

Greece

This month **850** people reached Greece from the **land borders** and **1,500** arrived on the Greek Aegean **islands**. This was 13 per cent lower than January's 2,650 new arrivals. With the support of UNHCR, **755**

Government-organized transfers took place from the islands. Slow procedures and the shortage of mainland capacity hinder the acceleration of transfers. The situation is **challenging for the children who**

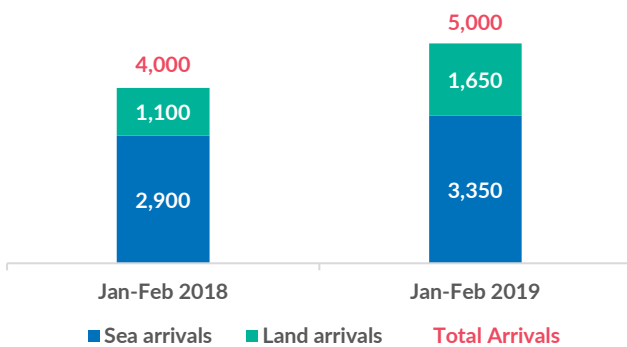
are on their own, with only **1 in 3 finding a place in a dedicated shelter**. More solidarity efforts are needed, similar to the relocation Dubs scheme for unaccompanied children to the UK.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

74,350

15,000 on the islands and **59,350** in the mainland

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimate as of 28 February 2019 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

66,850

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 107,900 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

22,800

people this month, and 57,150 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

92% have social security number

58% have tax identification number

29% registered with unemployment agency

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

299 National Staff

32 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in
Thessaloniki, Lesvos

4 Field Offices in Attika,
Chios, Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros,
Ioannina, Leros,
Rhodes



Refugee children attend UNHCR's non-formal school on Kos island.

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, community-based organizations, refugee and host communities.

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.
- Ultimately, these will be managed exclusively by the Greek authorities. UNHCR works closely with staff from State agencies to prepare for this transition.
- 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 easier. It also helps the inclusion of those who will remain in Greece. Additionally, the host population benefits from the **4,457 apartments and 19 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities across Greece**. UNHCR had **26,186 accommodation places** in February.
- In February, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **66,840 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. Cash preserves refugees' dignity and allows them to choose what they need most. It is spent on goods and services, and so it also contributes to the local community. In February, nearly **6.7 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- With steady new arrivals crossing the sea and land borders, limited legal pathways out of the country and an increasing population reaching Greece undetected, there is a pressing need for more reception places for asylum-seekers and refugees, especially children who have arrived unaccompanied and other people with specific needs.
- The heavy rainfalls this month deteriorated the situation in the reception centers and some mainland sites. The existing structures on the islands are well above capacity, with **11,300 people** crammed in spaces for an estimated **capacity of 5,200**. The majority of people struggled as they stay in tents or makeshift shelters, while there are few specialized services to cater to their needs.
- In February, the Ministry of Migration Policy with UNHCR's support transferred to the mainland **755 people from Lesbos (413), Samos (146), Chios (123), Leros (48) and Kos (25)**. As of July 2018, the Reception and Identification Service identifies and

informs those eligible to depart in most islands and coordinates their departure. UNHCR covers the transportation costs of those transferred to the mainland.

- The Government has increased the capacity in mainland sites and preparing additional ones. Nevertheless, the shortage of accommodation country-wide is increasingly also leading to the overcrowding of some mainland camps, creating tension and aggravating protection risks for the residents.
- 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 unaccompanied children and people with specific needs are directed to appropriate services.
- As of February 2019, UNHCR and its partners has helped over **2,300** 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's Experts advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. In February, UNHCR assisted in over **900 instances and 1,800 since 2019**.
- 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, some **7,600** people have found information on the website.

Child Protection

- There are an estimated **3,773 unaccompanied and separated children in Greece but only 1,085 places** in shelters and apartments for supported independent living (Source: [EKKA](#), as of 28 February). As a result, many children spend lengthy periods in protective custody or in the reception centres on the islands and Evros waiting for a place in a shelter appropriate for their age. Others stay in informal housing or risk becoming homeless.
- The situation remains alarming in the reception centre of Lesbos where there are **348 unaccompanied children**; the highest in Greece. On Samos, the designated area remains damaged for the **206 children** some of whom often have to sleep in shifts. There is also limited support and specialized services at the reception centre in Evros.
- UNHCR identifies children at risk in the urban setting and provides advice, technical support and trainings to the authorities and actors directly and through its partners.
- An innovation center run by UNHCR's partner in Athens offers the opportunity to unaccompanied children to overcome their trauma and learn new skills. On the [islands](#), UNHCR helps the authorities to protect children from risk through child and youth-friendly spaces, informal education, case management, legal aid, and psychosocial support.
- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **76 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary facilities in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2018, UNHCR has transferred **892 children**.
- UNHCR has developed Supported Independent Living where EKKA guardians and dedicated teams support children over 16 years old to live on their own.

- UNHCR transfers boys and girls who turn 18 to apartments in its accommodation scheme which helps free space in shelters for younger children.
- Within the framework of the Dubs Scheme, **33 children** have departed from Greece to the UK, since the beginning of the programme in 2017. UNHCR together with EKKA, the relevant authority and IOM review the best interests and needs of unaccompanied children to identify those best suited to relocate under the Dubs Scheme.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Sexual harassment and violence, including against men and boys, is a major risk in the reception centres and some mainland sites. Physical safety is not fully guaranteed in the refugee sites where entry and exit is uncontrolled and the uncoordinated allocation of shelter are of particular concern, especially for single parents and women. The limited number of specialized services, interpreters and police officers hinders the management of cases and perpetuates feelings of insecurity among the refugee population.
- UNHCR refers women survivors and those at risk to State services and shelters or accommodation in apartments. Unfortunately, limited interpretation means that refugees cannot always access State services.
- On the islands, UNHCR identifies survivors and people at risk, offers legal information and counselling and refers them to appropriate services also through partners. However, as a result of limited services in some of the reception centres, survivors cannot always access them on time.
- On the mainland, UNHCR works to prevent and respond to gender-based violence through national NGOs in some of the mainland sites and urban locations in Athens, Thessaly and Thessaloniki.
- UNHCR raises awareness and trains NGOs and authorities on how to prevent and respond to SGBV.

Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the Ministry of Education to ensure that all refugee children go and remain at schools. UNHCR also works with teachers to increase the awareness of pupils about refugees, human rights and displacement through experiential learning techniques.
- Refugee students living in UNHCR's apartments and in eight sites around Greece attend school alongside their Greek peers. New reception classes for refugee children opened this month on the islands of Kos and Samos.
- At least **6,600 children and youth** live in the reception centers, yet learning programmes are limited and there is a continuous need for livelihood opportunities, in particular for young men.
- On the islands, where formal education is not available for many children, UNHCR supports with complementary non-formal educational centres where children can attend language, math and IT classes, as well as get help with their homework.
- UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of Aegean on Rhodes to promote education prospects for adult asylum-seekers and refugees.

Health

- UNHCR works with the Ministry of Health, KEELPNO and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare.
- Across the islands and on some camps in the mainland the low number of staff under the Ministry of Health, in particular doctors and cultural mediators, is not sufficient to help refugees with medical and psychosocial needs.
- The limited public mental health institutions in Greece are a particular concern. UNHCR with partners work on ways to link those affected by mental health conditions with public institutions.
- UNHCR funds primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika. There, psychiatrists and psychologists provide services at the polyclinic of the municipality of Athens.

Durable Solutions

- In February, **1,609** people received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Greece, and **2,964** since the beginning of the year 2019.
- There is a pressing need to support refugees lead a normal life, go to school, get healthcare and earn a living. This requires key documents to access services and national schemes, enable refugees to work and help their eventual integration in the host communities.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees – especially those living in sites and reception centres – face difficulties accessing vocational trainings and gainful employment. Many are not eligible for national social solidarity schemes such as the Social Solidarity Income and the Rental Allowance Scheme as they cannot fulfil the technical requirements, for example, owning a house, or having a lease in their name.
- UNHCR's partners support those living in the accommodation scheme access important documents such as a tax and a social insurance number, and with job matching or referral to develop skills, vocational trainings and language courses. Residents are also supported with translation to help them access healthcare and enrol in schools as well as psychosocial, education and legal support.
- In February, some **6,314 beneficiaries** of international and subsidiary protection were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and **12,000 received cash assistance**. Of those in UNHCR's accommodation **92% have an AMKA social security number, 58% have an AFM tax number, and 29% are registered with OAED agency** for programmes that help them find work.
- UNHCR is a key partner in the Government's preparations for the implementation of the National Strategy for the integration of refugees and migrants. UNHCR assisted several municipalities to adopt local strategic integration plans for refugees.

Returns and Relocation

- This month, **13 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,838 people** in total since 20 March 2016.
- The relocation programme of asylum-seekers from Greece to other EU Member States concluded in September 2017. In total **22,000 people departed**.

Shelter

- UNHCR with partners and in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos, support the site management of Kara Tepe and transit site for new arrivals in Skala Sikamineas providing a set of protection and basic assistance services.

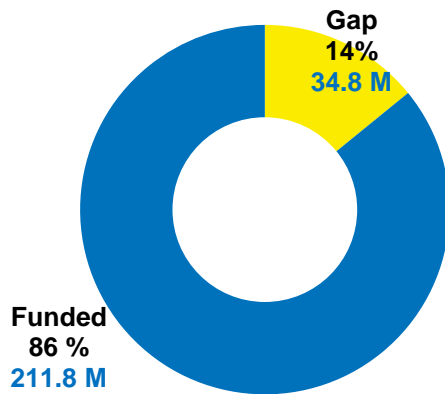
Partners

In February, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTEROS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [Terre des Hommes](#), 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](#) and the Local Authorities of Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Livadia, Herakleion, Trikala, Nea Filadelfia – Nea Chalkidona, Karditsa, Larissa and Tripoli.

LINKS

[Mediterranean Situation – UNHCR Greece – Twitter – Facebook – ‘Face Forward ...into my home’ exhibition in Košice, Slovakia – ESTIA](#)

FUNDING (AS OF 06 MARCH 2019)

USD 246.6 M requested for the Greece Operation

Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Sweden 90.4 M | Norway 44.5 M | Netherlands 37.5 M | United Kingdom 31.7 M | Germany 26.7 M | Denmark 24.4 | Switzerland 15.1 M | Private donor Spain 12.8 M

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

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European Union | Private donors

Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 224.7 M

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