

Aegean Islands

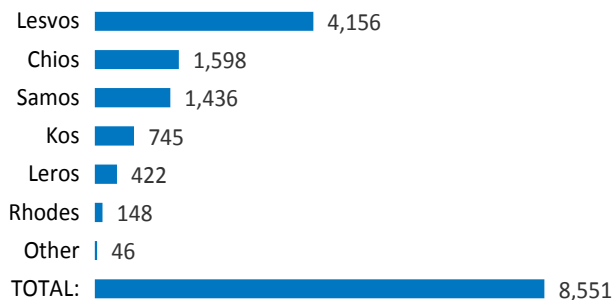
Some **2,249 people** arrived on the Aegean islands in July with the majority being **Syrian and Iraqi**. **60%** of the new arrivals on the islands are **women and children**.

The transitional period **intensifies problems on the islands** where some asylum-seekers must remain for their asylum decisions. Overcrowding and poor conditions persist.

Efficient **coordination** and **delivery of certain services** that affect the lives of asylum-seekers during the transition period can be further improved.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Islands

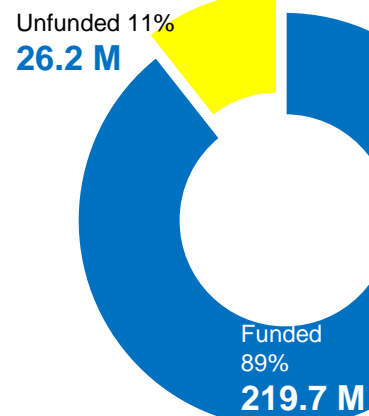


* Source: UNHCR Greece as of 31 July

FUNDING (AS OF 3 AUGUST)

USD 245.9 M

requested for the Greece situation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

60 National Staff
8 International Staff

Offices:

1 Islands Unit in Athens
1 Sub Office on Lesvos
5 Field Offices on Chios, Samos, Kos, Leros and Rhodes



Syrian refugee carries her bags as she prepares to board the ferry from Lesvos
© UNHCR/Achilleas Zavallis.

Working with Partners

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece who coordinates the refugee response. The Office works with other UN agencies, international and national NGOs, community-based organisations, refugees, and host communities through sectoral working groups on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#), [Samos](#), [Kos](#) and [Leros](#).

Main Activities

UNHCR supports the Government of Greece in the reception of new arrivals, asylum procedures and providing solutions to refugees.

Protection

- UNHCR provides information on rights and obligations, asylum procedure and offers legal counselling and representation to asylum-seekers through partners. UNHCR identifies and refers people with specific needs to responsible authorities and service providers for targeted assistance. UNHCR organises individual and group sessions to asylum-seekers.
- Many asylum-seekers have stayed on the islands for months and poor conditions in the so-called 'hotspots' have fuelled tensions and insecurity. Linked to this, on [Lesvos](#), protests were organised in Moria which escalated to violence.
- On [Chios](#), with the island having received the highest number of stateless people in 2017, a workshop on statelessness was organised by UNHCR.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence

- UNHCR provides capacity building to humanitarian organisations and authorities on sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) prevention and response, organises awareness campaigns, and conducts trainings to actors from various sectors on how to integrate SGBV guidelines in their everyday work. On [Chios](#), UNHCR supports the Women's counselling centre operating under the Ministry of Interior which provides support services to women victims of violence.

Child Protection

- UNHCR supports the identification of children at risk and assists in building the expertise of national and local actors.
- On the islands, UNHCR runs – through partners – recreational spaces ensuring that the development and well-being of refugee children and youth is supported in a conducive learning environment.

Education

- UNHCR is working with partners to explore options for non-formal education where formal education is not yet available.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with the University of Aegean, facilitates language classes

in 12 European languages to adult and children asylum-seekers on the islands through the Erasmus online learning programme of the European Commission. On [Samos](#), UNHCR donated tablets to participants to facilitate access to the program.

Health

- Challenges have been observed regarding the provision of primary healthcare during a transitional period on the islands with the handover of activities to the national authorities from humanitarian organizations. Delays in medical appointments and vulnerability assessments, lack of medication, limitations in access to medical services, human resources and interpretation have a negative impact to asylum-seekers and the asylum procedure.

Food Security and Nutrition

- On [Lesvos](#) and [Chios](#), UNHCR provides food assistance to the population of the Kara Tepe and Souda. In Kara Tepe, UNHCR has placed two communal kitchens to offer greater independency to the residents of the site as they will be able to benefit from the limited cash assistance provided by UNHCR with the support of ECHO.

Shelter, Water, Sanitation and CRIs

- UNHCR has supported the Greek Government in upgrading shelter as well as key water and sanitation facilities in the sites. On [Chios](#), some 20 toilet and shower containers were provided by UNHCR in the Vial RIC in order to improve hygiene conditions in the site.
- Despite efforts, accommodation for new arrivals on [Lesvos](#), [Chios](#) and [Samos](#) remains a challenge with hundreds of people, including unaccompanied children, vulnerable people and families sleeping in overcrowded conditions in the 'hotspots', or on the outskirts of the official sites under poor living conditions exposing them to serious protection risks, including SGBV.
- The Municipality of [Chios](#) and UNHCR continued to remove tents and makeshift shelters from Souda in an effort to reduce the population by transferring eligible people to improved accommodation on the island and mainland.
- In July, some 6,632 core relief items (CRIs) were provided on the Aegean islands by UNHCR through partners, including sleeping mats, fans and mosquito nets.

Communication with Communities

- UNHCR, in coordination with site management authorities on the islands, convenes on a regular basis community-based discussions. These platforms serve as a dual channel of communication for better dissemination of information inside the site and as a feedback mechanism where issues of interest, such as hygiene, accommodation, childcare and information provision are discussed. Furthermore, UNHCR on the islands provides leaflets in different languages with information about the asylum procedures and access to key services.
- Following the recent earthquakes on [Lesvos](#) and [Kos](#), UNHCR extended its availability to support the affected population and is developing messages for the refugees on how to protect themselves during an earthquake.

Peaceful coexistence

- UNHCR organises events and implements projects that bring closer the refugee and local population and help build bridges of trust and mutual understanding.
- In July, UNHCR donated medical and office equipment for the maternity clinic of the Mytilene Hospital on **Lesvos** in appreciation of the life-saving assistance to refugee pregnant women during the refugee emergency.
- The 'Ledu' educational and recreational space on **Leros** is now open to local children as well who have been increasingly participating in joint activities organised with refugees.

ESTIA Accommodation and Cash assistance

- In July, UNHCR provided dignified housing on the islands to some 904 people in apartments and buildings.
- On the islands, some 6,338 people benefited from partial cash assistance to cover certain basic needs, such as clothes, educational material, transport and communications and restore a sense of normalcy in their lives. This intervention represents the first blanket cash distribution in the humanitarian sector globally.
- UNHCR in Greece provides accommodation and cash assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees through the ECHO-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA).

Logistics

- In July, UNHCR assisted the transfer of 1,038 asylum-seekers from the islands to rented accommodation and open sites on the mainland. Since June 2016, UNHCR has coordinated and covered the cost of 10,292 such transfers, which help alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the sites of the islands. The inter-ministerial body (KEPOM) coordinates transfers and the allocation of asylum-seekers to state-run facilities.

Partners

- UNHCR on the islands works with international and national implementing partners in supporting the Government to manage the refugee situation: Danish Refugee Council, Doctors of the World, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Samaritan's Purse, Metadrasi, Arsis, Praksis and Iliaktida.

External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2017

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