

Greece

This month **1,250** people crossed the **land borders** and **1,900** arrived on the Greek Aegean **islands**. A **shipwreck off Samos** island resulted in the **loss of three lives**, including two children, after

their boat capsized. Since 2018, **179 people** have been found dead or are still missing attempting to reach Greece. UNHCR welcomed the **concrete measures** announced by the Government for the integration of

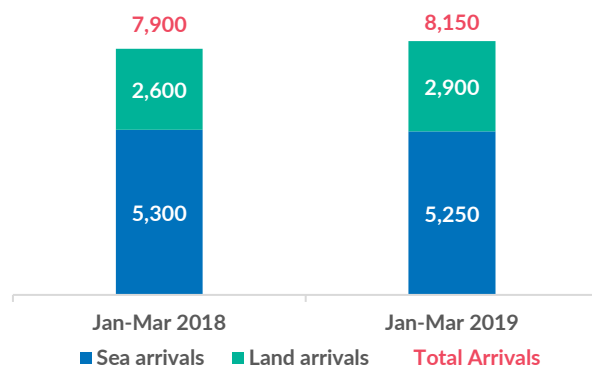
refugees. There is a need to accelerate **implementation** and UNHCR continues to support these efforts.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

76,000

14,600 on the islands and **61,400** in the mainland

Arrivals



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

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

69,050

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 111,500 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

22,650

people this month, and 57,600 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

92% have social security number

60% have tax identification number

30% registered with unemployment agency

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

297 National Staff

35 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



The remains of a rubber dinghy used by refugees and migrants to cross from Turkey to Greece

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.
- 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 **4,427 apartments and 18 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities and towns across Greece**. UNHCR had **25,779 accommodation places** in March.
- In March, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **69,052 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 March, nearly **6.9 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- With a steady number of people 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.
- A [shipwreck](#) occurred near Samos on 6 March that resulted in the loss of **three lives**, two four-year old twin boys and their father. The mother survived, along with the rest of the passengers, all Afghan nationals. UNHCR provided support to the survivors, including with accommodation in its apartments.
- Existing structures in the reception centers and some mainland sites are inadequate and well-above capacity. On the islands some **11,000 people** are crammed in spaces for an estimated **capacity of 5,200** with few specialized services to cater their needs. The situation is most difficult for those on Samos and Lesbos as thousands of people

are staying in tents or makeshift lodgings exposed to health risks and safety hazards, while there is limited privacy for families and women.

- In March, the Ministry of Migration Policy with UNHCR's support transferred to the mainland **1,968 people from Lesbos (781), Samos (692), Chios (201), Leros (182) and Kos (112)**. The Reception and Identification Service identifies and informs those eligible to depart and coordinates their departure, while UNHCR covers their transportation costs.
- Some of the **26 mainland sites** have surpassed their housing availability with poor hygiene and washing facilities. The dearth of transportation options impedes access to medical and other essential services.
- 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.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and its partners has helped over **3,250 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 March, UNHCR assisted in over **900 instances** and **2,700** 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, **14,000 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 (as of end February). As a result, many children spend lengthy periods in protective custody or in the reception centres at the borders waiting for a place in a shelter appropriate for their age. Others have limited options but to stay in informal housing or risk becoming homeless.
- The situation remains alarming in the reception centre of Lesbos where there are **342 unaccompanied children**; the highest number of children in a reception centre in Greece. On Samos, the designated area remains damaged, while there is limited support and specialized services at the reception centre in Evros where unaccompanied children stay for three months or longer.
- 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 with dedicated learning spaces that also offer legal aid, and psychosocial support.

- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **106 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary facilities in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2019, UNHCR has transferred **260 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, **39 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.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Sexual harassment, violence and abuse, including against men and boys, is a major risk in the reception centres and some mainland sites with poor lighting and few lockable shelters and latrines. There are limited shelters across Greece where women victims could be housed, and no dedicated shelters for men.
- UNHCR works in urban Athens, Thessaly and Thessaloniki as well as some field locations and islands to identify survivors and people at risk, offering legal information, counselling and psychosocial and medical attention.
- 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. Unfortunately, limited interpretation and police officers – especially women – means that refugees cannot always access State services timely.
- UNHCR trains NGOs and authorities on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and works with the refugee communities to raise awareness. On the occasion of International Women's Day this month, UNHCR organized [events](#) with the communities and expert partners.

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 forced displacement and human rights through [experiential learning](#) techniques.
- Refugee students living in UNHCR's apartments and in eight sites around Greece attend school alongside their Greek peers. Some **6,600 children and youth** live in the reception centres on the islands. However, educational and vocational opportunities are slim, especially for young men.
- The Municipality of Athens started [free computer classes](#) at the newly-established Migrant Integration Centre. UNHCR provided capacity building and support services.
- 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.
- This month, UNHCR co-organized with the Ministry of Education a [conference](#) on formal education for refugee children on the Aegean islands. The conference

assessed the operation of special reception classes on the islands and served as a platform for deeper coordination.

Health

- UNHCR works with the Ministry of Health, the National Public Health Organization and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare.
- Disruptions in the provision and staffing of medical and psychosocial services renders the situation very challenging, especially for people on the islands and some mainland camps who need specific attention.
- 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

- Since the beginning of 2019, **2,964** people have **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece (as of end February).
- UNHCR is a key partner in the Government's preparations for the implementation of the National Strategy for the integration of refugees and migrants.
- 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 local environment.
- 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.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees – especially those living in sites and reception centres – face difficulties accessing vocational training 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 some requirements, for example, having a lease in their name. Concrete measures, such as those [announced](#) by the Government in March, are crucial to strengthen integration prospects and lift barriers for refugees, but their implementation needs to accelerate.
- UNHCR assists asylum-seekers and refugees to obtain the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees which presents available information on educational level, work experience and language proficiency. This helps refugees seek employment and get admitted to studies.
- In March, some **6,790 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and **12,805** received **cash assistance**. Of those in UNHCR's accommodation **92%** have an **AMKA social**

security number, 60% have an AFM tax number, and 30% are registered with OAED agency. This helps them find work and facilitates their integration.

Returns and Relocation

- This month, **5 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,843 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

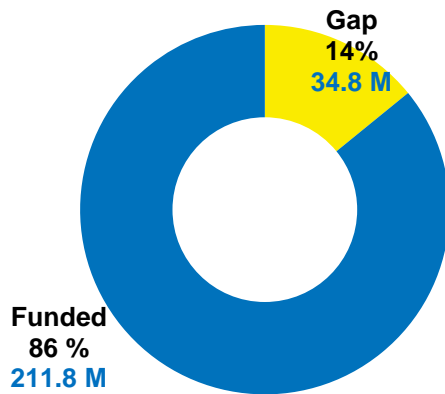
- This month, UNHCR donated **100 tents** with kits for insulation to the Reception and Identification Service to temporarily host those transferred from the islands.
- UNHCR with partners and in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos, support the site management of Kara Tepe and transit site for new arrivals in Skala Sikamineas providing a set of protection and basic assistance services.

Partners

In March, 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](#) - [YouTube](#)

FUNDING (AS OF 20 MARCH 2019)**USD 246.6 M** requested for the Greece Operation**Donors****Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019**

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United States of America 4.8 M | European Union | Private donors

Thanks to the donors of the Greece Operation in 2019

European Union 224.7 M

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