

Greece

The spike in sea arrivals since May, mostly from **Afghanistan and Syria** in September, made conditions untenable in the reception centres. **10,550** reached the islands and **2,000** crossed Evros land border.

A fire in a housing container in Moria, killed an Afghan woman. UNHCR continued to **urge the authorities to move asylum-seekers** out of the dangerously overcrowded reception centres.

Greek authorities finalized procedures for the relocation of **119 unaccompanied children to the UK**. Similar schemes are needed to benefit some of the **4,616 unaccompanied children**.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

96,500

30,700 on the islands and **65,800** in the mainland

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimate as of 30 September 2019 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

75,000

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **133,100** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

21,500

people this month, and **61,000** since November 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

REFUGEES IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

95% have social security number (AMKA)

74% have tax identification number (AFM)

86% children enrolled in schools

35% registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

6% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

276 National Staff

30 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



Newly-arrived Afghan refugees wait to be taken to UNHCR's transit centre and the government-run Moria reception centre on Lesbos.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who 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 society.

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.
- UNHCR works closely with staff from State organizations to prepare for the transition of these programmes to the Greek authorities.
- 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 facilitated. It also helps the integration of those who will remain in Greece. The host population benefits from the **4,450 apartments and 15 buildings** that the programme rents in **21 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,460 accommodation places** in September.
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **74,994 asylum-seekers and refugees** in apartments and sites. Cash allows refugees to choose what they need most. It is spent on food, goods and services, and contributes to the local community. In September, almost **7.6 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Current reception places country-wide are full, as a result of ongoing and increased arrivals as well as limited legal movement out of Greece for asylum-seekers and refugees. Reception centres have long surpassed their capacity with **25,900 people** in and around the sites often staying under precarious conditions risking their well-being. Mainland sites are overall better, albeit also the majority at capacity. Exasperation and anxiety over their future fuel tensions between asylum-seekers, but also with locals.
- In Moria reception centre on Lesbos, a fire that broke out on 23 September in a container used for accommodation, killed an Afghan woman and injured 17 others. A few days earlier a 5-year old [Afghan boy](#) was accidentally run over by a car near Moria. A [shipwreck](#) on 27 September north of Oinousses island, near Chios claimed the lives of two women and five children while 12, members of their families survived. The three incidents were a painful reminder of the risks that asylum-seekers face. To those close to the deceased, UNHCR provided accommodation in ESTIA apartments and psychological support.

- Some **5,070** people left the islands this month. Organized transfers to the mainland were more than four times higher compared to last month's (**852**), reaching a total of **3,650 people** – **2,230** with the support of UNHCR.
- **Samos (5,570), Lesvos (12,650) and Kos (3,060)** operate eight, six and four times above their estimated capacity of 700, 2,150 and 700 respectively. Thousands stay in rickety tents with inadequate access to sanitation. In Evros, half of the population in the reception centre (**330**) is unaccompanied children (**160**).
- UNHCR's team in Evros, at the Greek - Turkish land border helps people who have recently arrived at the Fylakio reception centre. They ensure they are informed and identified properly and that people with specific needs are directed to appropriate services.
- Access to the asylum procedure is more difficult for those applying on the mainland, while many also wait for two years or more for their asylum interviews. UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **9,300 instances** in 2019, and **44,630 instances** since 2016. This work has multiplying benefits in the processing of asylum applications beyond these instances.
- UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by seconding **68 experts** to the various Governmental agencies to bolster their response.
- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR and its partners have helped **9,217 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation on asylum procedures and further administrative treatment as well as other issues related to accessing rights.
- 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](#). In 2019, at least **34,000 people** have found information in five languages.

Child Protection

There are **4,616 unaccompanied children** in Greece, of which **1,196** in shelters appropriate for their age and under the supported independent living scheme ([EKKA](#) data). However, the **1,416** boys and girls in the reception centres face woefully inadequate conditions and often have to share their space with adults or sleep out in the open risking exploitation and abuse. Their transfer to a shelter appropriate for their needs is lengthy adding to the hardship of fleeing conflict and prosecution.

- In 2019, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi has accompanied and helped transfer a total of **483** unaccompanied children from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland. UNHCR works with EKKA guardians to provide places in apartments for **32 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and supporting them to become self-reliant and live on their own.
- Procedures for the relocation of **119 unaccompanied boys and girls** to the United Kingdom under the Dubs' scheme were finalized from the Greek side. Since the beginning of the programme in 2017, **75 children** have departed following review by

EKKA, UNHCR and IOM. Similar solidarity measures to relocate unaccompanied children to European states are needed.

- UNHCR identifies vulnerable children and fosters the response of the Government with expertise, trainings and advice.

Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence

- Prevention and response to incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence, is increasingly challenging. Risks are prevalent, especially for single parents and boys and girls who are unaccompanied with overfilled reception centres and many unlit areas around them.
- UNHCR trains State authorities and NGOs on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and works with the refugee communities to raise awareness on the risks of sexual violence and the existing legal framework.
- UNHCR works to respond to SGBV in urban areas as well as some field locations and islands to identify survivors and people at risk, offering case management, legal information, counselling and psychosocial and medical attention. UNHCR refers survivors and those at high risk of sexual exploitation to State services and shelters or accommodation in apartments where they can get expert help.

Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) (MoE) to include and prepare refugee boys and girls for public school.
- Not all refugee children have [access to education](#), especially **the 5,850 school-aged** children who live at the moment in the reception centres on the islands. The freeze in issuing AMKA social security numbers and the absence of transportation in certain locations, are among the main factors for the delay in the full roll-out of formal education. In the current school year, **86 per cent of refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation were enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. Almost all of the 80 announced Refugee Education Coordinators have been appointed, a positive step for the facilitation of refugees' educational prospects.
- UNHCR's bridging education centres on the islands and Athens offer opportunities for learning, skills-building as well as legal and psychosocial support to children at risk.
- UNHCR also works with teachers and students to foster coexistence, increase awareness about forced displacement and human rights and support the inclusion of refugee students in school through [experiential learning](#) techniques.

Health

- UNHCR works with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) (EODY) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare, also in coordination with the [World Health Organization](#).
- Staffing shortages have created a large backlog and lengthy delays in medical and psychosocial screening in the reception centres which subsequently overburdens the timely completion of the vulnerability screening – an integral part of the asylum procedure. This also renders difficult to detect and care for asylum-seekers who

suffer from non-obvious vulnerabilities, as for instance people who have survived torture. UNHCR assists in certifying victims of torture, an essential process for their rehabilitation.

- People requiring regular medical treatment, including those with chronic diseases, face challenges accessing public healthcare due to the suspension of AMKA social security number issuance.
- UNHCR funds primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki.

Durable Solutions

- **11,101** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece in 2019 ([Asylum Service](#) data as of August), and a total of **45,362** people since 2015. In September, **14,300 recognized** refugees benefitted from cash assistance and **7,357 beneficiaries of international protection status** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments.
- UNHCR supports the Government in promoting the national strategy on integration.
- The persisting freeze in issuing AMKA social security numbers also impacts negatively access to welfare and social services. UNHCR has alerted the Government and advocates for the establishment of an efficient procedure for the issuance of AMKA to all asylum-seekers and refugees in the country.
- 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 recognized refugees living in UNHCR's accommodation, **95% have an AMKA number, 74% have an AFM tax number, 35% are registered with OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **6% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.

Returns and Relocation

- UNHCR is supporting the national authorities in relocating **1,000 applicants and beneficiaries of international protection** from Greece to Portugal.
- This month, **7 people returned** from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with **1,914 people** in total since 20 March 2016.

Shelter

- UNHCR donated **437 accommodation containers** that can host approximately **2,600 people** to support the Government's expansion of the accommodation capacity of mainland sites. UNHCR also delivered **13 industrial tents** to assist in the set-up of the transit site in Korinthos.
- UNHCR provided to the authorities **90,000 core relief items**, including family-size tents, blankets, sleeping bags, dry food and bottled water.
- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,300 vulnerable people or families**, including **750 children**. This contributes to governmental efforts to reduce the population in Moria.

- UNHCR also helps people who arrive in the northern part of Lesbos, providing basic assistance and a place to stay overnight in the transit site in Skala Sikamineas until the authorities are ready to receive them in the reception and identification centre.

Partners

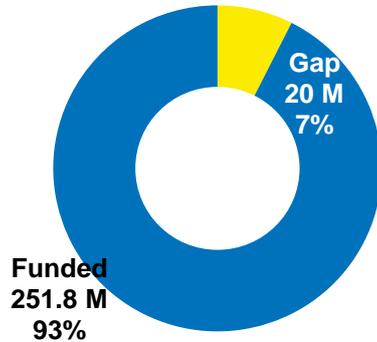
In September, UNHCR worked through **35 partners**: [UNICEF](#), [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praxis](#), [Solidarity Now](#), [Catholic Relief Services](#), the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#), [METAdrasi](#), the [Greek Council for Refugees](#), the [Network for Children's Rights](#), [Doctors of the World](#), the [Association for Regional Development and Mental Health \(EPAPSY\)](#), [Diotima](#), [Faros](#), [KEAN - Cell Of Alternative Youth Activities](#), [International Rescue Committee](#), [International Catholic Migration Commission \(ICMC\)](#), [Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network \(TENet\)](#), [UNOPS](#), [Perichoresis](#), [OMNES](#), [Kyclos](#) 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 OCTOBER 2019)

USD 271.8 M requested for the Greece Operation



Donors

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European Union 252 M | Education Cannot Wait 1.4 M | United States of America 1.2 M | Republic of Korea 500 K | The World We Want Foundation 250 K | Fondation BNP Paribas 112 K

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