

Greece

August saw **1,050 arrivals recorded** mostly to Lesbos island bringing the total arrivals in **2020** to **12,000**. UNHCR reiterated its concerns over **credible reports** of **pushbacks** and

stressed the need for Greece to **investigate** the **incidents** and ensure effective protection of asylum-seekers and refugees. Over **820 unaccompanied children** in

the reception centres remain at risk. UNHCR supports Greece with **care arrangements** and by strengthening **support** systems for unaccompanied **children**.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

121,400

93,700 in the mainland and **27,700** on the islands

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimates as of 31 August 2020 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

85,000

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **187,100** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

22,100

people this month, and **69,000** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

PEOPLE IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

68% children enrolled in schools

59% have access to healthcare (AMKA or PAAYPA)

56% have tax identification number (AFM)

22% registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

6% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

315 National Staff

33 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



Unaccompanied children waiting to depart to a European country, as part of the ongoing relocation scheme.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece which 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 community.

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 UN agencies, NGOs and authorities.
- 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 **1,843 people**.
- On the islands and in Evros, UNHCR has provided **55 medical units** for screening and isolation as well as **198 portable units** for hygiene and sanitation, including chemical toilets, showers and hand washing stations.
- UNHCR has provided over **174,700 hygiene items** such as soap and baby care kits, **63,800 core relief items**, such as blankets and sleeping bags, as well as more than **251,300 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](#). UNHCR also assists refugee communities offer help to residents in the island reception centres.
- UNHCR and partners running non-formal education centres ensure that classrooms are adequately equipped, 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 also benefits from the **4,650 apartments and eight buildings** that the programme rents in **21 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,800 accommodation places** this month.

- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **85,000 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. In August, **8.6 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- UNHCR [called on](#) Greece to refrain from the alleged practice of pushbacks and to seriously investigate these reports, which include a series of credible and direct accounts that have been recorded by the UNHCR Office in Greece and have been brought to the attention of the responsible authorities.
- Cessation of assistance without effective access to employment and social welfare continued to raise the risk of recognized refugees becoming destitute and further strain the already stretched capacity of some mainland sites. UNHCR continued to [call](#) on Greece to ensure that refugees have access to critical national programmes which promote their self-reliance and integration, including language classes, vocational training, and access to gainful employment.
- UNHCR's team at the land border in Evros, helped those arriving at the Fylakio reception centre, such as families and unaccompanied children, to access necessary services, provided them with information and helped the authorities identify those with specific needs who require special assistance.
- UNHCR helped strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **66 experts** to various State agencies to bolster their response and by organizing trainings for Governmental staff.
- UNHCR supported the Asylum Service with experts who advise the caseworkers upon request on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provided on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **8,748 first instance interviews in 2020, and 56,879 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 **7,300 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation in order to prepare and support their cases, as for example for 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

- With close to **4,400 unaccompanied children** in Greece, only **one in three** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of August). As a result, their well-being and safety are at-risk, especially on the islands where living conditions are difficult.
- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and supports them with legal aid and psychosocial support through partners and boosts the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice.
- Since January 2020, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi has safely moved **367 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland.
- During the month of August, UNHCR handed to the Greek authorities the management of the semi-independent living scheme for unaccompanied children. In

total, UNHCR through its partners provided care and housing to **58 unaccompanied children**.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Lack of privacy, inadequate lighting and long distance to toilets and showers foster risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the sites. In Samos, UNHCR assisted the authorities in increasing lighting in and around the reception centre by donating 1,000 solar lamps and other electrical equipment.
- UNHCR and its partners continued work to prevent and respond to SGBV 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.
- The Covid-19 pandemic and containment measures further increased the risk of SGBV and UNHCR piloted – through its partner – an online help desk to provide easier and instant assistance and information on the available services.
- UNHCR supported the authorities to strengthen the national reporting mechanism on trafficking, especially on the islands where the situation is more challenging.

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, **78% of recognized refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation are enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. UNHCR estimates that **6,400 school-aged children** (4-17) are on the Aegean islands, while only a handful attend public schools.

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 the [World Health Organization](#).
- 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 to train and build the skills of non-specialist refugees to offer basic psychosocial support and 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 August, **5,950 recognised** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **6,100**

beneficiaries of international protection were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.

- UNHCR's partners support those living in the accommodation scheme with job matching or referral to develop skills, vocational trainings and language courses. Of the recognised refugees living in UNHCR's accommodation, **84% have an AMKA social security number, 75% have an AFM tax number, and 34%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **10% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.
- 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.

Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR supports the Greek Government in its efforts to secure relocation places for unaccompanied children, as well as asylum-seekers and recognised refugees more broadly to other European States and offers advice and technical support.
- As of August, **239 unaccompanied children** have been [relocated](#) from Greece to Germany, Finland, Portugal, Belgium, Luxemburg, Ireland and France, with more European States' having pledged to accept 1,135 in total so far. In addition, 294 children with serious medical needs and their family members have relocated to Germany.
- UNHCR and its partners, in coordination with IOM, UNICEF and EASO, supported the authorities, in the identification and selection of children according to their best interests, as well as with their transportation to the mainland for their eventual departure. UNHCR and partners have supported the authorities in assessing the [best interest](#) of 317 children, including homeless children and children living in precarious conditions.
- This month, **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

- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,000 vulnerable people or families**.
- This month, UNHCR delivered approximately **4,500 core relief items** and personal protective equipment including blankets, hygiene items, masks, gloves to support the authorities in the reception of new arrivals on the islands.

Partners

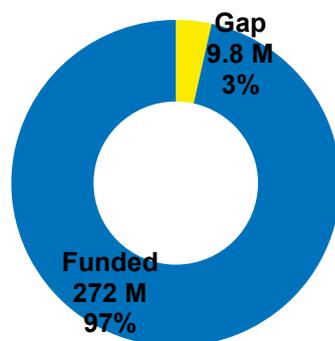
In August, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [UNICEF](#), [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTEROSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), [the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), [the Greek Council for Refugees](#), [the Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), [the Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [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 14 SEPTEMBER 2020)

USD 281.8 M requested for the Greece Operation



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