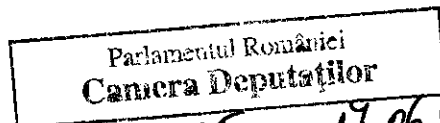


502/1585/15-06.2011

NR RET M44

APROBATÎn ședința Biroului permanent al
Camerei Deputaților

B.P. Nr. 685 din 17.06.2011

**Parlamentul României
Camera Deputaților****INFORMARE**

**privind participarea la lucrările Comisiei pentru migrații, refugiați și
populație a Adunării Parlamentare a Consiliului Europei
(Corfu, Grecia, 1 – 2 iunie 2011)**

În perioada 1 – 2 iunie 2011, în Corfu, Grecia, a avut loc reuniunea **Comisiei pentru migrații, refugiați și populație a Adunării Parlamentare a Consiliului Europei (APCE)**, la care au participat din partea Delegației Parlamentului României la Adunarea Parlamentară a Consiliului Europei, domnii deputați **Cezar Preda**, Președintele Delegației Parlamentului României la APCE, și **Ionuț Stroe**, precum și doamna Nadia Ionescu, director, secretara Delegației Parlamentului României la APCE.

În deschiderea lucrărilor prezidate de președintele Comisiei pentru migrații, refugiați și populație a APCE, domnul Christopher CHOPE, au avut loc dezbateri și schimburi de vederi unde au luat cuvântul personalități de seamă, precum doamna Rodoula Zissi, Vicepreședinta Parlamentului elen, Președinta Comisiei pentru afaceri europene și fostă membră a Delegației Parlamentului elen la APCE, domnul Christos Papoutsis, Ministrul pentru protecția cetățenilor, doamna Anna Dalara, Ministru adjunct al Muncii și securității sociale, domnul Konstantinos Vrettos, Președintele Delegației Parlamentului elen la APCE; de asemenea, au avut loc dezbateri și schimburi de vederi pe marginea proiectului de raport privind „Circulația pe scară largă a migranților ilegali, a solicitanților de azil și a refugiaților pe malul sudic al Europei” al parlamentarului britanic Christopher Chope.

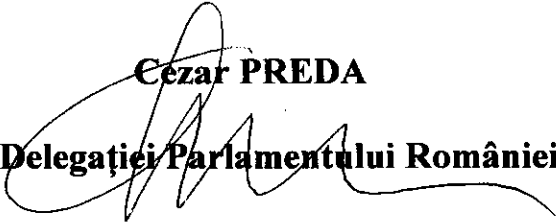
În continuarea lucrărilor Comisiei au avut loc dezbateri și schimburi de vederi pe marginea proiectului de raport privind „Imaginea migranților și a refugiaților în timpul campaniilor electorale” al parlamentarei belgiene Daphné Dumery și s-a decis, în vederea pregătirii raportului său, efectuarea unei vizite de documentare lucru în Danemarca și Suedia, a raportoarei.

De asemenea, au avut loc dezbateri și schimburi de vederi pe marginea proiectului de raport privind „Interceptarea și salvarea pe mare a solicitanților de azil, a refugiaților și a migranților ilegali” al parlamentarului spaniol Arcadio Diaz Tehera; pe marginea proiectului de raport privind „Refugiați și

solicitanții de azil: împărțirea responsabilităților în Europa” al parlamentarului englez Christopher CHOPE; pe marginea proiectului de raport privind „Situația neregulamentară a copiilor migranți fără acte: un motiv real de îngrijorare” al parlamentarului spaniol Pedro Agramunt, fiind adoptate un proiect de raport și un proiect de rezoluție pe aceste teme și s-a decis dezbateră acestora și în cadrul Sesiunii ordinare 2011 a APCE din luna iunie a.c.

Totodată, membrii Comisiei APCE au dezbătut pe marginea reuniunilor de consultare care au avut loc la Atena, în perioada 5 – 6 mai a.c., cu diferite rețele privind Structurile Naționale europene pentru respectarea Drepturilor Omului, și au stabilit locul și data următoarelor întâlniri ale Comisiei.

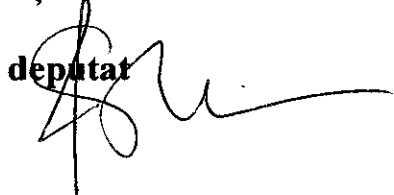
Reuniunea Comisiei APCE s-a bucurat de o deosebită atenție din partea autorităților elene care au avut o participare activă, inclusiv prin membri ai Cabinetului, la lucrări. Din păcate, la unul din momentele protocolare, prezența membrilor Guvernului a atras și organizarea unei manifestații de protest neautorizate care a obligat autoritățile la măsuri speciale pentru a asigura protecția participanților. Incidentul a fost relatat atât de presa locală cât și de presa centrală, precum și de edițiile grecești ale unor jurnale străine (International Herald Tribune).



Cezar PREDA

Președintele Delegației Parlamentului României la APCE

Ionuț STROE



deputat



AS/Mig (2011) OJ 04 REV.2
19 May 2011
amoj04_2011 rev2

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

REVISED DRAFT AGENDA 2^{1,2}

of the meeting to be held in **Corfu (Greece)** on
Wednesday 1 June 2011, from 9.30am to 12.30pm and from 2.30 to 6pm
GRAND MEDITERRANEO HOTEL
Ermones, 49100 Corfu
Tel. (+30) 22661 0 95380 Fax (+30) 22661 0 94248 / www.grand-mediterraneo.com

1. AGENDA

[AS/Mig (2011) OJ 04 rev.2
AS/Mig/Inf (2011) 08 rev.2]]

Adoption of the agenda

2. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH

- **Ms Rodoula ZISSI**, Vice-Chairwoman of the Parliament, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee and former member of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly
- **Mr Ioannis RAGKOUSIS**, Minister of the Interior of Greece
- **Mr Christos PAPOUTSIS**, Minister for Citizen Protection
- **Ms Anna DALARA**, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security
- **Mr Konstantinos VRETTOS**, President of the Greek Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

3. MINUTES

[AS/Mig (2011) PV 03]

Approval of the draft minutes of the meeting held in Strasbourg, during the April part-session 2011

4. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

¹ **This draft agenda, addressed to members and alternates of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population and observers' delegations (copy to secretaries of national delegations), is the convocation to the meeting.**

² **The Sub-Committee on Migration will meet on Thursday 2 June, from 9.30 to 1pm (this meeting is open to all members of the plenary Committee)**

5. **THE LARGE-SCALE ARRIVAL OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES ON EUROPE'S SOUTHERN SHORES**
[AS/Mig/AhLamp (2011) 01]

- Statement by the Chairperson of the *Ad Hoc* Sub-Committee on its visit to Lampedusa on 23-24 May 2011
- Exchange of views with:
 - Ms Claudette ABELA-BALDACCHINO, Vice-Chair of the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
 - Ms Andromachi LAZARIDIS, IOM, Greek Office
 - Ms Nuala MOLE, Director of the AIRE Centre (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe), London

6. **THE INTERCEPTION AND RESCUE AT SEA OF ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND IRREGULAR MIGRANTS**

Rapporteur: Mr Díaz Tejera, Spain, SOC

[AS/Mig (2011) 01 rev.2]

Press release 407(2011)]

Consideration of a draft report / Adoption of a draft resolution and of a draft recommendation

7. **ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES: SHARING RESPONSIBILITIES IN EUROPE**

Rapporteur: Mr Chope, United Kingdom, EDG

[AS/Mig (2011) 15]

- Statement by the rapporteur on his fact-finding visit to Brussels on 3 May 2011
- Consideration of a draft report / Adoption of a draft resolution

8. **UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN AN IRREGULAR SITUATION: A REAL CAUSE FOR CONCERN**

Rapporteur: Mr Agramunt, Spain, EPP/CD

[AS/Mig (2011) 16]

Consideration of a preliminary draft report

9. **LIVING TOGETHER IN THE 21ST CENTURY EUROPE: FOLLOW-UP TO THE EMINENT PERSONS REPORT**

Rapporteur for opinion: Mr Díaz Tejera, Spain, SOC

[GEP Report]

Statement by the rapporteur

10. **THE SITUATION OF IDPs AND RETURNEES IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS REGION**

Rapporteur: Mr Dendias, Greece, EPP/CD

Statement by the Rapporteur

11. **THE PORTRAYAL OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS**

Rapporteur: Ms Dumery, Belgium, NR

Statement by the rapporteur

12. WORK PROGRAMME

[AS/MIG/WP (2011) 04

▪ **Représentation of the Committee at various events**

- **Appointment:**
Seminar on Challenges of migration for local and regional authorities, organised by the Congress of Local and Regional authorities (Yerevan, 30 June 2011: appointment of a representative;
- **Statement:**
Consultation meeting with certain Networks of European National Human Rights Structures (NHRs) on the Council of Europe's activities in the field of migration", hosted by the Ombudsman of Greece (English only) (Athens, 5-6 May 2011): statement by Mr Dendias (Greece, EPP/CD)

13. OTHER BUSINESS

14. NEXT MEETINGS

- **Strasbourg**, during the 3rd part-session 2011 (20-24 June 2011)
- **Paris**, 13 September 2011 (to be confirmed)
- **Strasbourg**, during the 4th part-session 2011 (3-7 October 2011)
- **Paris**, 7 December 2011 (to be confirmed)

Deputy Minister of Labour's speech for the Council Of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Greece, here, on Corfu, for this Council of Europe conference.

The exchange of views between us all is essential for the coordination of policies towards a more effective management of immigration issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in turbulent times, full of developments that are impossible to foresee. Migrationary flows are always changing and increasing, creating a fluctuating environment in which we have to adapt, in order to solve today's crises and formulate our policies for the future.

Immigration, be it sans-papiers immigration or refugee influx is one of the key problems that we have to deal with in the European Union. We have to learn to be flexible and agile, because yesterday's solutions might well turn out to be tomorrow's problems.

Since we were elected in the fall of 2009, we have taken radical measures to control and manage the immigration issue in Greece, both in the sense of handling migrationary flows that converge on the greek border and also the creation of a structure that will aid third country nationals that have lived and worked in the country for years to be successfully integrated into our communities.

So, what has been done so far?

A bill [3838/10] has been passed for the naturalization and the bestowment of citizenship to second generation immigrants, as well as the voting rights for those immigrants that have been living in the country for long and have been fully integrated

Additionally, bill 3907/11 has been voted by the Parliament, in accordance to our international and European obligations, aiming to the creation of a comprehensive Asylum Service as well as a First Reception Service, for the fair, timely and effective examination of those who seek refuge in our country, according to the Geneva Treaty. I must also note the compleed transposition of European Directive 2008/115 regarding the deportation of illegal immigrants with absolute respect to human rights.

With these two bills, we have managed the two 'extremes' of our immigration policy, two areas that the previous government had consciously left unattended.

- The full integration to the Greek political community of legal immigrants and their offspring, as the culmination of a lengthy process of social integration
- The creation of a safe haven for refugees seeking asylum in our country and of the structures necessary to handle immigrants that enter Greece illegally, are not eligible for asylum and do not request international protection.

Of course, all the previous measures are hardly enough. Our first priority at this moment is to find ways to manage the 'middle ground', i.e. those who are in danger of, or have already lost their permits because of the financial crisis, those who will be subject to the 'removal postponement' regime, under the 3907/11 bill, as well as those who are working illegally in Greece. This last group of

Deputy Minister of Labour's speech for the Council Of Europe.

people, while certainly large, cannot be accurately defined, as there has never been an official record. Many of them have been in the country for many years and have been seamlessly integrated to the Greek social structures.

For that purpose, we are implementing the following policies:

1. Reducing the number of stamps necessary for the renewal of the residence permit for those who live and work legally in the country. Specifically, we're considering removing the number of required stamps from 200 to 120.
2. Transposition of EU Directive 52/2009 regarding "black labor" of third country nationals who reside in Greece illegally into Greek law.
3. Granting access to the labor market to those who are subject to the 'removal postponement' regime, as specified in bill 3907/11, in order to avoid the marginalization of those third country nationals whose deportation can't be executed at the present time.

For all of these categories of people, we are obliged to move swiftly forward, in order to handle the problems that exist due to the grave financial situation in Greece, but also because of the negligence and incompetence of the previous administration in managing the immigration issue. Moreover, we are beginning a big survey in order to map in quantity and quality terms the immigration population.

All these measures are taken to provide support for the third country nationals who work legally in the country, whose families have resided here for a long time and who are the first victims of the financial crisis. They are a vital and vibrant part of the social tissue and contribute greatly to the development and progress of Greece. We are making a serious effort to provide protection to those who are in danger of losing their legal status, as is the obligation of a state under rule of law. We refuse to 'patch' the problem up by legalizing vast numbers of immigrants. Instead, we clear the picture up, by creating an immigration census.

With respect to our international obligations we focus on two plans of action:

- Provide the opportunity to illegal immigrants to willfully leave the Schengen area, by providing specific motives. We also move to enforce the deportation of those who refuse to cooperate, always with respect to human rights. This way, we can reaffirm our ability to fulfill our commitment to the Schengen treaty.
- We manage realistically those immigrants whose cannot be deported at present, by making sure they receive fair and decent treatment by the state. Additionally, via the more efficient coordination of the various governmental agencies, we make deportations feasible, and remove pressure from detention centers, police stations and the judiciary system.

This is the first time in Greece that the administration is putting forward a comprehensive and complete set of policies to manage the immigration phenomenon in its entirety: the social and political integration of economic immigrants, the fair handling of those who request asylum, the acknowledgement and protection of refugees, the management of illegal immigrants, with absolute respect to human rights while protecting social cohesion and security.

Deputy Minister of Labour's speech for the Council Of Europe.

To this effect, in the context of the European social funding and our strong commitment to active policies, we have already initialized the so called "Local Cohesive Programs of Employment". These programs will be fine tuned according to the needs of each region and will enable socially vulnerable groups, inter alia immigrants and refugees, to access the labor market. These programs will also include the identification, education/training and relocation of migrants into the Greek labor market through an absolutely cohesive procedure. The actions of these programs also aim at training, educating and counseling on entrepreneurship issues (accounting, tax, marketing, etc.), acquiring work experience (internship), promoting the participation in distance learning programs (e-learning), acquiring expertise knowledge in companies, strengthening social support of unemployed beneficiaries, preparation and planning of new competing programs with emphasis on fostering entrepreneurship and self-employment, labor market integration and fighting social exclusion.

In this context, we are already in the process of conducting a research about the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of migrants in Greece per region, of the immigrants who live or/and work in Greece. The processed data include, inter alia, ethnic origin, employment status, living conditions, migration plans, any delinquent behaviour, marital status, age and legal status. This data, in correlation with information acquired during the National Census, will be used in order to better outline employment opportunities for immigrants. Moreover, as every year, a Joint Ministerial Decision has been issued, which restrictively provides for the number of third-country nationals that will enter the Greek labour market, per prefecture and specialty. For 2010, the predicted entries reached the number of 25.532 third-country nationals, of which 20.891 are employed for seasonal work, mainly in the primary sector of economy and come from Albania, with which Greece has signed a bilateral agreement. We see all this information as vital for the effective regulation of the job market, with absolute respect to the rights of third country nationals who provide vital services to our community.

As far as the integration of migrants into the Greek society is concerned, the project "Programmes for the Teaching of the Greek language, at certified vocational training centers (VTC), to unemployed repatriated persons – immigrants – refugees, for whom the inadequate knowledge of the Greek language is as an obstacle to social inclusion" was initiated during 2010. The project was announced and included in the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" (co-financed by the European Social Fund); most of the approved programmes coming under it have been implemented, with an implementation timetable up to 31.12.2011. These programs will have duration of 300 hours and will aim at improving oral and written skills and getting to know Greek culture and civilization. The above project will contribute to the elimination of the social exclusion and the exclusion from work faced by these particular population groups, who either do not speak any Greek at all or are not sufficiently fluent at it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Greece, as well as the other member-states of the South, is required to manage the entirety of the migratory flows on behalf of the European Union. Still, the problems we face should be dealt by the Union in its entirety and not by every member-state alone.

There is a definite need for the redistribution of the weights created by illegal immigration amongst all the member-states as well as the review and adaptation of the Dublin II Regulation that burdens the entry-states with the entire weight of managing the migration issue.

Deputy Minister of Labour's speech for the Council Of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to Greece and hope that this conference will create the basis of a fruitful cooperation between member-states and the Union in order to achieve our common goals: the humanitarian and efficient management of migratory flows as well as the integration of third country nationals into our societies, without fear, hatred or discrimination.

Thank you very much.

Speech by the

President of the Permanent National Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee and head of the Greek delegation in the P.A of the Council of Europe, M. D. Vrettos

Mister Minister

Mrs. Vice President of the Hellenic Parliament,

Distinguished colleagues, delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great joy that I'm addressing the Committee of Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly beginning its work.

The phenomenon of migration is a social issue which is not restricted to any one particular state. Recent developments in the global migration phenomenon which is the outcome of upheavals and poverty in many places on the planet, of unemployment and marginalization of large groups of the population, has turned Greece – over a short period of time – into a country of reception of a great number of migrants.

Free movement of persons is a fundamental principal guaranteed by the Treaties for the European Union citizens and is implemented by means of a space of freedom, security and justice without any internal borders. The lifting of internal borders requires enhanced management of the Union's external borders as well as an organized system for the entry and residence of third countries citizens, even by means of a common policy on asylum and migration. Historically, the concept of persons' free movement sprang from the Schengen Convention signed in 1985 and from the following Schengen Convention in 1990 by which internal

border controls among participating countries were gradually abolished. Cooperation under the Schengen agreements formed part of the EU legal and institutional framework and as such it expanded gradually to comprise most of the EU member – States and some third countries as well.

On April 14, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted decision 1805 bearing the title “the large scale arrival of irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees on Europe’s southern shores”. This Resolution gives an account of the current state of asylum/migration situation on the southern borders of Europe, which is a direct consequence of the ongoing conflicts in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

In essence, the resolution consists of a series of important recommendations to the member-States of the Council of Europe, recognizing that the conflicts in North Africa and the influx of refugees into Europe affect the whole of Europe.

These recommendations aim at generating an effective European co-responsibility, humanitarian aid for all, including the setting up of provisions for reception, avoidance of detention, special attention to vulnerable persons, respect of the right to seek asylum, enhanced support to Frontex, to the High Commissioner, to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations, participation in programs for repatriation, support to Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and support for the creation of legal migration channels.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Stockholm Program relating to solidarity and partnership in matters of migration and asylum, the long term consequences of migration on the labour market and on migrants' social integration must be taken into consideration. Emphasis is placed on the principles comprised in the Global Approach of Migration and on the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

The protection and integration of migrants in our society is a necessity and a high priority today, more than ever. The Greek government is determined to initiate a series of effective measures with the purpose to recognize and highlight their positive contribution to the enhancement of our potential, to the strengthening of our internal labour market and to the revitalization of our society – on the cultural and demographic levels.

It is now common knowledge that by protecting migrants we are protecting our society and serving the common goal for social growth and prosperity.

We are sparing no effort in this very crucial conjuncture towards creating the right conditions for our migrants to be able to enjoy their rights and insuring social cohesion, given that my country along with the other countries on the European Union borders has to deal with 90% of the migration flows.

The European Union's Concrete assistance to Greece and to the other member-States on the southern borders of Europe coming under great migration pressure from Asia and Africa, via implementation of the "European Pact on Immigration and Asylum", is necessary for the right management of migration flows and for the fight against illegal migration

Revision of "Dublin II" Regulation is deemed necessary in the framework of a Common European Asylum System, of a fair distribution of responsibilities and of solidarity among the Union member-States, so as not to put disproportionate pressure on entry countries, like Greece, to receive too large a number of asylum demands from third country citizens.

Migration is an issue relating closely to the future of Europe and its management must rely on the solidarity among European countries. It is a matter of dignity for European Integration and more than anything a matter of respect for Man.

I hope that the work of this Committee through its common approach of the migration phenomenon will produce valuable proposals and conclusions.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Speech

By the vice-President Mrs. Rodoula Zissi

addressed

To the Council of Europe P.A. Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Migration, as has been correctly pointed out, will be – and is already – one of the most crucial issues of the 21st century. It is an issue which puts each and every one of us personally and also each country separately-and by that I mean all the citizens of a state and all member-States of International Organizations- in front of a number of important responsibilities.

There are many different kinds of weighty responsibilities because migration (internal, external, legitimate or illicit, voluntary or involuntary, lasting or temporary) is the field or the arena, if you will, where a host of proposals and situations relating to human rights, to the distance separating written law and social compliance, to the understanding that our world is no longer the world of our nearest or wider natural boundaries but that it extends well beyond them and includes the whole world, conflict, are judged as to their essence and require pertinent solutions.

Talk about migration and migration policies becomes redundant if the citizens of a country (be it a country of origin, transit, or destination of migrants) have not been previously informed and made aware of the particulars of the phenomenon and requirements for its management.

I'm here referring to those subjects which have been consistently dealt with, highlighted and disseminated by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly from its very inception.

The Committee on Migration has taken action on such matters as respect of migrants' human rights – especially the most vulnerable migrant children's human rights, which will also be discussed during our meeting - reduction of illicit migration flows and of criminal activities relating to them, the need for the largest possible integration of migrants in their countries of destination, but also the possibility for migrant's repatriation.

The recipient countries especially have many issues to grapple with: their internal, economic, public health policies, justice and civil protection systems, their education policy, social structures, cooperation with other recipient countries but also countries of origin and transit.

I shall refer only briefly to the law on citizenship and voting rights of migrants of the Ministry of Interior, containing "*Provisions on the Acquisition of Greek Citizenship and the political participation of Greeks abroad and migrants who legally reside in Greece & other provisions*". The object of this law is the substantial integration of those migrants and their children residing legally in Greece, through the guaranty of a status insuring their stay and respect of their individual and social rights in the work place, the Greek society, and public life, as it encourages their full and equal participation in political decision making concerning their life, work and daily activities.

Migration represents an economic challenge as well. According to recent studies, by 2050, the population of Europe will be reduced by 67 million and it will age considerably. For this reason it appears that migration will contribute positively and considerably to serious issues arising in its economy, social security and retirement systems.

Experience in countries of the Mediterranean has shown that migrants might represent an asset for the labour market as most of those entering Europe are young. Certainly, we cannot overlook the problems arising from unemployment and discriminations, but at the same time we cannot preclude the possibility for controlled migration to become a source of growth and innovation.

In Greece, those entitled to the social rights of health and social care are in principle the Greek citizens (art. 21 par. 3 of the Constitution.), while the State obligation to provide social security rights extends to all workers (art. 22 par. 5 of the constitution). The right to social security and other welfare benefits is given by law to the legally and permanently residing aliens in the Greek State (see, art. 71 par. 2 of law 3386/2005, art. 12 par. 1, d of Presidential Decree 150/2006). Data from the Social Protection Circle state that 88% of those concerned by the Circle are Greek citizens and 12% aliens, this percentage coinciding with the percentage of aliens in the overall population of the country.

Concerning illegal migration, our country is entering a new era in relation to the handling of the requests of migrants who entered our country illegally and are seeking political asylum, as well as to the handling of voluntary repatriation cases. Representatives of the International Migration Organization, in cooperation with our country's Police Authorities have already facilitated procedures for the repatriation of the first 586 citizens of third countries to their countries of origin, while the second phase of the project, for the voluntary repatriation, by June 30 2011, of another 500 third country nationals is under way.

At the beginning of the year and in cooperation with the U.N High Commissioner for Refugees, the new Independent Asylum Service was set up, while training courses are being held (in some sectors they are almost completed), addressed

to the members of the Appeals Committees, to the examiners of International Protection requests and to the members of the Appeals Committees' secretariats.

Education has been shown to play a particularly important role, especially for second generation migrants. At the outset, accent must be placed to the learning of the recipient country language and also to the learning of the mother tongue. Of equal importance is the education which aims at forming the individual's character, and nurturing his understanding of important cultural elements of the country of origin and of the recipient country, while instilling respect for the others.

In today's Europe, cooperation seems to be more necessary than ever, but also more complex. The phenomenon of migration and policies relating to it change rapidly and radically following a cascade of events on the economic, political, cultural and daily strife for survival levels.

We cannot, for example overlook the "Arab Spring" as are called the major political changes and popular uprisings in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Libya which initiated another migration cycle, especially towards the Mediterranean countries.

On the other hand we cannot ignore the fact that the issue of migration is governed by different realities and conditions in different countries. The phenomenon which is shaping, and will continue to do so in the future, peoples' lives in recipient and even in transit countries, will be perceived as a mere echo in the countries of the European North, even if they attempt, in all sincerity, to treat it otherwise.

But there are also unresolved issues in matters of interregional cooperation in general and readmission agreements with third countries in particular, especially because a number of third countries either have not ratified international treaties on human rights, or they have but do not implement them.

So, is migration a threat or an opportunity? Migration, ladies and gentlemen, is an ever evolving dynamic situation. We must treat it as such without ever deviating from the principles which have always guided our work, those of recognition of and respect for equal human rights for all, special care for vulnerable groups, society awareness, education and training of people in charge of migration in recipient countries mainly, provisions for common rules governing migrant labour rights, their right to partake of public health and education systems as well as their right to take part in the country's public life.

Ladies and gentlemen, developments sometimes overtake and startle us. This however must not stand in the way of productive reflection, creativity and future prospects. Adverse economic and financial conditions in mine as well as in other European countries over the last year or so, magnify existing problems and make

solutions seem remote or unattainable, while they accentuate issues, so far neutral or simply controversial, making them look particularly negative. In the long run, however, and upon mature reflection, we need to put things in the right perspective in order to examine and analyze them.

I welcome you all to Greece, to Corfu and I wish you every success in your work!