

Greece

There were **1,050 land arrivals** this month, slightly lower than November's, **while sea arrivals doubled with 2,900 people**. The Government with UNHCR's support continued accelerated transfers

of asylum-seekers from the islands to the mainland this month. This had a very positive impact on some islands, like Chios, while the population in Samos remains five times over the centre's capacity. UNHCR provided

27,000 places of dignified accommodation in apartments this month, and since October **49,000 relief items** like blankets and sleeping bags to the authorities in reception centres.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

71,200

14,600 on the islands and **56,600** in the mainland

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimate as of 31 December 2018 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

63,000

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and 99,945 since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

3,600

people this month, and 42,345 since June 2016 from the islands **transferred** to the mainland with UNHCR support.

22,700

people this month, and 55,755 since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

294 National Staff

33 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



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Two-year-old Zahra stands between her mother (left) and father (right) in their apartment in Chios provided by UNHCR's ESTIA accommodation scheme.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who leads the refugee response, working closely with other UN 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 **4,554 apartments** and 22 buildings that the programme rents in 21 cities across Greece. UNHCR had 27,088 accommodation places in December.
- In December, UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **63,051 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 December, nearly 6.3 million euro in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Overcrowding has eased in Chios' Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) where the centre hosts as many people as its capacity for the second month. However, the RICs of Samos and Lesvos continue to operate beyond their capacity with thousands of asylum-seekers living in unsuitable tents or makeshift shelter in nearby fields. The situation is critical in Samos, and the worsening weather conditions make matters worse.
- The Ministry of Migration Policy (MoMP) with UNHCR's support transferred to the mainland the highest number of eligible asylum-seekers this month in 2018, also ahead of the deteriorating weather conditions. For the second month, the number of those transferred exceeded the number of arrivals. In total **3,591** people were transferred from Lesvos (1,754), Samos (1,173), Chios (255), Kos (244), Leros (153) and Rhodes (12) in December. As of July 2018, the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) 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 31 January 2019.

- The accelerated transfers were possible also because the MoMP increased accommodation with IOM's support in buildings and hotels across Greece.
- The Government has increased the capacity in mainland sites and preparing additional ones. UNHCR offered shelter items to house 3,000 people since spring, as part of over 2.5 million relief and shelter items UNHCR provided to the refugee response in Greece since 2015. UNHCR will provide another 400 housing units to assist these efforts.
- Nevertheless, the shortage of accommodation country-wide is increasingly leading to the overcrowding of many mainland camps, creating tension and increasing 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, RIC. They ensure asylum-seekers are identified properly and that unaccompanied children and people with specific needs are directed to appropriate services.
- In 2018, UNHCR and its partners helped over [10,000 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection](#) with counselling and legal representation on asylum procedures and other issues related to accessing rights. Among them, over 600 people were assisted at the appeal stage of the asylum procedure as per the relevant EU legal standards under UNHCR's Memorandum of Cooperation with the MoMP.
- 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 2018 UNHCR has assisted in over [13,700](#) instances.
- 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](#). Over 25,000 people have accessed the website in 2018.

Child Protection

- There are 3,741 unaccompanied and separated children in Greece but only 1,064 places in shelters and SIL apartments (Source: EKKA, as of 31 December). As a result, many children spend lengthy periods in protective custody or in the RICs on the islands and Evros waiting for a place in age-appropriate shelters or other facilities. Others stay in informal housing or risk homelessness.
- Living conditions for unaccompanied and separated children remain alarming. The situation is particularly worrying in Moria RIC, Lesbos where children often share shelter with adults and in Vathy RIC, Samos where the designated area lacks mattresses leaving limited options to children but to sleep in shifts. On Evros there is limited support and services for children at the RIC.
- On the islands, UNHCR helps the authorities protect children from risk with child-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 year, UNHCR's partner has transferred 738 unaccompanied children from RICs to temporary facilities in the mainland until their eventual transfer to designated shelters.

- UNHCR has also developed Supported Independent Living (SIL) –in its pilot phase in Crete – where EKKA guardians and dedicated teams support children over 16 years old live on their own.
- UNHCR transfers boys and girls who turn eighteen to apartments in its Accommodation Scheme which helps free space in shelters for younger children.
- In 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 RICs 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 RICs, survivors cannot always access them on time.
- In 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. The Ministry estimates that over 11,000 refugee and asylum-seeking children attend formal education country-wide.
- Refugee students living in apartments and in eight sites around Greece attend school alongside their Greek peers. An estimated 3,500 children housed in UNHCR apartments are enrolled in schools, which is half of the estimated school-age population in apartments.
- Additionally, the Ministry estimates that 8,000 children living in reception sites are enrolled in schools, and 800 in kindergarten.
- In addition to the mainland, preparatory afternoon classes on the islands this year for refugees in primary and secondary education aim to prepare children attend the regular school curriculum next year. An estimated 2,500 children attend these.
- On the islands, UNHCR supports complementary, non-formal education where formal education is not available for many children.

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

- As of December 2018, 15,205 people had received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Greece this year, and 10,351 in the entire 2017.
- 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 December 2018, some 5,649 beneficiaries of international and subsidiary protection were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, and 11,100 received cash assistance. Of those in UNHCR's accommodation, 93% have an AMKA social security number, 62% have an AFM tax number, and 27% are registered with OAED agency for programmes that help them find work. Additionally, 75% of children residing in accommodation were enrolled in schools (as of 26 December 2018).
- 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.

Returns and Relocation

- This month, 11 people **returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with 1,806 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.

Logistics

- As many of the sites in the mainland and some in the islands are remote from services and public transportation UNHCR facilitates people's access to the Asylum Service and other services around Greece.

Partners

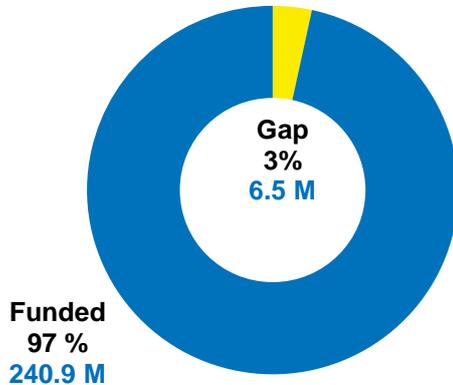
In December, UNHCR worked through 30 partners. UNHCR worked on Accommodation with [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praksis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [Terre des Hommes](#), and the Local Authorities of Athens, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Livadia, Herakleion, Trikala, Nea Filadelfia – Nea Chalkidona, Karditsa, Larissa and Tripoli; on Cash Assistance with [Catholic Relief Services](#), and the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#); on Legal Assistance with [METAdrasi](#) and the [Greek Council for Refugees](#); on Child Protection with [ARSIS](#), [METAdrasi](#), [Network for Children's Rights](#), and [Praksis](#); on PwSN with [ARSIS](#), [Doctors of the World](#), and the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#); on Prevention and Response to SGBV with [Diotima](#), [Praksis](#) and [ARSIS](#); on Peaceful Coexistence and Integration with [Solidarity Now](#), [ARSIS](#), [Faros](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), [INTERSOS](#), and [KEAN](#); on Site Management Support (SMS) with the [International Rescue Committee](#); on Interpretation Services and Messaging with [METAdrasi](#) and the [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\)](#); on Awareness Raising with the [Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network \(TENet\)](#); and on the Deployment of Affiliate Workforce with [UNOPS](#) and the [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\)](#).

LINKS

[Mediterranean Situation - UNHCR Greece - Twitter - Facebook](#) – 'Face Forward ...into my home' exhibition in Heraklion, Crete

FUNDING (AS OF 08 JANUARY 2019)

USD 247.4 M

 requested for the Greece Operation


Donors

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