

# Greece

Refugee flows remained **steady** this month compared to March's **3,150 new arrivals**, with **1,150** people crossing the **land borders** and **1,850** reaching the Greek Aegean **islands**.

The Government intensified efforts to alleviate **overcrowding on Samos** fully assuming the implementation of **transfers** and applying specific relief **measures**. Over **716 people** were transferred by the authorities from the

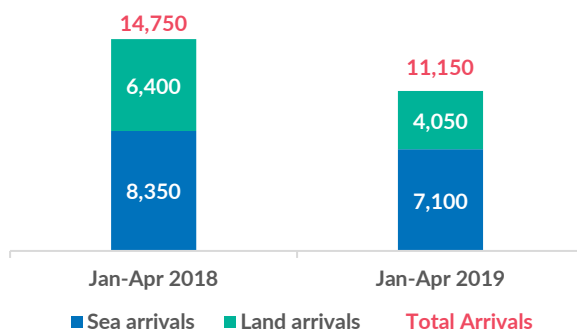
islands to the mainland. UNHCR continued to support these efforts and moved **253 vulnerable people**, mainly to ESTIA accommodation.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

**77,150**

**14,650** on the islands and **62,500** in the mainland

### Arrivals



\*UNHCR estimate as of 30 April 2019 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**69,900**

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 114,250 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

**22,300**

people this month, and 57,950 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

## REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**93%** have social security number

**62%** have tax identification number

**31%** registered with unemployment agency

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

280 National Staff

34 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in  
Thessaloniki, Lesbos

4 Field Offices in Attika,  
Chios, Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros,  
Ioannina, Leros,  
Rhodes



UNHCR-supported school festival bringing together Greek and refugee pupils. © Floulis Photographers

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who leads the refugee response, working closely with other United Nations agencies, international and national NGOs, regional and State institutions, municipalities, grassroots organizations, refugee communities and the local society.

## Main Activities

### Accommodation and Cash Assistance

- UNHCR runs the EU-funded [ESTIA accommodation](#) and [cash assistance](#) programmes in cooperation with the Government, municipalities and NGOs.
- Ultimately, these will be managed exclusively by the Greek authorities. UNHCR works closely with staff from State agencies to prepare for this transition.
- Apartments in cities and towns offer asylum-seekers and refugees greater dignity and independence. Children can go to school, while access to healthcare and other services is easier. It also helps the inclusion of those who will remain in Greece. Additionally, the host population benefits from the **4,430 apartments and 16 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities and towns across Greece**. UNHCR had **25,628 accommodation places** in April.
- UNHCR organizes and covers the transport of vulnerable people from apartments on the islands to the mainland. This helps liberate space for vulnerable people who are still geographically restricted to stay on the island.
- In April, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **69,897 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. Cash preserves refugees' dignity and allows them to choose what they need most. It is spent on goods and services, and so it also contributes to the local community. In April, nearly **7.1 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- In April, the [Racist Violence Recording Network \(RVRN\)](#) presented its [annual report](#) documenting **117 incidents** of racist violence, with more than **130 victims** between January and December 2018. Support for racist violence has increased, as attacks are carried out by groups with extreme xenophobic ideologies. The RVRN was established in 2011 by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and UNHCR Greece.
- With a steady number of people crossing the [sea](#) and land borders, limited legal pathways out of the country and an increasing population reaching Greece undetected, there is a pressing need for more reception places for asylum-seekers and refugees, especially children who have arrived unaccompanied and other people with specific needs.

- Existing structures in the reception centres and some mainland sites are insufficient and well-above capacity. Governmental efforts are underway to increase the capacity of the **26 mainland sites** that have surpassed their housing availability which can, in turn, improve conditions on the islands.
- In the islands reception centres, some **10,700 people** are crammed in spaces for an estimated **capacity of 5,400** with few specialized services to cater their needs. The situation is most difficult for those on Samos and Lesbos as thousands of people are staying in tents or makeshift lodgings exposed to health risks and safety hazards, while there is limited privacy for families and women.
- This month, the [Ministry of Migration Policy](#) fully assumed transfers of asylum-seekers staying in the sites to the mainland. These were accelerated for those vulnerable staying in Vathy reception centre on Samos. As a result, the population has recently reduced, but still remains at more than **2,800 people** compared to the **660** estimated capacity.
- UNHCR's team in Evros, at the Greek - Turkish land border helps people who have recently arrived at the Fylakio reception centre. They ensure they are informed and identified properly and that people with specific needs are directed to appropriate services.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and its partners has helped over **4,500 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation on asylum procedures and further administrative treatment as well as other issues related to accessing rights.
- UNHCR's experts advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **4,000** instances in 2019, and **39,350** instances since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum applications beyond these instances. [Asylum Service](#) staff issued a total of **21,155** asylum applications in the first quarter of 2019.
- UNHCR [HELP website](#) answers refugees and asylum-seekers questions on [how to apply for asylum](#), on their [rights and obligations](#), and on accessing services when [living in Greece](#). In 2019, **19,000 people** have found information on the website.
- In response to an organized social media movement that intended to cross the northwest land border of Greece, UNHCR, jointly with IOM, deployed interpreters and issued messaging in six languages to inform about the risks of irregular movement.

### Child Protection

- There are an estimated **3,817 unaccompanied and separated children in Greece but only 1,121 places** in shelters and apartments for Supported Independent Living ([EKKA](#)). As a result, many children spend lengthy periods in protective custody or in the reception centres at the borders waiting for a place in a shelter appropriate for their age. Others have limited options but to stay in informal housing or risk becoming homeless.

- The situation remains alarming in the reception centres, especially on Lesbos where there are **294 unaccompanied children**; the highest number of children in a reception centre in Greece.
- UNHCR identifies children at risk in the urban setting and provides advice, technical support and trainings to the authorities and actors directly and through its partners.
- An innovation centre run by UNHCR's partner in Athens offers the opportunity to unaccompanied children to overcome their trauma and learn new skills. On the islands, UNHCR helps the authorities to protect children from risk with dedicated learning spaces that also offer legal aid, and psychosocial support.
- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **83 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary facilities in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2019, **353 children** have been transferred.
- UNHCR has developed a scheme for Supported Independent Living where EKKA guardians and dedicated teams help currently **24 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old to become self-reliant and live on their own. UNHCR's programme is expanding to reach more children this year.
- UNHCR transfers boys and girls who turn 18 to apartments in its accommodation scheme which helps free space in shelters for younger children.
- Within the framework of the DUBS' scheme, UNHCR has submitted **76 unaccompanied children** to the United Kingdom for transfer from Greece. Since the beginning of the programme in 2017, **39 children** have departed. UNHCR together with EKKA, the relevant authority and IOM review the best interests and needs of unaccompanied children to identify those best suited to relocate.

#### Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Sexual harassment, violence and abuse, including against men and boys, is a major risk in the reception centres and some mainland sites with poor lighting and few lockable shelters and latrines. There are limited shelters across Greece where women victims could be housed, and no dedicated shelters for men.
- UNHCR works in urban Athens, Thessaly and Thessaloniki as well as some field locations and islands to identify survivors and people at risk, offering legal information, counselling and psychosocial and medical attention.
- UNHCR refers survivors and those at high risk of sexual exploitation to State services and shelters or accommodation in apartments where they can get expert help. Unfortunately, limited interpretation and police officers – especially women – means that refugees cannot always access State services timely.
- UNHCR trains NGOs and authorities on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and works with the refugee communities to raise awareness.

#### Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) (MoE) to ensure that all refugee children go and remain at schools. UNHCR also works with teachers to increase the awareness of pupils about forced displacement and human rights through [experiential learning](#) techniques.

- Approximately **12,480 refugee students** are enrolled in public schools alongside their peers, mostly on mainland Greece (MoE).
- Educational opportunities are slim for the **2,600** children between 5 and 17 years old who live in the reception centres on the islands. UNHCR supports with complementary non-formal educational centres where children can attend language, math and IT classes, as well as get help with their homework.

### Health

- UNHCR works with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) (EODY) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare.
- Disruptions in the provision and staffing of medical and psychosocial services renders the situation very challenging, especially for people on the islands and some mainland camps where there is no EODY presence.
- The limited public mental health institutions in Greece are a particular concern. UNHCR with partners work on ways to link those affected by mental health conditions with public institutions.
- UNHCR funds primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika. There, psychiatrists and psychologists provide services at the polyclinic of the municipality of Athens.

### Durable Solutions

- **5,804** people have **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece in 2019 ([Asylum Service](#)), and a total of **38,032** people since 2015.
- UNHCR is a key partner in the Government's preparations for the implementation of the National Strategy for the integration of refugees and migrants.
- There is a pressing need to support refugees lead a normal life, go to school, get healthcare and earn a living. This requires key documents to access services and national schemes, enable refugees to work and help their eventual integration in the local environment.
- UNHCR's partners support those living in the accommodation scheme access important documents such as a tax and a social insurance number, and with job matching or referral to develop skills, vocational trainings and language courses. Residents are also supported with translation to help them access healthcare and enrol in schools as well as psychosocial, education and legal support.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees – especially those living in sites and reception centres – face difficulties accessing vocational training and gainful employment. Many are not eligible for national social solidarity schemes such as the Social Solidarity Income and the Rental Allowance Scheme as they cannot fulfil some requirements, for example, having a lease in their name.
- In April, **7,035 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and **13,527** received **cash assistance**. Of those in UNHCR's accommodation **93%** have an **AMKA social security number**, **62%** have an **AFM tax number**, and **31%** are registered with **OAED agency**. This facilitates the integration of refugees, yet opening a bank account remains difficult limiting their chances to secure employment.

### Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service to relocate **1,000 asylum-seekers and refugees** to Portugal following an agreement with the Government. The relocation programme of asylum-seekers from Greece to other EU Member States concluded in September 2017. In total **22,000 people** departed.
- This month, **10 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,853 people** in total since 20 March 2016.

### Shelter

- UNHCR donated **24 prefabricated accommodation units** to the Reception and Identification Service to alleviate the difficult housing situation in Skaramangas site.
- UNHCR with partners and in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos, support the site management of Kara Tepe and transit site for new arrivals in Skala Sikamineas providing a set of protection and basic assistance services.

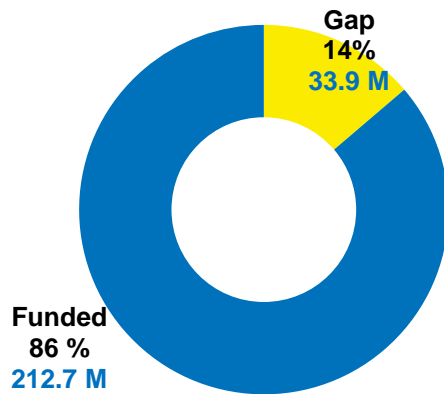
### Partners

In April, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), the [Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [National Confederation of Disabled People \(NCDP\)](#), [Diotima](#), [Faros](#), [KEAN - Cell Of Alternative Youth Activities](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\)](#), [Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network \(TENet\)](#), [UNOPS](#), [Perichoresis](#), [OMNES](#) and the Local Authorities of Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Livadia, Herakleion, Trikala, Nea Filadelfia – Nea Chalkidona, Karditsa, Larissa and Tripoli.

### LINKS

[Mediterranean Situation](#) – [UNHCR Greece](#) – [Twitter](#) – [Facebook](#) - [YouTube](#)

FUNDING (AS OF 07 MAY 2019)

**USD 246.6 M** requested for the Greece Operation

## Donors

### Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Sweden 90.4 M | Norway 44.5 M | Netherlands 37.5 M | United Kingdom 31.7 M | Germany 26.7 M | Private donors Spain 26.3 M | Denmark 24.4 | Switzerland 15.1 M | Private donors Republic of Korea 13.8 M

### Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Austria | Azerbaijan | Belgium | Canada | Estonia | Indonesia | Kuwait | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Peru | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

### Thanks to major donors of situational, thematic, regional, sub-regional funds 2019

United States of America 4.8 M | Private donors Australia 2.5 M | Denmark | European Union | Private donors

### Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 224.7 M | Republic of Korea 500 K

## CONTACTS

**Eleni Biza**, Associate Reporting Officer, Greece

[biza@unhcr.org](mailto:biza@unhcr.org), Tel: +30 216 200 7809, Cell +30 695 558 5567

**Elena Marda**, Liaison Associate, Greece

[marda@unhcr.org](mailto:marda@unhcr.org), Tel: +30 216 200 7855, Cell: +30 695 18 01 242

**Michail Agorastakis**, Information Management Associate, Greece

[agorasta@unhcr.org](mailto:agorasta@unhcr.org), Tel: +30 216 200 7946, Cell +30 695 1941546