

# Greece

Arrivals remained low this month with **288 people having reached Greece**, mostly Lesbos. UNHCR has **protected 1,124 people** at risk of COVID-19 complications moving them in safe accommodation.

**A new asylum law** was voted this month. UNHCR remains **concerned** over the **reduction of safeguards** for the sake of speediness and **stresses** the need for an **asylum procedure fast but also fair**.

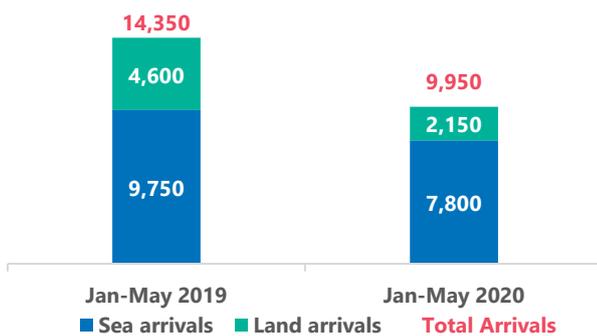
UNHCR has delivered **15 medical units**, **132,000 hygiene** products and **71,000** items of **protective equipment** for front-line workers to help Greece mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

**121,500**

**84,500** in the mainland and **37,000** on the islands

Arrivals



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

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**98,100**

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **180,300** since May 2017 received **cash assistance**.

**22,800**

people this month, and **67,450** since January 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

## PEOPLE IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**71%** children enrolled in schools

**70%** have access to healthcare (AMKA or PAAYPA)

**58%** have tax identification number (AFM)

**24%** registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

**5%** have a bank account

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

312 National Staff

31 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 assists Greece to increase access to clean water for asylum-seekers in the reception centre on Chios island.

## 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 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 **1,124 people** to hotels and ESTIA apartments.
- On the islands and in Evros, UNHCR has provided **15 medical units** for screening and isolation as well as **150 portable units** for hygiene and sanitation, including chemical toilets, showers and hand washing stations.
- UNHCR has provided over **132,000 hygiene items** such as soap and baby care kits, **38,500 core relief items**, such as blankets and sleeping bags, as well as more than **71,000 personal protective equipment** for front-line workers.
- 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.
- Non-formal education centres adapted to the COVID-19 situation largely reopened this month, following also the re-opening of public schools. UNHCR and partners ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped, distances are observed, and children can learn in a safe environment.

### 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 **98,100 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 May, more than **9.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- The Greek Parliament adopted a new law on asylum and migration this month. UNHCR presented its comments – which are available [here](#) and [here](#) – noting that the essence of previous legislation has not changed. UNHCR takes positive note of some important improvements brought on procedural aspects following public consultation, including with [UNHCR](#). UNHCR had expressed serious reservations that, for the sake of speediness, procedural safeguards were being dangerously and significantly reduced, while an asylum procedure should not only be fast but also fair. UNHCR is also 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.
- Reception centres remain overcrowded and poorly serviced with over **31,600 people** in spaces for almost 5,500. Security has deteriorated, especially in Moria on Lesbos where violent incidents have become more frequent. Police officers, especially women, are not sufficient leaving many, especially children, exposed to risks.
- Transfers from the islands to the mainland help liberate much-needed space in the reception centres. This month, UNHCR supported some **1,800 organized transfers**.
- 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 **5,438 instances in 2020, and 53,569 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 **4,900 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 close to **4,900 children** alone in Greece, only **one in four** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of May). As a result, their well-being and safety are at-risk, especially on the islands where living conditions are trying.
- 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. This month, UNHCR and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) trained **200 front-line workers** on how to assess the best interest of a child; a critical step for relocation processes, among other.
- Since January 2020, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi safely moved **141 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, 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.
- The pandemic and containment measures further foment the risk of SGBV and UNHCR piloted – through its partner – an online help desk to provide easier and instant help to information and available services.
- 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, **80% of recognized refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation are enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. UNHCR estimates that **9,500 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. This month, teenage refugees and asylum-seekers had the opportunity to develop 'quarantine monologues' during a series of creative writing workshops.

### 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](#).
- Access to medical treatment and essential medication is hindered for many asylum-seekers mainly due to the pending issuance of the limited capacity of EODY staff and the temporary health number (PAAYPA) which, in principle, allows asylum-seekers to obtain free healthcare.
- 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 ([Asylum Service](#) data as of February). In May, **14,350 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **6,600 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, **93% have an AMKA social security number, 78% have an AFM tax number, and 36%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **10% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.
- UNHCR supports the Government and Municipalities to ensure that recognized refugees get adequate support in their ongoing transition to self-reliance.
- UNHCR also helps refugees navigate the Greek civil, social and economic system and access much needed documents, such as travel papers and family certificates. These are necessary for refugees to find gainful employment and eventually be included in the Greek society. More language classes and job trainings for adults can accelerate refugees' integration.
- This month, UNHCR and the [Municipality of Ioannina](#) strengthened their collaboration through a Memorandum of Cooperation for the promotion of integration and coexistence.

### Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Greek Government in its efforts to secure relocation places for unaccompanied children, as well as asylum-seekers and recognized refugees more broadly to other European States and offers advice and technical support.
- So far, **59 unaccompanied children** have relocated to Luxembourg and Germany. UNHCR and its partners, in coordination with IOM, UNICEF and EASO, 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 **1,000 vulnerable people or families**.

### Partners

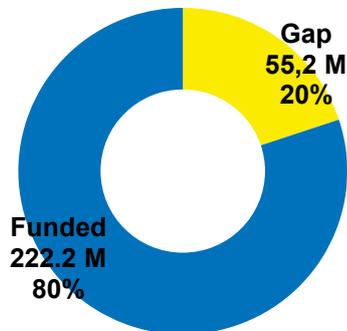
In May, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [UNICEF](#), [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), the [Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [Diotima](#), [Faros](#), [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 1 JULY 2020)**

**USD 277.4 M** requested for the Greece Operation



## Donors

### Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2020

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### Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2020

European Union 225.5 M (incl. firm projections) | United States of America 1.9 M | Education Cannot Wait 1.4 M | Austria 1.1 M | European Economic Area 609 K | Switzerland 782 K (firm projection) | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe 546 | Deutsche Postcode Lotterie 326 K | Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 200 K | The World We Want Foundation 125 K | Laboratorios Viñas 108 K | Norway 105 K | Liechtenstein Flüchtlingshilfe 102 K

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