



## HIGHLIGHTS

**26,160**

People benefitted from alternatives to camps in UNHCR accommodation since the beginning of the programme

**20,962**

People benefitted from cash assistance through UNHCR and UNHCR-funded partners in February

**19,314**

UNHCR accommodation places currently active as alternatives to camps

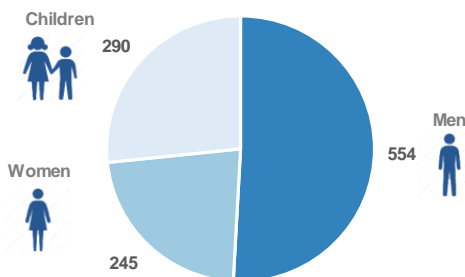
**1,581**

Asylum-seekers transferred from the islands to improved accommodation on the mainland in state-run sites or UNHCR accommodation this month

### Arrivals in February 2017

Some **1,089** sea arrivals

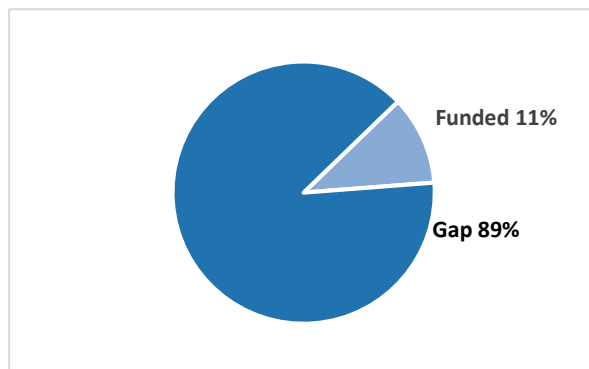
Age and Gender (February 2017)



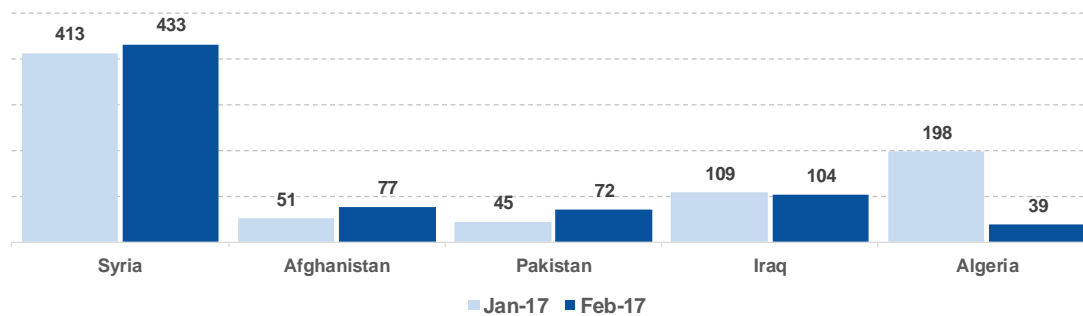
Source: Hellenic Police.

### Funding

**USD 246 million** requested



### Top nationalities of arrivals in Greece



Source: Hellenic Police.

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

- The cold weather persisted across Greece this month and humanitarian actors continued to work on improving the living conditions of refugees and migrants in the islands and the mainland. At the same time, they started systematizing their approach towards longer term solutions. In this line, UNHCR supported the Greek Government in providing accommodation for vulnerable asylum-seekers, and took the first steps with partners to systematize Cash Assistance in Greece.
- According to the Greek Government some 62,313 refugees and migrants were in Greece in February, including in UNHCR-funded accommodation. Out of those, 47,837 were in the mainland and 14,476 in the Aegean islands. UNHCR has been collecting population figures for planning purposes and has a lower estimate of the number of refugees and migrants in the country, which have been shared with the authorities.
- In February, there were an estimated 1,089 sea arrivals on the Aegean Islands, a decrease from January's 1,393 sea arrivals.
- UNHCR supported the Greek Government in its efforts to provide better shelter, which included upgrading camps to make them ready for winter and transferring vulnerable people to accommodation in apartments and hotels. In February alone, UNHCR helped some 1,611 people, amongst them the most vulnerable, move to improved accommodation.
- By the end of February, UNHCR had assisted authorities transfer over 6,000 people from the Greek Islands to improved shelter on the mainland, and to UNHCR's Relocation and Accommodation Scheme since the beginning of the programme in June 2016.
- By the end of February a total of 26,160 people had benefited from UNHCR's Accommodation and Services Scheme since the beginning of the programme. A total of 19,314 places were available in apartments (11,250) and buildings (1,814), hotels (5,142), host family programme (372) and facilities for unaccompanied children (732) in line with UNHCR's out-of-camp policy to accommodate people out of sites, and in apartments were they can enjoy better conditions and better access to services. The number of places in hotels is progressively reducing in favor of more cost-effective and sustainable accommodation in apartments.
- The Greek authorities, UNHCR and partners continued to evacuate unsuitable sites and move people to improved shelter. A number of sites were fully evacuated as they were deemed unsuitable, such as Larisa Kypselohori, Oreokastro Fessas, Karamanlis, Illiadi Kalochori, Frakaport, Cherso, Tsepelovo. Other sites like Agios Andreas, Skafidia, Pelopio, Thiva, Kavala, Stylida, Drama, Serres, Ktima Irakli, Vagiochori, Katsikas, Agia Eleni are either planned for renovation but not yet completed or have closed temporarily to reopen after renovation. The plans for the opening of new sites might change in view of the lower population.
- UNHCR completed infrastructural work in 15 sites in the mainland assigned by the Government for winter preparedness, and continued to improve accommodation in seven islands. UNHCR had installed 924 prefabricated containers by mid-February around Greece. In the North, UNHCR assisted transfer people to better accommodation, which ameliorated the conditions in formerly overcrowded sites.
- UNHCR's infrastructural interventions ranged from upgrading the electrical supply and heating, to providing communal spaces and equipping them with appliances such as washing machines and fridges in sites like Elefsina, Elaionas and Thermopiles. UNHCR also worked to connect sites to the electrical grid, as for example in Nea Kavala where 174 prefabricated containers accessed electricity.
- In Lesbos, in response to the harsh winter conditions, UNHCR moved all families out of individual tents into alternative shelter on the island and the mainland. In the first week of February alone, UNHCR had supported the move of nearly 800 people. As an emergency measure, the Greek Government also provided a navy vessel where over 170 people found temporary refuge from the cold. Following a request by the authorities, UNHCR installed 13 two-storey and four single-storey houses this month.
- Still in Lesbos, UNHCR worked with the Hellenic Army to complete infrastructural works at RIC Moria. Partners Samaritan's Purse and the Danish Red Cross distributed bunk beds, mattresses, blankets, sleeping bags, and other non-food items. At the Government's request, UNHCR assisted the accommodation of 214 people at the nearby Olive Grove site, temporarily until construction was completed at RIC Moria. This involved preparatory groundwork and the provision of one large Rubb Hall and 14 family tents through UNHCR's partner Samaritan's Purse. UNHCR and partners also undertook infrastructural work in Kara Tepe



Refugees given homes in Livadia, Greece

to receive population from RIC Moria. This included installing some 180 prefabricated containers, constructing a new WASH bloc, solar panels and electrical devices, heaters and solar lamps.

- In Samos, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Migration Policy in transferring people to appropriate shelter on the island and the mainland as part of the effort to reduce the overpopulation of the site. Despite a significant reduction of people in camping tents and improvements in hygiene conditions, about 700 people continued to live in unheated accommodation at the beginning of the month. UNHCR and partners (IRC) undertook infrastructural works and improved the conditions by replacing tents with 'Life-shelters'.
- UNHCR directly and through partners **distributed over 14,850 Non-food and Core Relief Items** in February 2017. In the islands, this included 7,256 non-food items in Lesvos, 2,078 aid items in Leros, 1,813 aid items in Kos, and 1,036 in Rhodes. In the mainland, UNHCR and DRC distributed winter clothing to 336 residents in the site of Thermopiles, and 4,005 blankets in Oinofyta, as well as hygiene kits in Trikala. This was part of the countrywide distribution of winter items started in 2016.
- In the North of Greece, UNHCR supported refugees to access the Asylum Service for their registration by providing transportation between the sites and the Asylum Services offices. In February 2017, UNHCR had provided transportation to some 5,500 individuals residing in sites in the North.

## Cash Based Intervention (CBI)

- In February, the Greek Government, UNHCR and partners began redesigning the provision of services to asylum-seekers with the aim of supporting their longer term integration and self-reliance. As part of this effort, the Greek Government, UNHCR and partners made the first steps towards systematizing cash assistance in Greece. Until then, assistance was provided in various amounts and modalities, including cash cards and vouchers.
- In February, UNHCR and partners started forming the Greece Cash Alliance (GCA). The GCA is conceived as a joint action between seven agencies led by UNHCR (IRC, IFRC, Mercy Corps, CRS, Samaritan's Purse and Care International) to ensure that all eligible asylum-seekers in Greece continue to receive monthly cash assistance. This joint action intends to have one database (UNHCR's ProGres database), one service provider and one card. The completion of the roll out of the programme will take several months.
- In February, UNHCR started preparatory work with the verification of eligible asylum-seekers living in selected UNHCR Accommodation hotels and apartments. UNHCR provided eligible asylum-seekers with UNHCR cards, thus establishing the foundation for the gradual implementation of the 'one-card' and the Greece Cash Alliance.
- UNHCR distributed 518 cash cards, benefitting 2,642 people. This included the first-time distribution on the islands of Lesvos, Kos and Leros. UNHCR also made the first monthly payments on UNHCR cards to people in accommodation in Northern Greece. In February, UNHCR paid directly 585 cards benefitting 1,718 people, and paid indirectly through its partners Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Samaritan's Purse (SP) 7,935 cards, benefitting 19,244 people. In total, UNHCR provided cash assistance directly and through partners to 20,962 people in February.



Cash cards are an invaluable lifeline for Syrian refugees in Greece

## Food Security and Nutrition

- In preparation of transitioning to a Cash Based Intervention in Greece, UNHCR analyzed the WASH and electricity capacity of sites in the mainland to assess the feasibility of installing kitchens. This would allow asylum-seekers to provide their self-catering. This assessment was carried out in close cooperation with all actors present in the sites performing Site Management Support functions.
- UNHCR and partners worked closely with the Greek Government to assess the cost of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB). The MEB is an estimate of how much cash assistance asylum-seekers would need to cover their basic needs, such as nutrition, hygiene, and communications to stay in touch with their family members abroad. The MEB amount is also in line with the Greek welfare system and the amounts the State provides to poor Greek families.

## INTER-AGENCY RESPONSE

- In Greece, 70 sectoral Working Groups (WGs) at the national and field level ensure coordination between actors. There are currently 14 sectoral WGs and sub-WGs at the national level coordinated and supported by UNHCR and by national and international NGOs, other UN Agencies and governmental institutions. Representatives from the national authorities are participating or co-chairing most working groups.
- The Sectoral WGs are Protection, Child Protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Communication with Communities (CwC), Cash, NFI, Site Management Support (SMS), Health & Nutrition, Education, Shelter & WASH, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Inter-Agency Consultation Forum and the Inter-Sector WG. The total number of partners in UNHCR coordination meetings is 106.
- Coordination at the site level is optimized through site meetings, where the site managers and partners discuss key multi-sectoral issues. In the islands, the local authorities, mainly from the Municipalities and the Reception and Identification Service (RIS), are chairing or participating in the general coordination meetings, along with the local and international NGOs and volunteers in Lesbos, Chios and Leros.

## MAINLAND AND AEGEAN ISLANDS RESPONSE

### Protection

- In February, **UNHCR issued eight recommendations for authorities in Greece**, the EU and Member States, to address the existing gaps in refugee protection in Greece. UNHCR called for authorities to 1) ensure capacity to register and process asylum claims; 2) immediately address serious gaps in the islands; 3) put in place a plan for sustainable and adequate reception system on the mainland; 4) provide adequate care for children; 5) prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV); 6) improve coordination and establish clear responsibilities; 7) increase the pace and number of people relocated and reunited with family members in other countries; 8) work towards self-reliance and integration.
- Since 2017, the number of places pledged by the EU Member States for relocation from Greece and the actual number of departure is rapidly increasing. In the entire 2016, the number of pledges recorded were 1,017, with 607 departures per month. In January and February 2017, these figures increased to 1,581 and 1,168 each, an increase of 92% and 55%. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a total of 7,286 persons left Greece through the relocation scheme in 2016. By February 2017, a total of 9,606 persons had left Greece.
- In February, a growing concern for UNHCR and partners was the increasing number of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) in shelters exhibiting extreme violent behavior. Possibly in response to the uncertainty of their future, or as a result of underlying mental health issues, it nevertheless highlighted systemic gaps in the national mental health services, and the need for specialized staff. UNHCR, Governmental agencies and NGOs set up an Alternative Care Task Force to propose solutions.
- There were positive steps in the integration of refugees, as the Greek Government included refugees and migrants in its new 'Social Solidarity Income programme'. The programme provides eligible individuals with financial support and social services such as free healthcare, and inclusion in social care and support services. The Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity estimates that the refugee and migrant population represent 10 percent of the estimated 324,736 individuals.
- The Inter-agency WG on Child Protection, co-led by UNHCR and Save the Children agreed on Case Management and Alternative Care options for Unaccompanied and Separated Children as the main priorities of the WG's Work Plan for 2017.



Winter in Vathy site, Samos, Greece

- UNHCR, EKKA, the Ministry of Migration Policy and the Ministry of Labour conducted a verification exercise in Samos which identified vulnerabilities of children at the RIC. UNHCR and the authorities set up a mechanism to inform EKKA weekly on the children staying at the RICs. EKKA and UNHCR continue to advocate for the alleviation of the overpopulation of the RICs, as that would enhance the children's safety.



Informal educational activities for refugee children

- Through focus group discussions, female refugees and asylum-seekers told UNHCR about their concerns with the security and the risk of SGBV in sites during the night. This included the informal site of Elliniko and Oinofyta near Athens, where complaints were linked to the general structure and site-planning, the limited police presence and response, but also to increased consumption of alcohol. UNHCR continues its advocacy to promote safer living conditions both in the RICs and open, camp-like accommodation facilities. UNHCR also developed with the SGBV and Shelter Working Groups practical shelter and site-planning measures to mitigate the risk of SGBV.
- UNHCR continued to build the capacity of partners, and in the framework of the Protection WG it focused on the asylum procedures in the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs). UNHCR continued to build the capacity of humanitarian staff and volunteers on the prevention and response to SGBV.
- UNHCR continued to build the capacity of partners in Best Interest Determination (BID) procedures. In February, a workshop was organized for the guardians of the UNHCR-funded METAdrasi Guardianship Network, which provides children with temporary accompaniment from unsafe places – including detention – to shelter, and temporary foster care prior to relocation to other EU Member States.
- UNHCR and partners continued to operate safe areas for children and their families, mother and baby spaces, playgrounds, counselling and other vital services in a single location by operating the Blue Dots – Child and Family Support Hubs. In the North of Greece, there were four Blue Dots operating in February in Lagadikia, Diavata, Nea Kavala and Alexandria.
- In February, UNHCR provided legal assistance, that is counselling and representation to 1,449 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in detention, open reception facilities as well as urban population through the Greek Council for Refugees and the Ecumenical Refugee Program. Moreover, METAdrasi and GCR provided also legal assistance at the appeal stage of the asylum procedures under a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) of UNHCR with the Minister of Migration Policy. Since the 5 July 2016 operationalization of the programme, and until 28 February 2017, 2,753 appellants benefited from free legal assistance on second instance.
- UNHCR continued to support caseworkers and the Quality Department of Greek Asylum Service in their everyday work, building their capacity and assuring that they produce work in line with quality standards of refugee status determination procedures. In February UNHCR supported with 1,119 instances of consultation the caseworkers of Asylum Service and attended 79 interviews. All consultations and interview attendances concern eligibility procedures both in the islands and the mainland. The caseworkers provided support on drafting decisions, as well as on interview related matters.
- In February, 34 people were readmitted to Turkey under the EU – Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. This included five Syrians who had withdrawn their asylum claims. Of the remaining 29 of other nationalities, five had not applied for asylum or had withdrawn their wish to apply, three had withdrawn their asylum claim, and two had been rejected at first instance and did not appeal the decision, while 19 were rejected at second instance. UNHCR in cooperation with the Greek Authorities monitors the return procedures to ensure that procedural guarantees are observed and no asylum-seeker is returned forcibly before a final decision on their asylum claim.

## Health

- The Ministry of Migration Policy, with the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and the Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention elaborated a Protocol for medical actors to follow in the event of incidents of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), which includes guidelines, a medical examination, and a referral form.
- There are persisting difficulties and delays in the issuance of Social Security Numbers in Greece (AMKA) which asylum-seekers need to access the public health system. UNHCR and the Health Working Group are advocating with the Ministry of Health to overcome these difficulties.
- The Ministry of Health with NGO support conducted a flu vaccination campaign across Greece for vulnerable individuals.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)



- Challenges remained in February in asylum-seekers' access to healthcare, as for example the persistent lack of interpreters in medical provision. The distance between sites and medical facilities posed an additional challenge, hindering asylum-seekers' access to medical services. In the islands, UNHCR continued to advocate for the lifting of geographical restriction for individuals on the islands who are vulnerable and require medical care in Athens.

## Education

- In February, there were significant achievements for refugee children's access to education. The Ministry of Education estimated that 2,500 children attended formal primary and secondary education following the launch of the education programme in October 2016. In February, 254 additional refugee children enrolled in evening classes in cities around Greece. UNHCR worked with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Education and the Scientific Committee to develop the plan for refugee children's participation in the next academic year.
- Attendance at local schools remained close to 100 per cent in Trikala, Volos and Koutsochero, Central Greece. However, female students with children, as well as male students about to relocate to Europe were not amongst the attendees. UNHCR worked to encourage attendance amongst these groups.
- There were also remaining gaps in refugees' access to education. Ritsona, north of Athens, recorded very poor attendance of nearly 50 per cent. UNHCR worked with the relevant actors to identify the reasons for this. Oinofyta was the only site in Central Greece where refugee children had not yet started attending school.
- UNHCR and other partners also organized informal education in Koutsochero, Volos, Trikala, Thermopiles, Ritsona and Oinofyta, and within the framework of the Blue Dots in the North.
- UNHCR and Save the Children in Leros inaugurated the LEDU Educational Facility, aiming to enhance the skills of refugee students and in February 110 children were enrolled. LEDU provided language classes for refugee children in their native languages, such as Dari, Arabic, and Kurdish.

## Communicating with Communities

- The Swiss Embassy with UNHCR, METAdrasi and EADAP developed a mini-lexicon to facilitate the everyday communication of refugees and migrants with Greek or English-speaking people, including service providers. The lexicon is a tool for refugees and migrants to exchange general information, information on living conditions, food, health and protection. The mini-lexicon aims to increase empowerment and resilience and includes chapters addressing women and unaccompanied children. It is produced in Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu and French. UNHCR and partners distributed the mini-lexicon throughout formal sites and urban accommodation places.
- UNHCR and partners continued to increase connectivity in sites around Greece through upgrades at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Samos, in Nea Kavala, and in Malakasa, Attica.
- UNHCR and other humanitarian actors provided information on the UNHCR-funded cash assistance in Greece. The information covered eligibility and amounts to be provided and was available in Greek, Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu, French and Pashto. UNHCR with partners' support also developed a Q&A to respond to questions of cash assistance.
- UNHCR and partners developed a Q&A to respond to people's queries on the relocation from sites to UNHCR supported accommodation. The informational materials were translated into Greek, Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu, French and Pashto.

## Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- In February, UNHCR initiated a country-wide Participatory Assessment (PA) to understand the concerns of refugees and thus be in a better position to respond to their needs. The PA involved nearly 2,000 asylum-seekers of 20 different nationalities including people with special needs, LGBTI, and all were included with consideration to have age, gender, and diversity. The PA was conducted with the host community, and with 40 partners of UNHCR.
- UNHCR organized a number of projects to contribute to the peaceful coexistence between the local and refugee communities. In the North, UNHCR donated a playground to the Lagadas Municipality as part of the efforts to ensure peaceful coexistence between the local and refugee communities living in Lagadikia. UNHCR also donated over 1,000 items of clothing, health and hygiene to the Municipality of Thessaloniki to support their social services for the locals and refugees in the city who are homeless.

- UNHCR is working with the Municipal Water Company on water supply projects, renovating public restrooms in the town of Mytilene, and is working on the rehabilitation of two elementary schools, as well as renovating a children's playground in Skala Sykamneas, Lesvos.

## WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- UNHCR provided protection and assistance activities directly and through 25 partners in 12 different sectors of intervention.
- UNHCR has ongoing partnerships with the national and local authorities, including the Greek Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction, the Municipality of Athens, the Municipality of Thessaloniki and Municipality of Livadia.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- UNHCR's requirements in Greece for 2017 amount to **US\$ 245.9** million, including **US\$ 238.7** million under the 2017 [Refugee and Migrant Response Plan \(RMRP\)](#) for Europe. At reporting, the total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 26.8** million from the European Union, all of which fall under the RMRP.
- The financial support provided by donors who have contributed with non-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds, as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation and the Greece operation allows to provide direct assistance in protection and help find solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers. In this changing operational context, UNHCR is appealing to donors to provide contributions that can be allocated as flexibly as possible.

Sector of Intervention	National NGOs	International NGOs	United Nations	Authorities and others
Protection	Arsis, GCR, KSPM-ERP, METAdrasi, Praksis	Catholic Relief Services, DRC, ICMC, Intersos, Samaritan's Purse	UNOPS	Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction
Child Protection	Arsis, Faros, METAdrasi, Iliaktida	Save the Children		
Communicating with Communities	GCR/GFR			
NFI/Shelter	Organisation Earth	Samaritan's Purse		
WASH		Norwegian Church Aid, Samaritan's Purse		
CASH		Catholic Relief Services, Samaritan's Purse		
Site Management Support	Organisation Earth	DRC, Intersos, Samaritan's Purse	UNOPS	Reception and Identification Service
Health	Médecins du Monde	WAHA		
Education		Save the Children		
Public Awareness	TeNet-Gr		UNOPS	
Accommodation	Arsis, CRS, Faros, Iliaktida, Nostos, Praksis, Solidarity Now			Municipality of Athens, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Municipality of Livadia
Peaceful Coexistence	Arsis, Solidarity Now	Intersos, Samaritan's Purse	UNOPS	

Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017: [Sweden \(76 M\)](#) | [Netherlands \(52 M\)](#) | [Norway \(41 M\)](#) | [Denmark \(23 M\)](#) | [Australia \(19 M\)](#) | [Switzerland \(15 M\)](#)

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