

# Greece

November saw **950 arrivals recorded**, bringing the total arrivals in **2020** to **15,150**. **Two people perished** off Rhodes and Samos when their boats attempted to cross

into Greece this month – a reminder of the **perils refugees face** to reach safety. The **population** on the islands **decreased by 54%** since its peak in February with 42,000 people.

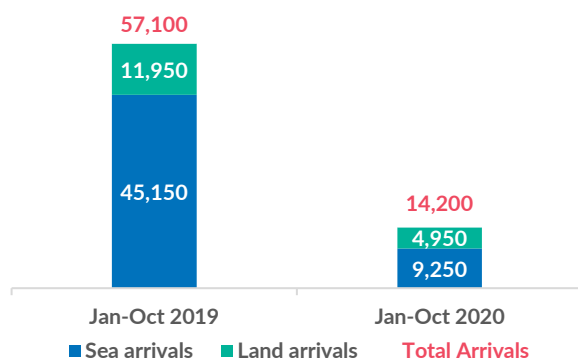
**Children should not be in closed facilities** and **thanks** to the determination of the **Greek Government** and joint efforts of UNHCR, IOM and its partners, their number has been reduced.

## REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE\*

# 120,000

**100,500** in the mainland and **19,500** on the islands

Arrivals



\*UNHCR estimates as of 30 November 2020 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

# 78,700

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees received cash assistance this month

# 13,500

accommodation places by UNHCR

# 15,400

accommodation places by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum

## PEOPLE IN ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

**74%** children enrolled in schools

**56%** have tax identification number (AFM)

**50%** have access to healthcare (AMKA or PAAYPA)

**20%** registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

**6%** have a bank account

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

309 National Staff

34 International Staff

### Offices:

1 Country Office in Athens

2 Sub Offices in Thessaloniki, Lesbos

3 Field Offices in Chios, Samos, Kos

4 Field Units in Evros, Ioannina, Leros, Rhodes



Afghan asylum-seeker Morteza and Nigerian refugee Kim are part of a team of teenage refugees and asylum-seekers publishing the bi-monthly newspaper Migratory Birds. © UNHCR/ Achilleas Zavallis

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece which leads the refugee response, working closely with other United Nations agencies, State institutions, municipalities, international and national NGOs, grassroots organizations, refugee communities and the local communities.

## Main Activities

### COVID-19 Prevention and Response

- UNHCR assists the Greek Government's prevention and response to COVID-19 in the reception centres by increasing water and sanitation capacity, providing core relief and hygiene items, installing health units for screening and isolation, distributing additional cash assistance, facilitating information dissemination through helplines and interpreters and enhancing its coordination role with authorities, NGOs and UN agencies, including the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO).
- In November, the Greek Government re-introduced a country-wide lockdown. The situation is difficult for asylum-seekers and refugees particularly those who have to shelter-in-place in sites where social distancing is untenable.
- Quarantine and isolation spaces are now available in almost all border locations but lack the medical staff to be fully operational. On the islands and in Evros, UNHCR has undertaken groundworks and provided **73 medical units** for screening and isolation as well as **244 portable units** for hygiene and sanitation, including chemical toilets, showers and hand washing stations.
- UNHCR protects the population at high risk of COVID-19 complications in the island reception centres – where it is difficult to apply social distancing measures – by moving them to safer accommodation. Since mid-March, UNHCR has moved some **2,160 people**.
- UNHCR has provided over **197,000 hygiene items**, such as soap and baby care kits, and over **490,000 personal protective equipment** for front-line workers.
- UNHCR facilitates access to quality information for asylum-seekers via helplines, interpretation, the [HELP](#) website, [podcasts](#), [radio spots](#), [a YouTube channel](#) and through information disseminated via phone SMS. UNHCR assists refugee communities to offer help to co-residents in the island reception centres.
- UNHCR and partners running non-formal education centres ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped, social distances are observed and children can learn in a safe environment.

### 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 agencies for the transition of these programmes to the Greek authorities.

- Apartments in cities and towns offer asylum-seekers and refugees greater dignity and independence. The host population benefits from the **4,584 apartments and 20 buildings** that the programme rents in **22 cities and towns** across Greece. Following the transition of accommodation places to the Greek State, UNHCR in November managed **13,500 places** and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum **15,400**.
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **72,100 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. In November, approximately **7.5 million euros** in cash assistance was re-injected into the local economy.

### Protection

- Two people perished in two separate incidents at sea off Rhodes and Samos islands highlighting the dangers refugees often face to reach safety. At the onset of winter, there are concerns over the well-being of those in islands but also mainland sites, particularly unregistered persons staying in makeshift tents and common areas.
- In November, two separate fires that broke out in the RIC of Samos damaged the shelter and belongings of an estimated 800 people in total. UNHCR [supported](#) the authorities to swiftly coordinate and deliver aid to those affected.
- Organized transfers from the islands to accommodations on mainland Greece continued in November. Over **650** asylum-seekers and refugees were moved out of islands through organized transfers, making a total of **13,500 persons** transferred since the beginning of the year. Of those, **8,500** were supported by UNHCR.
- UNHCR's team on the islands and land border in Evros helped new arrivals, such as families and unaccompanied children, to access necessary services, provided them with information on procedures, rights and obligations and helped the authorities identify those with specific needs who require special assistance.
- UNHCR helped strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **64 experts** to various State agencies to bolster their response and by organizing trainings for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR supported the Asylum Service with experts who advised the caseworkers, upon request, on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and other on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **12,818 instances in 2020 and 60,949 since 2016**. This support improved the quality of asylum processing while ensuring continued integrity of the procedure.
- From the beginning of 2020, UNHCR and its partners have helped over **9,300 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation in order to prepare and support their cases, for example with family reunification procedures.
- UNHCR [HELP website](#) answers questions in seven languages on [how to apply for asylum](#), on [rights and obligations](#) and on available services when [living in Greece](#).

### Child Protection

- Children should not be held in detention, and thanks to the determination of the Greek Government and joint efforts of UNHCR, IOM and its partners, this is close to a reality in November. UNHCR is working with the Greek authorities for the development and establishment of a national tracing and protection mechanism as an alternative to

protective custody, aiming at establishing a safety net in absence of care arrangements. Since January 2020, UNHCR and its partner have supported the transfer of **790 unaccompanied children** out of detention facilities.

- By November, UNHCR supported **2,190 homeless and vulnerable children** by offering psychosocial support, legal aid and cultural mediation, while also facilitating their safe removal accompaniment out of precarious conditions.
- UNHCR also boosts the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and research. Since January, **954 staff** of State agencies and organizations were trained in the protection of children.
- Along with partners, UNHCR works with the authorities to diversify alternative care arrangements, such as family-based foster care for younger children.

### Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence

- Lack of privacy, inadequate lighting and long distance to toilets and showers fosters risks of gender-based violence (GBV) in the sites. In Mavrovouni site on Lesbos, each household has been provided a UNHCR portable solar-powered lamp, which helps mitigate risks in unlit areas.
- UNHCR and its partners continued efforts to prevent and respond to GBV in urban areas as well as some field locations and islands to identify [survivors](#), including men and LGBTI persons, as well as people at-risk, offering case management, legal information, counselling, psychosocial and medical attention through partners. UNHCR refers those affected to State services and shelters or accommodation in apartments where they can get expert help.
- UNHCR supported the authorities to strengthen the national reporting mechanism on trafficking, especially on the islands where the situation is more challenging.
- In November, UNHCR and its expert partner organised eight trainings on GBV, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and case management in Attica and the islands. Approximately **225 participants** were trained, including public management and health staff, implementing partners and volunteer groups.

### Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) to include refugee boys and girls in public education.
- In the current school year, **80% of recognized refugee children** in ESTIA accommodation are enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. Several hurdles continue hindering education opportunities on the islands, where out of **4,000 school-aged children** (4-17), some **175** attend public schools. In addition, quarantine and restriction of movement measures significantly affect the transportation of students, physical presence in schools has been closed during the month, while special reception classes on the islands remain idle.
- Twenty four (24) teenage refugees expressed their thoughts and feelings during the first COVID-19 lockdown in Greece through '[The Quarantine Monologues](#)', as part of UNHCR's educational programme.

### Health

- UNHCR continued to work with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) (EODY) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers gain entry into the health care system, in coordination with WHO.
- Access to health care for asylum-seekers and refugees continued to be limited at several locations across Greece, in particular on the islands, mainly due to the limited public sector medical staff and difficulties in obtaining the necessary documentation.
- UNHCR supported primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesbos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki. UNHCR continued to work with experts towards refugee skill building and training, in order to provide essential psychosocial support and to empower vulnerable refugees, including those with mental health conditions.

### Durable Solutions

- Since 2013, **54,300** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece ([Asylum Service](#) and [Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#) data as of February). In November, **6,100 recognised** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **6,900 beneficiaries of international protection** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR's partners support those living in the accommodation scheme with job matching or referrals to develop skills, vocational trainings and language courses. Of the recognised refugees living in UNHCR's accommodation, **70% have an AMKA social security number, 71% have an AFM tax number, and 30%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **10% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary.
- UNHCR also helps refugees navigate the Greek civil, social and economic system and obtain much needed documents, such as travel papers and family certificates. These are necessary for refugees to find gainful employment and eventually be included in the Greek society. More language classes and job trainings for adults can accelerate refugees' integration.
- On 5 November, UNHCR [signed](#) Memoranda of Understanding with the Municipalities of Karditsa and Larissa aiming to intensify synergies for the integration of refugees.

### Relocation

- November saw **192** persons depart from Greece to other European countries. So far, **1,643 asylum-seekers and refugees** have been relocated from Greece to Germany, Finland, Portugal, Belgium, Luxemburg, Ireland, France, Bulgaria and Lithuania with European States' having pledged to accept **5,143** persons in total so far. Of these, **477** are **unaccompanied children** and **1,013 vulnerable families and adults**.
- UNHCR and its partners, in coordination with IOM, UNICEF and EASO, supported the authorities, in the identification and selection of children based on their best interests. UNHCR also supported the whole spectrum of the relocation of homeless children, providing operational and expert assistance. Since January, UNHCR and partners have supported with provision of guardians and in assessing the best

interest of **466 children**, while leading, at the operational level, the best interest process for homeless children and children living in precarious conditions, including coordination and practical arrangements.

### Returns

- In November, **no people** were returned from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with a total of **2,140 people** [returned](#) since 20 March 2016.

### Shelter and Basic Assistance

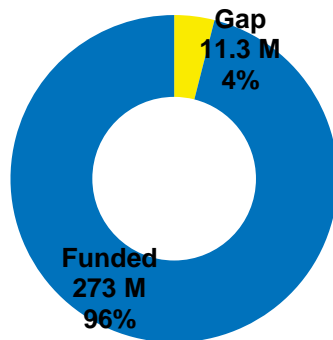
- Adverse weather conditions underscored the need for sustainable site improvement works in [Lesvos](#). By now, all tents in the site are reinforced with insulated material and flooring, while UNHCR distributed additional essential items, including blankets.
- The Greek authorities started planning major construction works this month which will require the temporary relocation of the population in other sections of the site. UNHCR supports the site planning and relocation exercise with technical expertise and interventions.
- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Mytilene on Lesvos island – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **800 vulnerable people or families**.
- Since January 2020, UNHCR has provided to authorities and actors operational in the refugee situation, over **921,700 core relief items**, such as tents, blankets, sleeping bags and mats for **50,000 asylum-seekers and refugees**. This includes material assistance related to COVID-19 and the recent emergency in Lesvos after the Moria fires.

### Partners

In November, UNHCR worked through **30 partners**: [ARSIS](#), [INTERSOS](#), [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 \(EPAPSY\)](#), [Diotima](#), [Faros](#), [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, Tripoli and Tilos.

### LINKS

[Mediterranean Situation](#) – [UNHCR Greece](#) – [Twitter](#) – [Facebook](#) - [YouTube](#)

**FUNDING (AS OF 15 DECEMBER 2020)**
**USD 284.3 M** requested for the Greece Operation


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