



HIGHLIGHTS

34,927

People received cash assistance in Greece in May directly from UNHCR, and indirectly from UNHCR-funded Greece Cash Alliance partners in May

29,300

People benefitted from alternatives to camps in UNHCR urban accommodation since the beginning of the programme

17,754

UNHCR accommodation places currently active as alternatives to camps

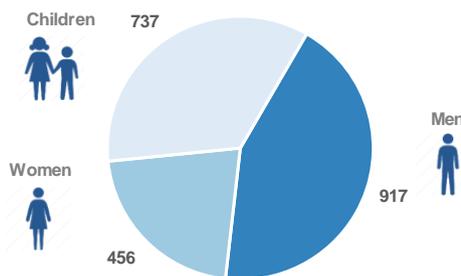
8,290

Transfers supported by UNHCR from the islands to improved accommodation in UNHCR accommodation and state-run sites in the mainland since 1 June 2016

Arrivals in May 2017

2,110 sea arrivals

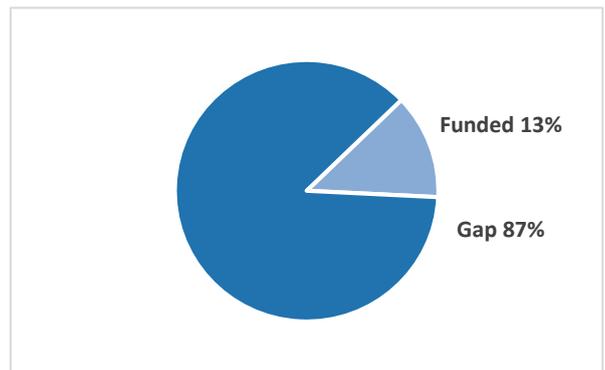
Age and Gender (May 2017)



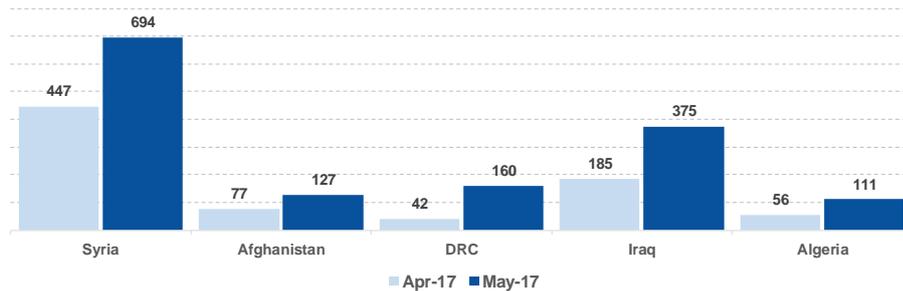
Source: Hellenic Police.

Funding

USD 246 million requested



Most common nationalities of sea arrivals



Source: Hellenic Police.

UNHCR Presence

262 national and **65** international
102 affiliated workforce and **125** staff deployed to support authorities

- 12** Offices
- 1** Representation in Athens
- 5** Mainland Offices (Thessaloniki, Larissa, Ioannina, Athens, Evros)
- 6** Islands Offices (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos, Rhodes)

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

One million refugees and migrants transited through Greece in 2015 and 2016 during the emergency, along the Eastern Mediterranean route through Turkey to Europe. After the closure of the Balkan route, and with the implementation of the Joint EU-TUR Statement on 20 March 2016, some 50,000 people remained in Greece. Since then, arrivals to the islands decreased to a daily average of 73 people, far below the 1,800 daily average of the first months of 2016. Many of those remaining in Greece sought asylum in the country. The Government and humanitarian actors gradually responded to their needs for accommodation and services.

In 2016, three times more people applied for asylum in Greece than the year before, **with 51,092 asylum applications, in contrast to the 13,195 in 2015**. New asylum procedures were put in place, which demanded an increased capacity from the Greek authorities, with substantial support in particular from the European Commission, to receive asylum-seekers, register and process asylum applications.

In the mainland, humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, focused their efforts on improving conditions in the many sites accommodating refugees and migrants. Supported by UNHCR, the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy closed most sites unsuitable for long-term human habitation, and intends to close many of the remaining ones that are also remote. The remote sites introduce a barrier to those needing to travel to complete their asylum applications, access education, medical care and other services. UNHCR has provided transportation to people in these remote sites, while also gradually shifting its operational focus from sites to urban accommodation.

In the islands, arrivals have decreased but many people spend a longer time there to complete their asylum applications. Consequently, the few sites hosting them become quickly overcrowded. The overcrowded conditions mean that unaccompanied children, people with disabilities or victims of sexual and gender-based violence cannot always access safe accommodation options. The overcrowded conditions also add pressure on the services that are provided and create tension over the limited available resources. The situation increases protection risks and demands ongoing work to improve living conditions and address protection concerns.

The Greek authorities estimated some 62,193 refugees and migrants to be in Greece at the end of May, of whom, 48,185 in the mainland and 14,008 in the Aegean Islands (Source: KEPOM). There were an estimated 2,110 sea arrivals on the Aegean Islands, a decrease from April's 1,156 sea arrivals (Hellenic Police). UNHCR has its own estimates for assistance delivery purposes which indicate lower figures of some 42,000 people and have been shared with the Government.



Refugees visit the Chios Mastic Museum in Greece. UNHCR, Alfredo D'Amato.

MAINLAND AND AEGEAN ISLANDS RESPONSE

UNHCR in Greece has been supporting the Greek Government together with partners to address the changing needs of asylum-seekers and refugees throughout the emergency and the post-emergency stabilization period. Operationally, UNHCR has worked on improving living conditions for asylum-seekers across Greece, on providing services and relief items directly and through partners, and on accommodating the most vulnerable in apartments and hotels.

UNHCR has also been supporting the Greek reception and asylum procedure through the capacity building of staff, the secondment of expert staff, targeted interventions and quality assurance. UNHCR also provides support through partners for legal aid and interpretation, and works with partners and other agencies to build the capacity of stakeholders in Greece.

UNHCR's response in May focused on supporting the Greek Government in the three areas of 1) **Reception**, 2) **Asylum** and 3) **Solutions**. As the Greek Government has increasingly focused on enhancing refugees' self-reliance and contributing to longer term solutions, UNHCR's two operational priorities in May were 1) **Urban Accommodation**, and 2) **Cash Assistance**.

Urban Accommodation

UNHCR is working with the Greek Government and municipalities to accommodate vulnerable asylum-seekers in urban areas where they can better access services and education. This increases the opportunities for self-reliance and for their potential integration in Greek society. The Urban Accommodation Scheme is a win-win solution for asylum-seekers and the local communities as it provides asylum-seekers with much needed normalcy, and delivers financial benefits to local communities at a time of economic hardship for many Greeks. The Urban Accommodation Scheme is implemented with UNHCR's partners Arsis, Praksis, Nostos, Iliaktida, METAdrasi, Faros, Save the Children, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Solidarity Now, with the support of the European Commission. The Municipalities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Livadia and Crete are also part of the Scheme. [Video on UNHCR Urban Accommodation available here.](#)

- Up to now, **29,300 people benefitted from the Accommodation and Services Scheme**, which is in line with UNHCR's out-of-camp policy and the Greek Government's efforts to provide longer term solutions for refugees.
- In May, UNHCR provided asylum-seekers with **17,754 places in its Urban Accommodation Scheme**. Of these, UNHCR provides 718 places for unaccompanied children in Greece through its partners. This month, **673 places were added** to the Scheme. This year UNHCR will provide through partners a total of 22,000 places in apartments and buildings, while gradually phasing out of providing accommodation in hotels. The shift towards apartments is to ensure that asylum-seekers are provided with a more sustainable option that is also closer to services such as schools and medical services.
- UNHCR also assisted authorities transfer **775 people in May** from the Greek islands to improved accommodation in the mainland, and to UNHCR's Urban Accommodation. Since June 2016, UNHCR has supported **the transfer of 8,290 people**.
- As part of the UNHCR country-wide strategy to increase accommodation spaces of the Urban Accommodation Scheme throughout Greece, the Minister of Migration Policy and the UNHCR Representative met with the 20 Mayors of Central Macedonia to increase accommodation spaces in Northern Greece by 1,000 by the end of 2017.
- In May, the Minister of Migration Policy announced the closing down of the site of Elliniko, the former international airport of Athens and former sites for the Olympics. Elliniko was initially used as an emergency measure to accommodate people in late 2015 and was not intended as a long-term solution. UNHCR facilitated the transfer of 583 vulnerable individuals from Elliniko to apartments in the UNHCR Accommodation Scheme since September 2016, 193 of whom in May. These include female-headed households, people with severe physical and mental illness, people with disabilities, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and infants. At the end of May, UNHCR had lowered the vulnerability criteria to also move of families with children attending school to nearby accommodation. This was to ensure that children would be able to finish the school year and attend the end-of-year exams in June. This also supported the efforts made by the Ministry of Education and the municipalities to enroll asylum-seeking children to school. Most of the evacuees were transferred to Thiva, Malakasa, Kavala and Derveni.
- As protection standards are at the heart of UNHCR's Urban Accommodation Scheme, UNHCR in May conducted an SGBV capacity building initiative for KEDHL, the managing partner of the Urban Accommodation Scheme in Livadeia. The training introduced participants to SGBV in displacement settings, examined the guiding principles and a survivor-centred approach, and emphasized the legal obligation to report SGBV incidents.

Cash Assistance

In May 2017, UNHCR provided cash assistance in Greece as part of the Greece Cash Alliance (GCA) with the support of the European Commission. The Alliance harmonizes cash assistance in Greece, and builds on the previous work of cash actors. The GCA is a joint action between six agencies (IRC, IFRC, Mercy Corps, CRS, Samaritan's Purse and CARE) led by UNHCR. It has one database (UNHCR's ProGres database), one service provider and one card. UNHCR as the grant holder and GCA lead agency loads the cards with payments while partners are responsible for monitoring and for field support on sites and in Urban Accommodation. In April UNHCR and partners started the transition between other agencies' cash systems to the joint GCA system, which will be concluded in July. Cash Assistance restores dignity and empowers people who can now choose how to cover their basic needs. [Video on UNHCR Cash Assistance available here](#)

- UNHCR and partners are verifying eligible asylum-seekers to ensure that those who are eligible will receive cash and to prevent fraud. By the end of May, UNHCR and partners had verified some **27,767 people in some 40 sites on the mainland and the islands**.
- In May, **34,927 people received cash assistance in Greece** directly from UNHCR and indirectly from UNHCR-funded partners. UNHCR continued the gradual distribution of the 'one-card' cash cards, which by the end of July will be the only card used in Greece. In May, UNHCR distributed a further 3,160 'one-card' cash cards, benefitting 6,892 people.

- In May, sites discontinued catering services as asylum-seekers could now use their cash assistance for self-catering. UNHCR and partners worked with asylum-seeker communities to ensure a smooth transition from catering to cooking. UNHCR, the Cash Working Group, the Communicating with Communities Working Group and Site Management Support actors informed the communities of the transition and the expected impact, and worked to provide a tailored approach as sites experienced differently the transition.
- Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are not eligible for cash assistance in Greece and they experienced the discontinuation of catering services differently. UNHCR drafted Standard Operating Procedures through the Protection and Child Protection Working Groups, and collected information on the number of affected children in the sites where child protection actors could take on additional responsibilities to cover the children's basic needs. Child Protection actors committed to undertaking Best Interests Assessments (BIAs) to identify the most appropriate solution for each child.
- In May, UNHCR continued to provide transportation for asylum-seekers from remote sites. Some 500 people were provided with transportation between sites in Attika and their appointments with the Asylum Offices and Embassies, and some 1,200 from the Alimos Asylum office to accommodation facilities.
- In May, UNHCR [delivered over 88,000 relief items](#) to partners in Greece for beneficiaries. This month, UNHCR and UNHCR-funded partners continued with targeted interventions to upgrade living conditions for asylum-seekers across Greece through infrastructural upgrades and technical works.



Refugee children at Kara Tepe, Lesvos, Greece. UNHCR, Pavlos Avagianos.

Protection

- **Quality Assurance of the Asylum Procedures:** UNHCR supports the Greek Asylum Service to ensure their work is in line with international quality standards of refugee status determination procedures. UNHCR fulfils this institutional role by helping, upon request, the caseworkers of the Quality Department with on-the-job training and advice on how to draft decisions and conduct interviews. In May alone, UNHCR advised in 1,493 instances and attended 64 interviews.
- **Legal Aid:** In May, UNHCR through its partners Greek Council for Refugees, Ecumenical Refugee Program and METAdrasi, provided legal assistance in the form of counselling and representation [to asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection](#) in detention, in open reception facilities as well as to urban population on asylum procedures, family reunification, child protection, protection of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence as well as on other relevant administrative procedures and access to rights. METAdrasi and GCR also provided legal assistance at the appeal stage of the asylum procedures under a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Ministry of Migration Policy. Since July 2016, [over 3,500 appellants benefited from free legal assistance at second instance](#).
- **Relocation:** According to the European Commission (EC), 13,825 asylum-seekers from Greece have been relocated as of 31 May 2017 since the beginning of the programme in September 2015. In May, the number of departures was 1,335 in contrast to the 2016 average monthly departures of 607. As of May 2017, the total number of pledges from EU States to the Greek Asylum Service was 24,352 (Source: Greek Asylum Service) The number of departures is expected to increase in the coming months and until October 2017 when the programme is planned to end.
- **Family reunification:** In the first three months of 2017, 1,352 people departed for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation to other EU Member States according to [information published by the Greek Asylum Service](#). This constitutes a significant increase from 2016, when 951 people departed the entire year. At the request of the Asylum Service, UNHCR with its partner, the Ecumenical Programme for Refugees have assumed the cost of the transfers of people reuniting with their families from February until July 2017.
- **Returns:** In May, 87 people (14 Syrians, and 73 other third country nationals) returned from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the EU-TUR Statement. With the latest returns, the total number of returnees under the EU-Turkey Statement is 1,181 people. UNHCR monitors readmissions to Turkey since the implementation of the EU-TUR Statement to ensure the observance of procedural safeguards so as to reduce the risk of unlawful returns of asylum-seekers.
- **Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** UNHCR and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee rolled-out the 2015 IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings in Athens, Lesvos and Thessaloniki. In the training 400 staff participated from International Organizations, NGOs and public authorities and the different sectors of education, health, protection and child protection, site management support, shelter and WASH. The training aimed to incorporate GBV concepts throughout the daily work of the different sectors and to build the capacity of sector partners to identify and mitigate sector-specific GBV risks.

- **Child Protection:** In Samos, UNHCR's partner Save the Children organized a training on 'Child Protection Safeguarding' with the participation of around 30 Police staff participated.

Education

- The Ministry of Education (MoE) called for the registration of refugee children into public schools for the next academic year, where they may also attend specific reception classes to facilitate their school attendance. This is available for children between 6 and 15 years old, who reside in urban accommodation. UNHCR and partners are supporting the refugee communities with information and advice on school enrolment.
- UNHCR continues to support non-formal education activities, in particular on the islands where formal education has not yet been ensured in practice. In **Leros**, eleven refugee boys and girls from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan of the 'LEDU' facility received certificates from their EUROPALSO English language exams in April. On **Rhodes**, UNHCR initiated computer courses in coordination with the University of the Aegean for some twenty people residing in UNHCR accommodation. The online language programme of the European Commission organized by UNHCR and the University of the Aegean continues in **Lesvos** and **Samos**. Finally, UNHCR facilitates the visits of asylum-seekers to learning spaces of the University of the Aegean on **Lesvos** and **Samos**, and soon on **Chios**. By the end of the course, some 2,000 refugees will have the chance to benefit from the online language classes of 12 European languages.

Health

- The Hellenic Red Cross will provide medical services on the islands from June under the umbrella of KEELPNO (Hellenic Centre for Disease and Control). KEELPNO will then assume this provision between August and the end of 2017.
- The PHILOS Programme of KEELPNO will continue until the end of the year. PHILOS is a programme that provides medical staff and associated specialists to camps and hospitals in the mainland for refugees and migrants. PHILOS involves 480 staff and is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Commission.

Communicating with Communities

- UNHCR, partners and community centers produced urban service mapping leaflets in Arabic, Farsi and Kurmanji to address the request of the communities in Northern Greece for more information on what services are available. UNHCR also supported the asylum-seekers arriving in the mainland from the islands, as well as those who live in urban areas.
- In Lesvos, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, RIS and RAO/EASO launched an information point in the RIC Moria to help asylum-seekers and migrants better access information with regular info sessions, maps with key locations and timetables on education activities and lists of asylum appointments.
- UNHCR and partners continued to increase connectivity (wifi) in sites around Greece through upgrades in Diavata and Nea Kavala. Connectivity is very important for communities to access information and stay connected with family.

Community Empowerment and Peaceful Coexistence

- UNHCR also organizes events with the host and refugee communities to promote integration and peaceful coexistence. On Chios, UNHCR's partner Samaritan's Purse organised a cooking event in a local restaurant where asylum-seekers from Syria, Iran and Eritrea prepared traditional dishes. In Samos, UNHCR brought together local and refugee mothers and children in celebration of the international Mother's Day in collaboration with the Regional Division of Samos and the Association of Parents, Guardians and Friends of Persons with Mental Disabilities.
- UNHCR organized a food festival in the town of Alexandria, Northern Greece where asylum-seekers from the site prepared Syrian and Iraqi food and offered 700 meals to the host community to express their gratitude. In Thessaloniki, the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education of Central Macedonia, with the support of UNHCR organized a sports event called "We play/live together" (παίζοιμε μαζί). Over 490 local youth joined refugees from neighboring sites in football, volleyball, basketball, and other sports. Also in Thessaloniki, ten asylum-seeker children residing in UNHCR Urban Accommodation apartments took part in a baseball tournament against xenophobia and racism. The event was organized by the Greek Police and the Municipality of Thessaloniki.



An elderly man rests, observing refugees and migrants plant flowers. UNHCR, Alfredo D'Amato.

Gaps

- In May, UNHCR observed a general upward trend in the detention of children nationwide. This is due to the limited capacity of safe zones as alternatives to detention and the reduction of available spaces in shelters. Safe zones are safe areas that host unaccompanied and separated children for short periods of time in sites in the mainland and that include protection standards and services. Unfortunately, alternative care options are a challenge in Greece despite the referrals of unaccompanied children to the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), the agency providing emergency shelter to unaccompanied children. The available places in shelters and safe zones are limited even when those options have been assessed to be in the best interest of the concerned children. UNHCR teams provide children with legal assistance and advocate for their prompt release and referral to the Public Prosecutor for decision.
- A number of worrying violent incidents during consecutive days occurred on Leros between the refugee and the local population, including a physical assault of an LGBTI asylum-seeker. The recent incident highlights the need for expedited processing of registration, identification and asylum processing of LGBTI people, and their prompt transfer to a safe place in the mainland where they cannot be easily traced and identified. On Chios, clashes between asylum-seekers of different nationalities, which resulted in twelve arrests, contributed to the already tense relations on the island.
- The ongoing evacuation of hotels, in line with UNHCR's efforts to reduce hotels and increase places in apartments in coordination with an increasing number of asylum-seekers who are accepted for relocation but await for their departure has contributed to a lack of available accommodation places in Attica.

INTERAGENCY RESPONSE AND WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- In Greece, UNHCR works through 70 sectoral Working Groups (WGs) and coordinates with 80 partners on Protection, Child Protection, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Communication with Communities (CwC), Cash, NFI, Site Management Support (SMS), Health & Nutrition, Education, Shelter & WASH, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mental Health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Inter-Agency Consultation Forum and the Inter-Sector WG.
- In May UNHCR worked through 25 partners in 12 sectors: Protection with GRC, KSPM-ERP, METAdrasi, Praksis, Arsis, ICMC, UNOPS, Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services, Intersos, DRC, Ministry of Interior; on Child Protection with Praksis, Nostos, Faros, Arsis, METAdrasi, Iliaktida, Save the Children, Network for Children's Rights; on NFI/Shelter with Organization Earth, Samaritan's Purse; on WASH with Samaritan's Purse, on CASH with Samaritan's Purse, Catholic Relief Services, on Site Management Support with Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, DRC, UNOPS, Reception and Identification Service, on Health with Medecins du Monde and WAHA, on Education with Save the Children, on Accommodation with Praksis, CRS, Arsis, Nostos, Iliaktida, Solidarity Now, Faros, Municipality of Athens, Municipality of Livadia, Municipality of Thessaloniki, Heraklion Development Agency, Municipality of Andravida; on Peaceful Coexistence with Arsis, Solidarity Now, Samaritan's Purse, Intersos, UNOPS and on Raising Awareness with TENet-Gr, UNOPS.

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 of donors with non-earmarked and broadly earmarked funds and those contributing directly to the situation in Greece allows UNHCR to provide direct assistance in protection and help find solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR appeals to donors to provide contributions that can be allocated as flexibly as possible.
- Major donors of unrestricted and regional funds to UNHCR in 2017: United States of America (95 M) | Sweden (76 M) | Netherlands (52 M) | Norway (41 M) | Private Donors from Spain (24 M) | Denmark (23 M) | Australia (19 M) | Canada (16 M) | Switzerland (15 M) | France (14M) | Germany (12 M)

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Links: [Arrival figures website](#) - [Refugee stories](#) - [Facebook](#) – [Twitter](#)