

# Greece

**Arrivals** were very low this month compared to the past years with fewer than **100 people arriving** in April. UNHCR has **protected 867 people** at risk of COVID-19 complications who were living in dire conditions in island centres, by moving

them in safer accommodation. Greece **relocated** the first **59 unaccompanied** children to Germany and Luxembourg, with the support of UNHCR, IOM, EASO and the European Commission. Such efforts are crucial as shelters are limited.

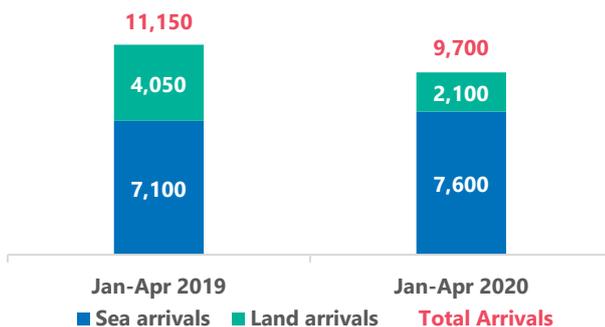
UNHCR also assists the Greek Government's response to **COVID-19** by increasing **health** facilities and asylum-seekers' access to clean **water** and adequate **information**.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

# 121,000

**82,700** in the mainland and **38,300** on the islands

### Arrivals



\*UNHCR estimate as of 30 April 2020 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

# 96,700

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **178,200** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

# 22,400

people this month, and **66,950** since January 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

## PEOPLE IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**72%** have access to healthcare (AMKA or PAAYPA)

**72%** children enrolled in schools

**59%** have tax identification number (AFM)

**23%** registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

**4%** have a bank account

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

309 National Staff

32 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



Refugees arrive at the village of Skala Sikamineas, in the north of the Greek island of Lesbos, after crossing the sea on a dinghy from Turkey.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece which 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

### COVID-19 Prevention and Response

- UNHCR [helps](#) the Greek Government's prevention and response to COVID-19 in the island reception centres by increasing water and sanitation capacity, providing core relief and hygiene items, installing health units for screening and isolation, distributing additional cash assistance, facilitating access to information through helplines and interpreters and enhancing its coordination role with UN agencies, NGOs and authorities.
- UNHCR protects the population at high risk of COVID-19 complications in the island reception centres – where it is difficult to apply social distancing measures. Since mid-March UNHCR has moved **867 people** to hotels and ESTIA apartments.
- On the islands and in Evros, UNHCR provided **15 medical units** for screening, isolation and **35 portable WASH units**, including chemical toilets and hand washing stations. UNHCR donated **58 toilet and shower containers** in support of reception conditions in mainland sites.
- UNHCR provided to **31,560 people** on the islands one-off additional cash assistance through pre-paid cash cards to purchase hygiene products. UNHCR also offered **75,500 hygiene items** such as soap and baby care kits and **18,000 core relief items**, such as blankets and sleeping bags to those in reception centres.
- UNHCR facilitates access to quality information for asylum-seekers via helplines, interpretation, the [HELP](#) website, [podcasts](#), [radio spots](#), [a YouTube channel](#), and is mobilising refugee communities to offer help to residents in the island reception centres. Some **24,000 people** visited the HELP website this month, a 209 per cent increase compared to March.
- UNHCR distributed additional cash assistance through pre-paid cash cards to help **91,870 people** cover their connectivity needs and get online access to information and messaging on hygiene and other COVID-19 preventive measures.
- With the closure of public schools, UNHCR adapted its learning programmes for children who were enrolled in the non-formal educational centres offering self-learning packages with exercises and recreational material which children can do while sheltering in place.

### 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 agencies 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 and helps the integration of those who will remain in Greece. The host population also benefits from the **4,600 apartments and eight buildings** that the programme rents in **21 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,500 accommodation places** this month.
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **96,700 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 April, more than **9.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- A new draft law was submitted to the Greek Parliament this month introducing stricter procedural guarantees and extending the practice of detention. UNHCR is concerned about the additional requirements for an appeal to be admissible and the lack of adequate access to free legal aid for all who request it, among other issues.
- Housing options and services to cater for the present population remained limited countrywide, while **33,200 people** on the islands continued to crowd in spaces for less than 5,400.
- Transfers from the islands to the mainland help liberate much-needed space in the reception centres. This month, UNHCR supported some **1,100 organized transfers**. In total, **1,150 people departed** to the mainland.
- UNHCR's team at the land border in Evros, helps those arriving at the Fylakio reception centre, such as families and unaccompanied children, to access necessary services, provides information and helps the authorities identify those with specific needs who require special assistance.
- UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **71 experts** to the various State agencies to bolster their response and by organizing trainings for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who advise the caseworkers upon request on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in approximately **4,500 instances in 2020, and 52,600 since 2016**. This work has multiplying benefits beyond these instances promoting high quality in asylum processing and ensuring the integrity of the procedure.
- From the beginning of 2020, UNHCR and its partners have helped over **4,400 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation in order to prepare and support their cases, as for example for family reunification procedures.

- UNHCR [HELP website](#) answers questions in seven languages on [how to apply for asylum](#), on [rights and obligations](#), and on accessing services when [living in Greece](#).

### Child Protection

- With **5,100 children** alone in Greece, only **one in four** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of April). As a result, their well-being and safety are at-risk, especially on the islands where living conditions are trying. This month, serious violent incidents involving children took place, including the fatal stabbing of an unaccompanied boy in Moria on Lesbos.
- 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.
- Since January 2020, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi safely moved **130 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland.
- UNHCR provides places in [semi-independent living apartments](#) for **44 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and empowering them to become self-reliant and to live on their own. For younger children, UNHCR works with foster families to cater to the needs of **30 unaccompanied or separated children**.

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

- Lack of privacy, inadequate lighting and long distance to toilets and showers foster risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the sites.
- UNHCR and its partners work to prevent and respond to SGBV in urban areas as well as some field locations and islands to identify [survivors](#), including men and LGBTI persons, as well as people at risk, offering case management, legal information, counselling and psychosocial and medical attention through partners. UNHCR refers those affected to State services and shelters or accommodation in apartments where they can get expert help.
- UNHCR supports the authorities strengthen the national reporting mechanism on trafficking, especially on the islands where the situation is more challenging.

### Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) to include refugee boys and girls in public education.
- In the current school year, **81% of recognised refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation are enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. UNHCR estimates that **10,800 school-aged children** (4-17) are on the Aegean islands, while only a handful attend public schools.
- UNHCR joins forces with teachers and students to increase awareness on 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, also in coordination with the [World Health Organization](#).
- The issuance of a new temporary health number (PAAYPE), which replaces the older AMKA social security number for asylum-seekers, largely allows asylum-seekers to obtain free healthcare. However, due to technical complications this measure is not implemented in practice. Amidst COVID-19, those with serious medical conditions faced difficulties in obtaining medication.
- UNHCR supports primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki. UNHCR works with experts to train and build the skills of non-specialist refugees to offer basic psychosocial support and empower vulnerable refugees, including those with mental health conditions.

### Durable Solutions

- Since 2013, **54,300** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece, of which **1,500** in February ([Asylum Service](#) data as of February). In April, **12,750 recognised** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **6,550 beneficiaries of international protection** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- 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 recognised refugees living in UNHCR's accommodation, **94% have an AMKA social security number, 78% have an AFM tax number, and 36%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **8% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.
- UNHCR supports the Government promote the national strategy on integration and supports the Municipalities to establish more inclusive services.
- UNHCR also supports refugees navigate the Greek civil, social and economic system and access much needed documents, such as travel papers, and family certificates. This helps refugees become self-reliant, have gainful employment and eventually be included in the Greek society. More language classes and job trainings for adults can further help refugees to integrate.
- This month, UNHCR joined forces with IOM and Athens Municipality in supporting the "Cities Network for Integration", an initiative aiming at enhancing municipalities' cooperation towards the effective inclusion and self-reliance of recognised refugees through technical assistance, tools and resources.

### Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Greek Government in its efforts to secure relocation places for unaccompanied children, as well as asylum-seekers and recognised refugees more broadly to other European States and offers advice and technical support.
- Ten European States have pledged to [relocate 1,600 unaccompanied children](#). The [first group](#) of **59 children** from Lesvos, Samos and Chios departed to Germany and Luxembourg. UNHCR and its partners, in coordination with IOM, supported the authorities in the identification and selection of children according to their best interests as well as with their transportation to the mainland for their eventual departure.

- This month, **no people** were [returned](#) from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with a total of **2,054 people** returned since 20 March 2016.

#### **Shelter and Basic Assistance**

- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,100 vulnerable people or families**.

#### **Partners**

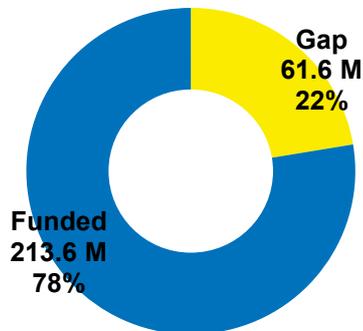
In April, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [UNICEF](#), [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praksis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), the [Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [Diotima](#), [Faros](#), [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 10 JUNE 2020)**

**USD 275.4 M** requested for the Greece Operation



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