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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Médecins du Monde in Greece: A strong partnership with EU to assist refugees**

More than **130 people** working in **12 sites\*** throughout Greece

**10.929 consultations** since April 2016

**Mental health:** one of the major challenges in refugee camps in Greece

Médecins du Monde-Greece has been supporting moving populations in Greece since the beginning of the refugee crisis and is now working in a total of 28 sites throughout the country. Among the programs they are running is “*Emergency response for moving populations throughout Greece*”, a major program that was launched in April 2016 and is funded with an EU Emergency Support grant to MdM-Belgium. It is a joint action of five MdM delegations: Greece, Belgium, France, Spain and United Kingdom. Seven months into the action, MdM takes stock on the progress made in mental, physical and sexual-reproductive health.

#### **Close to 11.000 consultations since April 2016**

MdM acts through its fixed clinics and mobile units to **cover medical needs** in the camps. The teams consist of doctors, nurses, midwives, psychologists, social workers, data collectors, interpreters and drivers. In parallel, dental and gynecological mobile units visit the camps, accompanied by a pediatrician if needed.

A total of 10.929 consultations have been conducted so far by MdM. In detail: 9.332 **Primary Health Care** examinations (PHC), 767 **Sexual and Reproductive Health** consultations (SRH), 361 concerning **Mental Health** (MH) and 469 **dental** visits.

Of the people examined, 53% were female and 47% male. The majority (65%) were 15 years or older. The top 3 countries of origin were Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

## General health of refugees and migrants in the camps

The general health of refugees is good. Most problems detected are linked to the journey people have made to reach Greece and to the difficult living conditions in the camps: accommodation, sanitation, water, etc.

The most common health issues are respiratory infections (25%), orthopedics (13%) and dermatological problems (13%). MdM teams also reported some chronic diseases (high blood pressure, diabetes, epilepsy, serious handicaps) that are treated in collaboration with the National Health System. For these cases, MdM set up referral teams to fill the gaps in terms of transportation from/to hospitals and interpretation.

## Sexual and reproductive health are key issues in the camps

During the first six months, MdM's activities with midwives and gynecologist included, among others, care for pregnant women and lactating women, information about and provision of contraception, detection and treatment of vaginal infections and referrals of complicated pregnancies to hospitals.

MdM will continue to provide these services while also focusing on family planning, promotion of contraception, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, support in case of unwanted pregnancies or cervical/breast cancer and information concerning menstrual/vaginal hygiene.

## Mental health related problems on the rise

MdM provides psychosocial support to refugees and migrants in camps in group sessions or individual consultations. Residents of the camps are increasingly presenting symptoms of depression, anxiety, complex trauma or self-inflicted harm, possibly linked to prolonged stays and the lack of activities in the camps, as well as the loss of traditional roles within a community. According to MdM, involving refugees and migrants more actively in decisions about life in the camps (community meetings with camp managers), promoting productive activities or facilitating their coping mechanisms (cooking, learning activities, workshops, access to libraries and sports) could improve the mental condition of the populations in the camps, help them rebuild confidence and have a productive role within their community.

MdM's psychologists and social workers will continue to assist refugees over the coming months and will also support community initiatives to increase the well-being in the camps in Greece.

The European Commission wants every single refugee and migrant to have access to basic health care. This is the case in all 12 locations MdM is covering. Psycho-social and mental support is a priority for the European Commission, as well the improvement of the living conditions in the camps.

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*\*The 12 camps of the "Emergency Greece" program: Elliniko, Malakasa, Schisto, Trikala, Volos, Katsikas, Konitsa, Filipiada, Faneromeni, Dolianna, Kavala, Redestos (Vasilika).*

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### **About Médecins du Monde – Doctors of the World Greece**

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*Médecins du Monde-Doctors of the World Greece was founded in 1990 and is part of the International network of MdM that consists of 15 Chapters in the world (Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxemburg, Netherlands Portugal, Spain, Sweden , Switzerland, United Kingdom and U.S.A.) It remains, though, a Greek organization, taking its own path based on circumstances particular to Greece, while maintaining financial and administrative independence and transparency shared with the network.*

*Completing 26 consecutive years of action in 2016, MdM-Greece has been acknowledged as a credible and efficient organization that fosters the sense of solidarity within the Greek Community.*

*Having conducted numerous humanitarian aid programs in Greece and in developing countries, Greek doctors, administration, medical staff and technical experts continue to offer their voluntary services.*

*MdM-Greece with more than 600 volunteers since its foundation, in around 50 countries around the world, contributes to medical and humanitarian aid programs. Throughout the years, medical and humanitarian aid programs have been carried out in Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Serbia, Sudan, Palestine, Haiti, Gaza, Uganda, Tanzania, Algeria etc.*

*Doctors of the World Greece works with other international Non Governmental Organizations in order to more efficiently provide humanitarian aid to people in need.*

### **About EU Humanitarian Aid**

*The European Union with its Member States is a leading global donor of humanitarian aid. Through the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), the EU helps over 120 million victims of conflict and disasters every year. With headquarters in Brussels and a global network of field offices, ECHO provides assistance to the most vulnerable people solely on the basis of humanitarian needs, without discrimination of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.*