

Greece

Refugee flows marginally increased this month compared to April's **3,200 new arrivals**. **545** people crossed the **land borders** and **2,650** reached the Greek Aegean islands.

Most of the **2,700 school-aged children** in the islands reception centres have **missed between one and four years** of school due to war in their countries. UNHCR helps the Government to prepare refugee

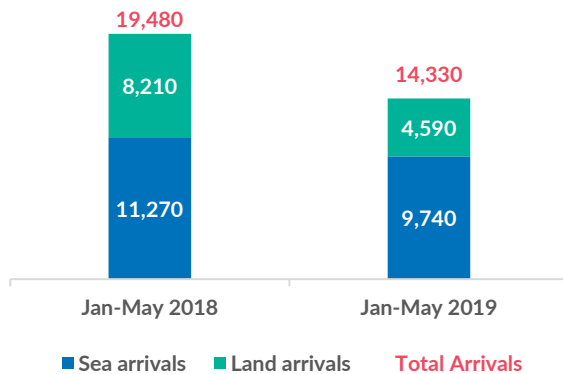
children for public classrooms through non-formal education centres. UNHCR **urged** Greece's European Parliament candidates to work for **stronger refugee protection**.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

79,500

15,800 on the islands and **63,700** in the mainland

Arrivals



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

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

70,000

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 116,776 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

22,220

people this month, and 58,422 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

94% have social security number

66% have tax identification number

33% registered with unemployment agency

61% children are enrolled in schools

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

280 National Staff

33 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



Refugees and migrants staying in the informal site next to Moria, Lesvos.

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 **4,419 apartments and 14 buildings** that the programme rents in **20 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,213 accommodation places** in May.
- In May, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **70,000 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 May, nearly **7.1 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Overcrowding in the islands reception centres endured this month. The Government continued applying extraordinary measures on Samos where the situation is dire and redirected new arrivals to nearby Kos and Leros islands. Despite efforts, tensions are rising with hundreds of people living in the outskirts of the reception centre in deplorable conditions. In the reception centre on Kos, at least **500 people** resorted in rickety tents and makeshift shelter without sufficient toilets and showers to serve the increased population. Meanwhile, Moria and the adjacent fields host twice the site's estimated capacity of **2,200 people**.
- This month, over **2,120 people** were transferred by the authorities from the islands to the mainland, **280** of which with UNHCR's support. They were transferred mostly from **Lesvos (1,180)** and **Samos (400)**.
- The situation is overall better on the mainland, yet certain sites are well-above capacity, often in remote locations with insufficient services.

- Access to the asylum procedure is more difficult for those applying on the mainland. UNHCR works with the authorities to ensure that adequate pathways are available to people seeking protection. 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 helps build the national system and expertise, including by seconding **68 experts** to the various Governmental agencies to bolster their response.
- 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. UNHCR assisted in **4,900** instances in 2019, and **40,250** instances since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum decisions beyond these instances.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and its partners have helped over **5,600 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 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, **26,000 people** have found information on the website.

Child Protection

- Age-appropriate shelter is not enough for the **3,835 children** who are alone in Greece. There are only **1,165 such places** ([EKKA](#)) and as a result, many unaccompanied or separated children are exposed to risks, including sexual violence and homelessness.
- This month, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi transferred **37 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters. Since 2019, **387 children** have been transferred.
- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and fosters the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice. UNHCR-run dedicated spaces offer legal and psychosocial support to children at risk on the islands, while a centre in Athens offers the opportunity to unaccompanied children to overcome their trauma through innovation and learning skills.
- UNHCR works with EKKA guardians provides places for **24 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old mentoring and supporting them to become self-reliant and live on their own.
- Within the framework of the DUBS' scheme, UNHCR has submitted the cases of **76 unaccompanied children** to the United Kingdom for their transfer from Greece. Since the beginning of the programme in 2017, **43 children** have departed. 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

- Prevention and response to SGBV incidents is increasingly challenging, especially on Lesbos and Samos as well as some mainland sites. This is mainly due to mixed arrangements which often place women and men together, poor lighting, few lockable facilities, limited shelters across Greece where women survivors can be housed, and no dedicated shelters for men survivors. Trafficking and sexual violence, including against children, are of particular concern.
- UNHCR trains State authorities and NGOs on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and works with the refugee communities to raise awareness on SGBV response and the existing legal framework.
- 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.
- 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.

Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) (MoE) to prepare children for public school and ensure that all refugee boys and girls attend regularly.
- According to the MoE, **12,480 refugee students** are enrolled in public schools alongside their peers, the majority on mainland Greece. **61% of children** who live in ESTIA accommodation attend school. Lack of space, difficulties with enrolment that result from the transfers and parents' reluctance are among the most common reasons of school absenteeism.
- Educational opportunities are slim for the **2,700 children** between 5 and 17 years old who live in the reception centres on the islands. UNHCR estimates that most have missed between one and four years of school as a result of war and forced displacement. UNHCR supports children on the islands with non-formal educational centres – such as the one [Leros](#) – where they can attend language, math and IT classes, as well as get help with their homework.
- UNHCR also works with teachers to increase the awareness of pupils about forced displacement and human rights through [experiential learning](#) techniques.

Health

- UNHCR works with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) (EODY) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare. Forced displacement adds psychological pressure to asylum-seekers and refugees who often have to cope with poor conditions and uncertainty.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees on the islands face severe challenges in medical screening and health provision as the EODY medical teams are understaffed. On Chios this has affected the conduction of vulnerability assessment with at least 500 pending cases.

- UNHCR funds primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika.

Durable Solutions

- **5,804** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece in 2019 ([Asylum Service](#)), and a total of **38,032** people since 2015.
- UNHCR seconds the Government in developing a national strategy on integration. This month, the Government held the first Forum on Integration to discuss needs and identify priority actions.
- 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.
- 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.
- In May, **7,242 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and **13,527** received **cash assistance**. Of those in UNHCR's accommodation **94%** have an **AMKA social security number**, **66%** have an **AFM tax number**, and **33%** are registered with **OAED agency**. The issuance of AMKA and AFM remains problematic in certain regions. Without this, asylum-seekers and refugees are unable to benefit from health care, social assistance and other support or seek employment.

Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service to relocate **1,000 asylum-seekers and refugees** to Portugal following an agreement with the Government.
- This month, **14 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,867 people** in total since 20 March 2016.

Shelter

- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,300 vulnerable people or families**, including **700 children**. This contributes to governmental efforts to reduce the population in Moria.
- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesvos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until they are picked up by the authorities.

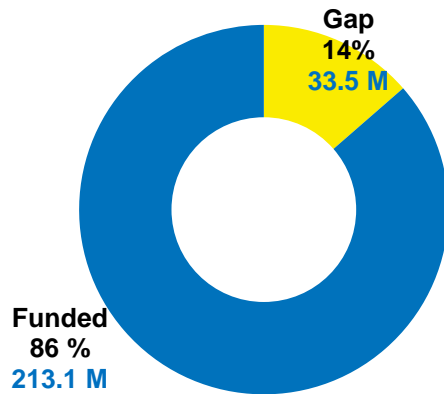
Partners

In May, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [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 \(EPAPSY\)](#), [National Confederation of Disabled People \(NCDP\)](#), [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 04 JUNE 2019)

USD 246.7 M requested for the Greece Operation

Donors

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

Sweden 90.4 M | Norway 44.5 M | Netherlands 37.5 M | United Kingdom 31.7 M | Germany 26.7 M | Private donors Spain 26.3 M | Denmark 24.4 | Switzerland 15.1 M | Private donors Republic of Korea 13.8 M

Thanks to other donors of unrestricted funds in 2019

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