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ETUCE Statement on the situation of refugees in Moria: Human rights prevail!

(adopted by ETUCE Bureau on 22 September 2020)

The devastating fire that destroyed Greece's largest migrant camp Moria on [9 September 2020](#), left more than 12,000 refugees including over 4,000 children without shelter, individual belongings, and access to hygiene, food, water, education and other basic necessities. The unaccompanied minors had to be relocated to other reception centres in Greece and after a week of sleeping rough in the fields and alongside roads, more than 9,000 people are now housed in the new emergency facility in Kara Tepe which has capacity to accommodate not more than 8,000 people, while construction works are ongoing. The site was set up by Greek authorities - who hold overall responsibility for the management and coordination of the humanitarian response - with the support of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and other organizations.

ETUCE member organisations in Greece report that this new site in Kara Tepe is currently functioning as an emergency shelter facility, intended to cover immediate and urgent needs of those affected by the fires, in terms of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care. Before entering the facility, all new residents are undergoing rapid COVID-19 testing. Everyone who is tested positive has received medical attention and is isolated in a quarantine area within the new site. Refugees seem relieved to have found basic assistance but are still worn-out from being on the street for several days and worried about their future. ETUCE member organisations in Greece also caution that what may be deemed adequate in terms of shelter and services during emergency situations is not appropriate for the longer-term. Greek authorities are yet to clarify the future use of this site.

ETUCE demands from Greek and European governments, with the support of the European Commission, to urgently deliver a solution based on solidarity and respect for human dignity and human rights. This solution must ensure that all displaced individuals on Lesbos are provided with safe accommodation, food and water, access to hygiene and healthcare services, and necessary protection from COVID-19¹, while all minors need to have access to inclusive quality education as their fundamental human right.

We welcome the efforts of the European Commission to relocate 406 minors from Lesbos to other reception centres in Greece and that some EU countries (Germany, France, Norway, and the Netherlands) are ready to [host](#) children and families. Nonetheless, ETUCE highlights that the relocation itself is not sufficient: It is of utmost importance to avoid **long breaks in children's education and to ensure the provision of targeted support**, including among other things linguistic services, thorough assessment of their learning needs, and addressing the psychological traumas they have experienced.

¹ See [ETUCE Statement 'Education Trade Unions in Solidarity with Refugees in Times of COVID-19'](#), 2020.

Sadly, the tragedy of the Moria reception centre which hosted more than 12,000 people where its official capacity was only 2,800 people, showcases the chronic problem of European governments and the EU's fragmented and ambiguous approach to migration and asylum policies. Overcrowded refugee camps in Italy, Greece, Turkey, and other countries on the European frontline of migration are ticking bombs of humanitarian disaster, especially in current times of the pandemic when residents have no means to follow even the basic public health measures.

Therefore, ETUCE calls on European Commission, European Parliament, EU Council and all EU member states to ensure that the upcoming [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) and [European Action Plan on integration and inclusion](#) of migrants and people with a migrant background provide **a coherent, unambiguous, and unified, migration policy and subsequent legislative framework**. This policy needs to be **guided by principles of solidarity, equality, democracy and the rule of law, and represent a holistic, integrated and well-structured approach**² to migration and integration among all relevant authorities, including education, social support, and employment. In particular a prominent and multi-dimensional place should be given to education in the new European migration framework reminding that **education is central to migrants' integration and inclusion in the host country's society and for providing them with equal opportunities** in life and a sense of belonging and normality.

² ETUCE-EFEE Joint Practical Guidelines for a Quality Framework on effective inclusion of migrants and refugees in education: <https://www.csee-etuice.org/en/projects/migration-education/3453-introduction>

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