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.

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

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

109,000
70,200 in the mainland and 38,800 on the islands

Arrivals

Jan-Nov 2018
Sea arrivals 46,550
Land arrivals 29,550
Total Arrivals 76,050
Jan-Nov 2019
Sea arrivals 17,000
Land arrivals 36,950
Total Arrivals 54,950

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:
302 National Staff
29 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

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