

Greece

In 2019 **74,600 people arrived**, 50 per cent more than last year. They are mostly **families with children** from **Afghanistan and Syria**. **59,700** arrived on the islands and **14,900** at the land border.

The islands' **reception centres** are **now dangerously overcrowded** with **36,400** people sharing the space and services intended for 5,400.

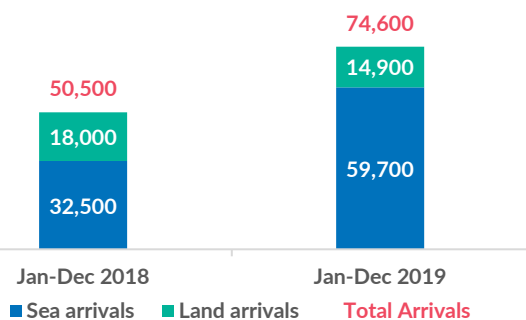
This month, UNHCR provided a 'one-off' **cash assistance to 67,300 people** and **25,500 relief items** to help refugees cover winter needs as harsh weather conditions persisted.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

112,300

71,200 in the mainland and **41,100** on the islands

Arrivals



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

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

90,500

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **159,200** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

21,650

people this month, and **63,950** since December 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

95% have social security number (AMKA)

79% have tax identification number (AFM)

88% children enrolled in schools

37% registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

8% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

302 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



Asylum-seekers at the informal expansion outside Moria reception centre on Lesbos.

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 **4,500 apartments and 14 buildings that the programme rents in 21 cities and towns across Greece. UNHCR had 25,800 accommodation places in December.**
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **90,500 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 December, more than **8.7 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Low temperatures and heavy rainfall had a serious impact on refugees. Mainland sites were overall better prepared, but in certain locations refugees did not have adequate heating. On the islands, thousands of people had to endure the extreme cold in tents and makeshift shelter with many lighting small fires to warm up in the persisting overcrowded reception centres. Tension remains heightened with sporadic security incidents, especially in the reception centres of Lesbos and Samos. There, nine and ten times more people live in centres than their available housing and services.
- UNHCR provided **67,300 asylum-seekers** with supplementary cash assistance to cover some of their basic needs related to the winter season. Additionally, UNHCR provided **25,500 core relief items** to the authorities to respond to the basic needs of arrivals in the winter including blankets, sleeping bags, sleeping mats, hygiene items and tarps.
- In 2019, UNHCR supported **14,700** out of **20,810** organized transfers. In total, **35,500** people departed from the islands.

- 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.
- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **12,750 instances** in 2019, and **48,080 instances** since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum applications, beyond these instances, promoting high quality in asylum processing.
- UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **65 experts** to the various State agencies to bolster their response and organizing trainings for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR and its partners have helped over **12,200 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 questions in five languages on [how to apply for asylum](#), on their [rights and obligations](#), and on accessing services when [living in Greece](#).

Child Protection

- Living conditions for the **5,300 children** who arrived alone in Greece are critical as only **one in five** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of December). In the reception centres, the **2,200 boys and girls** who are unaccompanied face grave risks of exploitation and abuse. Their transfer to a shelter suitable for their age is lengthy adding to the hardship of fleeing conflict and persecution. In 2019, **3,500 unaccompanied children** arrived, almost two times higher compared to last year.
- 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.
- UNHCR, its partner METAdrasi and the Ministry of Labour cooperate through a tripartite agreement for the implementation of the guardianship law. UNHCR deploys **45 guardians** who safeguard the rights and ensure the well-being of **2,190 unaccompanied children** as well as **14 coordination staff** to support the Ministry of Labour.
- In 2019, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi has safely moved almost **670 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland.
- UNHCR provides places in supported independent living apartments for **44 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and empowering them to become self-reliant and live on their own. For younger children, UNHCR works with foster families to cater to the needs of **30 unaccompanied or separated children**.
- Since the beginning of the Dubs' scheme in 2017, **101 children** departed to the United Kingdom following review by EKKA, UNHCR and IOM, while **18 await their**

transfer. UNHCR advocates for the continuation of the programme and for additional solidarity measures by other European states.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Prevention and response to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence, is increasingly challenging. With overfilled reception centres and many unlit areas around them, risks are prevalent, especially for single women as well as boys and girls who are unaccompanied. In the urban centres, there is a notable increase of survivors who are homeless risking further abuse and exploitation.
- In 2019, UNHCR donated to the authorities **120 solar street lights** which help enhance security in and around the reception centres.
- 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 through partners. 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 include and prepare refugee boys and girls for public school. In the current school year, **88 per cent of refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation were enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. Nonetheless, not all have [access to education](#), especially the **8,600 school-aged** children who live now in the reception centres on the islands.
- UNHCR's bridging 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 foster coexistence, increase awareness about forced displacement and human rights and support the inclusion of refugee students in school through [experiential learning](#) techniques.
- UNHCR donated to the Ministry of Education and local Municipalities **five prefabricated units** for educational purposes.

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](#).
- Asylum-seekers may now have access to medical services with a new temporary health card, however full implementation of this provision falls short. EODY's staffing capacity was overall reinforced with incoming staff, but the reception centres on the islands and Evros continue to lack doctors and interpreters – both a major obstacle to the provision of medical services and psychosocial support.
- UNHCR supports primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki.

Durable Solutions

- In 2019, **17,350** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece, and **51,600** people since 2013 ([Asylum Service](#) data as of December). In December, **15,500 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **6,800 beneficiaries of international protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR supports the Government in promoting the national strategy on integration.
- 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, 79% have an AFM tax number, and 37%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **8% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.
- UNHCR is supporting the Municipality of Trikala with technical expertise to establish an intercultural centre to include, among other, a community centre and a migrant's integration centre.

Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR is supporting the national authorities in relocating **1,000 applicants and beneficiaries of international protection** from Greece to Portugal.
- UNHCR welcomed the very positive initiative of the French Government to relocate 400 asylum-seekers from Greece and welcomes additional efforts from other States.
- This month, **26 people** were [returned](#) from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with a total of **2,001 people** since 20 March 2016.

Shelter and Core Relief Items

- In 2019, UNHCR provided to the Government a total of **397 accommodation units, 25 rubble halls** and **445 family tents**. These can house a total of **6,400 people**. UNHCR also provided **41 prefabricated units** to be used for administrative and office purposes.
- In 2019, UNHCR delivered to the authorities **303,300 core relief items** in **23 locations**, including blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene items, as well as baby care kits and portable solar lamps.
- UNHCR also provided **33,650 pieces of dry food** to assist new arrivals on the islands.
- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to vulnerable people or families.
- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesvos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay overnight in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until the authorities are ready to receive them in the reception and identification centre.

Partners

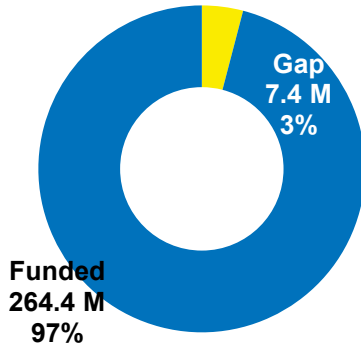
In December, UNHCR worked through **35 partners**: UNICEF, ARSIS, Iliaktida, INTERSOS, NOSTOS, Praxis, Solidarity Now, Catholic Relief Services, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, METAdrasi, the Greek Council for Refugees, the Network for Children's Rights, Doctors of the World, the Association for Regional Development and Mental Health (EPAPSY), Diotima, Faros, KEAN - Cell Of Alternative Youth Activities, International Rescue Committee, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet), UNOPS, Perichoresis, OMNES, Kyclos 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 7 JANUARY 2020)

USD 271.8 M requested for the Greece Operation



Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

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Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

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Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 252 M | Education Cannot Wait 1.4 M | United States of America 1.2 M | Republic of Korea 500 K | The World We Want Foundation 125 K | Fondation BNP Paribas 112 K | Krueger Foundation 100 K

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