

# Greece

Refugee flows increased by 60 per cent this month. Over **7,700** reached the Greek Aegean **islands** and **1,600** people crossed the **land** borders, mostly Afghans and Syrians.

While **islands' reception centres** are intended to host 5,400 people, the increase brought the population to **20,500**, placing in particular risk **the 1,180 unaccompanied children** amongst them.

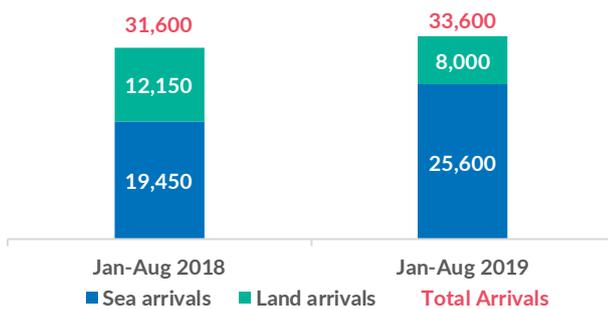
The death of a 15-year old boy in Moria **stressed the need** for measures to protect the **4,393 unaccompanied** children in Greece, including with relocation to other European States.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

# 88,750

**25,250** on the islands and **63,500** in the mainland

### Arrivals



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

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

# 74,350

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **128,600** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

# 21,600

people this month, and **60,200** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

## REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**95%** have social security number

**72%** have tax identification number

**64%** children are enrolled in schools

**35%** registered with unemployment agency

**6%** have a bank account

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

276 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



A refugee woman at the Pyli reception centre on the island of Kos.

## 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 **4,442 apartments and 15 buildings** that the programme rents in **21 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,265 accommodation places** in August.
- In August, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **74,350 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 August, almost **7.6 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- Accommodation capacity country-wide has reached its limit restraining options for the decongestion of the islands where some **20,500**, including families with children and vulnerable people, live under poor conditions in the reception centres. The situation on mainland sites is overall better, yet asylum-seekers often lack access to essential social and healthcare services.
- On 29 August, a total of **646 people** reached the shores of Lesbos in one day, with 13 boats arriving simultaneously. With Moria reception centre heavily overcrowded, UNHCR accommodated overnight 353 people in its transit site and provided blankets, food and water during their stay until they were moved to Moria for registration by the authorities. As a response, the Government announced a large-scale transfer to Nea Kavala site and UNHCR donated 200 family tents suitable for temporary accommodation.
- In August, transfers to the mainland reached a total of **852 people** – **542** of which with the joint support of the Reception and Identification Service and UNHCR to mainland sites and **306** with UNHCR's support to apartments.

- The recent increase of [sea arrivals](#) has put a strain on the already overflowing reception centres, especially on the islands. **Samos (4,197)**, **Lesvos (10,300)** and **Kos (2,481)** operate six, five and four times above their estimated capacity of 700, 2,150 and 700 respectively. Thousands stay in rickety tents with inadequate access to sanitation. In Evros, half of the population in the reception centre (**375**) is unaccompanied children (**150**).
- 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.
- 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 **8,333 instances** in 2019, and **43,663 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 **67 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

- In Greece, only one in four has a place in a shelter and many of the **4,393 children** who are alone are exposed to risks, including sexual violence and homelessness ([EKKA](#) data). Arrangements for unaccompanied children in the reception centres remain woefully inadequate and the grim living conditions further exacerbate the well-being of **1,182 unaccompanied or separated children** in the reception centres who often have limited options but to share their space with adults until they get transferred to a shelter appropriate for their age and needs.
- A 15-year-old Afghan boy was killed and two other teenage boys injured after a fight broke out on 24 August at the Moria reception centre on Lesvos. A teenager, also from Afghanistan, was arrested by police in connection with the violence. UNHCR [urged](#) the Government to transfer unaccompanied children to safe shelters and end overcrowding. In Evros, unaccompanied children protested against their lengthy stay. On Samos, girls have to sleep in shifts due to lack of space, while most of the boys resort to the roof of the containers due to the heat.
- UNHCR's partner METAdrasi accompanied and helped transfer a total of **480** unaccompanied children from reception centres to temporary shelters on the

mainland. UNHCR works with EKKA guardians to provide places in apartments for **32 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and supporting them to become self-reliant and live on their own.

- Within the framework of the Dubs scheme, UNHCR has submitted the cases of **119 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, **70 children** have departed.
- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and fosters the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice.

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

- Prevention and response to SGBV incidents, including domestic violence, is increasingly challenging in the island hotspots. 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.
- [Access to education](#) for all refugee children is not secured despite efforts by the Government for their inclusion into the public system. **64 per cent of refugee children** who live in ESTIA accommodation attended public schools in the previous school year, but three out of four of the **4,656 school-aged** refugee children in the reception centres did not have this opportunity.
- UNHCR's non-formal education centres on the islands and Athens offer opportunities for learning, skills-building as well as legal and psychosocial support to children at risk.
- UNHCR also works with teachers and students to increase awareness about forced displacement and human rights and to 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.
- EODY's medical teams remain understaffed across the islands widening the gap in the process of medical registration, vulnerability assessment as well as primary and mental healthcare. The lack of psychologists and interpreters make it difficult to detect and care of asylum-seekers who suffer from non-obvious vulnerabilities, as for instance 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 Lesbos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki.

### Durable Solutions

- **9,731** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece in 2019 ([Asylum Service](#) data as of July), and a total of **41,960** people since 2015. In August, **13,900 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **7,350 beneficiaries of international protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR supports the Government in promoting the national strategy on integration.
- The persisting freeze in issuing social security numbers (AMKA) impacts negatively access to healthcare, welfare and social services, including those who need treatment for chronic or grave diseases. It also impedes homeless and survivors of sexual violence from accessing shelters and medical treatment. UNHCR has alerted the Government and advocates for the establishment of an efficient procedure for the issuance of AMKA to all asylum-seekers and refugees in the country.
- 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 number, 72% have an AFM tax number, 35% are registered with OAED unemployment agency**. However only **6% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary or applying for any state benefit.

### 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, **15 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,907 people** in total since 20 March 2016.

### Shelter

- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesbos – 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 Lesbos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until the authorities are ready to receive them in the reception and identification centre.

### Partners

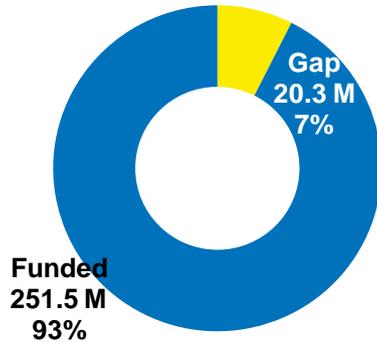
In August, UNHCR worked through **34 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), the [Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [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](#), [UNICEF](#) 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 SEPTEMBER 2019)**

**USD 271.8 M** requested for the Greece Operation



## Donors

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### Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

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