

Greece



Photo: NATO



International Catholic
Migration Commission

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Context

A signatory state to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Greece receives large numbers of asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants every year from the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere, due to its strategic location at the South-Eastern external border of the European Union (EU). Coming by land and increasingly by sea in mixed migratory movements, these groups with different profiles and protection needs present a challenge for the Greek authorities in terms of reception and asylum capacity. Since 2010, the government of Greece has sought to improve the effectiveness of its response to these arrivals by undertaking a major reform of its asylum and migration management system. Greece receives direct support for this reform from UNHCR, the European Union, and other agencies.

Operations

As an implementing partner of UNHCR in Greece, ICMC deploys highly qualified experts to assist UNHCR in providing operational support to the reform of the Greek asylum and migration management system. Since 2010, this pool of skilled professionals has been a critical component of UNHCR's protection activities in Greece. Recruited and administered by ICMC, these experts work under the operational and functional supervision of UNHCR and provide support on matters relating to reception conditions, law, country of origin information analysis, quality assurance, project management and communications.

ICMC manages this pool of experts in a flexible way, so to respond to changes in migration patterns. ICMC has also extended the geographic range of its expert deployment in response to the opening of regional asylum offices in multiple locations around the country, including on several Greek islands (see map).

In assisting with protection activities, ICMC is deeply concerned about the challenges and dangers that arise from perilous sea crossings. These dangers highlight the importance of effective asylum procedures and protection for vulnerable persons on the move.



PROTECTION

ICMC partners with UNHCR in supporting Greek authorities to build an effective asylum system in Greece. Our activities include:

- Strengthening first reception responses to new arrivals.
- Improving conditions in reception centers upon arrival.
- Identifying new arrivals with special protection needs and improving access to essential services.
- Improving reception mechanisms for asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors.
- Advocating for improvement of detention conditions and prevention of arbitrary detention.
- Improving the quality and efficiency of decision-making in asylum procedures at first instance.
- Providing country of origin analysis and documentation support.
- Consolidating the quality of the refugee status determination process.

Activities



Map: Based on OCHA/ReliefWeb

ICMC's deployment locations in Greece

ICMC's experts are deployed to support UNHCR's protection activities in:

- The Central Asylum Service in Athens.
- Regional asylum offices in Athens, Thessaloniki, Alexandroupolis, Orestiada and Rhodes.
- Selected border locations on the islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Rhodes and Kos.
- Other border areas without a permanent UNHCR presence.

Strengthening the first reception of displaced people

ICMC's experts are on the front line when refugees and asylum seekers reach the shores of Southern Europe. They ensure that these displaced persons receive protection upon their arrival in Greece.

In particular, ICMC deploys personnel to assist UNHCR in:

- strengthening the response of the Greek authorities in receiving new arrivals at selected border locations; and
- monitoring arrivals at island entry points without a permanent UNHCR's presence.

Once new refugees and asylum seekers have entered Greece, ICMC's experts seek to respond to their immediate needs and reduce their vulnerability by informing them of their rights and obligations and distributing essential items within reception centers and at entry points.

ICMC also deploys various experts to help improve and harmonize conditions, set standards and increase assistance in reception centers for new arrivals.

Key figures

In 2014,
47,000
refugees and migrants
arrived in Greece

ICMC deployed
37 experts
to different locations

ICMC's Information
Officers conducted over
37,000
information sessions

Improving protection for vulnerable people upon arrival

Amongst the migrants arriving in Greece, there are many particularly vulnerable persons in need of special protection, including asylum seekers and unaccompanied or separated children. ICMC's experts working as legal, protection, and community service officers are assigned by UNHCR to identify persons with special needs and improve their access to essential legal, social and psychological support services.

ICMC's experts also assist UNHCR in:

- improving assistance to asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors;
- ensuring a more protection-sensitive approach to border management; and
- advocating to improve conditions in detention centers and prevent arbitrary detention.

Improving access to and quality of refugee status determination

ICMC's experts are assigned by UNHCR to work with the Greek authorities and the Asylum Service to help them respond to the migration flows and improve access to and quality of asylum procedures.

These experts provide support in terms of quality assurance support, legal matters, informational analysis, project management and communications where needed. They transfer their knowledge and support Greek authorities, including by:

- improving their capacity to gather, translate and analyze information on the migrants' country of origin;
- providing quality support within the Greek asylum procedures.

“ I would like to ask the international community to continue saving people in water and not leave them to die. Please do continue to rescue the many desperate people crossing the sea and do whatever you can to save and assist them, or otherwise they die. ”

Mr. Abu Kurke Kabeto, a refugee from Ethiopia and one of the nine survivors of a boat stranded at sea between Libya and Europe for 16 days.

**With thanks
to our donor**



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