

Greece

In February **3,000 people arrived**, 33 per cent fewer than January. They are mostly **families with children** from **Afghanistan and Syria**. **2,150** arrived on the islands and **850** at the land borders.

Conditions on the islands remain **alarming** for thousands living there. Hygiene and sanitation are poor, while **health problems** are on the rise. The High Commissioner **urged** for action to address the desperate

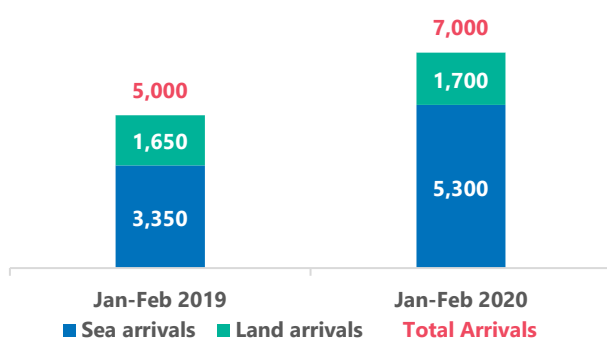
situation, as UNHCR remains ready to assist both short-term with **transfers** and quick **solutions** to increase shelter, and long-term with support in **relocation** schemes for the most vulnerable.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN GREECE*

118,000

76,000 in the mainland and **42,000** on the islands

Arrivals



*UNHCR estimate as of 29 February 2020 of those who arrived and remained in Greece since the 2015 – 2016 flow.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

93,900

eligible asylum-seekers and refugees this month, and **172,500** since April 2017 received **cash assistance**.

21,700

people this month, and **65,500** since January 2015 have benefitted from UNHCR's **accommodation in apartments**.

PEOPLE IN UNHCR'S ESTIA ACCOMMODATION

75% have access to healthcare (AMKA or PAAYPA)

74% children enrolled in schools

59% have tax identification number (AFM)

24% registered with unemployment agency (OAED)

4% have a bank account

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

309 National Staff

31 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



Asylum-seekers inside a UNHCR family tent in Moria reception centre, 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 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. Children can go to school, while access to healthcare and other services is facilitated and helps the integration of those who will remain in Greece. The host population also benefits from the **4,610 apartments and 8 buildings** that the programme rents in **21 cities and towns** across Greece. UNHCR had **25,650 accommodation places** in January.
- UNHCR gave cash in the form of pre-paid cards to **93,900 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 January, more than **9.1 million euro** in cash assistance will eventually be re-injected into the local economy.

Protection

- Housing options and services to cater for the present population are scarce countrywide. Violent protests, self-community patrols and clashes between different groups fuelled tensions at border locations this month.
- Living conditions remained dangerous on the islands and thousands of women, men, and children who live in small tents are exposed to cold and rain with little or no access to heating, electricity or hot water.
- UNHCR [called](#) the Government to use emergency measures to expedite its plans to transfer a greater number of asylum-seekers to appropriate accommodation on the mainland. Transfers from the islands to the mainland help liberate much-needed space in the reception centres. This month, UNHCR supported **610 organized transfers**. In total, **2,400 people departed** to the mainland in February and 6,000 since the beginning of the year.

- UNHCR's team in Evros, at the 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.
- UNHCR helps strengthen the national system and expertise by organising trainings for Governmental staff and seconding **65 experts** to bolster the response of the various State agencies, such as the Reception and Identification Service or the Asylum Service.
- UNHCR supports the Asylum Service with experts who advise the Asylum Service caseworkers upon request on how to conduct interviews, draft decisions on asylum applications and provide on-the-job training. UNHCR assisted in **2,316 instances in 2020, and 50,461 since 2016**. This work has multiplying benefits beyond these instances promoting high quality in asylum processing and ensuring the integrity of the procedure.
- From the beginning of 2020, UNHCR and its partners have helped over **2,900 asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** with counselling and legal representation in order to prepare and support their cases, such as for family reunification procedures.
- UNHCR [HELP website](#) answers questions in five languages on [how to apply for asylum](#), on their [rights and obligations](#), and on accessing services when [living in Greece](#).

Child Protection

- Living conditions for the **5,400 children** who have arrived alone in Greece are critical as only **one in five** has a place in an appropriate shelter ([EKKA data](#) as of February).
- UNHCR is concerned that hundreds of unaccompanied children in Greece – already experiencing hardship – will be exposed to greater risks after a guardianship programme, supported by UNHCR with the Ministry of Labour and NGO METAdrasi, ended at the start of this year but has not been replaced yet by a planned Governmental scheme.
- 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.
- UNHCR's partner METAdrasi safely moved **58 unaccompanied children** from reception centres to temporary shelters on the mainland.
- UNHCR provides places in supported independent living apartments for **44 unaccompanied children** over 16 years old, mentoring and empowering them to become self-reliant and live on their own. For younger children, UNHCR works with foster families to cater to the needs of **30 unaccompanied or separated 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 urban areas, based on a [report](#) of UNHCR's partner Diotima, **73%** of the survivors are homeless and **one out of three** claim to have been raped while being homeless. They are often single mothers, have been tortured or have serious medical problems.

- UNHCR and its partners 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. They can get help with case management, legal information, counselling and psychosocial and medical attention through partners. 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.
- UNHCR supports the authorities in strengthening the national reporting mechanism on trafficking, especially on the islands where the situation is more precarious.

Education

- UNHCR with UNICEF and other actors support the [Ministry of Education](#) to include and prepare refugee boys and girls for public school. In the current school year, **81% of asylum-seeker and recognised refugee children in ESTIA** accommodation are enrolled into public schools alongside their Greek peers. UNHCR estimates that **11,100 school-aged children** (4-17) are on the Aegean islands, but less than **three per cent** attend schooling.
- With few official classes, UNHCR works to bridge the gap in the education of children on the islands through six non-formal learning centres, as well as legal and psychosocial support to children at risk. In Athens, children and youth follow an innovative approach that offers opportunities for education and life skills-building.
- UNHCR joins forces with teachers and students to increase awareness about forced displacement and human rights through [experiential learning techniques](#). More than 49 workshops for students of primary and secondary education took place in February in 12 towns throughout Greece.
- UNHCR and the University of Athens [signed](#) a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in educating and training the next generation of communicators in forced displacement.

Health

- UNHCR works with the [Ministry of Health](#), the [National Public Health Organization](#) and partners to help refugees and asylum-seekers access healthcare, also in coordination with the [World Health Organization](#).
- UNHCR supports primary healthcare and psychosocial support services in Lesvos and mental health services in Attika and Thessaloniki. UNHCR works with experts to train and build the skills of non-specialist refugees to offer basic psychosocial support and empower other refugees who are vulnerable, including those with mental health conditions.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees in the islands reception centres [struggle](#) to access healthcare as available services are negligible with few doctors at the reception centres and the public hospitals.
- As of end January, the issuance of a new temporary health number (PAAYPA), which replaces the older AMKA social security number for asylum-seekers, largely allows asylum-seekers to obtain free healthcare. However, due to technical complications

this measure is not implemented in practice; medical care services and free medicine are still unavailable to asylum-seekers apart from critical urgent cases.

Durable Solutions

- Since 2013, **52,850** people acquired **refugee or subsidiary protection** in Greece, of which **1,200** in January ([Asylum Service](#) data as of January). This month, **13,000 recognised** refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection benefitted from cash assistance and **6,550** were accommodated in UNHCR's apartments, as part of the grace-period in ESTIA for those recognised as refugees in Greece.
- 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, **94% have an AMKA social security number, 76% have an AFM tax number, and 36%** are registered with **OAED unemployment agency**. However, only **8% have a bank account** which is a prerequisite for receiving a salary, among other.
- UNHCR supports the Government in promoting the national strategy on integration and supports the Municipalities to establish more inclusive services. This month, the Municipality of Ioannina completed the establishment of the Refugees and Migrants Integration Council consisting of six municipal councillors and five representatives of refugee and migrant communities, mainly from Syria, Iraq and Sub-Sahara Africa.
- UNHCR also supports refugees in navigating the Greek civil, social and economic system and obtain access to much needed documents, such as travel papers, and family certificates. This helps refugees become self-reliant, have gainful employment and eventually become integrated into the Greek society. More language classes and job trainings for adults can further help refugees to integrate.

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. Portugal, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria have pledged their support with relocation, including of unaccompanied children.
- The Dubs scheme of the United Kingdom concluded with **119 unaccompanied children** having departed from Greece to the UK, following an individual review by EKKA, UNHCR and IOM. UNHCR advocates for the continuation of the programme and for additional solidarity measures by other European states.
- This month, **63 people** were [returned](#) from Greece to Turkey in the framework of the E.U. - Turkey Statement, with a total of **2,117 people** since 20 March 2016.

Shelter and Core Relief Items

- This month, UNHCR provided to the authorities more than **89,000 items** of humanitarian assistance to new arrivals, including blankets, sleeping bags and hygiene items.

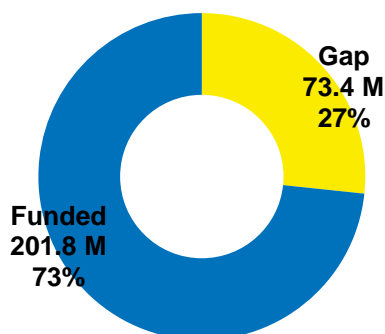
- UNHCR with partners is managing – in coordination with the Municipality of Lesvos – the Kara Tepe accommodation site which provides quality accommodation and protection to **1,300 vulnerable people or families**.
- The transit site in Skala Sikamineas was closed in February, following a decision by the Municipality of Western Lesvos. The site was offering critical assistance and a place to stay overnight for people arriving at the shores of northern Lesvos until their transfer to Moria.

Partners

In February, UNHCR worked through **33 partners**: [UNICEF](#), [ARSIS](#), [Iliaktida](#), [INTERSOS](#), [NOSTOS](#), [Praksis](#), [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 6 MARCH 2020)**USD 275.2 M** requested for the Greece Operation**Donors****Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2020**

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European Union 197.9 M (incl. firm projections) | Education Cannot Wait 1.4 M | European Economic Area 609 K | Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 200 K | The World We Want Foundation 125 K | Norway 104 K

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