

LESVOS

FACTSHEET 2022





INTRODUCTION

As of June 5th, the number of total arrivals of Third Country Nationals in Greece for 2022, amounted to a total of **4.212**. Of this number, approximately **2.035** are recorded to have arrived by sea, while **2.177 refugees** made it to Greece by land. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the country is currently hosting approximately **25.000**¹ refugees both in the mainland and the islands, with **8%** of them residing in the islands of Northern Aegean. While still hosting a large number of asylum seekers, Greece often fails to protect their rights on many levels inter alia due to the illegal returns (*pushbacks*) of new arrivals to Turkey, as well as the absence of an institutional guardianship policy regarding Unaccompanied minors.

Returns under the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration have not taken place since March 2020 due to Covid-19 measures. It should be noted that the Greek authorities have asked the Turkish authorities to resume returns under the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration.

In total, **604 people** left the country in April 2022, while **1.129 arrived**. The departures made from Greece to non-EU countries, both to and from the European Union, are as follows:

- **191 forced** expulsions and returns of third country nationals under the agreements of the European union and Greece's bilateral agreements
- **230 voluntary** returns through the IOM program
- **83 voluntary** departures from Greece to the country of origin
- **62 transfers** to EU Member States under the Dublin Regulation
- **13 minors** departed under the relocation program for unaccompanied minors
- **25 applicants** for International Protection left for France under voluntary relocation Schemes.

Meanwhile, in September 2021, the Greek Government inaugurated the first Closed Controlled Facility (CCF) on the island of Samos, which replaced the makeshift refugee shelters with containers and beds. However, the living conditions of the people inside this new structure are rather questionable due to the restrictions imposed by the administration on the entry and exit of refugees, creating a new approach to the reception and identification of Third Country Nationals with an emphasis on the detention and isolation of asylum seekers rather than on an appropriate reception, unimpeded access to asylum and pre-integration procedures in the host society which seems to be part of the overall EU strategy to stem new migratory flows².



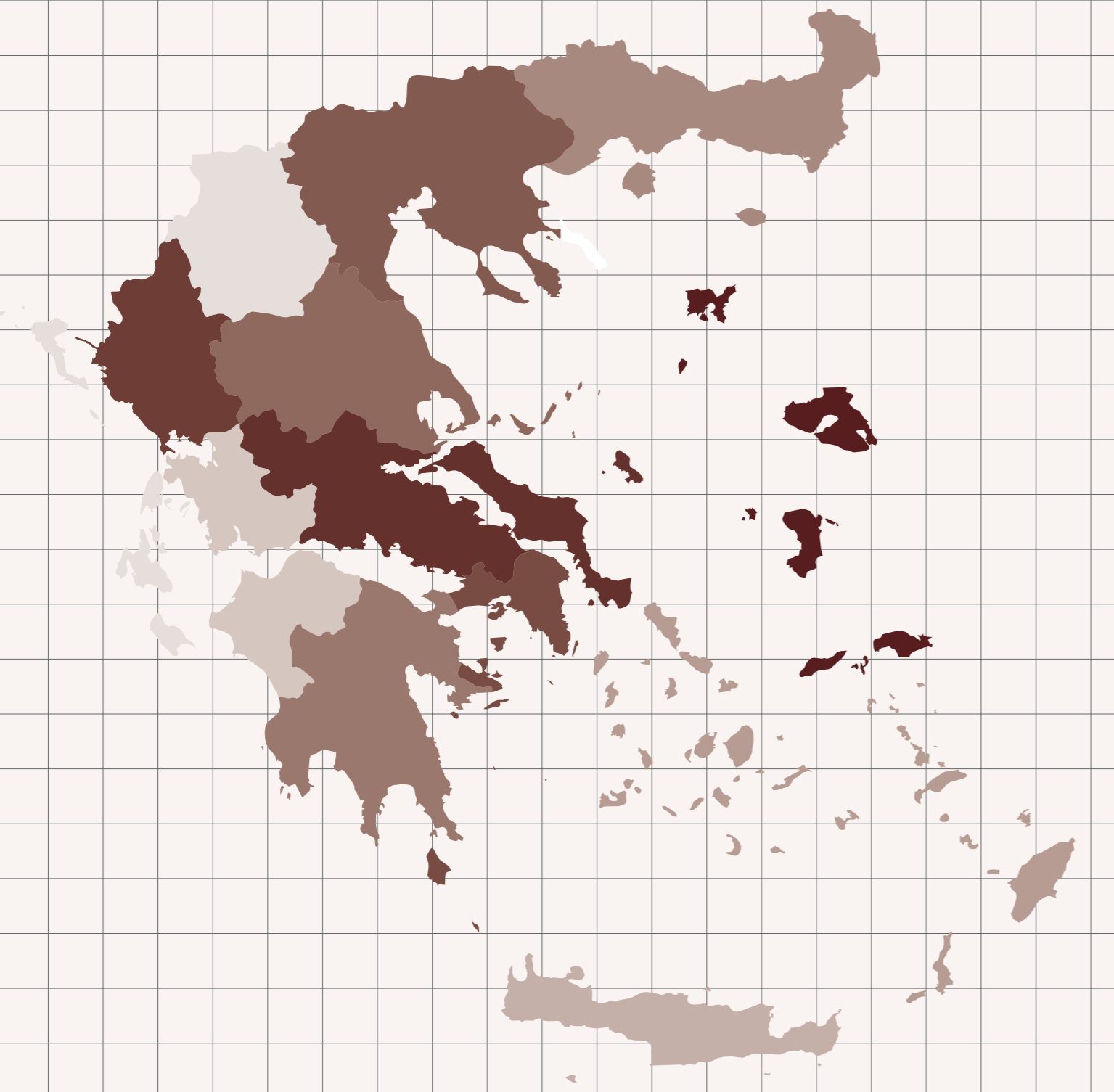
A new National Integration Strategy was put out to public consultation in January 2022. The strategy has some positive aspects, such as the inclusion of a pre-accession period for the more effective integration of refugees and migrants into the host society, as well as the incorporation of the "Saragoza Integration indicators". Although, among the gaps in this national strategy are the lack of reference to measures for family reunification and the mitigation measures of the psychosocial risks that are posed by the Closed and Controlled Facilities in the context of the pre-integration process.³

After the opening of the first Closed Controlled Facility (CCF) on the island of Samos, the new CCFs in Kos and Leros were officially inaugurated on 27 November 2021, while similar structures are to be built in Chios and Lesvos. The Closed Controlled Facilities of all the islands are located in remote, isolated areas that exclude the possibility of pre-integration and social interaction with the local community, limiting their ability to access community services, contrary to the EU fundamental principles of freedom and equality.

¹ https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/%CE%91%CF%80%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82-2022_%CE%A5%CE%9C%CE%91-GR-%CE%95%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%94%CE%99%CE%95%CE%98%CE%9D%CE%97-%CE%A0%CE%A1%CE%9F%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91.pdf

² https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/20220224_Lesbos_Bulletin_GR.pdf

³ https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/Greece_Advocacy_Update_Q1_2022_GR.pdf



ASYLUM SEEKERS BY REGION

NUMBER OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AS A PERCENTAGE TO THE GENERAL POPULATION

■ North Aegean	1.781 (0.89%)
■ Central Greece	3.353 (0.61%)
■ Epirus	1.397 (0.41%)
■ Attica	10.121 (0.26%)
■ Central Macedonia	4.491 (0.24%)
■ Thessalia	1.082 (0.15%)
■ Peloponnese	744 (0.13%)
■ Eastern Macedonia & Thrace	746 (0.12%)
■ South Aegean	286 (0.09%)
■ Crete	302 (0.05%)
■ Western Greece	226 (0.03%)
■ Western Macedonia	0 (0.00%)
■ Ionian Islands	0 (0.00%)

CURRENT REFUGEE SITUATION IN GREECE

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum confirmed on 22 February 2022 that the Emergency Support Programme for Integration and Housing (ESTIA) will come to an end at the end of 2022 and that from 16 April the housing programme (ESTIA II) will be limited to **10.000 places**, compared to the **27.000 places** available in 2021.

The asylum seekers that considered as vulnerable after submitted their application, they may be given some extra time (which cannot exceed three days) in order to adequately prepare for the interview and to be advised by a lawyer or other counselor so as to be assisted during the procedure. Other than that, along some minor interpretation facilitation, no other mechanisms have been overseen in order to protect the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers' rights that remain exposed. Even regarding the protection of Unaccompanied Minors, the institutional mechanism of the UAMs guardianship is not visibly activated or put in proper use so far. The care and protection of these most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers falls primarily on the arms of NGOs and the civil society at large, while the state is reported as dysfunctional and insufficient at most times due to bureaucratic resistances and technical difficulties.

THE RIGHT TO ASYLUM VS BORDER CONTROLS

In parallel, there has been a mounting chorus of criticism of Greece's practice of massively returning thousands of people to Turkey, including through violent pushbacks. On this practice, the Greek Ombudsman, the Council of Europe and the EU Commissioner of Home Affairs, all took turns criticising and calling on the government to change its de facto practice of refugees push backs in the islands. Moreover, it has been reported that the European Commission asked Greece to set up an independent mechanism to monitor abuses at borders before it releases **€15.83 million** (around \$18 million) in EU migration funding⁵.

These migrants never made it to the border. Any suggestion that they did, or indeed were pushed back into Turkey, is utter nonsense.

—NOTIS MITARAKIS

As of the beginning of 2022 there are no actual records of shipwrecks in the Northern Aegean, nor of people dead or missing along the maritime borders with Turkey. However the criticism as well as reports of both refugees and residents to have noticed suspicious movements across Lesbos' coastal areas that leave serious innuendos on illegal pushbacks, no institutional reporting has been mainstreamed as to people dead or missing.

However the criticism that has been exercised by the Civil Society, the minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarachi has stated that the complaints of civil society organizations and UN agencies regarding pushbacks are not evidence based and consist of false propaganda against EU and Greece.

⁴ Minors, unaccompanied or not; direct relatives of victims of ship-wrecks; persons with a disability; the elderly; women in pregnancy; single parents with minor children; victims of human trafficking; persons suffering from a serious illness; persons with a mental or psychological disability and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or any other serious form of mental, physical or sexual violence, like victims of genital mutilation

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/greece>



On 12th of June 2022, a report published by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants has confirmed as well that "pushbacks in Greece are de facto general policy". Felipe González Morales is concerned about the significant increase in the number of people prevented from entering Greek territory, as part of the declared strategy of the authorities and concludes that there is a grave issue of pushbacks in Greece.

The UN Special Rapporteur notes in paragraph 32 of the report: In Greece, pushbacks at land and sea borders have become de facto general policy. UNHCR has recorded almost 540 separate incidents during the period 2020–2021, involving at least 17,000 people who were reportedly returned by force, informally, to Turkey. Greece reportedly deterred over 140,000 people from entering the country between April and November 2021 and has announced an extension to a fence in the Evros region. In the Aegean Sea, NGOs have documented at least 147 incidents of the forcible return of 7,000 migrants, including children, to Turkey by the Hellenic Coast Guard, without due process.

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—FELIPE GONZÁLEZ MORALES

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

COVID-19 IMPACT

The mental health and protection crisis on the islands has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The disproportionate restrictions that were imposed and continue to be enforced on refugee camps in response to the pandemic have compounded the mental health challenges faced by residents – a large number of whom have suffered violence, abuse and/or exploitation in their country of origin, on the route to Europe, and after their arrival in Greece. The resilience of people with additional vulnerabilities continues to be challenged in the Reception and Identifications Centers (RICs), such as Mavrovouni camp, and especially of those belonging to groups facing discrimination, such as the LGBTQ community.

⁶ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/328/57/PDF/G2232857.pdf?OpenElement>

MDM-GREECE PRESENCE IN LESVOS

MdM-Greece has been present on the island of Lesvos since 2011, providing its support to the population of asylum seekers and new-comers, even before the immense flows of refugees that began in 2015 in Greece. During these years, next to the mainstream medical services, MdM-Greece were also immediately activated after the fires in Moria and Kara Tepe as well. The ground activities of MdM-Greece's field team are carried out along the following services' axes.

1. Provision of primary health care: Privacy and confidentiality are guaranteed with single medical consultations. When necessary, patients are referred to the local health facilities of Mytilene with which MDM-Greece has established a sound referral pathway. The medical management and treatment of patients is based on MDM's medical protocols as well as the operating framework of its medical teams and is provided within the limits of outpatient care. Within this framework the medical operating procedures on Lesvos include: medical screening and triage, recording of the medical history of the patient with particular attention to the existence of chronic and infectious diseases, detection of specific situations (pregnancy, injuries, potential victims of torture), diagnosis, detecting existence of psychiatric / psychological problems and refer them to the PSS staff, evaluation of incidents and priority assignment based on medical necessity, referral for further examination in public primary / secondary health facilities, drafting of reports in collaboration with the nursing staff, immediate mobilization in case of serious illness, death, violence, epidemics (or risk of epidemic outbreaks), provision of medicines and pharmaceutical treatment.

2. Provision of SRH and gynaecological services: The SRH team provides sexual and reproductive health services and conduct consultations with the women and pregnant women in Kara Tepe facility. Different aspects of antenatal care are included in the framework of SRH services, such as: support and information through pregnancy, regular clinical assessments, screening for a range of infections and abnormalities, linkage with the psychosocial support professional if it's necessary and offerings of social and lifestyle advice. Antenatal information is provided to pregnant asylum seeker women residing in Kara Tepe according to their individual needs and their stage of pregnancy. Moreover, group sessions with pregnant and non-pregnant women are organized including information about breastfeeding, painless childbirth, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, and methods of contraception. Awareness campaigns about Sexually Transmitted Diseases and smear test (PAP test) and HPV vaccination, as well as use and application of spiral contraception method are implemented on an ad hoc basis.

3. Provision of paediatric services: The childhood and infants care services (diagnosis, management, treatment, counselling and follow up) including children's immunization assessment, vaccination referrals and relevant follow up are provided by a paediatrician who conducts consultations with new-borns, infants and children living in Kara Tepe. Privacy and confidentiality are guaranteed with individualised medical consultations. When necessary, children are referred to the local health facilities of Mytilene with which MdM-Greece has established a sound referral pathway. The medical management and treatment of children is based on MDM's medical protocols as well as the operating framework of its medical teams and is provided within the limits of community based care. The Pediatrician vaccinates children according to the National Vaccination Plan and also prepares student health cards for the children to have access to schools.

4. Psychological Support: MdM-Greece's team Psychologist provides counselling, undertakes assessments of mental health needs, and contributes to reducing the distress and to improving the psychological wellbeing of the refugees. Alongside this, a worrisome identification of SGBV trends based on reported incidents (i.e. domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, in the countries of origin) have been identified. Individual and group (family) counselling / psychological support sessions and PFA are carried out daily by the MdM psychologist in order to help alleviate the refugee population who is in psychological distress due to long standing trauma and/or other psychological problems.

COLLABORATIONS

MdM-Greece has been for the past 2 years an official partner of MoH/EODY regarding Covid-19 response. It is also in contact and collaboration with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the General Secretariat of Reception of Asylum Seekers. Within its operation within the Mavrovouni camp, MdM-Greece is in contact and collaboration with all involved NGOs, including a close cooperation with Movement on the Ground.

11 YEARS PRESENT
ON THE ISLAND OF LESVOS,
PROVIDING MEDICAL SERVICES
TO REFUGEES SINCE 2011

7 DAYS PER WEEK
CONDUCTING MEDICAL
OPERATIONS WITH A SPECIALISED
MEDICAL FIELD-TEAM

2022 (JAN – MAY)

1.290 BENEFICIARIES
RECEIVED MEDICAL AND
PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

442 VACCINATIONS
CARRIED OUT TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN

2.772 MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS
TO REFUGES WHO FACED
HEALTH PROBLEMS AND WERE IN NEED OF
IMMEDIATE HEALTHCARE AND SUPPORT

98 AWARENESS ACTIVITIES
ON MENTAL HEALTH, SEXUAL &
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND
GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

45%
CHILDREN

35%
WOMEN

20%
MEN



WHEREVER PEOPLE ARE

DONOR



SUPPORTERS



COLLABORATIONS



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