



EESC President meets Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum Panagiotis Mitarachi: Solidarity with Greece is not negotiable and a precondition for moving forward on the EU New Pact on Migration and Asylum

05/03/2020

Reference number: 9/2020



EESC President Luca Jahier has met today the newly appointed Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum, Panagiotis Mitarachi, as part of the visit to Athens of the EESC's permanent study group on Immigration and Integration (IMI).

"Greece as a frontline Member State needs our full support and solidarity. It is not acceptable that some Member States opt out of our joint obligations and leave others to carry a disproportionate burden in managing migration flows. We need to find common solutions with unity and determination, and by strengthening the principle of solidarity so it is not perceived as an empty word. Managing our borders and reforming the EU's asylum law is the responsibility of Europe as a whole and cannot be further delayed," President Jahier said.

Several measures have been planned by the Greek government in order to manage new arrivals, better shelter migrants in overcrowded facilities in the Aegean islands and smooth identification and asylum processes. These efforts should be acknowledged and not be crippled by geopolitical games.

Human lives are not commodities, nor they can be used for geopolitical interests. We should stand firmly to uphold international human rights and obligations, to ensure protection for people fleeing conflict zones and make sure that pacts are respected, including the EU-Turkey deal signed in 2016.

Once more, we are facing a humanitarian emergency. Thousands of unaccompanied minors, escaping from war zones, are missing basic rights, such as housing and education. "We need to stop thinking about immigration as an emergency. Each year, between 2 and 2.5 million people come to the EU. 95% of these arrivals are regular and should not be viewed as a threat, but as an opportunity for the European economic and social model," he continued.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum currently developed by the European Commission represents a key opportunity to agree on the ways the EU should manage migration issues. To this end, the EESC is ready to support the Commission's ongoing efforts, as clearly stated by President Jahier in a meeting with Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs earlier this week.

"A prompt collective action towards drawing up a New Pact on Migration and Asylum should definitely include the key dimension of integration, promote humanitarian corridors and legal pathways for people in need. At the EESC, we believe that sustainable long-term integration policies covering language training, the screening and recognition of skills and competencies, and vocational training should be put in place. Evidence shows that well managed migration delivers positive results for the economy and society as a whole," he added.

"A thriving society without a safe, orderly and regular migration policy supported by all Member States is unthinkable, and a strong focus on inclusion in Europe is as important as getting asylum systems functioning. We should stop ghettos from forming in our cities," Jahier warned.

It is undeniable that civil society organisations play a major role in ensuring migrant integration and inclusion. "Making integration work: towards a more inclusive European society" is also the theme of the upcoming European Migration Forum - the dialogue platform on migration, asylum and migrant integration-

that will meet for the sixth time on 2-3 June 2020 and to which this two-day visit will contribute by documenting good practices and identifying problems and potential solutions.

Today, the EESC delegation composed of President Luca Jahier, Mr Carlos Manuel Trindade, President of the IMI Group, Mr Evgeniy Ivanon and Mr Panagiotis Gkofas, Members of the IMI Group, met with UNHCR Representative in Greece Mr Philippe Leclerc, as well with Mr Gianluca Rocco Chief of IOM Greece, and Ms Vania Nedeltcheva, head of the Migrant Point of Athens Labour Union Organisation (EKA). More meetings will be held tomorrow at the Secretariat general on Migration Policy, Reception and Asylum, at the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE) and at the Athens Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee Issues (ACCMR).

Press contact

Daniela Vincenti

EESC President Spokesperson

Phone +32 2 546 82 62

Mobile +32 470 89 22 66

[email](#)