



HIGHLIGHTS

30,824

Number of arrivals on islands since the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement

1,156

Number of arrivals on the islands in April 2017

948

Number of people hosted in improved accommodation on the islands

530

Asylum-seekers transferred from the islands to state-run sites or UNHCR accommodation on the mainland

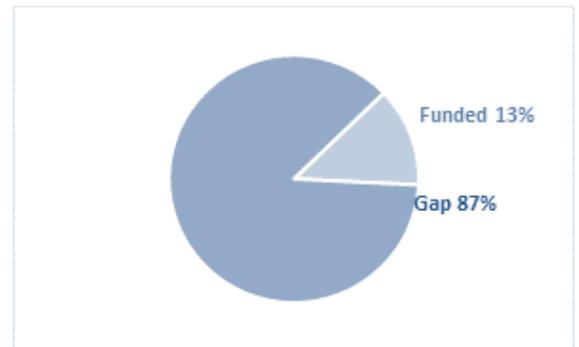
Population on the islands

Some **13,822** estimated on the Aegean islands

April 2017	Arrivals	%	Population
Lesvos	229	15%	3,985
Chios	513	34%	3,788
Samos	243	16%	2,093
Kos	38	2%	2,422
Leros	46	3%	894
Rhodes	26	2%	640
Other	61	4%	
Total	1,156	100%	13,822

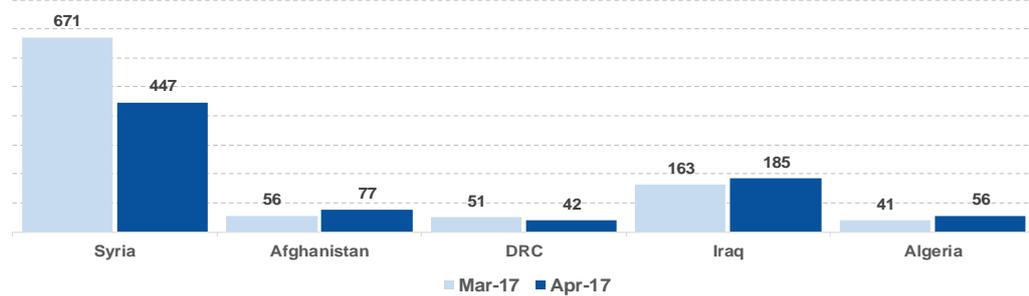
Funding requested for Greece

USD 246 million



Source: Hellenic Police/Coordination Centre for the Management of the Refugee Crisis

Most common nationalities of sea arrivals



Source: Hellenic Police.

UNHCR Presence

73 national and **13** international
42 affiliated workforce out of which **13** staff
deployed to support authorities

1 Islands Unit based in Athens
6 Islands offices (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros, Rhodes)

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The Aegean islands have been at the forefront of the 2015/2016 European Refugee Emergency with over 1 million people arriving in total, the vast majority from refugee producing countries. Before 20 March 2016, the population was transient, with arrivals remaining on the islands for a limited time, sometimes hours or a few days, before continuing their journey. The situation changed after the closure of the so-called ‘Balkans route’ and the implementation of the Joint EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. Arrivals decreased significantly, the length of stay on the island increased, and the needs of the refugee and migrant populations on the islands changed, especially for people and families with specific needs.

Currently, according to the authorities, over 13,800 people are hosted on the Aegean islands; UNHCR estimates that this number could be lower. Some 964 are accommodated in urban facilities run by UNHCR and funded by the European Commission (EC). The Greek Government, supported by UNHCR and the broader humanitarian community, has made positive steps in improving conditions and services at the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on **Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, and Leros**.

The situation on the islands has generally improved, but challenges with overcrowding and insecurity remain, and sub-standard conditions must still be improved in some locations. Protection risks for people staying on the islands continue, particularly the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Children, including unaccompanied children, remain in inadequate shelter with insufficient access to formal or non-formal education, which also severely impacts their psychosocial well-being. Some sites lack regular access to essential services, such as psychosocial counselling, healthcare, and interpretation.

Months after their arrival on the Greek islands many asylum-seekers are still waiting for the full registration and processing of their asylum claims, especially for Iraqis and Afghans. Authorities have accelerated the pace of registration in recent months, but gaps remain. A comprehensive plan is still needed for the strengthening of the institutions allowing for the rapid full registration and processing of asylum claims in accordance with the requirements of the Asylum Procedures Directive (APD) and Greek law. As a protest against the lengthy asylum procedures and uncertainty over their future, twelve Kurdish Syrian men – all residents of the Moria RIC on **Lesvos** – went on a hunger and water strike. The strike was suspended after seven days following UNHCR-led facilitation with the RIC authorities.

Coordination gaps also remain and the Greek Government, the Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) in particular, should establish clear coordination structures with all humanitarian stakeholders to ensure a coherent and efficient response where gaps are addressed, overlap avoided, and resources optimised.

UNHCR’s role in Greece focuses on working with the Government, non-governmental and other organizations, volunteer networks and communities to ensure the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers arriving in Greece. UNHCR advocates for the improvement of policies and services that affect the lives of refugees. UNHCR supports the Government to improve the process through which people can apply for asylum and access rights.

Where necessary, UNHCR helps the Government to fulfil the basic needs of asylum-seekers and refugees. In some cases, UNHCR provides support when there are gaps related to shelter, water, sanitation, food, basic household items, health, education, information provision, coordination and site management. UNHCR does this either directly or by working with partners. UNHCR’s role varies from location to location, depending on the identified needs and partnerships.

UNHCR assists asylum-seekers by connecting them with partners who can provide social and legal advice and representation.

UNHCR also provides support to government officials, the staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others to enhance their capacity to understand and respond to the needs of refugees.



UNHCR provides blankets to newly arrived Afghan refugees on Lesvos. © UNHCR/A. Zavallis, December 2015.

AEGEAN ISLANDS RESPONSE

Protection

- Border procedures.** Despite fewer people traveling to the Aegean islands, UNHCR and its partners maintain shoreline support to new arrivals, in line with its protection mandate. On the night of 23/24 April, sixteen people lost their lives in the first shipwreck recorded in Greece this year off the coast of **Lesvos**. Children were among the 16 dead; seven remained missing; and two women travelling alone were rescued by the Hellenic Coast Guard, one was eight months pregnant. The two shipwreck survivors are hosted in a UNHCR-funded apartment, run by partner Iliaktida, after receiving treatment at the Mytilene Hospital. On **Chios**, the quality of services upon arrival is being affected as gaps in RIS (Reception and Identification Service) services continue with fewer staff for the reception and registration of new arrivals who enter the RIC after 17:00. Since the implementation of EU-Turkey Statement, UNHCR also monitors readmissions to Turkey from the pre-removal stage to the departures at the ports. Between 20 March 2016 and 30 April 2017, 1,094 persons have been readmitted to Turkey under the provisions of the EU-Turkey Statement.
- Monitoring.** UNHCR undertakes protection monitoring in all sites on the islands and offers legal counselling to asylum-seekers through partners. Furthermore, UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, including on procedures to seek asylum; identifying and referring people with specific needs to authorities and other service providers; and carries out regular protection monitoring.
- Child Protection.** Over 175 unaccompanied children reside at open accommodation facilities run by partners Iliaktida, Arsis, Praksis, and Save the Children on the islands. While efforts for their transfer to appropriate shelters continue, on **Kos**, approximately 65 unaccompanied children remain at an overcrowded separate area of the Pyli RIC with minimum specialised services and supervision with the majority remaining unregistered. On **Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros**, UNHCR's partners Praksis and Save the Children operate Child and Youth Friendly Spaces with activities ranging from sports and chess games. On **Samos**, UNHCR's partner Save the Children facilitated a workshop on Best Interest Assessments (for around 15 staff of different organisations dealing with children, including unaccompanied children). On **Lesvos**, two minors reside on the island since March 2016. On **Chios**, Save the Children with UNHCR organised a child protection training for 30 participants from the Hellenic Police and RIS staff working in the RIC. The training focused on principles of child protection, health and nutrition for children in emergencies.
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response (SGBV).** As part of capacity building, a series of trainings on 'Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action' was organised by UNHCR on **Lesvos** with the participation of actors involved in different sectors with the aim to integrate the guidelines in their daily work. On **Samos**, UNHCR facilitated a legal session with around 30 participants during a training on 'Clinical Management of Rape Survivors' organised by UNFPA/KEELPNO. On **Chios**, UNHCR organized a training with partners' interpreters on working with LGBTI in forced displacement. To help address the threat of SGBV, UNHCR's partner Samaritan's Purse is installing additional lighting in the WASH facilities of Souda (toilets and washrooms).
- Accommodation Scheme.** UNHCR – with the support of the EC – accommodates some 964 vulnerable people in apartments through partners Iliaktida, Arsis and Praksis. UNHCR also continues to support the Greek authorities with transferring vulnerable people from overcrowded sites on the Aegean islands to improved shelter on the mainland in sites and UNHCR's accommodation scheme. The inter-ministerial body (KEPOM) coordinates transfers and the allocation of asylum-seekers to state-run facilities. In April, UNHCR supported the transfer of 530 people to the mainland.

Humanitarian Assistance



Refugees play football in front of UNHCR accommodation containers at the Moria RIC funded by the EC © UNHCR/A. Zavallis, February 2017.

- Shelter.** UNHCR actively supports the Greek Government, under the coordination of the MoMP, in moving people to improved accommodation and upgrading shelter in sites. However, poor living conditions persist in several refugee sites in the Aegean islands, more sustainable solutions will need to be found by the Government in coordination with the local authorities. On **Lesvos**, UNHCR installed, at the Moria RIC, 19 two-storey and nine single-storey pre-fabricated containers. As works at the Moria RIC are still ongoing, approximately 155 people are temporarily hosted in the nearby temporary 'Olive Grove' site where a Rubb hall and eleven UNHCR family tents have been set up. At Kara Tepe – the open accommodation site managed by the local Municipality – the installation of 247 EC-funded prefabricated containers was completed. The temporary hotel accommodation scheme, which was initiated by UNHCR, with EC funding, to provide an alternative to vulnerable people during the harsh winter ended in April and they were all transferred to improved accommodation on the island or the mainland. On **Samos**, UNHCR's partner Samaritan's Purse, installed 18 air conditioners in all the dormitories in the upper area of

the Vathy RIC in preparation for the summer period. On **Rhodes**, UNHCR is working with the Municipality to identify the most appropriate solution for the 35 residents of ‘Sfageia’ where conditions remain sub-standard.

- **Water, Sanitation, Hygiene.** UNHCR’s partner Samaritan’s Purse continues to undertake maintenance works of key WASH facilities on **Chios, Samos, Kos** and **Leros**. On **Chios**, UNHCR is providing eight shower and ten toilet containers in the Vial RIC, while on **Samos**, three defect water tanks were replaced in the dormitories of the RIC. On **Leros**, UNHCR continued to support RIS at the open accommodation facility of PIKPA with cleaning services.
- **Core Relief Items.** In April, 900 core relief items were distributed on the Aegean islands – including hygiene parcels, sleeping mats and blankets. As part of the gradual handover to the authorities, UNHCR is organising trainings on the distribution and verification of core relief items. On **Kastelorizo**, UNHCR donated to the local authorities a package of blankets, sleeping mats and dry food in case of new arrivals. As part of efforts to support the host communities as well, UNHCR on **Samos** offered to the Church and Social Welfare Service of the local Municipality 280 women’s shirts, 60 men’s shirts donated by ZARA and 400 hot water bottles.
- **Food.** On **Lesvos**, UNHCR has expressed its readiness to support the Municipality in Kara Tepe accommodation facility by providing temporary food assistance, while transitioning to the more sustainable and self-sufficient communal kitchen modality. For this purpose, two kitchen containers were purchased by UNHCR to be placed in the site.
- **Health.** UNHCR is concerned over the future of medical and psychosocial services at the RICs and RIS managed facilities. In particular, the following issues are of great importance and continuation of the services will need to be ensured: the identification and referral of vulnerable people, including unaccompanied children; the medical treatment of persons in the RICs; the asylum procedures as the RIS vulnerability assessment which is shared with the Regional Asylum Offices (RAOs) for the exemption of vulnerable persons from the border asylum procedure; the provision on mental health and psychosocial support at all sites. On **Samos**, UNHCR along with Doctors without Borders initiated a rapid mapping of vulnerable people in the Vathy RIC; the results showed that over 80 persons residing in the RIC are vulnerable. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the public health sector, UNHCR exceptionally extended the provision of health care on **Kos** and the RIS-managed PIKPA facility on **Leros** and Souda site on **Chios**. On **Chios**, UNHCR through medical partner WAHA donated medical equipment to Chios Hospital. Also on **Chios**, UNHCR recorded an increased need for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHSSP) services; UNHCR and the MHSSP Working Group developed a tool to map services and activities in Vial and Souda.

Cash Card Assistance

- On 1 April 2017, UNHCR received confirmation from the EC to fund the Greece Cash Alliance (GCA). The Alliance builds on the work of UNHCR and other cash actors and is conceived as a joint action between six agencies led by UNHCR (International Rescue Committee, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Mercy Corps, Catholic Relief Services, Samaritan’s Purse and Care International) to ensure that all eligible asylum seekers and migrants in Greece continue to receive monthly cash assistance.
- In April, which is the first month of the implementation of UNHCR’s cash assistance through the GCA, over 1,440 people benefitted from UNHCR’s cash card programme with 923 new cards distributed in to cover for basic needs, such as clothes, hygiene items, transport and communications. Given the diverse nature of the sites on the islands, UNHCR – in coordination with the MoMP – has reviewed the distributed amounts to reflect the services provided in the sites and accommodation facilities.

Education

- **Formal Education.** UNHCR is working with the Ministry of Education to identify solutions for children moving between locations so that they can continue attending school and certify their attendance. School attendance greatly varies from island to island. Indicatively, on **Lesvos** some 45 children attend public schools, while on **Samos** and **Kos** only a handful of refugee children – 8 and 7 respectively – receive formal education. UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available.
- **Non-formal Education.** On **Leros**, eleven boys and girls between 12 and 18 years old from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan and 24 adults from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ethiopia took part in the exams for the certification of English language at the ‘LEDU’ centre managed by UNHCR and Save the Children. The exams were organised free of charge by the EUROPALSO Greek Association of Teachers-Owners of Language Centres. In the Child Friendly Space outside the Vathy RIC on **Samos**, approximately 60 children



Refugees participate in exams for English language certification at the ‘LEDU’ centre on Leros. ©UNHCR/A. Papakonstantinou, April 2017.

attend classes on a daily basis with the support of UNHCR’s partner Save the Children and Samos Volunteers.

Communicating with Communities

- **Information Provision.** UNHCR continues to organise individual and group sessions to asylum-seekers on their rights and obligations and the asylum procedures. UNHCR on **Lesvos** and **Samos**, expanded the coverage of WIFI services in the RICs which, among other, allows refugees and migrants to obtain information regarding asylum procedures and stay in contact with their families and communities.
- **Community Dialogues.** UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities of the islands, convenes community-based discussions on a regular basis. These platforms serve as a dual channel of communication for better dissemination of information inside the site and as a feedback mechanism where issues of interest, such as hygiene, childcare and information provision are discussed. For example on **Chios**, UNHCR organises bi-weekly meetings with a women’s committee to address protection and other concerns of women and girls, as well as, to encourage meaningful and active participation of women in the refugee committees. UNHCR on **Lesvos** presented to humanitarian actors the outcomes of the participatory assessments carried out between May 2016 and March 2017 in Moria, Kara Tepe and UNHCR-funded accommodation. The assessments reveal a sense of feeling of fatigue and uncertainty about the future of the refugee population. Following up on this, UNHCR and partners are planning to implement a number of community initiatives with the aim to encourage skills development and help increase sentiments of optimism and positivity among the population.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

- The sessions of a European Commission online language program organised by UNHCR and the University of Aegean continue on **Lesvos** and **Samos**. UNHCR facilitates the visit of asylum-seekers to learning spaces of the University of the Aegean on **Lesvos** and **Samos**, and soon on **Chios**, for participants of the program. Volunteer students from the University of the Aegean help participants with technical issues and can address simple linguistic questions. By the end of the course, some 2,000 refugees from the islands will have the chance to benefit from the online language classes of 12 European languages.
- A set of recreational and livelihood activities were launched by UNHCR and the volunteer group ECHO100Plus on **Leros**. Approximately 35 women from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Palestine have the opportunity to choose their preferred activity, including fashion design, cooking classes and music workshops, among others. On **Samos**, UNHCR organised an intercultural poetry night during which poets from Samos, Syria and Iran recited their own poetry pieces. A discussion and music event followed with the participation of over a hundred people, including the Permanent Representative of Greece to UNESCO.
- A rise in xenophobic incidents was reported on the islands during April. On **Chios**, a demonstration by right-wing Golden Dawn supporters, followed by attacks against asylum-seekers ended with the arrest and conviction under anti-racism laws of two locals. On **Rhodes**, a small group of locals threw eggs at the unofficial site of ‘Sfageia’. The police was informed by volunteers about the incident, which is now under investigation. UNHCR is concerned over recent incidents of xenophobia and underlines the importance of peaceful coexistence projects that foster closer relations and mutual trust between the refugee and local population.



Palestinian refugee recites her poem ‘Homeland’ during a poetry night organised by UNHCR on Samos. ©UNHCR/D. Anagnostou, April 2017.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national organisations in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: Danish Red Cross, Save the Children, Samaritan's Purse, METAdrasi, Arsis, Praksis, Iliaktida. Working groups per sector are organised on a weekly basis on **Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros** with the participation of national and local authorities, European institutions and volunteer groups.
- UNHCR assists the Government and the municipalities in chairing interagency meetings and coordinating interventions that take place on the Aegean islands.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- UNHCR's requirements in Greece for **2017** amount to **US\$ 245.9** million, including **US\$ 238.7** million under the **2017 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP)** for Europe. At reporting, the total recorded contributions for the operation amount to **US\$ 31.1** million from the European Union, all of which fall under the RMRP.
- The financial support provided by donors who have contributed with non-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds, as well as for those who have contributed directly to the situation and the Greece operation allows to provide direct assistance in protection and help find solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers. In this changing operational context, UNHCR is appealing to donors to provide contributions that can be allocated as flexibly as possible.
- Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR 2017: [United States of America \(95 M\)](#) | [Sweden \(76 M\)](#) | [Netherlands \(52 M\)](#) | [Norway \(41 M\)](#) | [Denmark \(23 M\)](#) | [Australia \(19 M\)](#) | [Switzerland \(15 M\)](#) | [Priv Donors Spain \(13 M\)](#) | [Germany \(12 M\)](#)

Sector	Partner
Protection	GRC, KSPM-ERP, METAdrasi, Praksis, Arsis, ICMC, UNOPS, Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services, Intersos, DRC, Ministry of Interior
Child protection	Faros, Arsis, METAdrasi, Iliaktida, Save the Children
Shelter/Core relief items	Organisation Earth, Samaritan's Purse
WASH	Samaritan's Purse
Cash	Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services
Site management support	Organisation Earth, Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, DRC, UNOPS, Reception and Identification Service
Health	MdM, WAHA
Education	Save the Children
Accommodation	Praksis, CRS, Arsis, Nostos, Iliaktida, Solidarity Now, Faros, Municipality of Athens, Municipality of Livadia, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Heraklion Development Agency
Peaceful coexistence	Arsis, Solidarity Now, Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, UNOPS
Awareness raising	TENet-Gr, UNOPS

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