

Dear UNHCR

As a feminist network WIDE + is very concerned about the vulnerable situation of women refugees in Europe and in Turkey.

It has been brought to our attention through reports of several organisations and through personal accounts that the special needs of women are not sufficiently taken care of throughout the asylum process, in transit and in reception centres. We are therefore turning to you as one of the most important actors to intervene and make sure that gender sensitive measures are implemented.

Furthermore, we would like to kindly ask you to let us know how the implementation of such measures will be ensured.

We have identified a number of important needs:

- It is obvious that lack of knowledge and of control of one's personal situation causes anxiety. **Women should be proactively given access to accurate legal and factual information, in a language they can understand, about procedures they are subject to and services available. This situation calls for female culturally-sensitive interviewers, translators and interpreters.**
- We are aware of that some of female refugees have been victims of physical and psychological violence. **It is necessary that women with experience of violence, torture and threats will be proactively given access to professional GBV counselling and assistance.**
- Within the camps and or reception centres women should be proactively **given access to gender- sensitive medical, health and counselling services.** This is especially important for pregnant women.
- It is important that there are **staff with gender sensitive training** working in the camps so that women's needs can be assessed and responded to quickly (especially women travelling alone or single-mothers).
- It is important that the camps are organised in such ways that **women are secured access to places of safety and privacy, including gender-segregated sleeping and sanitation facilities.**
- Regarding the asylum seeking process it is of utmost importance **that women's rights to lodge an asylum claim independently of their spouse and family**, and to have a legal status independent of that of their spouse and family, are duly and proactively enforced.
- We also want to draw attention to **gender-specific reasons for seeking asylum**, such as flight from a violent relationship or fear for gender mutilation, which should be legally acknowledged and accepted. This calls for trained legal staff in gender specific needs for legal protection.
- Under current circumstances, the screening for rights to asylum is a procedure that must be quickly conducted. For women with small children it would be necessary that they are provided **with childcare during screening, asylum interviews and counselling.**

- It is of utmost importance that **family reunification** is given a high priority, so that independently travelling women and children can reach their spouses and fathers, and are **not being prevented or blocked by current arrangements between the EU and Turkey on deporting people back to Turkey.**

We look forward to your reply.

Kind regards

WIDE+

WIDE+ Women in development Europe is a feminist organisation which strives for a world in which the implementation of the UN Convention against all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and all other international agreements on women's rights are respected and implemented in economic and development policies at the local, national and global level.