




## Supporting **new arrivals** – protection by presence

*“When we arrive and see the blue UNHCR vests, it’s the very first moment we feel safe again”,*  
asylum-seeker at Lesbos island


UNHCR Protection staff provides valuable information to asylum-seekers residing at Lesbos Closed Controlled Access Centre. © UNHCR/ Socrates Baltagiannis

 **170,000**  
refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless. **54%** are women & children

Source: Ministry of Migration and Asylum, UNHCR; February 2026

 **60%**  
of arrivals in 2025 were from nationalities with **refugee recognition rates above 75%**

Source: Ministry of Migration and Asylum, UNHCR; December 2025

 **30%**  
**decrease** in arrivals by **April 2026 vs. same period in 2025, with an increase in Crete in late May**

Source: Ministry of Migration and Asylum, UNHCR; April 2026

### CONTEXT

Arrivals to Greece by sea and land routes continue, though at reduced levels compared to previous years. In 2025, Greece recorded 48,800 arrivals (21% less than in 2024), with the sea route from North Africa to the Crete region gaining prominence.




Since 2013, UNHCR has supported the functioning of the State’s first-reception mechanism. Pursuant to Article 45 of Law 4939/2022, UNHCR monitors reception and identification procedures, provides information to persons subject to these procedures, and offers any form of assistance, in accordance with its mandate and responsibilities. **Through its long-standing presence in key locations, UNHCR enables direct engagement with affected populations and authorities, real-time identification of protection risks, and evidence-based advocacy to uphold access to territory and asylum.**

**Ensuring refugees’ access to territory and asylum remains a priority. UNHCR will remain engaged with the State to support with any activities under the Screening Regulation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which sets out streamlined procedures for identifying, registering, and conducting security checks on third-country nationals at the EU’s external borders.**





In 2025, due to reduced resources, UNHCR’s presence in field locations was scaled back. The premises of Samos, Chios, Kos, and Thessaloniki closed, and a limited staff presence was retained in all field locations primarily through camp-based modalities, while the Country Office remains in Athens covering southern Greece. In-person interpretation services were shifted to remote modalities, and interpretation hours were reduced, affecting communication with refugees.

**A total of \$8.3 million is needed in 2026 to sustain priority responses and scale up critical interventions across all UNHCR programmatic areas.**

## UNHCR'S FIRST RECEPTION AND IDENTIFICATION PROGRAMME 2026

 <p><b>35,000</b> people receive info provision &amp; <b>500</b> border and frontline personnel trained in 2026</p>	 <p><b>\$1.2M</b> prioritized financial requirements for 2026 for protection by presence programme</p>	 <p><b>3</b> UNHCR offices across Greece and presence in another <b>6</b> locations, covering around <b>30</b> sites countrywide</p>
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Currently, in close coordination with national authorities (Reception and Identification Service, Asylum Service, Coast Guard, Police), as well as with the EUAA, Frontex, IOM, and NGO partners, UNHCR offers:

 <p><b>Information provision to new arrivals</b></p>	<p>Trained staff deployed across first line facilities in Greece deliver <b>accurate, in person information to newly arriving refugees and migrants</b>, in coordination with the Reception and Identification Service (RIS), EUAA, and IOM. They explain screening and asylum procedures, and available integration or return options. Accessible and inclusive information provision, offered in an appropriate language, enables individuals to comprehend their rights, obligations, and accessible services.</p>
 <p><b>Early identification and referral of vulnerable individuals</b></p>	<p><b>Vulnerable individuals are identified</b> by UNHCR at the point of arrival and are <b>referred to the authorities</b>, with prioritized access to appropriate procedures, services, and application of safeguards. Vulnerable groups include unaccompanied and separated children, single women, shipwreck survivors, persons with serious health and mental health conditions, and survivors of violence against women and children. This process helps to <b>strengthen screening and response mechanisms</b>.</p>
 <p><b>Protection monitoring and community engagement</b></p>	<p>UNHCR supports authorities to engage with refugees and host communities to better <b>understand protection risks, gather feedback, and promote peaceful coexistence</b>. Through <b>community consultations and feedback mechanisms</b>, services and procedures can be adapted to reflect the needs, priorities, and concerns of people of different ages, genders, and backgrounds.</p>
 <p><b>Capacity building of frontline responders and supporting with basic items</b></p>	<p>UNHCR equips authorities operating at the borders, as well as staff in reception facilities, through <b>trainings</b> on refugee protection in the context of managing mixed movements. Personnel of the Hellenic Coast Guard and the Hellenic Police receive trainings on refugee protection and protection at sea, while targeted trainings for RIS staff in complementarity with the EUAA, cover agreed areas such as Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Child Protection. UNHCR has also historically supported the State with <b>provision of non-food items</b> (mattresses, blankets etc.) to address new arrivals' needs.</p>

## UNMET NEEDS & POTENTIAL TO SCALE UP

<p>In 2024, UNHCR provided <b>information on asylum, rights and obligations</b> to over <b>54,000</b> new arrivals – 87% of all arrivals</p>	<p>In 2025, due to funding cuts of more than 50%, <b>32,600</b> new arrivals were supported through <b>UNHCR information provision</b> – 67% of all arrivals</p>	<p>In 2026, UNHCR needs <b>\$900K</b> more to enhance presence at border locations and <b>train 500</b> border and frontline personnel and <b>reach 20%</b> more refugees</p>
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