



HIGHLIGHTS

33,856

People received cash assistance in Greece directly from UNHCR, indirectly through UNHCR-funded partners, and from organizations who are expected to join the Greece Cash Alliance in May 2017

27,742

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

17,081

UNHCR accommodation places currently active as alternatives to camps

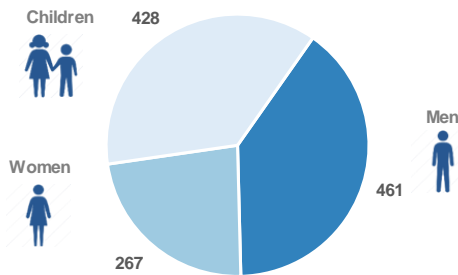
7,583

Transfers supported by UNHCR from the islands to improved accommodation in UNHCR accommodation and state-run sites in the mainland since 1 June 2016

Arrivals in April 2017

1,156 sea arrivals

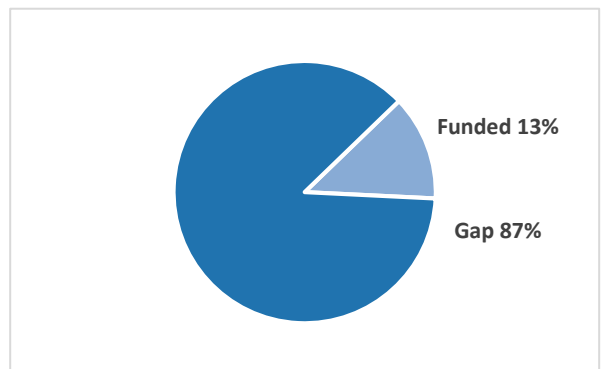
Age and Gender (April 2017)



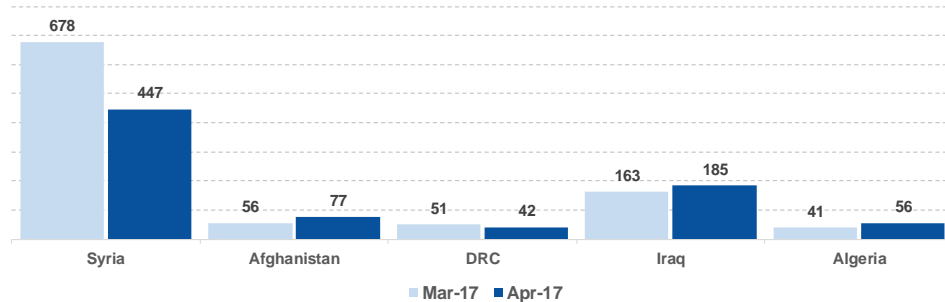
Source: Hellenic Police.

Funding

USD 246 million requested



Most common nationalities of sea arrivals



Source: Hellenic Police.

UNHCR Presence

273 national and **77** international
102 affiliated workforce and **125** staff deployed to support authorities

- 12** Offices
- 1** Representation in Athens
- 5** Mainland Offices (Thessaloniki, Larissa, Ioannina, Attica, Evros)
- 7** Islands Offices (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos, Rhodes)

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

One million refugees and migrants transited through Greece in 2015 and 2016 during the emergency, along the Eastern Mediterranean route through Turkey to Europe. On 20 March 2016, some 50,000 people remained in Greece following the implementation of the Joint EU-TUR Statement and the closing of the Balkan route. Since then, arrivals to the islands decreased to a daily average of 75 people, far below the 1,800 daily average of the first months of 2016. Many of those remaining in Greece sought asylum in the country. The Government and humanitarian actors responded to their needs for accommodation and services.

In 2016, three times more people applied for asylum in Greece than the year before, **with 51,092 asylum applications, in contrast to the 13,195 in 2015**. New asylum procedures were put in place, which demanded an increased capacity from the Greek authorities, with EC support, to receive asylum-seekers, register and process asylum applications.

In the mainland, humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, focused their efforts on improving conditions in the many sites accommodating refugees and migrants. The Greek Ministry of Migration Policy closed many of the sites that were unsuitable for long-term human habitation, and intends to close many of the remaining ones that are also remote. Many of the remaining sites that are remote introduce a barrier to those needing to travel to complete their asylum applications, access education, medical care and other services. UNHCR has provided transportation to people in these remote sites, while also gradually shifting its operational focus from sites to urban accommodation.

Arrivals have decreased in the islands, but many people spend a longer time there to complete their asylum applications. Consequently, the few sites hosting them become quickly overcrowded. The overcrowded conditions mean that unaccompanied children, people with disabilities or victims of sexual and gender-based violence cannot always access safe accommodation options. The overcrowded conditions also create pressure on the services provided and tension over the available resources. The situation increases protection risks and demands ongoing work to improve living conditions and address protection concerns.

The Greek authorities estimated some 62,073 refugees and migrants to be in Greece at the end of April, of whom, 48,251 in the mainland and 13,822 in the Aegean Islands (Source: KEPOM). There were an estimated 1,156 sea arrivals on the Aegean Islands, a decrease from March's 1,526 sea arrivals (Hellenic Police). UNHCR has its own estimates for assistance delivery purposes which indicate lower figures and have been shared with the Government.



MAINLAND AND AEGEAN ISLANDS RESPONSE

UNHCR in Greece has been supporting the Greek Government together with partners in addressing the changing needs of asylum-seekers and refugees throughout the emergency and the post-emergency stabilization period. Operationally, UNHCR has worked on improving living conditions for asylum-seekers across Greece, on providing services and relief items directly and through partners, and on accommodating the most vulnerable in apartments and hotels.

UNHCR has also been supporting the Greek reception and asylum procedure through the professional development of staff, the secondment of expert staff, targeted interventions and quality assessment. UNHCR also provides support through partners for legal aid and interpretation, and works with partners and other agencies to build the capacity of stakeholders in Greece.

UNHCR's response in April focused on supporting the Greek Government in the three areas of 1) **Reception**, 2) **Asylum** and 3) **Solutions**. As the Greek Government has increasingly focused on enhancing refugees' self-reliance and contributing to longer term solutions, UNHCR's two operational priorities in April were 1) **Urban Accommodation**, and 2) **Cash Assistance**.

Urban Accommodation

- UNHCR is working with the Greek Government and municipalities to accommodate people in urban areas where they can better access services and education. This increases the opportunities for self-reliance and for their potential integration in Greek society. The Urban Accommodation Scheme is a win-win solution for asylum-seekers and the local communities as it provides asylum-seekers with much needed normalcy, and delivers financial benefits to local communities at a time of economic hardship for many Greeks. [Video on UNHCR Urban Accommodation available here.](#)
- Up to now, **27,742 people benefitted from the programme**, which is in line with UNHCR's out-of-camp policy and the Greek Government's efforts to provide longer term solutions for refugees.
- In April, UNHCR provided asylum-seekers with **17,081 places in its Urban Accommodation Scheme**. This month, **1,250 places were added to the UNHCR Urban Accommodation Scheme**. The municipality of Crete joined the Scheme with 750 places, and UNHCR completed renovations in Agia Eleni, Ioannina, providing 500 places to vulnerable people. The Scheme has been running successfully in the municipality of Livadeia, central Greece.
- UNHCR also assisted authorities transfer 363 people in April from the Greek islands to improved accommodation in the mainland, and to UNHCR's Urban Accommodation. Since June 2016, UNHCR has supported **the transfer of 7,583 people**.
- In Attika, UNHCR helped transfer some 200 vulnerable people from the site of Elliniko to UNHCR Urban Accommodation in view of the site's imminent closure. Amongst them were female-headed households, people with specific needs, people with serious physical or mental illness, and some in need of regular appointments with medical and psychological services.
- **UNHCR ensures that protection standards are at the core of the Urban Accommodation Scheme** and in April UNHCR trained some 100 staff of partners working on the scheme on how to provide individual social support to people with vulnerabilities. UNHCR also developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA) and trained 350 staff from partners providing accommodation in urban areas. Furthermore, UNHCR conducted two series of trainings on child protection for caseworkers and lawyers of the UNHCR's partners in the Accommodation Scheme. The aim was to build the capacity of partners in case management including Best Interest Determination (BID) procedures and the legal procedures for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC).
- Finally, **to ensure good communication with the resident communities of the UNHCR Accommodation Scheme**, UNHCR developed Q&A information materials to address their concerns of the residents in English, Greek, Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu, French and Pashto.

Cash Assistance

- In April 2017, UNHCR provided cash assistance in Greece as part of the Greece Cash Alliance (GCA). The Alliance harmonizes cash assistance in Greece, and builds on the previous work of cash actors. The GCA is a joint action between six agencies (IRC, IFRC, Mercy Corps, CRS, Samaritan's Purse and Care International) led by UNHCR. It has one database (UNHCR's ProGres database), one service provider and one card. UNHCR as the grant holder and GCA lead agency loads the cards with payments while partners are responsible for monitoring and for field support on sites and in Urban Accommodation. In April UNHCR and partners started the transition between other agencies' cash systems to the GCA joint system which will be concluded in July.
- Cash Assistance restores dignity and empowers people who can now choose how to cover their basic needs. In April, UNHCR and partners started the verification of eligible asylum-seekers. This is to ensure that all eligible will receive cash and to prevent fraud. By the end of April, UNHCR and partners had verified nearly **10,000 people from 30 sites on the mainland and the islands**. [Video on UNHCR Cash Assistance available here](#)
- In April, **33,856 received cash assistance in Greece** directly from UNHCR, indirectly through UNHCR-funded partners, or from organizations who are expected to join the Greece Cash Alliance in May 2017. This includes those payed directly by UNHCR, and those payed indirectly through UNHCR-funded partners. This month, UNHCR continued the gradual distribution of the 'one-card' cash cards, which by the end of July will be the only one used by those eligible in Greece. This month UNHCR distributed 1,126 'one-card' cash cards for 1,918 people.
- UNHCR also worked with partners to equip sites with kitchen facilities and thus enable asylum-seekers to use their cash assistance for self-catering. This month, UNHCR concluded this work also in Thermopiles and Trikala, in Central Greece.

- Finally, UNHCR provided information for those eligible for cash assistance about the programme and developed Q&A to answer queries on cash assistance and the movement of people between sites and UNHCR accommodation settings in Greek, Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu, French and Pashto.
- In April, UNHCR continued with targeted interventions to upgrade living conditions for asylum-seekers across Greece with infrastructural upgrades and technical works.
- In addition, [UNHCR provided some 90,000 relief items](#) to partners for beneficiaries in Greece.



Protection

- Borders:** At the islands, UNHCR and its partners maintain shoreline support to new arrivals in line with UNHCR's protection mandate. On 23 April, the first shipwreck of the year took place off the coast of Lesbos. It left only two survivors, seven missing, and sixteen dead, amongst whom children.
- Quality Assurance of the Asylum Procedures:** UNHCR in Greece supports the Greek Asylum Service to ensure their work is in line with international quality standards of refugee status determination procedures. UNHCR fulfils this institutional role by helping, upon request, the caseworkers of the Quality Department with on-the-job training and advice on how to draft decisions and conduct interviews. In April alone, UNHCR advised in [1,132 instances and attended 51 interviews](#).
- Legal Assistance:** In April, UNHCR through its partners Greek Council for Refugees, Ecumenical Refugee Program and METAdrasi, provided legal assistance in the form of counselling and representation to [1,827 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection](#) in detention, in open reception facilities as well as to urban population on asylum procedures, family reunification, child protection, protection of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as well as on other relevant administrative procedures and access to rights. METAdrasi and GCR also provided legal assistance at the appeal stage of the asylum procedures under a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Ministry of Migration Policy. Since July 2016, [3,666 appellants benefited from free legal assistance at second instance](#).
- Participatory Assessment (PA):** To better understand the concerns and challenges of refugees and asylum-seekers, UNHCR conducted a PA exercise in Greece with 35 partners, the host community and a total of 1,929 people of concern, representing 20 different nationalities, people with specific needs, LGBTI and with consideration to age, gender and diversity. Individual interviews and 241 focus group discussions took place over 40 sites, Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and 38 urban accommodation settings (hotels, apartments, shelters and squats). UNHCR shared the results with the partners participating in the process through regional reports, and developed a National Report with results and recommendations to assist the Government and humanitarian actors in their further programming of activities in Greece.
- Relocation:** In 2017, there has been [an increase in the number of departures for relocation, as well as the number of places pledged](#) by EU Member States. In April, the number of departures was 1,211 in contrast to the 2016 average monthly departures of 607. In 2017, the average recorded monthly pledges was 2,125 in contrast to the 1,017 average recorded pledges of 2016. (Source: Greek Asylum Service)
- Family reunification:** In the first three months of 2017, 676 people departed for family reunification to other EU Member States, 547 of whom to Germany based on the information published by the Greek Asylum Service. UNHCR continues to encourage Member States to increase the pace of people reuniting with their families, as this is an important legal pathway towards solutions for asylum-seekers in Greece. It enables women and children to access protection in Europe, and reduces their exposure to exploitation by smugglers or human traffickers.
- In addition to offering solutions to those relocated or re-united with their families in other European States, an increase in these respective numbers also allows the Greek State to focus its efforts on building the capacity of the reception and asylum systems, thus accelerating the processing of the asylum-claims for those remaining in Greece.
- Returns:** In April, six people returned to Turkey in the framework of the EU-TUR Statement, all of whom had been issued with decisions rejecting their asylum claims at second instance. UNHCR monitors readmissions to Turkey since the implementation of the EU-TUR Statement to secure the observance of procedural safeguards so as to reduce the risk of unlawful returns of asylum-seekers.
- To **prevent and reduce Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)** the regional **SGBV** SWG for Northern Greece developed the Inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual and

Gender-based Violence (SGBV). In Ioannina, UNHCR and actors developed SOPs, referral pathways, and mapped the area of responsibility in services. They also identified gaps in referrals, as for example the lack of medical equipment and specialized personnel in hospitals, or the lack of legal representation for victims.

- To improve the identification and response to SGBV, UNHCR and partners developed referral pathways on case management for Child Protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and People with Specific Needs for a total of 42 sites and RICs in the mainland and the islands. The documents are accessible on an online map to all involved partners.
- The General Secretariat for Gender Equality developed an Inter-Agency State Protocol of Cooperation for the establishment of common procedures for the Referral of Asylum-seeking and Refugee Women survivors or at risk of violence to the available state structures of 40 counselling centres and 21 shelters. The Protocol describes how to identify and refer refugees and their children to centers and Shelters, and the obligations of the relevant stakeholders.
- UNHCR, UNFPA and other UN agencies, the Government and NGOs trained 28 staff on working with **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI)** people in forced displacement. The training informed staff on the appropriate terminology related to sexual orientation and gender identity and helped them articulate the protection concerns that LGBTI asylum-seekers and refugees face. It also empowered them to develop LGBTI-friendly counselling.
- A new safe zone for 20 - 25 unaccompanied children opened in Kavala site this month managed by the Hellenic Red Cross. The first ten children had previously been in protective custody in Fylakio, Evros. UNHCR works with the Hellenic Red Cross to ensure their protection and assistance. Safe Zones are safe areas with protection standards and services like catering in the sites in the mainland that host unaccompanied and separated children for a short period of time. Children from the islands, detention centres or protective custody are prioritized for referral to the Safe Zones.

Education

- UNHCR is working with the Ministry of Education to identify solutions for children moving between locations so that they can continue attending school and so that their attendance can be certified. Indicatively, only a handful of refugee children attend public school in Samos and Kos. UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not available yet.
- In April, nearly 98 per cent of children attended local schools in sites in Trikala and Volos. However, refugee children also faced bullying, unfortunately often from refugee children of other ethnic groups. UNHCR works closely with education coordinators and partners and helps parents use group therapy models.



Health

- UNHCR and other Medical, Health and Psycho Social Support (MHPSS) actors are advocating with the Ministry of Migration Policy and the Ministry of Health and the National Health Center to provide refugees with better access to specialized mental health services. The lack of interpreters in mental health care creates challenges for the diagnosis and treatment. At times, this gap also acts as a deterrent to hospitalization, as an interpreter is often required to complete the process. In addition, there is a lack of space for mental health patients in the public health system while private facilities are in practice inaccessible due to long waiting lists and because private facilities may refuse to accept refugees and migrants due to a lack of interpreters.
- UNHCR and partners have expressed their concerns to the authorities with the increasing number of unaccompanied and separated children exhibiting behavior indicative of mental health issues. It is particularly difficult to access pediatric mental health services due to the limited number of specialist practitioners in the Greek National Health System, and the strong need to support and expand the specialized programmes that are available by national and international non-governmental organizations.
- UNHCR continues to advocate and coordinate with the Greek authorities for the implementation of procedural safeguards during the age assessment procedures where a particular concern is the use of medical screening.

- UNHCR exceptionally extended the provision of health care in the Pyli RIC on Kos, the RIS-managed PIKPA facility on Leros, and in the site of Souda on Chios to ensure a smooth transition to the public health system. On Chios, UNHCR through its partner WAHA donated medical equipment to the hospital of Chios. However, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) service needs have increased. On Chios, UNHCR with the MHPSS Working Group developed a “4Ws” tool to map services and activities in the sites, including community-focused and case-focused MHPSS services. A service leaflet for refugees and migrants was also developed.



- Asylum-seekers have difficulties accessing elective pregnancy termination in Thessaloniki. The procedure is legal in Greece but difficult to access in practice due to the long waiting times for appointments, and because some physicians refuse on moral grounds.
- Finally, a persistent problem is the lack of continuity in medical care, due to the lack or loss of a medical passport and lack of clear standard operating procedures to guide the transfer of medical care and medical records. UNHCR is actively advocating to address this problem.

Communicating with Communities

- UNHCR launched the [Help Website](#) to provide information to refugees and asylum-seekers in Greece. The information is comprehensive and up-to-date, and covers legal procedures, rights and obligations for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as advice about living in Greece. The information is provided in English, Arabic, Farsi, French and Greek.
- UNHCR developed a note to guide actors develop face-to-face, printed, audio and electronic information material for people with different types of impairments. The guidance aims to facilitate everyone’s access to important information.
- Finally, UNHCR recognizes how important internet connectivity is for asylum-seekers to be able to access information and be in touch with their families and is working with partners and service providers to improve and increase connectivity in urban accommodation settings and to achieve long-term sustainability.

Community Empowerment

- UNHCR with the volunteer group ECHO100Plus on Leros launched a set of recreational and livelihood activities for some 35 women from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Palestine who chose activities such as fashion design, cooking classes and music workshops.
- UNHCR and the University of Aegean continue the sessions of a European Commission online language programme in Lesbos and Samos. Some 2,000 asylum-seekers from the islands benefit from the online languages classes offering 12 European languages.
- In addition, UNHCR and the refugee communities are engaged in activities to strengthen the relationship with the host communities. In Lesbos, UNHCR renovated the 11th Elementary Primary school in Mytilene, one of the four schools hosting refugee children. In Samos, UNHCR organized a poetry night for poets from Iran, Syria and Samos. In Chios, UNHCR’s partner Samaritan’s Purse and refugees rehabilitated the garden at Chios nursing home.

Gaps

- Many asylum-seekers in Greece have difficulties accessing the Asylum Service Offices to complete their applications. This is because many sites, particularly in central, western and northern Greece are remote with no access to public transport. In April, UNHCR supported the transportation of 2,659 people to their medical appointments and the Asylum Service to lodge their applications. Unfortunately, the cost of transportation by other means is prohibitive with the cash assistance amounts that refugees receive. As many organizations are scaling down their operations in Greece for lack of funding or other reasons, transportation remains an important gap, which effectively inhibits asylum-seekers’ access to the asylum procedure. UNHCR developed Q&A on how to access to additional assistance for transportation to appointments at the Asylum Service and medical services in Greek, Arabic, Farsi, Sorani, Kurmanji, Urdu, French and Pashto.

- UNHCR is becoming increasingly aware of refugees who having been officially recognized in Greece, are not eligible for the majority of the services provided in Greece which these target asylum-seekers. UNHCR is particularly concerned with the vulnerable individuals whose cases were processed with high priority and as such did not benefit for projects that would have facilitated their integration in the community. In addition, they often face particular difficulties living on their own as they might have difficulties working or supporting themselves as a result of their vulnerabilities.
- A persisting problem in Greece is the lack of a clear referral mechanism for asylum-seekers who require accommodation in open sites. This is a notable problem particularly in Attika where many asylum-seekers arrive spontaneously from the islands or the land borders and search independently for accommodation by visiting different sites. UNHCR developed an advisory note for humanitarian actors on the spontaneous and independent movements between sites to respond to an increasing need for clarification amongst asylum-seekers on access to sites in Attika and northern Greece.

INTERAGENCY RESPONSE AND WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- In Greece, UNHCR works through 70 sectoral Working Groups (WGs) at the national and field level that ensure coordination between actors. There are 80 partners in UNHCR coordination meetings. The sectoral Working Groups 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.
- In April, UNHCR provided protection and assistance activities directly and through 25 partners in 12 sectors of intervention. UNHCR worked on Protection with GRC, KSPM-ERP, METAdraji, Praksis, Arsis, ICMC, UNOPS, Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services, Intersos, DRC, Ministry of Interior; on Child Protection with Praksis, Nostos, Faros, Arsis, METAdraji, Iliaktida, Save the Children; on NFI/Shelter with Organization Earth, Samaritan's Purse; on WASH with Samaritan's Purse, on CASH with Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services, on Site Management Support with Organization Earth, Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, DRC, UNOPS, Reception and Identification Service, on Health with Medecins du Monde and WAHA, on Education with Save the Children, on Accommodation with Praksis, CRS, Arsis, Nostos, Iliaktida, Solidarity Now, Faros, Municipality of Athens, Municipality of Livadia, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Heraklion Development Agency, on Peaceful Coexistence with Arsis, Solidarity Now, Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, UNOPS and on Raising Awareness with TENet-Gr, UNOPS.

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\$ 31.1** million from the European Union, all of which fall under the RMRP.
- The financial support of donors with non-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds and those contributing directly to the situation in Greece allows UNHCR to provide direct assistance in protection and help find solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers. In this changing operational context, UNHCR appeals to donors to provide contributions that can be allocated as flexibly as possible.
- Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2017: [United States of America \(95 M\)](#) | [Sweden \(76 M\)](#) | [Netherlands \(52 M\)](#) | [Norway \(41 M\)](#) | [Denmark \(23 M\)](#) | [Australia \(19 M\)](#) | [Switzerland \(15 M\)](#) | [France \(14M\)](#) | [Private Donors from Spain \(13 M\)](#) | [Germany \(12 M\)](#)

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Links: [Arrival figures website](#) - [Refugee stories](#) - [Facebook](#) – [Twitter](#)