





Over the last three years, our country has been called upon to manage an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants coming from two continents and heading to Europe in search of a better future.

The Greek Government has made every effort right from the start to respond adequately to extraordinary circumstances, while thousands of people were being rescued in the Aegean Sea and Reception and Identification Centers and Hospitality Structures were being established with the capacity to meet all the basic needs. The collaboration on the ground among all the involved ministries and agencies has been crucial and brought tangible results.

The structures subsequently got improved and some of them over time met the stricter standards set by International Organizations. The reduction in migrant flows after the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016, allowed the Greek Government to focus on implementing improvements of the living conditions and developing programs for the effective integration of asylum seekers who would remain in the country.

In cooperation with the European Commission and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) support programs have been implemented in the framework of which asylum seekers have been accommodated in apartments as well as they have been offered financial support through prepaid cards. Improving everyday life, facilitating access to goods and services strengthening and at the same time local societies and economies not only enhanced the sense of dignity but also strengthened relations between asylum seekers and host societies.

One of our central priorities for the immediate future is the implementation of major infrastructure projects in the islands, in cooperation with the local government, aiming at enhancing everyday life of the inhabitants who are in the front line during the ongoing refugee crisis. At the same time, our goal is to relieve the burden of the reception and identification centers until the fulfillment of EU- Turkey Statement requirements. Aim of EU- Turkey Statement is the migration flows to be eliminated. The government is seeking to speed up the procedures for examining asylum applications with new regulation introduced in the immediate future.

In any case, the Greek Government has strictly respected and complied with all the obligations of International Law and European and International Agreements, expecting all parties to do the same.

The Ministry for Migration Policy will continue to defend strongly the values of humanity and solidarity, while supporting asylum seekers as well as local communities that have made significant efforts at this time to manage the situation.

**Dimitris Vitsas**

Minister of Migration Policy



The first for 2018 edition of the Newsletter concerning the situation of refugees and migrants in Greece provides updated data of the greek authorities and international organizations which closely cooperate in handling this matter.

This edition presents data and statistics in an effort to satisfy the need for information. Apart from figures we should always keep in mind that the refugee issue is primarily a humanitarian one. It is a combination of human stories, dangerous journeys, inhuman exploitation and struggle for survival.

Our country and greek people have proved, on national as well as on local level, that they provide their assistance in managing the refugee issue in a spirit of humanitarianism and solidarity.

Our aim is to activate and maintain open communication channels on the issue, so that all of us remain both sharers of this approach and assistants in the effort to keep record of the refugee issue in its true dimensions.

The initiatives of the greek authorities to address the urgent needs of refugees and migrants are being constantly supported with the assistance and financial aid of the European partners as well as by the active involvement of local communities and voluntary organizations.

This edition presents analytic data concerning the actions developed in the sensitive sector of Health, that prevented exposure to serious public health risks.

The Newsletter will be issued periodically focusing on individual sectors and the initiatives of those respectively involved in its management, with the aim to give the greek and international media the big picture of what is going on.

The Secretariat for Crisis Management Communication of the Ministry of Digital Policy Telecommunications and Media wishes to thank the Ministries of Migration Policy, Interior, Economy and Development, Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Health, Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy as well as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their cooperation in the preparation of this edition.



**Foteini Pantiora**

Secretary for Crisis Management Communication of the Ministry of Digital Policy Telecommunications and Media





## REFUGEE AND MIGRATION FLOWS

### GENERAL DATA

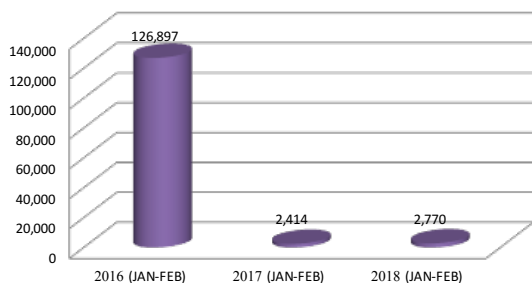
The total number of asylum seekers living in hosting facilities and sites under the supervision of the Greek authorities is estimated at 55,000.

Reception and Identification Centers operate on the Eastern Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos and Leros. Moreover, 22 temporary accommodation structures are operating throughout mainland Greece.

By the end of February 2018, a total of 21,853 relocations to other European countries had been carried out.



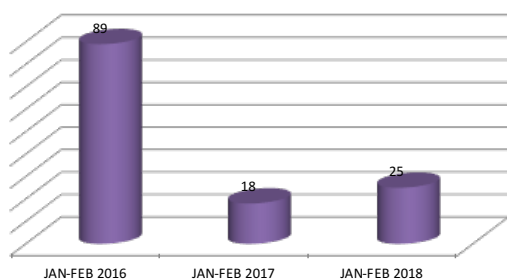
IRREGULAR MIGRATION FLOWS  
THROUGH GREEK-TURKISH SEA BORDERS



The number of irregular immigrants from third-countries in the entire country amounted to **8,394** in January-February 2018 (**6,336** in the corresponding two months of 2017 – **an increase of 32.5%**)

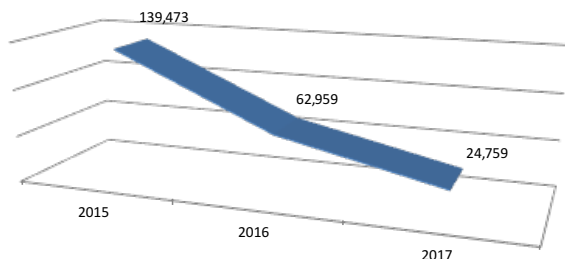
It is noted that in 2017, refugee-migration flows in Greece were reduced by about 70% compared to 2016, according to the National Coordination Center for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum (N.C.C.B.C.I.A.)

MIGRANT SMUGGLERS ARRESTS

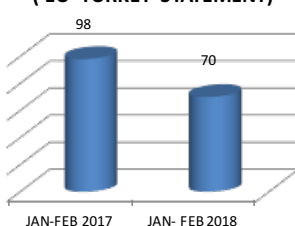


The total number of returns in January - February 2018 reached 2,313, while in the corresponding months of 2017, it was 2,836. At the same time, 70 returns from Greek islands to Turkey were carried out, pursuant to the EU-Turkey Statement, instead of 98 in the corresponding period last year.

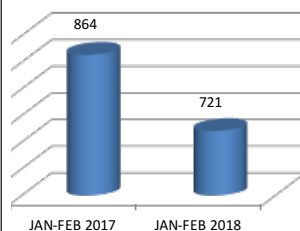
RESCUES OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS



RETURNS FROM THE ISLANDS  
(EU-TURKEY STATEMENT)



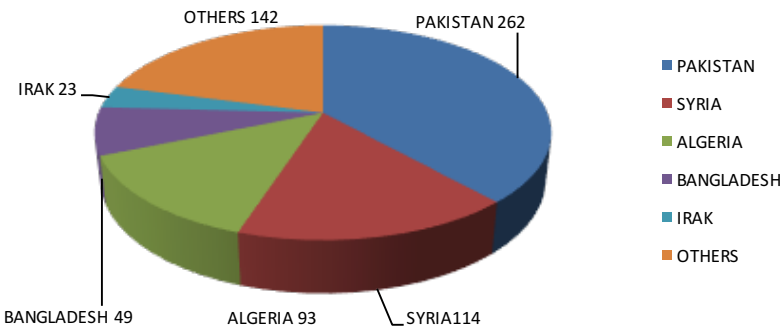
VOLUNTARY RETURNS (IOM)



REFUGEE AND MIGRATION FLOWS



2017: RETURNS FROM THE ISLANDS ( EU-TURKEY STATEMENT)  
2017



ESTIA

In the framework of the Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation – ESTIA program – the Greek Government works with the UNHCR and local authorities to provide urban accommodation and cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in Greece. As of 27 February 2018, the total number of accommodation sites (apartments, buildings and hotels) all over Greece within the framework of ESTIA program reached 23,280 where 19,568 people are being hosted. Municipalities of Athens, Thessaloniki, Livadeia, Larissa, Trikala, Karditsa, Tripoli, Nea Philadelphia-Chalcedon, Iraklion-of Crete, Chania, Rethymnon and Agios Nikolaos as well as seven NGOs have joined the program.

The UNHCR provides 1,336 reception sites on the islands where 1,127 asylum seekers are being hosted.



## PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

### Asylum Service

#### First instance asylum procedure

In 2017, a total of **58,661** asylum applications were submitted, **26,668** of which on the five islands where Reception and Identification Centers are operating.

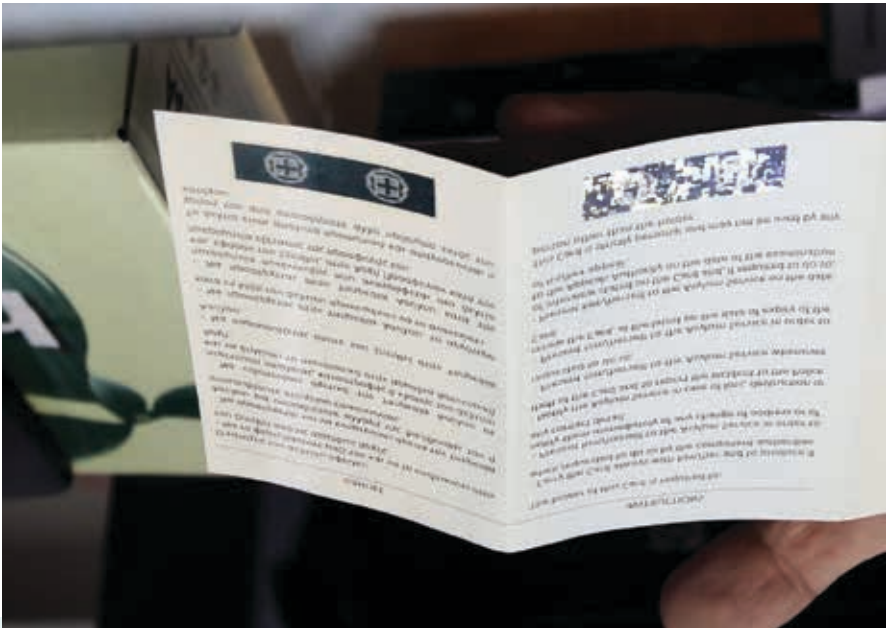
In particular, **40,126** applications were submitted by men, **18,535** applications were submitted by women and **2,275** by unaccompanied minors. A total of **51,061** asylum applications were submitted in **2016**, while in the first two months of 2018 the asylum applications submitted were **8,815**, against **11,979** in the corresponding two months of 2017.

#### First instance decisions in 2017 and January –February 2018

- In 2017, a total of 10,364 people were awarded international protection status (asylum or sub-

sidiary protection), while 34,646 applications were rejected due to either relocation to some other EU Member State, or for family reunification reasons (pursuant to the Dublin III Regulation), or to procedures based on the “safe third country” concept.

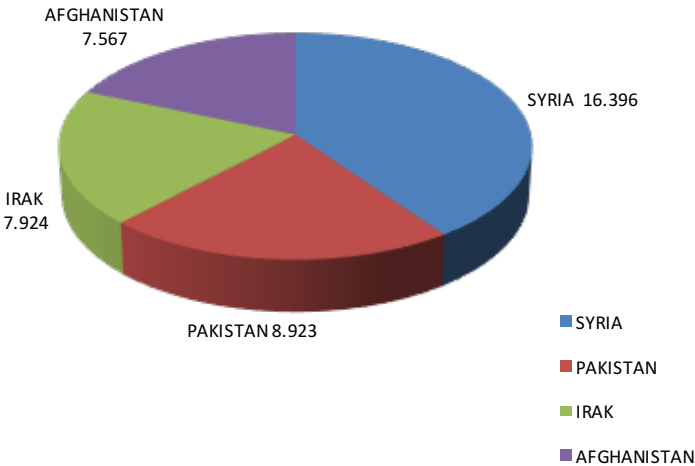
- In 6,989 cases, the asylum procedure was discontinued, primarily because of the tacit withdrawal of the asylum claim by the applicant.
- The overall recognition rate (by country of origin) for the whole year stands at 46% percent



### Staffing of the Asylum Service

Concerning the staffing of the Asylum Service, at the end of 2017, the pertinent numbers are as follows: **650** employees of whom more than a hundred are deployed to the eastern Aegean islands. They are assisted by **176** staff deployed by European Asylum Support Office (EASO), **20** police officers and **20** staff deployed by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, the Asylum Service is assisted in its work by hundreds of interpreters of the NGO METAdrasi (with which the Asylum Service has signed a service agreement as well as tens of interpreters employed by EASO. In 2018, **218** newly-appointed civil servants will join the Asylum Service.

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN\_2017





## PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

- In January-February 2018, the asylum procedure was completed in 6,971 cases, 4,054 of which were relevant to the cross-border process compared to 2,504 completed cases in the corresponding months of 2017.

### Appeals Authority

#### Examination at second instance administrative (quasi-judicial) appeals

Since July 2016, the Appeals Authority has completed the appeal process in 52% of the requests throughout the country.

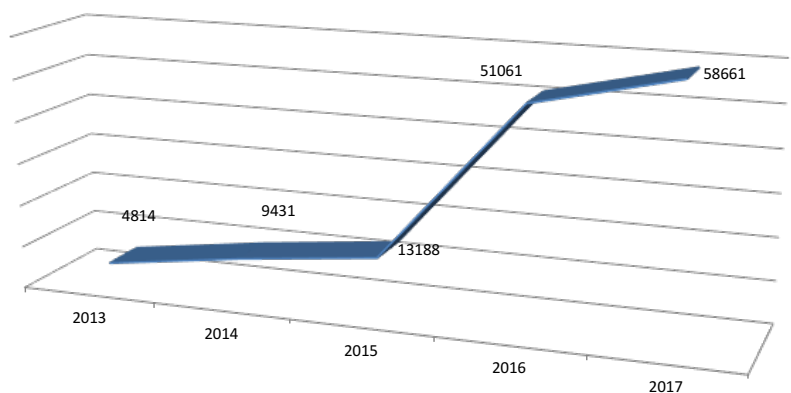
More specifically, on the islands, 77% of the applications at second instance have been processed.



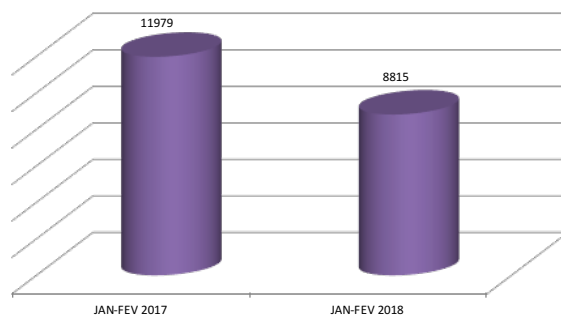
### Asylum Application Service

In 2017, the Asylum Service, in cooperation with the Harokopio University of Athens, developed a cell phone application (the Asylum Service Application) provided free of charge. The project was funded by the **National Program of AMIF 2014-2020**. The purpose of this application is the provision of reliable, authoritative and timely information for all those who intend to apply for asylum status in Greece and for all those who have already done so. The application is available in Greek, English, French, Arabic, Farsi/Dari, Urdu, Amharic and Tigrinya.

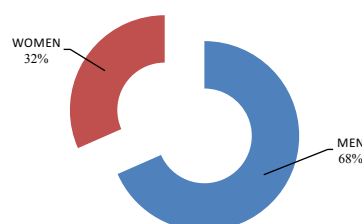
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS (submitted to the Asylum Services)



ASYLUM APPLICATIONS



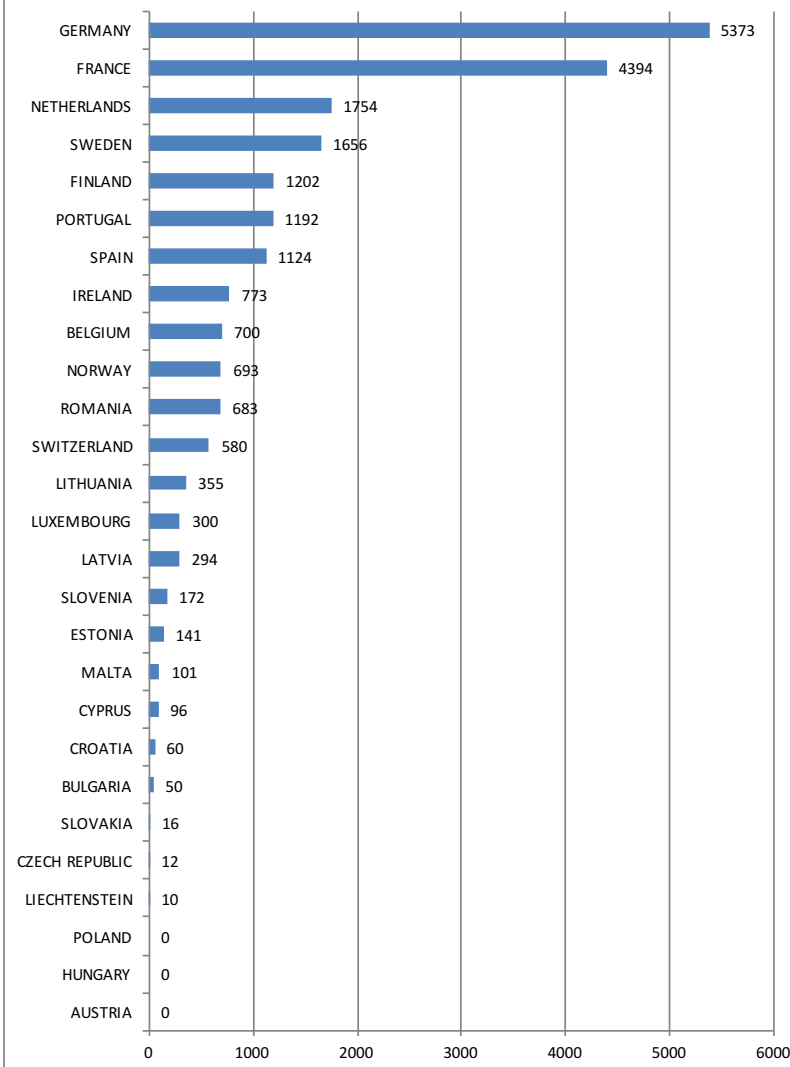
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS BY GENDER\_2017



## PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION



**RELOCATED PERSONS  
(01.01.2017-28.01.2018)**



### EU Relocation Program - Family reunification

Through the European Relocation program, 21,853 asylum seekers were relocated to other EU-Member-States from the beginning of 2017 until the end of February 2018.

This number is expected to reach 22,002 when the examination of pending cases will be completed.

Twenty four European countries participated in the program, three of which are not members of the European Union. Three Member States did not accept migrants or refugees.

At the same time, in 2017 a total of 9,784 asylum seeking applications were submitted in other EU-Member States, 7,225 of which were approved. The main reason for their acceptance was family reunification (4,334 cases).

In parallel, 886 requests by minors were submitted for family reunification, 612 of which were accepted, while 517 transfers were carried out. During January-February 2018, of the 256 requests made, 69 have been accepted while 68 transfers have been carried out.



## PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

### Unaccompanied Children



According to the report published by **EKKA** and updated on February 28, the estimated number of Unaccompanied Children (UAC) currently in Greece is **3,030**, 96,5% of which are boys, 3,5% girls, while **4,7% are under 14 years old**.

The **48 UAC** shelters with a capacity for **1,118 people** are operational on the islands (Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Crete) and in Attica, Western Greece, Central Macedonia, East Macedonia and Thrace. In the beginning of 2015, shelter capacity stood at merely 300 places.

The **Migration and Integration Asylum Fund** in December 2017 made a call for applications to subsidize the operation of old and new hosting facilities for unaccompanied minors, with the aim of increasing this capacity to a total of **2,000 places**.

### Booklet for unaccompanied minors

The Greek Asylum Service has released a fully illustrated booklet for all unaccompanied minors. The presentation of the booklet at the European Parliament Office in Greece took place on 26 January, 2018. The booklet, published in six languages, is a project funded by The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (National Program) with the aim of providing information in a friendly way to all unaccompanied minors are interested in applying for international protection.

(Sketch: Christine Tsevi)



## FUNDING ISSUES

According to the **Ministry of Economy and Development** data, the financial support budget amounting to **€561 million** allocated to Greece under the national programs for 2014-2020 (**€322.8 million from AMIF and €238.2 million from ISF**) was increased by more than 20% following negotiations and successive amendments. Note that, in April 2016 this budget amounted to €454 million Euros. The sum of **€115.3 million**, out of the total €561 million that has been allocated to Greece in the form of advance payments and annual installments has already been absorbed by the Greek authorities.

The budgetary absorption of the co-funding programs during the last 12 months is therefore close to 30%, whereas the **European average is estimated at 10%**. In addition, the earmarked funding for Greece in the framework of the **EU-Emergency Support Instrument**, which is allocated to Member-state authorities, international organizations and NGOs, amounts to **€570 million**. Of that amount, €182 million is distributed to Greek authorities (32%) and €388 million, (68%) to non-governmental organizations.



94,508 incidents were transferred to hospitals, while no serious reportable health events or contagious disease incidents dangerous to public health occurred.

## HEALTH

The Greek Ministry of Health, in cooperation with bodies and NGOs under a series of initiatives and actions taken, has laid the groundwork for immediate medical assistance to thousands of refugees and migrants, effectively protecting public health.

Key steps of this procedure have been the provision of primary health care in open refugee hosting structures, the provision of direct access to medical services (NHS) for refugees and migrants irrespective of nationality and legal status and the systematic ongoing vaccination program.

According to the General Secretariat for Public Health data, 80,500 vaccinations have been administered in the last two years (March 2016 - February 2018),

### Vaccination

- March 2016 - February 2018 : 80,500 vaccinations were administered
- January 2018: The systematic vaccination of children upon arrival commenced in the process of their registration and identification. Moreover, their immunization status was checked and un-inoculated children were vaccinated before their transfer from the islands to other mainland structures.
- Also, in January 2018, 300 vaccinations against measles, mumps and rubella were carried out at the Reception and Identification center of Moria Lesvos.
- In February 2018 a vaccination campaign for children in refugee camps of Lesvos was implemented with the support of the NGO Doctors Without Borders (vaccine donation, operational support).
- The World Health Organization provided refugee children with 26,500 immunization cards noting vaccination dates to cover the first needs and also to facilitate their school enrollment.

- The Ministry of Health is planning to continue the vaccination program for refugees and migrants with: a) similar actions such as mass vaccinations at refugee shelters, facilities and the Reception and Identification Centers on Chios, Kos, Leros and Samos; b) the immunization and issuance of inoculation cards recording vaccination dates at mainland refugee structures; c) supporting the issuance of AMKA (social security number), as a matter of priority for the children participating in the educational program of the Ministry of Education; d) the gradual integration of child immunization in primary health care.

### Epidemiological surveillance

- In cooperation with KEELPNO, a surveillance and alarm system for selected syndromes / hygiene conditions is under implementation.
- No serious health or contagious disease incidents of concern to public health have occurred until now.

## MOBILE MEDICAL STATIONS

The National Health Operations Centre (EKEPY) in cooperation with the General Secretariat for Civil Protection have received 18 vehicles deployable for emergency situations incidents, do-

nated by the Dutch government. The vehicles operate in pairs: one vehicle holds mobile emergency operations center equipment and the other carries portable healthcare equipment. The

vehicles were offered in pairs to the seven regional administration Health Authorities in order to cover the needs of migrants and refugees.



## National Health Operations Center (EKEPY)

### Refugee access to the National Health System (ESY)

The EKEPY keeps records of the flows of refugees and migrants on behalf of the National Health System, organizes medical officials' visits to all refugee structures throughout the country and takes action for the transfer of patients from islands to specialized hospital units.

According to March 2016 - February 2018 data:

- 94,508 visited hospitals (ESY)
- 12,067 patients were transferred by the Greek ambulance service EKAV
- 11,838 patients admitted to hospitals
- 4,222 regular medical appointments for refugees and migrants arranged with doctors at hospitals in Attica in 2016 - 2018.

The majority of patients who visited hospitals were aged 15 years or older.

### *Tackling gender-based violence*

One of the initiatives of EKEPY is to convene a body which facilitates the provision of medical support and reception facilities to abused women.

- In collaboration with KEELPNO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a medical protocol on tackling gender violence was formed, the main objective being the provision of specialized medical and psychosocial services, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and the gathering of evidence of sexual and gender-based abuses.
- A standardized protocol was created for the medical assessment of victims of violence, aiming to integrate the protocol into the current primary healthcare provision system.

### *Meeting the needs of vulnerable populations*

The program "Emergency Health Response to Crisis - Philos" is being implemented with the aim of strengthening the public health system (PEDY-Hospitals-EKAV). For the successful implementation of the ongoing program, 668 health professionals have been recruited.





## REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN

### General Secretariat for Gender Equality actions

The General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior stands by refugee women with the aim of providing shelter, food, psychosocial support, employment and legal counseling, access to medical services and above all security for themselves and their children.



The General Secretariat for Gender Equality:

- initiated the “National Action Plan on Gender Quality 2016-2020” to combat the social exclusion of women facing multiple discrimination, focusing on refugee women and their children.
- coordinates with all the jointly responsible agencies the implementation of the Protocol Cooperation signed in December 2016 concerning the adoption of a common framework of procedures for the identification, referral, accommodation and provision of counseling services and activities to refugee women, victims or potential victims of violence and their children, as well as to refugee women who are single mothers heads of households
- provides essential services to women refugees, victims or potential victims of violence and their children, in the framework of the Network of Structures for Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, which includes:

1. about 40 Counseling Centers for Refugees referred by Reception and Identification Centers. Open Structures or NGOs that offer social support, information, psychological support, job and legal counseling, facilitation of access to health services and referral to hosting facilities.

2. about 21 hosting structures for refugee women referred by the Counseling Centers or the Municipal Social Services or EKKA. The Network of Structures provides safe accommodation, feeding, psychosocial support, work and legal counseling, facilitation of access to health services and school

enrollment for children.

3. the bilingual (Greek and English) SOS help-line 15900. It provides support and counseling to women victims of all forms of gender-based violence.

- keeps records of refugee women victims or potential victims of violence and their children hosted in the accommodation facilities network, in collaboration with the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (E.E.T.A.A.)
- ensures the adoption of joint actions with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) under a Memorandum of Understanding, with the aim of eliminating the problems that women refugees and their children experience in Greece.

EDUCATION

At the end of February 2018, a total of 6,375 refugee children, from primary school up to high school age have been enrolled at 769 specific training structures, where 1,091 teachers are employed. Children are taught the Greek language, mathematics, computer science and English.



The objective of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs is the enrolment of all refugee children in school, in the current school year, with particular emphasis on the harmonious transition of most children into the morning zone. For the enrolment of refugee children in public education, two main supporting schemes exist: Reception Structures for Refugee Children Education and Reception Classes.

The **Reception Structures** for Refugee Children Education are for new refugee pupils residing in accommodation sites. These Reception Structures offer a weekly, afternoon educational twenty-hour training program (four hours a day). The curriculum consists of Greek, Mathematics, English, Information Technology and Communication, including artistic and athletic activities. The Reception Structures are established in school units located next to the accommodation centers, except Kindergartens, which operate within the accommodation centers.

In the **Reception Classes**, pupils follow an intensive program of Greek language, alongside standard class lessons. These classes address the needs of all pupils who do not have the required knowledge of the Greek language (Roma, foreigners, repatriates, refugees, vulnerable social groups, etc.).

Reception Structures: Number of schools, pupils and teachers, February 2018

Reception Structures for Refugee Children Education (RSRCE)

	RSRCE	Pupils	Teachers
Primary	45	1.393	260 (1)
Secondary	19		56 (2)
Preschool	21	400	37 (3)
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ	85	1.793	353

(1) Full-time teachers (FTT) and part-time teachers (PTT)  
(2) Full-time teachers (FTT) and part-time teachers (PTT)  
(3) Full-time teachers (FTT)

Reception Structures: Number of schools, pupils and teachers, February 2018

Reception Classes (RC)

	RC	Pupils	Teachers
Primary	557	3.692	557(1)
Secondary	127	890	181 (2)
TOTAL	684	4.582	738

(1) Part-time teachers (PTT)  
(2) Part-time teachers (PTT)

## HELIOS (Hellenic Integration System)



A Memorandum of cooperation for the implementation of a pilot project concerning migrant and refugee integration, called "HELIOS" (Hellenic Integration System) has been signed by the Minister of Migration Policy, the Mayors of Thebes and Livadeia and the Head of the Greek office of the

International Organization for Migration.

This six-month program began on 1 March, 2018, and will probably be extended for another six months. In the framework of HELIOS, 80 refugees in Livadeia and 40 in Thebes will initially be selected for participation. Facil-

ities already being offered, such as housing, financial support and education, will be further developed and combined with new support actions regarding employment consulting, social support, technical training and facilitation of access to local services.

### Home New Home initiative -

#### Audience Award for "Painting..." at the 20th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival

The documentary "Painting ..." a Greek film by Dimitris Stamatis & Ioanna Neofytou, won the Audience Award for the films under 50 minutes in length category at the 20th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival. The movie is part of the Home New Home actions by StoryDoc, an initiative implemented by the Hellenic Institute for the Promotion of Documentary under the auspices of the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, supported by the Secretariat for Crisis Management Communication. The action provides young refugees the means to narrate their own stories regarding refugee issues.





## ACTIONS

### Minister of Migration Policy, Dimitris Vitsas, visits Eastern Aegean islands

Migration Policy Minister, Dimitris Vitsas, visited Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos and Leros from Thursday, March 22 until Sunday, March 25. He also visited the reception and identification centers and met with local officials and local community. "We are interested in minimizing the problems as long as the Centers are operational so that they do not become a burden on the local community. Our aim is to overcome the refugee and migration crisis and return to regularity. We work towards this direction with respect to the international treaties and agreements regarding the management of the refugee issue", Minister Dimitris Vitsas noted. Furthermore, during his visit to Lesbos, the Minister pointed out that Alternate Minister of Economy and Development, Alexis Charitsis, announced specific growth programs to be implemented in Lesbos and the other islands. "To balance the rights of all involved is of great importance. In any case both the rights of the asylum-seekers and the rights of local populations living permanently in the islands should be protected. We are here to collaborate

towards this effort. Our Ministry will have an open line of communication with the local authorities within the framework of the new national strategy that has been drafted in relation to the refugee issue", Vitsas said.



### Secretary for Crisis Management Communication, Foteini Pantiora, visits Leros island

The Secretary for Crisis Management Communication of the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media, Fotini Pantiora, visited on February 1 and 2, 2018, the Open Reception Facility of International Protection Applicants (PIKPA) and the Reception and Identification Center of Leros. Ms Pantiora was briefed on the current situation, talked with refugees and migrants staying in the facilities and emphasized the importance of the work of the Ministry of Migration Policy and the effective cooperation of local authorities. She also highlighted the essential contribution of the island's community in addressing the problems of the management of refugee and migration issues.





**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**  
Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media

Secretariat for Crisis Management Communication

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**SOURCES:**

Ministry of Migration Policy  
Ministry of Interior  
Ministry of Economy and Development  
Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Maritime Affairs & Insular Policy  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
International Organization for Migration

\*updated data until 28 February 2018

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