

Aegean Islands

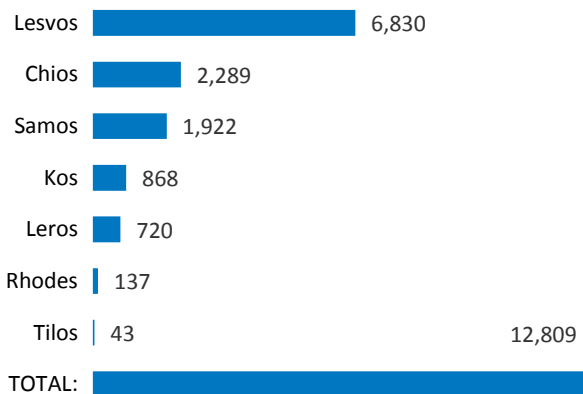
Sea arrivals continued mainly to **Lesvos** and **Samos**, but decreased this month to **2,300 people**. The majority came from **Syria and Iraq**, and **59%** were **women and children**.

The **situation remains difficult** for asylum-seekers staying under **unhygienic conditions** in border reception centres. **178 people** at high risk are hosted in UNHCR-rented **hotels for the winter**.

The Government accelerated transfers to the mainland and UNHCR supported some **3,200 asylum-seekers, mainly vulnerable or families** authorized to move.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Islands

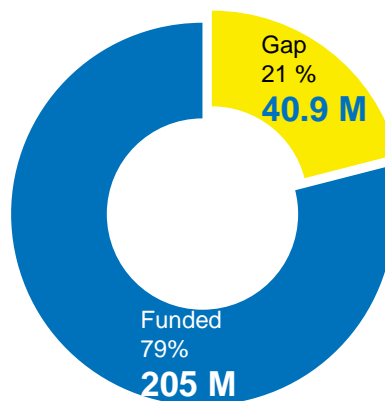


* Source: UNHCR Greece as of end of December 2017.

FUNDING (AS OF 2 JANUARY)

USD 245.9 M

requested for the Greece operation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

64 National Staff

10 International Staff

Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens

1 Sub Office on Lesvos

5 Field Offices on Chios,

Samos, Kos, Leros and

Rhodes



UNHCR supports transfer of 262 asylum-seekers from overcrowded Moria RIC on Lesvos to apartments in Crete. © UNHCR/S. Nanou

Working with Partners

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who coordinates the refugee response. The Office works with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, state institutions, community-based organisations, refugees, and host communities through sectoral working groups on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#), [Samos](#), [Kos](#) and [Leros](#).

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, asylum procedures and offers legal counselling and representation to asylum-seekers directly and through partners. UNHCR identifies and refers people with specific needs to responsible authorities and service providers for targeted assistance.
- On [Chios](#), UNHCR organised a workshop on 'Interviewing victims of violence and credibility assessment' for 30 participants, including the Asylum Service. On [Samos](#), this month's arrivals included a high number of pregnant women, infants and unaccompanied children.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

- UNHCR provides capacity building to humanitarian organisations and authorities on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) prevention and response, organizes awareness campaigns and conducts trainings to actors from various sectors on how to integrate guidelines preventing SGBV in their everyday work.
- UNHCR and partners have also developed referral pathways so that survivors of SGBV receive appropriate help.
- UNHCR works – through partner – on preventing and responding to SGBV in Kara Tepe site managed by the Municipality of [Lesvos](#).

Child Protection

- UNHCR supports the identification of children at risk and assists in building the expertise of national and local actors. UNHCR coordinates with humanitarian actors and stakeholders to monitor and develop Standard Operating Procedures and minimum standards to enhance the protection of children.
- There are some 490 unaccompanied children at the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) on the islands – of whom 313 in Moria RIC alone – awaiting referral to age appropriate shelters according to UNHCR's estimates.

Education

- UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available as access to education, especially for children over 15 years old is limited. UNHCR runs recreational spaces to ensure that the

development and well-being of refugee children and youth is supported in a conducive learning environment.

- In collaboration with the University of Aegean on [Lesvos](#) and [Samos](#), UNHCR facilitates classes in 12 European languages for adult and child asylum-seekers through the European Commission's online learning programme.

Health

- As the deployment of national service medical staff under the Ministry of Health has not been completed yet, medical services remain limited, while there is insufficient number of doctors in the reception centres and the hospitals on the islands.
- UNHCR offers primary health services to the residents of the Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#) and Vial on [Chios](#).

Food Security

- UNHCR provides food tailored to the specific needs of the population in Kara Tepe on [Lesvos](#).

Shelter, Water and Sanitation

- Access to warm and safe shelter with adequate sanitation facilities, water and electricity is limited on the islands, especially on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#) and [Samos](#).
- On [Lesvos](#), while the population in Moria reception centre decreased as transfers to the mainland intensified, still 5,100 people remain in the site with capacity for 1,700.
- The situation is dire also for 1,700 people in the Vathy reception centre on [Samos](#) where unhygienic conditions prevail and some 900 people exposed to cold living in unheated shelter prone to flooding.
- Upon request of the authorities and with the closure of Souda site by the Municipality of [Chios](#), UNHCR offered targeted shelter and hygiene solutions in the extended part of the Vial reception centre, including with the provision of housing units for 300 people.
- While on [Kos](#) and [Leros](#), the recent acceleration of transfers offered some much needed space in the reception centers, on [Rhodes](#) vulnerable people have limited options but to stay in a derelict building.

Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities, convenes regular community discussions on the islands. These platforms are a channel of communication amongst asylum-seekers, humanitarian actors and authorities where issues such as hygiene and childcare are discussed. UNHCR also provides leaflets in different languages about the asylum procedures and access to key services.

Support to local community

- UNHCR organizes events and implements projects that bring closer the refugee and local population and help build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.
- Tension in the reception centers and on the islands has been mounting exacerbated by overcrowding and poor living conditions.

ESTIA Accommodation and Cash assistance

- UNHCR works with the Government, local authorities and NGOs to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees through the ECHO-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (**ESTIA**). Cash assistance and accommodation help provide people with a sense of normalcy and contribute directly to the economy of the host community through the purchase of services and goods, and the renting of apartments.
- In December, some 989 people are accommodated by UNHCR in apartments on the islands and an additional 178 in hotels under a temporary emergency scheme for the winter on [Lesvos](#) and [Chios](#).

Logistics

- In December, UNHCR assisted the transfer of some 3,200 asylum-seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and Government-run sites on the mainland and Crete. Since June 2016, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of 20,960 such transfers, which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands.
- UNHCR offers local transportation from remote sites to key facilities and the Regional Asylum Offices on the islands in order to ensure that asylum-seekers have access to the asylum procedure and the necessary services.

Partners

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: [Danish Refugee Council](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), [Doctors of the World](#), [Save the Children](#), [Samaritan's Purse](#), [Metadrasi](#), [Arsis](#), [Praksis](#) and [Iliaktida](#).

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

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Thanks to the donors for the Greece Operation

European Union (201.44 M) | Spain (1.9 M) | Republic of Korea (0.8 M) | Fondation BNP Paribas (0.4 M) | Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (0.3 M) | The Big Heart Foundation (0.1 M)

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