

Greece

The high pace of new arrivals continued this month with **8,300** reaching the **islands** and **1,550** crossing the **land border**. They are mainly **families** with children from **Afghanistan and Syria**.

In his visit to Greece, the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees** urged the Government to take **urgent measures** to address overcrowding on the islands and stressed the need for **European solidarity**.

Harsh weather worsened the already **dire conditions** in the **islands reception centres** where **34,000** asylum-seekers and refugees cram in spaces for 5,400.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

109,000

70,200 in the mainland and **38,800** on the islands

Arrivals



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

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

84,850

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **149,400** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

21,650

people this month, and **63,050** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

96% have social security number (AMKA)

78% have tax identification number (AFM)

89% children enrolled in schools

37% registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

7% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

302 National Staff

29 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



UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi greets a young girl and her father, asylum-seekers living at the Kara Tepe accommodation site in Lesbos.

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 **4,500 apartments and 14 buildings that the programme rents in 21 cities and towns across Greece. UNHCR had 25,700 accommodation places in November.**
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **84,850 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 November, almost **8.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- In his three-day visit to Lesbos and Athens, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi [called](#) for the urgent improvement of living conditions; the tackling of overcrowding on the islands; ensuring an efficient and fair asylum process; and ensuring the protection of unaccompanied children in the country, most of them living in precarious conditions.
- As a result of the heavy rainfalls and winter cold, thousands of asylum-seekers are left with flooded tents and wet belongings at the lack of insulation and water-proof material perpetuating risks to their well-being. All reception centres are heavily overpopulated, especially **Samos (7,000) and Lesbos (16,300)**. Governmental efforts to identify space on mainland Greece are ongoing, but almost all accommodation places across the country are occupied, which makes the transfer of people from the islands more difficult. This month, **5,600** people departed in total. Organized transfers to the mainland reached **4,000 people – 2,700** with the support of UNHCR.
- Relations between the local and the refugee population are increasingly strained, fueled by fatigue and uncertainty over the future. The [Racist Violence Recording](#)

[Network](#) coordinated by UNHCR and the Greek National Commission for Human Rights has witnessed an increasing number of xenophobic and racist incidents, targeting the transfers of asylum-seekers to reception facilities.

- 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.
- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in at least **11,800 instances** in 2019, and **47,130 instances** since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum applications beyond these instances.
- UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **67 experts** to the various State agencies to bolster their response and organizing trainings for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR and its partners have helped over **11,300 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, **44,100 people** searched for information in five languages.

Child Protection

- Living conditions for the **5,300 children** who arrived alone in Greece are critical as only **one in five** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of November). In the reception centres, the **2,340 boys and girls** who are unaccompanied face grave risk of exploitation and abuse. Due to the lack of space, almost half of the **1,150** in Moria are housed in an industrial-like tent or make their own sleeping arrangements. On Samos, 22 unaccompanied girls stay in a container for five people. Their transfer to a shelter suitable for their age is lengthy adding to the hardship of fleeing conflict and prosecution.
- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and supports them with legal aid and psychosocial support through partners and boosts the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice.
- UNHCR, its partner METAdrasi and the Ministry of Labour cooperate through a tripartite agreement for the implementation of the guardianship law. UNHCR deploys **45 guardians** who safeguard the rights and ensure the well-being of **2,190 unaccompanied children** as well as **14 coordination staff** to support the Ministry of Labour.
- In 2019, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi has safely moved over **650 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland.
- UNHCR provides places in supported independent living apartments for some **36 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and empowering them to

become self-reliant and live on their own. For younger children, UNHCR works with foster families to cater to the needs of **30 unaccompanied or separated children**.

- Since the beginning of the Dubs' scheme in 2017, **95 children** departed to the United Kingdom following review by EKKA, UNHCR and IOM, while **24 await their transfer**. UNHCR advocates for the continuation of the program and for additional solidarity measures by other European states.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Prevention and response to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence, is increasingly challenging. With overfilled reception centres and many unlit areas around them, risks are prevalent, especially for single women as well as boys and girls who are unaccompanied. In the urban centres, there is a notable increase of survivors who are homeless risking further abuse and exploitation.
- 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 through partners. 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 include and prepare refugee boys and girls for public school.
- This month, preparatory classes and kindergartens for refugee children in accommodation started across the country; a positive development for the participation of refugee children in schools. In the current school year, **89 per cent of refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation were enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. Nonetheless, not all have [access to education](#), especially the **8,000 school-aged** children who live at the moment in the reception centres on the islands.
- UNHCR's bridging education centres on the islands and Athens offer opportunities for learning, skills-building as well as legal and psychosocial support to children at risk. This month, UNHCR gave **1,000 school bags** to refugee children attending classes.
- UNHCR also works with teachers and students to foster coexistence, increase awareness about forced displacement and human rights and support the inclusion of refugee students in school 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, also in coordination with the [World Health Organization](#).
- Asylum-seekers may now have access to medical services with a new temporary health card, however full implementation of this provision falls short. EODY's staffing capacity was overall reinforced, but the reception centres on the islands and Evros

continue to lack doctors and interpreters – both a major obstacle to the provision of medical services and psychosocial support.

- UNHCR supports primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesbos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki.

Durable Solutions

- In 2019, **16,000** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece, and **48,200** people since 2015 ([Asylum Service](#) data as of November). In November, **15,300 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **7,200 beneficiaries of international protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR supports the Government in promoting the national strategy on integration.
- 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, **96% have an AMKA number, 78% have an AFM tax number, and 37% are registered with OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **7% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.

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, **25 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with a total of **1,975 people** since 20 March 2016.

Shelter

- This month, UNHCR provided to the authorities **13,500 core relief items** for new arrivals, including blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene items, as well as wheelchairs and crutches for persons with disabilities or other mobility problems.
- UNHCR helped the authorities to improve reception conditions for new arrivals and people living in mainland sites by delivering **five industrial-size tents** that can house **300 people** and providing beds and solar street lights.
- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesbos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to vulnerable people or families.
- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesbos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay overnight in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until the authorities are ready to receive them in the reception and identification centre.

Partners

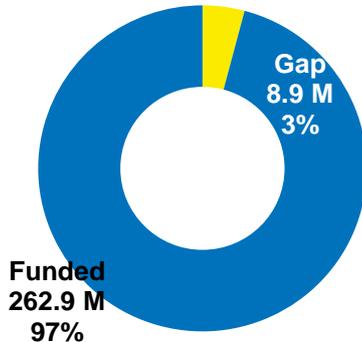
In November, UNHCR worked through **35 partners**: UNICEF, ARSIS, Iliaktida, INTERSOS, NOSTOS, Praxis, Solidarity Now, Catholic Relief Services, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, METAdrasi, the Greek Council for Refugees, the Network for Children's Rights, Doctors of the World, the Association for Regional Development and Mental Health (EPAPSY), 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, Kyclos 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 9 DECEMBER 2019)

USD 271.8 M requested for the Greece Operation



Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Sweden 99.8 M | Private donors Spain 73.8 M | United Kingdom 44.6 M | Norway 44.5 M | Netherlands 43.1 M | Private donors Republic of Korea 37.9 M | Germany 26.7 M | Japan 25.7 M | Denmark 24.4 M | Private donors Japan 20.5 M | Private donors Italy 17.5 M | Switzerland 15.1 M | France 14 M | Private donors Sweden 12.3 M | Private donors USA 11.7 M | Ireland 10.2 M | Italy 10 M

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Austria | Azerbaijan | Belgium | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Islamic Republic of Pakistan | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Peru | Philippines | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

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

United States of America 15.9 M | Private donors Australia 12.5 M | Private donors Republic of Korea 2.6 M | Canada 2.3 M | Denmark | Liechtenstein | Norway | Private donors

Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 252 M | Education Cannot Wait 1.4 M | United States of America 1.2 M | Republic of Korea 500 K | The World We Want Foundation 125 K | Fondation BNP Paribas 112 K

CONTACTS

Eleni Biza, Associate Reporting Officer, Greece

biza@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7809, Cell: +30 695 558 5567

Elena Marda, Liaison Associate, Greece

marda@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7855, Cell: +30 695 18 01 242

Michail Agorastakis, Information Management Associate, Greece

agorasta@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7946, Cell: +30 695 1941546