



# THE ASYLUM INTERVIEW

## Information about the interview process follows:

**You must submit your application in person, orally or in writing. You may also submit applications for members of your family, provided that they are with you in Greece and they wish to do so.**

**An interpreter will be present in order to assist you if you are unable to communicate with the Asylum service employees.**

**When substantiating your claim, you will have to answer to all questions the interviewer asks you truthfully. If you provide false evidence or claims, this could have a negative effect on the judgement of your case.**

If you are an unaccompanied child, i.e. if you are under 18 years old and you are not accompanied by an adult person who is responsible of looking after you, according to the Greek law or practice, the Authorities must immediately notify the competent Public Prosecutor (District Attorney). The Public Prosecutor will appoint a representative (guardian) who will be responsible for you and will act in your best interest. If you are under 14 years old your application for international protection must be submitted by the appointed representative. If you are over 14 years old, you may submit your application yourself. The authorities will care for your protection and to ensure that you are hosted in an environment suitable for minors.

When you submit your Application for International Protection, you and any members of your family who are over 14 years old will be photographed and fingerprinted. Your fingerprints will be entered to the European

Central Database EURODAC and, in case you have submitted an application for international protection in another state of Europe where the Dublin II Regulation is in force, you will be transferred there for the examination of your application.

The Dublin III Regulation allows for you to be reunited with close family members (usually limited to spouses and parents with children under 18) across Europe once you have fully registered your asylum claim. The countries which apply the Dublin III Regulation are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

You must hand in your travel documents (passport) or any other document you may have in your possession and is relevant to

the examination of your application, the verification of your and your family members' identity, your country and place of origin, as well as your family status.

You may be body searched and your personal belongings may be searched. You may be submitted to medical examinations.

When you submit your application, the competent authorities are obliged to inform you, in a language that you understand, regarding the procedure, your rights and obligations while being an international protection applicant, as well as the deadlines that apply throughout the procedure.

If you are a victim of torture, rape or any other serious violent act, you must inform the Authorities accordingly, so that they help you.

You may ask to come in contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or an organization that provides legal, medical and psychological support.

Throughout the procedure you have the right to seek the assistance of a lawyer or other counsellor of your own choice (without mediation by the Asylum Service) at your own expense. After the first instance administrative decision if you need to appeal, then you have the right to publicly funded legal aid for a lawyer to assist and represent you. There is also free legal aid provided by NGOs and volunteer lawyers in some areas, which you may be able to access before the appeal stage.

If you are a woman, you may ask for your interview to be conducted by a female Asylum Service employee and a female interpreter, if available.

In any case, you may ask for your interview and its interpretation to be conducted by an officer of the sex of your choice, in cases that there is a serious reason for such a request. Your relevant request will be assessed by the Service.

If you are an unaccompanied child, you must be informed by your representative regarding your interview. Your representative will be invited and he may be with you during the interview. The authorities may conduct medical tests in

order to determine your age. Both you and your representative must be informed regarding this procedure and you or your representative must agree. Withdrawal and implicit withdrawal or abandonment of an international protection application

You may explicitly withdraw your application at any time you wish. You must go in person to the Regional Asylum Office and explicitly withdraw your application in writing. If you explicitly withdraw your application, the Service will not examine your application and you will have to abandon the country if you do not possess any other permit of legal residence in Greece. You should not withdraw your application without seeking information and advice from a qualified asylum lawyer and thoroughly considering the long-term implications and consequences for you.

**The Asylum Service may consider that you are not interested in the continuation of the examination of your application (implicit withdrawal of the application) and may discontinue its examination in the following cases:**

- a)** if you refuse to provide information which was asked by the authorities and is of great importance for your application, or
- b)** if you do not go to your interview or
- c)** if you escape from your place of detention or
- d)** if you do not comply with the obligations the Police has imposed to you instead of detaining you or
- e)** if you leave the area of residence which was determined for you by the authorities without informing them beforehand or
- f)** if you leave the country without asking permission from the Asylum Service or
- g)** if you do not immediately inform the Asylum Service regarding changes in your address and your contact information, or
- h)** if you do not come in contact with the Asylum Service after being requested to do so, or

You will have to go to the Asylum Service and explain the reasons why the Service should not have considered that you were not interested in your application. The Service will decide accordingly.

So far the Asylum Service appears to be interpreting the rules about implicit withdrawal of asylum applications less strictly than it could, in sympathy with applicants. You should be aware though that implicit withdrawal of your application in Greece is a risk if you leave the area you are registered in order to attempt onward movements out of Greece, especially if you do not know when you are called for an interview in the regional office where your application is registered and miss the appointment without knowing it. If you have left the area of the regional office where you will be called for an interview, it would be wise to ask a friend to look at the noticeboard where applicant numbers to be called for interviews are posted twice a week and let you know if you are called. If your application is considered implicitly withdrawn but you do not succeed in reaching another EU country before Dublin transfers back to Greece resume probably in the near future (probably months not years), you would be returned to Greece and have to start all over again, wasting possibly about a year.

### **The examination procedure of International protection applications**

On the date determined by the Service, you will be interviewed by an Asylum Service employee. You will have to answer his questions with absolute truthfulness, testify complete descriptions of true incidents and not conceal any element that is relevant to your application. If you make false statements on any incident or claim, you are going to negatively affect the judgement of your application.

During the interview, the Asylum Service employee is particularly going to ask you questions regarding the information mentioned in your application, your identity information, how you came to Greece, the reasons why you left your country of origin, or the country where you used to live in case you are a

stateless person, and the reasons why you cannot or you do not wish to go back to that country. During the interview you may also submit any other evidence you consider necessary.

If you are not able to communicate with the Asylum Service employee due to a language barrier, an interpreter will be present in the interview.

You can go to the interview accompanied by a lawyer or other counsellor (legal expert, doctor, psychologist or social worker).

Everything you say during the interview is confidential.

The interview may be recorded. At the end of the interview, the Asylum Service employee will write a report that will include your basic claims and all the substantial evidence of the interview. In case the interview is not recorded, the employee will write a text (minutes) to include all the questions and answers in the interview. In this case you will have to check the text of the minutes with the assistance of the interpreter, verify its contents or ask for corrections and sign. Any time you wish, you may obtain a copy of the minutes or the report and the sound recording of your interview.

After the interview, the Asylum Service will decide to grant you refugee status, grant you a status of subsidiary protection, or reject your application.

When a decision upon your application is issued, the Asylum Service will notify you to receive it. You will be notified based on the contact information you have declared, either by a telephone call, a letter, a fax, or an e-mail.

The Asylum Service must notify the decision to you with the assistance of an interpreter in a language that you understand.

If you have not received the decision and you do not go to renew your card on the next business day after its expiry date at the latest, then the Asylum Service will consider that you have received the decision on that day.

## **Obligations of international protection applicants**

**As an international protection applicant in Greece, it is your obligation:**

To remain in Greece until the examination of your application is completed.

To cooperate with the Greek authorities regarding any issue in relevance with your application and the verification of your personal data.

To go in person to the Asylum Service in order to renew your card before it expires and, at the latest, on the next business day after its expiry date.

To immediately inform the Asylum Service regarding the address of your residence and your contact information and any change in them. The Asylum Service is going to send documents related to your case, to the address that you have declared.

You must abide by the deadlines as determined throughout the different stages of the procedure of examination of your application.

To reveal your real financial status in case you are provided with benefits by the State.

To comply with the obligations that apply in case you are housed in a Reception Centre or other facility.

## **Rights of international protection applicants in Greece**

Your deportation is prohibited until the examination of your application is completed.

You may move freely across the country, unless specific areas of the country where you may move freely are determined on the card that you are provided with.

If you are homeless, you may be hosted in a Reception Centre or other facility.

You have the right to work under the conditions set by the Greek law.

As an employee, you have the same rights and obligations, regarding social security, as any Greek citizen.

You have the right to receive hospital, medical and pharmaceutical treatment free of charge, provided that you are uninsured and indigent.

Your children have access to the public educational system free of charge, and so do you, in case you are a child.

You have access to vocational training.

If you are a disabled person with a disability percentage of 67% and above, you have the right to receive a disability allowance, provided that your housing in a Reception Centre is not possible.

While being an asylum applicant, you cannot travel outside Greece.

While being an asylum applicant, you cannot transfer your family from your country of origin to Greece.