

Migrants to be warned by SMS

Cyprus not a gateway to Europe (Updated)



File photo

Cyprus is launching a multilingual SMS campaign to head off more migrant arrivals by dispelling the mistaken belief it is a gateway to the rest of the EU, interior minister Nicos Nouris told the Cyprus Mail on Monday.

The message will be seen by all who enter the roaming area of Cyprus, he said.

“The intention is to let them know a number of issues of which they are not properly informed,” he told the Cyprus Mail. “The major problem is that they think they can go to any country in Europe from here.”

Nouris said arriving migrants are effectively “trapped” in Cyprus because the

island is not part of the Schengen area – the 26 European nations that have abolished their borders and permit unrestricted travel between them.

“We interviewed a number of them and we realized that the traffickers are taking advantage of them. Most of the interviewees are not interested in staying in Cyprus. They want to go to Germany, Italy, Greece...They say they told us to come to Cyprus to get approval. So sending this message is good for them and good for the country.”

Indeed, many do not know what to expect, Rimon, a refugee from Bangladesh, told the paper. He is currently in the Pournoura reception camp in Kokkinotrimithia and has spoken to many other refugees from different countries.

“Nearly 100 percent who come to the north believe they are in Europe already,” he said, “and 95 percent who cross to the south believe they will find work and be able to go to other European countries.”

Cyprus, with a population of roughly 880,000, has “by a wide margin” the largest number of migrants relative to its population in the 27-member bloc, Nouris said.

3.8 percent of those living in Cyprus are asylum seekers, while that number is under one percent in other front-line EU states like Greece, Italy, Spain, and Malta.

It is estimated that just 25-30 percent of all migrants currently in Cyprus are refugees fleeing conflict.

Source:

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