



Migration Profile

GREECE

A. Executive Summary

During the last decades of 1800 until the first part of the twentieth century, Greece was a migrant-sending country. Many Greeks expatriated to find better economic conditions. From the 1950s to the 1970s Greece experienced sustainable economic growth, and when in the mid-1970s other EU countries closed their frontiers to migration, Greece became a migrant-receiving country. It was with the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the twentieth century, however, that migrant inflows took on massive proportions, with Albania predominating as a migrant sending country. In 2008, the Greek economic crisis and the subsequent debt crisis changed the economic scenario with an astounding 100% increase in poverty. The unemployment rate rose and those who were most affected were immigrants, some of whom returned to their countries of origin. At the same time, a new outflow of skilled Greek workers increased, while some immigrants remained in Greece, slipping from authorized into unauthorized status because they could no longer find formal employment which was required for permit renewal. At the same time, inflows of migrants with unauthorized status continued, despite the deterioration of the Greek labour market, with Asia and Africa emerging as important sources. From 2014, Greece began to receive mixed inflows of migrants and asylum seekers, some of them wishing to reach destinations situated in the northern EU countries. In 2015, UNHCR registered 857,000 arrivals, an increase twenty times larger than the number that arrived in the previous year. Most of these were Syrians and Afghans who used the Balkan route and the Eastern Mediterranean route to reach Greece. Although they wanted to continue to the countries of northern Europe, they were trapped in Greece. In March 2016, an agreement was concluded by the EU and Turkey to restrain flows of asylum-seekers and migrants from Turkey to the EU countries. A sharp decline in flows from the Turkish coast to Greece was observed from April 2016. Nevertheless, inflows continue and the reception centres in Greece are collapsing. In 2019, the new centre-right government proclaimed a new migration and asylum law that should make asylum procedures faster. New detention centres are being constructed with EU funds.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Greece, with a total area of 131,957 km², has a population of approximately 10.7 million. Its 13,676 km coastline is the longest on the Mediterranean Sea and the 11th longest in the world. The country

comprises more than 6,000 islands, of which only 227 are inhabited. Greece is a unitary parliamentary republic; the President is Katerina Sakellaropoulou and the Prime Minister is Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Due to the 2008 economic crisis and the 2010 debt crisis, 30% of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Regarding ethnic or religious affiliation, 90% of the population is Orthodox Christian, 3% are other Christians, 4% are unaffiliated, and 2% are Muslims.

II. International and Internal Migrants

As of 27 July 2020, there were 1,200,835 migrants in Greece, representing 11.3% of the total population; a slight majority were women (50.9%). Men and women are mainly between 20 and 29 years old. In 2019, 71,386 migrants arrived by land and by sea. During the first seven months of 2020, a total of 9,913 migrants arrived, most (8,137) by sea and the rest (1,776) by land. In 2016, Albania was the major country of origin of migrants, representing 69.4% of the total immigrants. In 2020 the five top countries of origin of newly arrived migrants are Afghanistan (39%), Syria (25%), Somalia (6%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5%), and Iraq (4%).

Women are largely employed in domestic service, and men in construction. Some immigrants are employed in agriculture, so depending on the job they get, this means they can be located in urban or rural areas. In 2016, due to the economic and debt crisis, the unemployment rate among migrants was higher than that of the native population. Specifically, almost 24% of immigrant men were unemployed compared with 19% of Greek nationals; 32% of immigrant women were unemployed compared with 27% of native women. (Thus women overall experience greater unemployment than men overall.) Immigrant men and women present higher rates of poverty. In 2016, more than 80,000 immigrant men and women were at risk of poverty compared with less than 40,000 at risk Greek men and women.

The main routes that migrants follow on their way to Greece are the Balkan route and the Eastern Mediterranean route. Migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran enter Greece by land, following the Balkan route, while migrants from Syria and Iraq enter through the Eastern Mediterranean route crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece.

The main narrative about migrants that is spread by the media depicts them as an invasion and negatively labels them as “illegal”.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

Due to the 2008 economic crisis, a significant number of Greeks began to migrate, but there is still little information about this phenomenon. Unlike past waves of Greek emigrants, this new wave was composed primarily of highly educated youth, causing alarm about brain drain. In 2010, it was estimated that between 110,000 and 135,000 tertiary graduates born in Greece were working abroad. Germany emerged as the top destination for well-educated Greeks, ahead of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees)

As of the 30 June 2020, there were 122,000 forced migrants in Greece, with 86,500 of them on the mainland and 35,500 on the islands. In the first seven months of this year, 10,889 forced migrants arrived in Greece, of whom 8,405 arrived by sea and 2,494 by land. The most common nationalities

are Afghanistan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, State of Palestine, Iran, Pakistan, Kuwait and Algeria.

Furthermore, the numbers of unaccompanied children, primarily from Afghanistan, are rising. Of the total of asylum seekers in 2019, about 40% were children, and of that group, 85% were accompanied and 15% were unaccompanied. The most recent 42,500 unaccompanied children marked a significant increase compared to 2018, when there were 27,000 unaccompanied children. Most of them are between 15 and 17 years old; 59% are boys and 41% are girls. They escape from civil wars and human crises.

Asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran enter Greece by land, following the Balkan route, while asylum seekers from Syria and Iraq enter through the Eastern Mediterranean route crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece. When they arrive in Greece, they are accommodated in centres situated inland and on some islands. In the case of unaccompanied children in 2019, almost half (48%) were living in shelters situated in urban areas; and 26% of these were in Reception and Identification centres. The 1,300 unaccompanied children living in Reception centres were experiencing an insecure environment and the lack of schooling. Reception centres are overcrowded and have poor hygiene and sanitary conditions. Furthermore, asylum seekers who are confined in the islands for months or years, are not adequately supported with medical care, trauma counselling or mental health services. Moreover, physical and gender-based violence are quite common. Even when asylum seekers obtain the status of refugee, they remain at risk of poverty due to the difficulties linked to the country's economic crisis and unemployment rate. Refugees are often presented in media coverage as illegal immigrants, denying their legitimate rights as refugees. Media reports label them as a "tsunami", overwhelming the public health system and creating problems in the local economy, especially tourism. They are depicted as a national security problem and considered as terrorists.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

In 2019, police identified 30 victims of sex trafficking; there was one case of trafficking for forced labour. Most of victims (22) were adults while 9 were children. Most were female (27) and 4 were male; 5 of the victims were Greek and the rest (26) were foreign victims. Victims of human trafficking are very young, mostly between the ages of 12 and 25.

Some women and children are trafficked from Eastern and Southern Europe, South and Central Asia, China, Georgia, Nigeria and Russia to enforced sex work on the streets, in strip clubs, in massage salons and in hotels. Victims of forced labour are primarily children and men from Eastern Europe, South Asia and Africa. Migrant workers from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan are susceptible to debt bondage in agriculture. Marginalized Romani children from Albania, Bulgaria and Romania are forced to sell goods on the street, beg, or commit petty theft. The increase in unaccompanied child migrants in Greece has increased the number of children who are susceptible to exploitation. Unaccompanied children, primarily from Afghanistan, engage in sex to survive and are vulnerable to trafficking. Refugee and migrant women, especially those living in the Reception and Identification centres in the islands, are highly vulnerable to trafficking. Most migrants and asylum-seekers are believed to rely on smugglers at some point during their journey and in some instances, they are also forced into exploitation upon arrival in Greece.

Most of the victims of human trafficking do not have the required documentation to reside in Greece. Furthermore, traffickers use Greece not only as a destination but also as a transit stop and as a source country where even Greek women are prostituted on their way north to Western Europe. There are two main trafficking routes that go through Greece in order to reach the European Union. The first is the Balkan Route, through which victims are moved from the Balkans into Slovenia, Hungary, Italy and Greece, and from there to the rest of Europe. The second is the Eastern Mediterranean route, which moves victims from Turkey through Greece into Bulgaria and Romania.

According to the 2020 US report, one of the main problems is the identification of the victims and particularly of forced labour in the agriculture sector, cleaning and domestic services, and the tourism industry.

The victims of human trafficking have access to several programs such as the information and referral helpline "1109" that operates around the clock with the capacity of communicating in dozens of different languages. At the state level, EKKA, the National Centre for Social Solidarity, also operates "197", a 24-hour helpline. , Additional help lines especially for children at risk are in operation throughout the day: the National Helpline for Children "1107" and the Helpline "1506", as well as the European Hotline for Missing Children "116000". The General Secretariat for Gender Equality in cooperation with municipalities all over Greece has begun to establish shelters for women and children who are victims of violence and of trafficking. Furthermore, victims of human trafficking receive psychosocial support, psychotherapy, medical care, vocational guidance and legal representation or support for repatriation.

VI. National Legal Framework

The following laws address migration, asylum and human trafficking. Laws 4332/2015, 4368/2016 and 4478/2017 on migration and asylum have been amended with the law 4636/2019. Law 3064/2002 and the Presidential Decree 233/2003 prohibit sex trafficking and forced labour. Law 3875/2010 has extended legal aid to victims of human trafficking. In addition, law 3811/2009 gives victims of violent crimes the right to claim compensation.

In 1974, Greece ratified the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its amending protocols, and in 2013 signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In 2010, Greece ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Migration Policy are responsible for the implementation of laws governing migration and human trafficking. According to the 2020 US report, despite enforcement on human trafficking laws, the government of Greece does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Accordingly, it has a TIER 2 ranking, which means that it is making significant effort to fill the gaps. On the other hand, it is too early to see the results of the changes that the country's new law on migration and asylum will take.

VII. Main Actors

The State

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum provides information on asylum procedures in 18 languages, as well as data, information and legislation. The Hellenic Police provide information about migration issues related to laws and documentation. The Ministries of Education and of Foreign Affairs have jointly published a website about the support for refugees that is provided by NGO initiatives in Greece, including shelters, legal aid, health provision, nutrition and hygiene products and education.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Greece, with its various organizations, has been particularly attentive to the issue of forced migration.

The Holy Synod of the Catholic Hierarchy of Greece, a permanent institution founded by the Holy See in 1965 and whose members are the bishops of Greece, dedicated one of the seven National Committees to the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Itinerant People and tourists. The Bishops' Conference of Greece is part of the International Catholic Migration Commission. It is committed to strengthening the Greek asylum system with expert capacity.

The Pope John XXIII community that settled in Greece in 2014, helps migrants who are minors and people who are homeless with a group home and a shelter. Among its various activities, there are projects aimed at building bridges of dialogue and reconciliation in conflict zones, with particular attention to the Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Talitha Kum works under the RENATE program—Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation—operates a 24-hour helpline for victims of human trafficking. Its additional services include prevention, awareness, emergency shelters, freedom centres, transition programs and safe repatriation.

The Missionary Sisters of San Carlo Borromeo Scalabrinians (MSCS) have partnered with Sant'Egidio Community on the island of Lesbos to distribute food daily to migrants in the camp at Moria. The Sant'Egidio Community itself operates on Samos, offering food and care for migrants and asylum seekers. The MSCS and the Sant'Egidio Community recently launched an appeal (September 2020), together with JRS, to call for collective responsibility after the fire that destroyed the Moria camp in Lesbos. Limited accommodations for the displaced, humanitarian assistance (especially for the most vulnerable such as the sick, women and children, and elderly), programs of relocation, and changes in the reception systems in the Greek islands, were among the priorities of their joint appeal. Special attention was then given to humanitarian corridors, in which the Sant'Egidio Community was involved in 2016, as an example of efficient alternative projects of reception and integration.

Caritas Hellas is a registered charitable association, non-profit organization, institute of the Catholic Church in Greece, and member of Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europe. In its 11 Diocesan Caritas initiatives in the country, Caritas Hellas offers charity, essentials and development assistance; social services including consulting, moral and psychological support; financial help; and volunteer activities, implementing anti-poverty programs against poverty and addressing social exclusion especially involving vulnerable groups.

Since its founding in 2005, JRS Greece has been providing emergency assistance, education, psychological support and advocacy at the individual level. At the community level, it works for the rights of refugees rights and their dignity, and at the country level it addresses public perceptions of refugees and forced migrants in the country as a whole. JRS offers initial assistance

aimed at ensuring the survival of refugees in emergency situations through shelters, food and water supply, sanitation and provision of other essentials. It then aims to achieve the integration of all migrants and refugees through several activities offered in its three different centres located in Athens. Its programmes address integration through employment in the Women's Day Centre, integration through education for refugee and migrant children in the Pedro Arrupe Centre, and integration through activities such as language lessons, computer classes and jewellery-making in the Hub Community. Each of these initiatives is accompanied by programmes that address mental health and psychological support as well as regional and international advocacy. In the recent COVID-19 scenario (2020), JRS Greece urgently called for action from all the members of the European Union for the immediate decongestion of the Aegean Islands.

Local Churches are involved in serving the basic and spiritual needs of migrants and asylum seekers. Some offer fellowship and warm food, others seek to engage the new cultures of the refugees and combine them with Greek traditions, and others help migrants and refugees with their spiritual needs.

Church of Greece

APOSTOLI was founded in 2010 and is the major charity, welfare and humanitarian aid agency of the Archdiocese of Athens (Church of Greece). It offers charity, welfare, emergency relief and development assistance and programs to those in need. The Ecumenical Refugee Program (ERP), founded in 1994 by the Church of Greece, offers a wide range of help for refugees. It is a project partner for EU DG ECHO (the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations Department), UNHCR and the Greek Health Ministry and offers social and legal aid, interpreters and shelter for refugees. It also assists family reunion of unaccompanied minors.

International organizations

IOM Greece and UNHCR participate in different projects addressed to immigrants and asylum seekers. UNICEF focuses on children and mothers who have fled war and crisis zones. The Hellenic Red Cross is also heavily committed to help refugees. *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) is particularly active in the health sector and offers medical care and a mobile dental office for migrants and refugees. MSF Greece is also involved in health care, while the SOS Children's Villages supports unaccompanied minors and refugee families

Other organizations

The Greek Council for Refugees focuses its work on full support for refugees and asylum applicants and provides social and legal advice. ARSIS (Association for the Social Support of Youth) is an organization founded in 1992 for the rights of children and adolescents. It cares especially for unaccompanied minors. *Kivotos tou Kosmou* (Ark of the World) supports children of different nationalities from socially disadvantaged families, providing food, childcare, afternoon courses and other measures to combat social inclusion. *Paidia tis Gis* (Children of the World) takes care of children of all nationalities and works with youth detention centres and orphanages, helping street children. The Orange House is run by the NGO ZAATAR and offers a house for refugees in Athens with medical, psychosocial and education assistance as well as a mentoring program for unaccompanied minor children. *PRAKSIS* fights poverty and exclusion. It helps poor, homeless, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and forced prostitution, providing counselling, education and support for people at risk of social

exclusion. The Greek Association of Paraplegic Persons (PASPA) supports refugees seriously injured in war and who need a wheelchair or a prosthesis. In addition, the organization offers support to their clients' families by offering housing, nutrition, medical care and legal advice. Solidarity Now advocates for the rights of people in risk of social exclusion such as refugees and migrants, and provides food aid, accommodation and medical care. The organization functions as a network for various help organizations and operates a Solidarity Center in Athens and Thessaloniki. The Smile of the Child advocates for the rights of children, adolescents and unaccompanied minors providing accommodation, care and medical provisions. *ZEUXIS* is another NGO aimed at providing protection and support to vulnerable people. Its main focus is the protection of minors and especially those with a refugee or migrant profile. *ZEUXIS* currently operates two projects: 1) *OIKOS* is a shelter for unaccompanied minor girls, providing housing, social services, psychosocial support, non-formal education and cultural activities, and legal aid with asylum procedures; and 2) *DAY CENTER*, a centre for the provision of psychosocial support to minor refugees and migrants and their families. The Welcome to Europe Network offers information on NGOs that help for refugees and migrants in all of Greece, especially Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras. *Lexica* assists with translation and social and health orientation for refugees in Greek, Arabic, English, French, Sorani, Kurmanji and Urdu.

Despite the high number of programs and organizations involved in the care for migrants and asylum seekers, some sources indicate that there has been a delay in the application of the national plan for integration due to the lack of preparation of the institutions and people in charge.

8. Other Important Issues

Greece signed the Global Compacts under the former Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras. Pope Francis and the JRS continue to send public messages to overcome the problems that affect migrants and asylum seekers who arrive in Greece, calling on the EU community to participate in their redistribution. Furthermore, the Greek Orthodox Church cooperates actively with UNHCR to help migrants and refugees.

September 2020

C. References

Institutional websites and NGOs

IOM Greece

<https://greece.iom.int/en>

UNHCR in Greece

www.unhcr.gr

UNICEF in Greece

www.unicef.gr

The Hellenic Red Cross

www.redcross.gr

Doctors of the World

www.mdmgreece.gr

The organization MSF Greece

<http://www.msf.org/greece>

The SOS Children's Villages

www.sos-villages.gr

ARSIS

<http://arsis.gr>

The Greek Council for Refugees

www.gcr.gr/index.php/en/

The organization Kivotos tou Kosmou

www.kivotostoukosmou.org

The organization Paidia tis Gis

<http://www.paidiatisgis.gr>

The Orange House

<http://zaatarngo.org/>

The Greek Association of Paraplegic Persons

www.paspa.gr

The organization Praksis

www.praksis.gr/en/about-praksis

Solidarity Now

www.solidaritynow.org//index_en.html

The Smile of the Child

www.hamogelo.gr

ZEUXIS

www.zeuxis.org.gr

APOSTOLI

www.mkoapostoli.gr

Caritas Hellas

www.caritas.gr

The Ecumenical Refugee Program (ECRP)

<http://refugeeshub.org/places/athina/accommodation/ecumenical-refugee-program-erp/>

The Greek Ministries of Education and of Foreign Affairs

<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/>

- Shelters: (<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/shelter>)
- Legal aid: (<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/legal>)
- Health provision: (<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/medical>)
- Nutrition and hygiene products:
<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/distributionof-product>
- Education: (<https://refugees.studyinggreece.edu.gr/index.php/education>)

The Network Welcome to Europe: <http://w2eu.info/greece.en/articles/greece-contacts.en.html>

Lexica

www.eda.admin.ch/greece-lexica

The Holy Synod of the Catholic Hierarchy of Greece

<https://www.ccee.eu/ccee/conferenze-episcopali/greece/?lang=en>

Bishops' Conference of Greece:

<http://www.cathecclesia.gr>

The International Catholic Migration Commission:

<https://www.icmc.net/what-we-do/deploying-refugee-protection-experts/greek-asylum-system/>

The Pope John XXIII community

<https://www.apg23.org/it/grecia/>

RENATE program (Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation)

<https://www.renate-europe.net/contact-renate-in-greece/>

Missionary Sisters of San Carlo Borromeo Scalabrinians

<http://www.scalabriniane.org/2020/08/23/migranti-parte-un-nuovo-gruppo-di-suore-scalabriniane-per-missione-lesbo/>

Sant'Egidio Community

https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/30284/langID/en/georef/CY=Greece/NEWS_GREECE.html

Publications

ASPIDDA (2007). *Trafficking in human beings and Greek mass media*.

https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/trafficking_in_human_beings_and_greek_mass_media-guide_for_journalists_en_1.pdf

Cavounidis, J. (2015). *The changing face of emigration. Harnessing the potential of the new Greek diaspora*. Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/TCM-Emigration-Greece-FINALWEB.pdf>

Cavounidis, J. (2018). The migration experience of Greece and the impact of the economic crisis on its migrant and native populations. *European Journal of Public Health*, 28, 5, pp. 20-23.

https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/28/suppl_5/20/5196845

Megrelis, N. (2017). *Greece. Media's double vision as migrant crisis catches the world's imagination*.

<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/medias-double-vision-as-migrant-crisis-catches-the-world-imagination>

UNHCR (2020). *Fact Sheet 1-30 June 2020*.

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/78115>