

Greece

This month **800** people reached Greece from the **land borders** and **1,850** arrived on the Greek Aegean **islands**. This was lower than December's 3,950 new arrivals.

The harsh weather this month affected thousands of people staying in **unheated shelter in the reception centres on the islands**. The situation was **better in mainland sites**, overall better prepared for the cold.

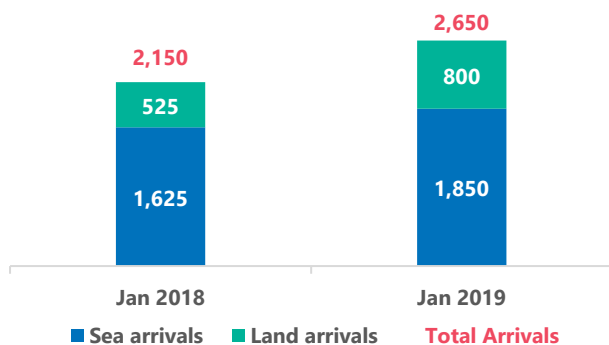
UNHCR signed with the Ministry of Interior a **Memorandum of Cooperation** this month on Greek nationality acquisition and the **prevention of statelessness**.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

72,300

14,550 on the islands and **57,750** in the mainland

Arrivals



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

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

63,850

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 102,750 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

22,750

people this month, and 56,550 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

92% have social security number

85% have tax identification number

29% registered with unemployment agency

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

293 National Staff

30 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in
Thessaloniki, Lesbos

4 Field Offices in Attika,
Chios, Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros,
Ioannina, Leros,
Rhodes



(L-R) The Representative of UNHCR in Greece Mr. Philippe Leclerc, the Associate Protection Officer of UNHCR Mr. Petros Mastakas, the Special Secretary for Citizenship Mr. Lambros Baltziotis and the Minister of Interior Mr. Alexis Charitsis at the conclusion of the Memorandum of Cooperation.

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 **4,500 apartments and 19 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities across Greece**. UNHCR had **26,452 accommodation places** in January.
- In January, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **63,853 asylum-seekers and refugees**. 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 January, nearly **6.4 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- With steady new arrivals reaching the sea and land borders and limited legal pathways out of the country, there is an ever increasing need for more reception places for asylum-seekers and refugees, especially children who are unaccompanied and other people with specific needs.
- The cold spell this month found reception centres and sites better prepared than last year and the majority of shelters were equipped for winter. Most problems were observed in northern Greece with difficulties in accessing certain sites. The reception centres of Samos and Lesvos continued to operate beyond their capacity with thousands of asylum-seekers living in unsuitable tents or makeshift shelter lacking sufficient heating.
- In January, the Ministry of Migration Policy with UNHCR's support transferred to the mainland **1,555 people from Lesvos (653), Samos (321), Leros (250), Chios (227) and Kos (104)**. 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 until 28 February 2019.

- The Government has increased the capacity in mainland sites and preparing additional ones. Nevertheless, the shortage of accommodation country-wide is increasingly 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 asylum-seekers who have recently arrived at the Fylakio reception centre. They ensure asylum-seekers are identified properly and that unaccompanied children and people with specific needs are directed to appropriate services.
- UNHCR and its partners helped asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection with counselling and legal representation on asylum procedures and 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 January, UNHCR assisted in over **900 instances and 14,600 since 2018**.
- 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](#). Since 2018, over 29,300 people found information on the website.

Child Protection

- There are **3,718 unaccompanied and separated children** in Greece but only **1,035 places** in shelters and apartments for supported independent living (Source: [EKKA](#), as of 31 January). 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 is particularly worrying in the reception centre of Moria, Lesbos where children often share shelter with adults and in Vathy, Samos where the designated area remains damaged and children often have to sleep in shifts. On Evros there is limited support and services for children at the reception centre.
- UNHCR signed a Tripartite Agreement with the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Solidarity and its partner METAdrasi to reinforce EKKA with expert-seconded staff for the implementation of the Greek guardianship system as of September 2019.
- On the islands, UNHCR helps the authorities to protect children from risk with child and youth-friendly spaces, informal education, case management, legal aid, and psychosocial support.
- UNHCR also identifies children at risk in the urban setting and provides advice, technical support and trainings to the authorities and actors.
- This month, UNHCR's partner transferred **78 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary facilities in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2018, UNHCR has transferred **816 children**.
- UNHCR has developed supported independent living where EKKA guardians and dedicated teams support children over 16 years old to live on their own. Following its launch in Crete, UNHCR is expanding the scheme in Athens as well.

- UNHCR transfers boys and girls who turn 18 to apartments in its accommodation scheme which helps free space in shelters for younger children.
- Since 2018, **30 children** departed from Greece to the UK within the framework of the Dubs Scheme. UNHCR has worked with the authorities to develop panels which identify children eligible to relocate under the scheme, by considering their needs and best interests.

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. The limited number of specialized services, interpreters and police officers hinders the management of cases and perpetuates feelings of insecurity among the refugee population. Limited access to toilets and showers, and the uncoordinated allocation of shelter are of particular concern, especially for single parents and women.
- 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.
- Finally, 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 to school.
- Refugee students living in apartments and in eight sites around Greece attend school alongside their Greek peers.
- 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.

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 January, **1,361** people received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Greece, and **15,205** in the entire 2018.
- 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 that allow access to services and national schemes, enable refugees to work and help their eventual integration in the host communities.
- 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 January, some **5,728** beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and **11,400** 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 advocates for refugees to be included in practice in the national social solidarity schemes, as for example the Social Solidarity Income and the Rental Allowance Scheme. While eligible, many are excluded because they cannot fulfil the technical requirements, as for example owning a house, or having a lease in their name.
- UNHCR is a key partner in the Government's preparations for the implementation of the National Strategy for the integration of refugees and migrants. The Strategy is now available for [public consultation](#).
- In January, UNHCR signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) with the Ministry of Interior on nationality acquisition and the prevention of statelessness. UNHCR will deploy two experts to strengthen the capacity of State services in [eradicating statelessness](#) and enhance procedures of Greek nationality acquisition.

Returns and Relocation

- This month, **19** people [returned](#) from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,825** 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.

- UNHCR recently provided **16 containers** to increase the processing capacity of the Fylakio reception center in Evros.

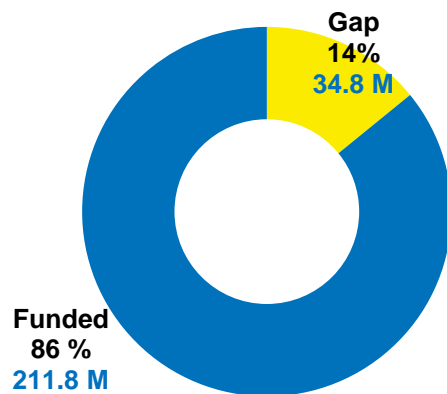
Partners

In January, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [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 22 JANUARY 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 | Denmark 54.9 | Norway 44.5 M | Netherlands 37.5 M | United Kingdom 31.7 M | Germany 27.3 M | Switzerland 15.1 M

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Austria | Belgium | Canada | Estonia | Indonesia | Monaco | Montenegro | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

Thanks to major donors of situational, thematic, regional, sub-regional funds 2019

European Union | Private donors

Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 224.7 M

CONTACTS

Eleni Biza, Associate Reporting Officer, Greece

BIZA@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7809, Cell +30 695 558 5567

Elena Marda, Liaison Associate, Greece

marda@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7855, Cell: +30 695 18 01 242

Michail Agorastakis, Information Management Associate, Greece

AGORASTA@unhcr.org, Tel: +30 216 200 7946, Cell +30 695 1941546