

Greece

Almost **5,000** reached the Greek Aegean **islands** this month and **850** people crossed the **land borders**. Refugee flows were 44 per cent higher compared to June's **4,050 new arrivals**.

The recent **freeze of social security numbers issuance** hinders the access of recently arrived asylum-seekers to **healthcare and social services**.

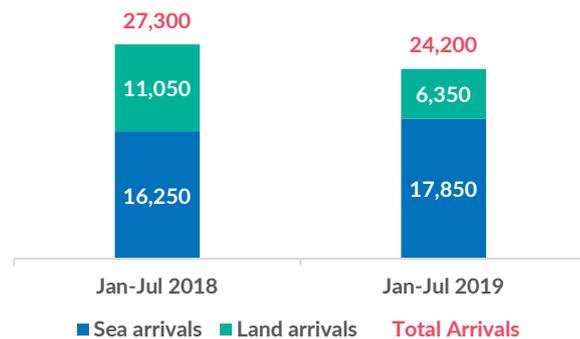
Only **1 in 4 unaccompanied children** have a **place in a shelter**. Since 2017, UNHCR has helped the Government to relocate **53 children** to the UK under the Dubs solidarity scheme.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

84,000

19,900 on the islands and **64,100** in the mainland

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimate as of 31 July 2019 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

72,300

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **124,000** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

21,700

people this month, and **59,400** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

95% have social security number

70% have tax identification number

62% children are enrolled in schools

35% registered with unemployment agency

5% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

277 National Staff

30 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in
Thessaloniki, Lesbos

3 Field Offices in Chios,
Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros,
Ioannina, Leros,
Rhodes



Asylum-seekers face poor conditions in Pyli reception centre in Kos due to overcrowding.

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 **4,426 apartments and 14 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,265 accommodation places** in July.
- In July, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **72,290 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 July, almost **7.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Continuous new arrivals put a strain on the accommodation structures both on the mainland and the islands. The situation further deteriorated in July, particularly on the islands where the highest number of people [arrived](#) since the EU-Turkey statement.
- Transfers to the mainland increased this month, but the impact remained modest as a result of the shortage of accommodation options country-wide. **1,834 people – 301** of which with UNHCR's support – departed from the islands to the mainland compared to **1,476** the previous month. They departed mostly from **Lesvos (1,057)** where the refugee reception centre is more than three times above its estimated capacity (**6,850 people in Moria and 9,100 on the island**).
- As a result of the increased new arrivals, tents in the reception centre on Chios increased by 350%, while on Kos the reception centre is overflowing with many asylum-seekers unable to find shelter within the boundaries of the site. Frequent water cuts coupled with the high temperatures of the season deteriorated the hygiene conditions.

- 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 **7,000 instances** in 2019, and **42,330 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 **69 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, at least **28,000 people** have found information on the website.

Child Protection

- Only one in four unaccompanied or separated children have a place to stay in a shelter appropriate for their age. Many of the **4,129 children** who are alone in Greece are exposed to risks, including sexual violence and homelessness ([EKKA](#) data). In July, there were **847 unaccompanied children** in the reception centres on the islands waiting for their move to one of the dedicated shelters. The majority are found in the reception centres on **Lesvos (497) and Samos (170)** and with some having limited options but to stay among adults in deplorable conditions.
- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **58 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland until their eventual transfer to permanent care structures. In 2019, **470 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 **91 unaccompanied children** to the United Kingdom for their transfer from Greece

following review by EKKA, UNHCR and IOM. Since the beginning of the programme in 2017, **53 children** have departed.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Prevention and response to SGBV incidents is increasingly challenging. Poor lighting, overcrowding and the few lockable facilities create precarious conditions especially for women and unaccompanied boys and girls. Single women and mothers in the islands reception centres face serious security risks as they often have to sleep in pop-up tents or in the open-air.
- 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.

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. **62% of refugee children** who live in ESTIA accommodation attend Greek schools. In Karditsa, UNHCR has created a [non-formal school](#) where more than 50 Arabic-speaking children have the opportunity to learn their mother tongue by refugee volunteer teachers.
- Educational opportunities are slim for the **3,550 children** between 5 and 17 years old who live in the reception centres on the islands.
- 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.
- In many locations, access to healthcare is problematic due to the limited capacity of EODY to cover interpretation needs at the local hospitals. 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](#) data as of June), and a total of **40,452** people since 2015. In July, **13,800 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **7,336 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR seconds the Government in developing a national strategy on integration.
- The issuance of social security number (AMKA) paused this month as a result of the revocation of a Circular Note on AMKA issuance hindering newly arrived asylum-seekers from accessing healthcare and social services. This also impedes access to shelters for homeless and survivors of sexual violence, as well as medical treatment, including for those suffering from chronic diseases. UNHCR raised its concerns with the Government and discussed possible ways to provide medical coverage as soon as possible.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees – especially those living in sites and reception centres – face difficulties engaging in gainful employment. UNHCR's partners support those living in the accommodation scheme 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**, **70%** have an **AFM tax number**, **35%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency** and **5%** possess a **bank account**.

Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR is supporting the national authorities in relocating **1,000 applicants and beneficiaries of international protection** from Greece to Portugal.
- This month, **7 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,892 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 **700 children**. This contributes to governmental efforts to reduce the population in Moria.
- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesvos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until the authorities assume their reception and identification.

Partners

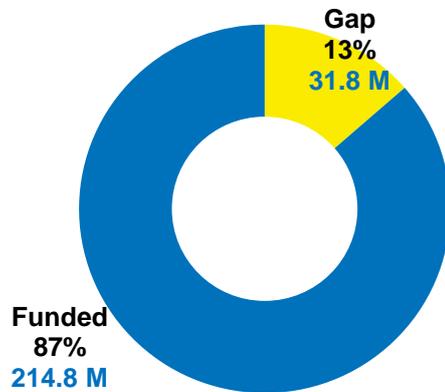
In July, UNHCR worked through **34 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), [the Greek Council for Refugees](#), [the 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, 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



Donors

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