

# Greece

Refugee flows were 25 per cent higher this month compared to May **3,200 new arrivals**. **950** people crossed the **land borders** and **3,100** reached the Greek Aegean **islands**.

A **shipwreck** off the eastern coast of Lesvos claimed the **lives of seven people**, including two children. This is the second shipwreck in the Aegean Sea this year, highlighting the need for more **safe legal pathways**.

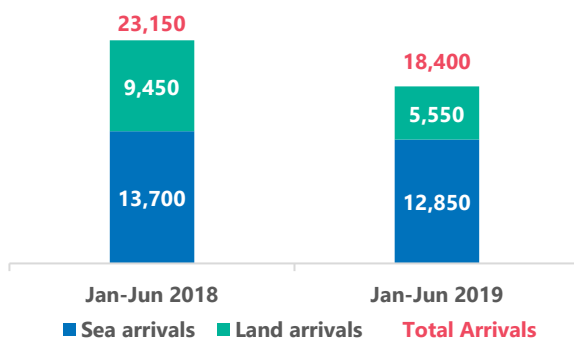
UNHCR honored those risking their lives daily to seek safety on **World Refugee Day**, with **events** that promoted solidarity and commemorated multiculturalism.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

**80,600**

**17,150** on the islands and **63,450** in the mainland

Arrivals



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

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**72,200**

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **120,700** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

**22,200**

people this month, and **58,900** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

## REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**95%** have social security number

**68%** have tax identification number

**61%** children are enrolled in schools

**34%** are registered with unemployment agency

**4%** have a bank account

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

270 National Staff

32 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in  
Thessaloniki, Lesvos

3 Field Offices in Chios,  
Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros,  
Ioannina, Leros,  
Rhodes



In Thessaloniki, volunteers light lanterns and hold a minute's silence on World Refugee Day, in remembrance of the thousands of refugees who have lost their lives on their journey in search of safety. © UNHCR/Elli Delliou

## 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.
- UNHCR works closely with staff from State organizations to prepare for the transition of these programmes to the Greek authorities.
- 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 facilitated. It also helps the integration of those who will remain in Greece. The host population benefits from the **4,418 apartments and 14 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,208 accommodation places** in June.
- In June, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **72,171 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. Cash allows refugees to choose what they need most. It is spent on food, goods and services, and contributes to the local community. In June, more than **7.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- On 11 June, a [shipwreck](#) took place off the eastern coast of Lesbos, claiming the lives of seven refugees, among whom two children. UNHCR provided the survivors accommodation in its apartments and Kara Tepe, psychological support and legal aid.
- Overcrowding in the islands reception centres worsened this month. Inadequate measures for the high temperatures of the season deteriorated the already difficult hygienic and sanitary situation fuelling frustration among refugees. The population on Kos and Leros reached a record high with approximately **3,700** people in a total estimated capacity of **2,000**. Demands for basic assistance items, such as hygiene kits, mattresses and clothes were high as a result of the increased population. Meanwhile, the difficult conditions in the reception centres on Lesbos and Samos persisted, despite governmental efforts to transfer asylum-seekers and refugees to other sites.

- This month, **1,480 people** – **265** of which with UNHCR's support – were transferred by the authorities from the islands to the mainland compared to **2,120** the previous month. They were transferred mostly from **Lesvos (730)** and **Samos (310)**.
- 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.
- The situation is overall better on the mainland, yet certain sites are well-above capacity, often in remote locations with insufficient services.
- Access to the asylum procedure is more difficult for those applying on the mainland while many also wait for two years or more for their asylum interviews. UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who 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 **6,000 instances** in 2019, and **41,330 instances** since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum decisions beyond these instances.
- In total UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **71 experts** to the various Governmental agencies to bolster their response.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and its partners have helped over **6,640 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 [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, **28,000 people** have found information on the website.
- UNHCR marked World Refugee Day this month with various events in collaboration with partners and refugee communities [in Athens](#) and across Greece, including the [Cooking #WithRefugees" festival](#) where Greek chefs and refugee cooks teamed up to serve their favourite dishes in restaurants in Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, and Lesvos island.

### Child Protection

- Age-appropriate shelter is not enough for the **3,835 children** who are alone in Greece. There are only **1,165 such places** and as a result, many unaccompanied or separated children are exposed to risks, including sexual violence and homelessness (EKKA data as of May). In June, UNHCR estimates that **354 unaccompanied children** in Moria awaited their transfer to a shelter.
- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **32 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2019, **412 children** have been transferred.
- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and fosters the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice. UNHCR-run dedicated spaces offer legal and psychosocial support to children at risk on the islands, while a learning centre in Athens offers the opportunity to unaccompanied children to overcome their trauma through innovation and skills building.

- UNHCR works with EKKA guardians providing places in apartments for **24 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and supporting them to be become self-reliant and live on their own.
- Within the framework of the DUBS' scheme, UNHCR has submitted the cases of **84 unaccompanied children** to the United Kingdom for their transfer from Greece. Since the beginning of the programme in 2017, **48 children** have departed. The DUBS' scheme will be completed by the end of July with the submission of **119 cases** of vulnerable children, following review by EKKA, UNHCR and IOM to identify those best suited to relocate.

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

- Prevention and response to SGBV incidents is increasingly challenging, especially on Lesbos and Samos as well as some mainland sites where UNHCR receives more reported incidents. Poor lighting, overcrowding and the few lockable facilities create precarious conditions especially for women and unaccompanied boys and girls. Trafficking and sexual violence are of particular concern, while there is limited housing for women survivors and no dedicated shelter for men survivors.
- UNHCR trains State authorities and NGOs on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and works with the refugee communities to raise awareness on the risks of sexual violence and the existing legal framework.
- UNHCR works to respond to SGBV in urban areas as well as some field locations and islands to identify survivors and people at risk, offering case management, 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.

### Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) (MoE) to prepare children for public school and ensure that all refugee boys and girls attend regularly.
- According to the MoE, some **12,500 refugee students** are enrolled in public schools alongside their peers, the majority on mainland Greece. **61% of refugee children** who live in ESTIA accommodation attend school. Lack of space in classrooms, difficulties with enrolment and transportation are among the most common reasons of school absenteeism.
- Educational opportunities are slim for the **3,050 children** between 5 and 17 years old who live in the reception centres on the islands. UNHCR estimates that most have missed between one and four years of school as a result of war and forced displacement. UNHCR supports children on the islands with non-formal educational centres – such as the one on [Leros](#) – where they can attend language, math and IT classes, as well as get help with their homework.
- UNHCR also works with teachers to increase the awareness of pupils about forced displacement and human rights through [experiential learning](#) techniques.

### Health

- UNHCR works with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) (EODY) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare.
- Forced displacement adds psychological pressure to asylum-seekers and refugees who often have to cope with poor conditions and uncertainty. The lack of psychologists and interpreters renders very difficult the detection and care of asylum-seekers who suffer from non-obvious vulnerabilities, such as people who have survived torture. UNHCR assists in certifying victims of torture, an essential process for their rehabilitation.
- UNHCR funds primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika.

### Durable Solutions

- **8,223** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece in 2019 ([Asylum Service](#)), and a total of **40,452** people since 2015. In June, 13,974 recognized refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **7,371 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR seconds the Government in developing a national strategy on integration.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees – especially those living in sites and reception centres – face difficulties accessing vocational training and gainful employment. Obtaining AMKA and AFM numbers is crucial for asylum-seekers and refugees to seek employment and benefit from health care and social assistance, but it remains problematic in certain regions. This creates additional hurdles to persons with disabilities putting on hold procedures and applications for some benefits.
- 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. Of the recognized refugees living in UNHCR's accommodation, **95%** have an **AMKA social security number**, **68%** have an **AFM tax number**, **34%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency** and **4%** possess a **bank account**.
- This month, UNHCR offered two scholarships for computer literacy in collaboration with [Data Labs](#) lifelong learning centre.

### Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service to relocate **1,000 asylum-seekers and refugees** to Portugal following an agreement with the Government.
- This month, **18 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,885 people** in total since 20 March 2016.

### Shelter

- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,300 vulnerable people or families**, including **730 children**. This contributes to governmental efforts to reduce the population in Moria.

- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesbos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until they authorities assume their reception and identification.

### **Partners**

In June, UNHCR worked through **34 partners**: [ARISIS](#), [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, Tripoli and Tilos.

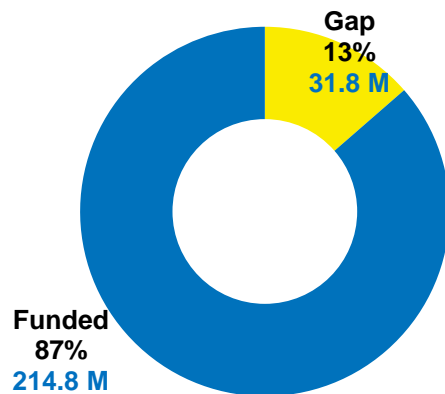
### **LINKS**

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



FUNDING (AS OF 19 JULY 2019)

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



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

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European Union 225.2 M | United States of America 1.2 M | Republic of Korea 500 K | The World We Want Foundation 250 K | Fondation BNP Paribas 112 K

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