

MILMET Project

IO1-Handbook: Country's situation

MIGRATION IN GREECE

Greece is one of the main gates to the EU for migrants from Asia and Africa seeking to flee war and economic hardships in their countries. According to the UNHCR (2022), 147,420 refugees and 22,117 asylum-seekers were present in Greece in June 2022. In total, 14.000 individuals were estimated to have entered Greece that year, either via land or maritime borders. Of these, the majority were men (52.2%), followed by minors (30.4%) and women (17.4%).¹ Among the 28,320 asylum applications that were received in 2021, most concerned individuals from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iraq and Somalia. Important delays in treating applications have been reported and 60% of the applications were granted international protection status, refugee or subsidiary protection status.² The total number of third-country nationals detained in Pre-removal Detention Facilities (PRDFs) during 2021 was 12,020, out of whom 6,447 were asylum seekers.³

The war in Ukraine as well as the Covid-19 pandemic put increasing strain on the country's migration reception infrastructure, particularly in a country that was already heavily affected by national austerity policies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, refugees were confined to already overcrowded reception centres. (Brändle, Eisele & Trenz, 2019; Cinnally & Trenz, 2018, Triandafyllidou, 2022). In addition, according to OPORA (2023), the number of citizens of Ukraine who entered the country after the start of Russia's invasion is estimated around 77,258 individuals and the number of those who received temporary protection status is around 21,202 individuals.⁴

¹ All data are from the website Operational Data Portal, Refugee Situations, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

² All data are from aida (Asylum Information Database) and ecre (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), Country Report Statistics: Greece, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/statistics/>

³ All data are from aida (Asylum Information Database) and ecre (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), Country Report Statistics: Greece, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/statistics/>

⁴ All data are from OPORA, The impact of a full-scale war on the migration of Ukrainian people: how the scale of displacement is assessed by the state of Ukraine and international organizations,

Following the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 resulting in the closure of the Western Balkan migration route, the status of Greece was altered from a transit gateway to being a refugee destination. Consequently, the official policy for the migrants and refugees shifted focus from humanitarian support towards more longer-term solutions. The new National strategy for integration, adopted in 2021, broadened policies on the access to education and training for migrants in the country, the respect of human rights and the creation of jobs in critical sectors of the Greek economy. The rationale behind the policy was to increase GDP, to the benefit of Greeks and refugees alike, as well as to facilitate relocations to other countries and the implementation of return policies. The National strategy foresees coordination mechanisms between national, regional and local authorities. An important role in the preparation, development, and implementation of the strategy was also played by other actors such as INGOs and NGOs (Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου, 2021).

Despite the advances in migration policy, Human Rights Watch (2022) reported a great number of violations of migration rights in Greece, including violent border practices, arbitrary detention, and deaths at the Greek borders. These practises have further been criticised by UNHCR, IOM, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, the Council of Europe Commissioner, the Greek Ombudsperson, and civil society organisations. The challenging domestic context in recent years has resulted in parts of the public opinion being sceptical towards migration (Dixon et al., 2019). Regardless, the Greek context is characterised by a strong mobilisation by local communities and NGOs operating to support migrants at the borders, in the reception centres and in local communities (Kousis, Chatzidaki, Kafetsios, 2022).

Social Integration

Although the number of the reception places of refugees and migrants in Greece has been increased through temporary camps and the UNHCR accommodation scheme, a large proportion of this population are affected by poverty and homelessness. The

https://www.oporaua.org/en/report/viyana/24523-vpliv-povnomasshtabnoyi-viini-na-migratsiiu-ukrayintsiv-iak-masshtabi-peremishchennia-otsiniuiut-derzhava-ukrayina-ta-mizhnarodni-organizatsiyi?gclid=CjwKCAjwm4ukBhAuEiwA0zQxk6_wB40dwRidYa_7LpdYCAJW9wksV-lyRWKnGu_sqYtQ6HJHsWgTAhoCwmlQAvD_BwE

ESTIA programme (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation), jointly implemented between 2015 and 2021 by the UNHCR, the Greek Government and NGOs, with the financial support of the European Union, provided accommodation to 73,000 individuals and cash assistance to 200,000 all over the country⁵. While the Ministry of Migration and Asylum continued the programme with ESTIA II the number of migrants accommodated through the programme was significantly reduced and it was announced that the programme will be terminated at the end of 2022.⁶

Between June 2019 and December 2021, another programme, HELIOS (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection) was supported by the European Commission's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Greece in collaboration with the Greek government and NGOs. The project supports and promotes the integration of beneficiaries of international protection by providing integration courses, accommodation support, employability support, integration monitoring and sensitisation of local communities. In August 2021, 32,380 beneficiaries had been enrolled in the programme with 5,983 households supported, 15,132 individuals had benefited from rental subsidies (less than 4% of these were in Western Greece), 5,799 had enrolled in integration courses and 5,632 had benefitted from job counselling sessions⁷. From 2022, the Greek Authorities has taken over the project's management and funding, resulting in 945 additional individuals benefitting from new lease agreements and 18,170 receiving rental subsidies.⁸

Labour market & Education

Despite the fact that asylum seekers have the right to access the labour market six months after filing their application for international protection, many continue to

⁵ All data are from the website ESTIA UNHCR, A new chapter in the lives of refugees in Greece, <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/home/>

⁶ All data are from aida (Asylum Information Database) and ecre (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), Country Report: Greece, https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AIDA-GR_2021update.pdf

⁷ All data are from European Commission, European Website on Integration, IOM: Feedback from HELIOS programme beneficiaries, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/iom-feedback-helios-programme-beneficiaries_en

⁸ All data are from MoMA's website, Statistics, Reports, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/statistika/>

face difficulties in doing so. As of the end of 2021, less than 50% of adult asylum seekers (9,707 out of 15,793) had managed to obtain a social security number. Other common obstacles are faced when trying to open a bank account or obtain an unemployment card.⁹

Among those asylum seekers who manage to get employed, most work in the informal sector, without access to social security. Moreover, lack of formal documentation makes it difficult for asylum seekers to access vocational trainings. A survey of the educational background and professional skills of asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, conducted by UNHCR in April and May 2021, found that individuals had skills in 20 different sectors, including trade, engineering, manufacturing, and social work. Only 7% of the participants stated that they had no previous occupation or skills. Moreover, 78% of those interviewed had at least some formal education and 8% had studied at a university¹⁰.

The local situation in Patras

In Western Greece, 146 people were waiting for their asylum applications to be treated.¹¹ However, the migrant population residing in the region and in Patras particularly is thought to be much higher, with estimations of around 600 – 1000 individuals¹², the majority of which are the so-called irregular migrants who live in old, abandoned factories at the coastline of Patras. Most of them have the intention to leave Greece and try to reach Northern Europe. This population is particularly vulnerable to abuse, including police brutality, fear of deportation and receive limited social aid by the state. Documented and undocumented migrants in Patras typically work in the agricultural sector, as service staff at individual homes or at recycling factories. According to the local press and the president of the Greek-Ukrainian Friendship Association "The Lighthouse" (2023), the number of Ukrainian refugees in

⁹ All data are from aida (Asylum Information Database) and ecre (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), Country Report: Greece, https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AIDA-GR_2021update.pdf

¹⁰ All data are from the website Operational Data Portal, Refugee Situations, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/87682>.

¹¹ Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Statistics, Reports,

¹² Official data does not exist for the exact number of irregular refugees in Patras, the estimates are made from testimonials.

Patras are estimated around 40 individuals, 17 families and most of them are employed in the hospitality sector and as carers for the elderly.¹³ Official data and reports about the number of immigrants and refugees working in the sector of the green economy in Greece or in Patras does not exist.

Resources

International

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¹³ THE BEST portal, Πόσοι Ουκρανοί πρόσφυγες έχουν μείνει σε Πάτρα και Πύργο- Με τι ασχολούνται (How many Ukrainian refugees have stayed in Patras and Pyrgos - What are they doing?), <https://www.thebest.gr/article/708807-posoi-prosfuges-apo-tin-oukrania-echoun-meinei-se-patra-kai-purgo-me-ti-ascholountai>



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Greek

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