

Cyprus | Reception Capacity

31 December 2019

Overview

Since 2013 Cyprus has been receiving an increasing number of refugees, particularly from neighbouring Syria. This increase has been ongoing and intensified in 2018, with a 72% increase over the previous year stretching the limited reception structures of the country. By the end of 2019 the upward trend continued with the lodging of 12,724 new asylum applications.

Overall, some 18,800 applications for international protection were pending at the end of 2019. In addition, some 11,870 persons are registered as having been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status between 2002 and the end of 2019.

State efforts have started to introduce a comprehensive action plan to address the major challenges in reception, such as registration and asylum processing as well as housing.

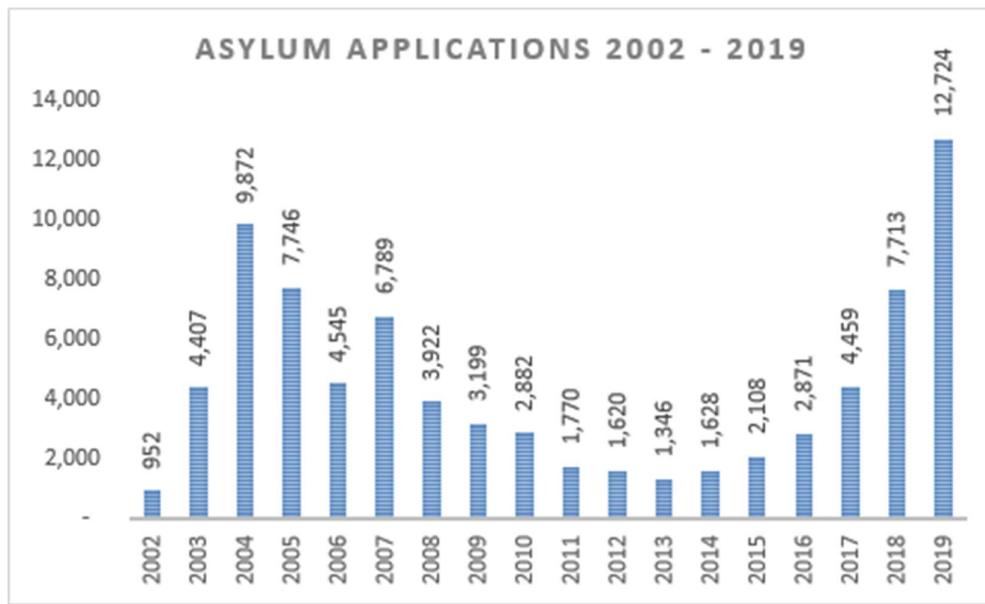


Figure 1: New Asylum Applications in Cyprus from 2002 through to the end of 2019

The top ten countries of origin of new asylum-seekers in Cyprus in 2019 were Syria, Georgia, India, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Pakistan, Egypt, Vietnam, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. Figure 2 below shows the top ten countries of origin breakdown for asylum applications in Cyprus from 2013 to 2018.

| Year | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | |
|--|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| Total Applicants in Year | 1,144 | | 1,728 | | 1,560 | | 3,055 | | 4,582 | | 7,761 | |
| Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Syria | 562 | 49.13% | 983 | 56.89% | 1,008 | 64.62% | 1,248 | 40.85% | 1,805 | 39.39% | 2,007 | 25.86% |
| Egypt | 143 | 12.50% | 82 | 4.75% | 75 | 4.81% | 109 | 3.57% | 268 | 5.85% | 407 | 5.24% |
| Bangladesh | 106 | 9.27% | 69 | 3.99% | 48 | 3.08% | 137 | 4.48% | 287 | 6.26% | 637 | 8.21% |
| Vietnam | 83 | 7.26% | 80 | 4.63% | 126 | 8.08% | 155 | 5.07% | 357 | 7.79% | 415 | 5.35% |
| Pakistan | 54 | 4.72% | 68 | 3.94% | 122 | 7.82% | 217 | 7.10% | 191 | 4.17% | 587 | 7.56% |
| Sri Lanka | 50 | 4.37% | 49 | 2.84% | 53 | 3.40% | 75 | 2.45% | 140 | 3.06% | 278 | 3.58% |
| Somalia | 43 | 3.76% | 21 | 1.22% | 66 | 4.23% | 224 | 7.33% | 118 | 2.58% | 104 | 1.34% |
| India | 36 | 3.15% | 81 | 4.69% | 90 | 5.77% | 205 | 6.71% | 446 | 9.73% | 883 | 11.38% |
| Philippines | 34 | 2.97% | 39 | 2.26% | 51 | 3.27% | | | 87 | 1.90% | 128 | 1.65% |
| Iran (Islamic Republic of) | 22 | 1.92% | 34 | 1.97% | 27 | 1.73% | | | 82 | 1.79% | 208 | 2.68% |

Figure 2: Asylum applications in Cyprus with top ten countries of origin breakdown from 2013 to 2018.

Kofinou Reception Centre for Applicants of International Protection



Some 300 residents are housed at the Kofinou Reception Centre, while the vast majority of asylum-seekers and refugees in Cyprus live in urban areas.
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The sole State-run reception centre, located in the village of Kofinou some 40-50km from Nicosia, was expanded in 2014 to have a 400-bed capacity. The Centre has been operating at its maximum capacity since January 2016.

Efforts have been made over the years to provide suitable reception conditions, including a medical centre, full catering, as well as kitchens, common rooms, and a play area for young children. Ongoing problems with food quality and

infrastructure continue to be addressed in an effort to further improve the living conditions at the Centre.

Persisting challenges relate to the Centre's remote location coupled with the limited transport facilities to town that tend to impede the residents' employment opportunities, their interaction with the locals and integration efforts in general. More and targeted on-site activities could further improve the daily lives of the residents making their time at the Centre more pleasant and productive. Enhanced social services and psychosocial counselling would in addition help to better address the needs of vulnerable persons and ensure their smooth transition from the Centre to the community, including upon the granting of international protection.



UNHCR donated in December 2018 a 9-seater mini-bus to the Asylum Service to support efforts to improve the living conditions of the residents at the centre, their access to services given the remote location of the centre and improve their integration into society.

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Emergency Centre at Kokkinotrimithia

There is also a 350-person capacity tented shelter located in Kokkinotrimithia, on the outskirts of Nicosia. The tented facility, established in 2014 with EU funding to help deal with increased arrivals from Syria, was envisaged only for short-term emergency accommodation. It currently serves as a first reception centre providing shelter for 72 hours to newly arrived homeless asylum-seekers. There are plans to expand the centre's capacity further.

UNHCR provides technical advice to ensure adequate reception conditions including advice to address exploitation risks for children and women at the camp.



Residents of the temporary shelter in Kokkinotrimithia dry their clothes outside their tents in the August sun.

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UNHCR has in addition donated to the Civil Defence blankets, plastic sheets and other non-food relief items aiming to cover the needs of 3,400 persons.

Urban living for the majority of asylum-seekers

The vast majority of asylum-seekers live in the cities. Many live in rented private accommodation, but many are left homeless or at risk of homelessness and destitution. This is due to a number of factors, such as the employment policy that applies to asylum-seekers, which is not conducive to their integration into the labour market; the amount of the state aid granted to unemployed asylum-seekers that is less than the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) granted to other destitute groups of the population, including unemployed citizens and refugees; the surge in the rent prices caused by an increase in the demand for rented accommodation; and the prolonged period for the examination of asylum applications.



Increasing numbers of asylum-seekers are at risk of homelessness. They rely on charities for food and access to basic facilities or live in inappropriate and overcrowded spaces, sharing with other destitute asylum-seekers.

Homeless asylum-seekers are provided emergency assistance and/or are referred to hostels for emergency accommodation. Sectors of the economy in which asylum-seekers can work have expanded, but finding a job remains problematic for most asylum-seekers due to language barriers and red tape.

State aid has increased and consists of rental allowance, food coupons and utilities. Despite the increase, it remains well below the GMI. The GMI allowance provides for a basic income to the applicant of EUR480 per month. In addition to this amount, there is an allowance for spouses (EUR240) and for children under age 14 (EUR144) or for children over age 14 and up to age 28 (240), as well as a rental allowance, which is calculated based on various criteria, and according to a specific formula.

| Number of persons in the household | Food, clothing and footwear (in coupons) | Allowance for electricity, water and minor expenses (in cash or cheque) | Rental allowance | Total amount of assistance granted |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 1 | €186 | €75 | Nicosia €100 Limassol €100 Famagusta €100 <u>Larnaca €100</u> <u>Pafos €100</u> | Nicosia €361 Limassol €361 Famagusta €361 <u>Larnaca €361</u> <u>Pafos €361</u> |
| 2 | €279 | €100 | Nicosia €200 Limassol €218 Famagusta €146 <u>Larnaca €174</u> <u>Pafos €146</u> | Nicosia €579 Limassol €597 Famagusta €525 <u>Larnaca €553</u> <u>Pafos €525</u> |
| 3 | €372 | €140 | Nicosia €290 Limassol €317 Famagusta €211 <u>Larnaca €252</u> <u>Pafos €211</u> | Nicosia €802 Limassol €829 Famagusta €723 <u>Larnaca €764</u> <u>Pafos €723</u> |
| 4 | €465 | €170 | Nicosia €290 Limassol €317 Famagusta €211 <u>Larnaca €252</u> <u>Pafos €211</u> | Nicosia €925 Limassol €952 Famagusta €846 <u>Larnaca €887</u> <u>Pafos €846</u> |
| 5 and more | €558 | €200 | Nicosia €364 Limassol €397 Famagusta €265 <u>Larnaca €315</u> <u>Pafos €265</u> | Nicosia €1,122 Limassol €1,155 Famagusta €1,023 <u>Larnaca €1,073</u> <u>Pafos €1,023</u> |

Figure 3: Material Reception Conditions for asylum-seekers in Cyprus

Asylum processing

UNHCR advocates for the implementation of fair, effective and quick procedures for examining asylum-seekers' applications. This is to everyone's interest as the asylum system should be preserved for those needing international protection.

To address the backlog, UNHCR advocates for the adoption of an effective screening mechanism and accelerated procedures to quickly decide on applications from persons who are in need of international protection as well as on applications with unfounded claims, in accordance with the **Fair and Fast Policy Document** [<https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b589eef4.html>]

A UNHCR quality audit unit has been set up at the Asylum Service to support the latter to better structure its work on improving the asylum screening process and establish accelerated procedures throughout the asylum system.

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