



MIGRATION

Migration Developments in Greece in 2022

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Summary

In 2021, Greece had the highest unemployment rate (15.1 %) in the EU-27. This continued into the first months of 2022, with Greece once again topping the list in January 2022 (13.3 %), though the rate would fall by 1.9% to 11.4% in July 2022 of the same year.

In September 2022, 756,886 migrants were legally residing in Greece, which corresponds to 7.25 % of the country's total population (10,432,481). This represents a decrease of 1.24% compared to 2021. Of these, 29% were EU citizens, 63% third-country nationals (TCNs) with a valid residence permit, and 8% beneficiaries of international protection.

The total of TCNs with residence permits valid in September 2022 amounted to 476,552, marking a decrease of 29% compared to September 2021. Similarly, the 23,995 asylum applications lodged in the first nine months of 2022 marked a 15% decrease compared to 2021. Young men continue to represent the largest group of asylum seekers in Greece (78%), with most originating from Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. The fall in asylum applications in 2021 can mainly be attributed to the suspension of the asylum procedure and the subsequent suspension of Asylum Service operations in the context of tension at the Greek-Turkish border and Greece's COVID-19 restrictions. However, according to the Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the downward trends are also a result of the introduction of drastic measures focused on decongesting the Aegean islands and Evros; a significant increase in deportations, returns and relocations; and the acceleration of asylum procedures.

After a significant drop during the pandemic, refugee, and migrant inflows during the first nine months of 2022 were 55% up on the same period in 2021. The main entry point was now Evros rather than the islands of the North Aegean, while Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan remaining at the top of the sending countries.

With reference to Ukrainian displaced persons, a total of 21,039 online applications have been submitted and 19,783 Temporary Protection Permits have been issued, of which 69.4% concern women and 30.6% men.

One of the biggest challenges for 2021-2022 remained the decongestion of the Aegean islands. Compared to 2020, the residents in Aegean islands decreased by 81% in 2021 and 14% in 2022, respectively.

In the first nine months of 2022, IOM returns marked an increase of 11.3% compared to the equivalent of 2021. Also, in the first nine months of 2021 voluntary departures showed an increasing trend of 13 and 52% respectively.

2021-2022 witnessed a significant increase in reports and testimonies about irregular forced returns (pushbacks) at Greece's sea and land borders. Accusations from human-rights groups, national and international non-governmental organizations, and independent authorities claim that Greek authorities routinely round up and expel migrants without permitting them to complete asylum requests, and that this is often done in an indiscriminate and violent way.

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According to the 2022 Annual Report published by the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), 72 incidents of racist violence were recorded in 2021. In 28 incidents, migrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers were targeted due to their national origin, religion, or colour, along with human rights defenders who were targeted due to their association with refugees and migrants. Importantly, this was the first year in which there were no records of incidents of organized violence perpetrated against refugees and migrants by far-right groups.

Finally, we can identify three main trends in Greek migration governance, 2021-2023: the shift in focus from humanitarian response to security policy; the intensification of border surveillance by means of advanced technologies and the emphasis on the management of legal (labour) migration as a response to Greece's ageing population and declining economic indicators.

Introduction

This report offers an overview of the most recent trends and developments in international migration flows and policies in Greece. It contains data and policy information for the whole of 2021, as well as for the first nine months of 2022, which are useful for identifying emerging trends. This report further discusses the characteristics of the immigrant population in Greece, its size and main socio-demographic features, as well as its labour market participation. Special attention is paid to the current situation as regards the flows and stock of asylum seekers and irregular migrants through the Greek-Turkish sea and land borders in 2021-2022. The report outlines the main developments in migration and asylum policy in 2021-2022 and the challenges facing the country with regard to the governance of migration and integration policies.

The report is divided into eight chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of recent trends. It draws on the statistical data relating to the size of the migration population in Greece, its composition and main features, as well as the migrants' participation in the labour market.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the presence of asylum seekers and refugees. It assesses the size and demographic profile of asylum seekers and the refugee population, including unaccompanied minors, while also examining their asylum applications, Dublin cases, relocation, the decongestion of the Aegean islands, and transfers to the mainland.

Chapter 3 presents the situation relating to irregular migration flows, return and readmissions. It elaborated on the issues of return, deportation, detention, fast-track procedures, and push-back allegations.

Chapter 4 focuses on the reception system, accommodation schemes and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, paying special attention to the accommodation and protection of unaccompanied minors.

Chapter 5 outlines the developments relating to the policies and legislation regulating asylum and refugee status.

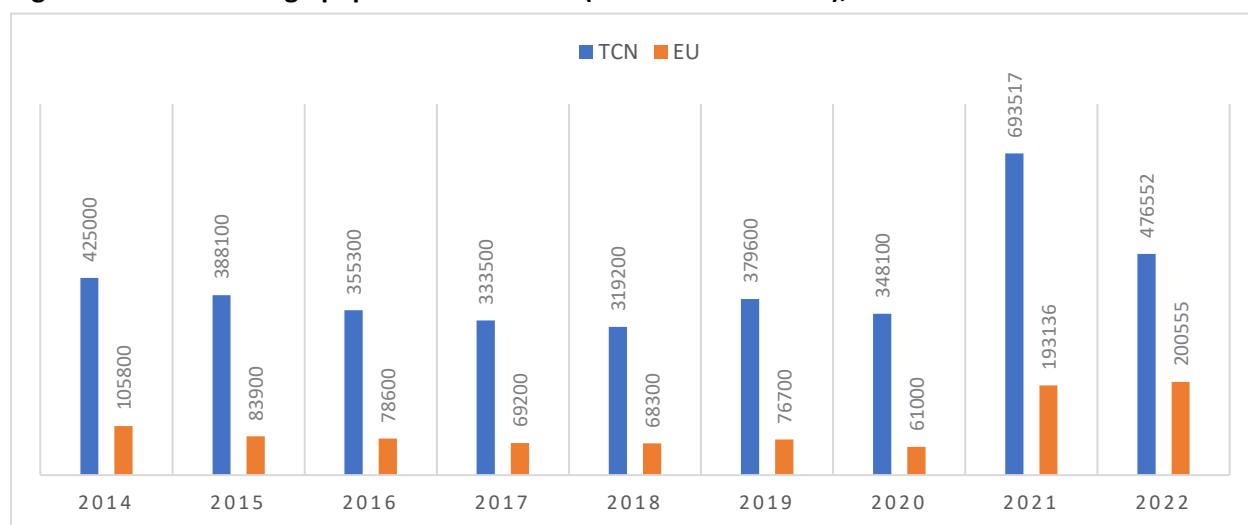
Chapter 6 discusses policy and legislative developments, including citizenship acquisitions and racism and xenophobia.

Chapter 7 provides specific information on the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Greece.

1. The Migrant Population in Greece

According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum's monthly and yearly reports, in September 2022 the stock of third-country nationals residing in Greece stood at 476,552,¹ recording a fall of 29% comparing to September 2021 (675,388)² (Figure 1). If we add to that the 60,019 beneficiaries of international protection, plus 220,315 EU citizens and co-ethnics, the total number of immigrants legally residing in the country in September 2022 is estimated at 756,886, which corresponds to 7.25% of the total population (of 10,432,481 inhabitants).³ Similarly, 23,995 asylum applications were lodged in the first nine months of 2022⁴ (January - September 2022), recording a circa 15% decrease compared to 2021 (28,287).⁵

Figure 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece (TCN and EU citizens), 2014-2022



Source: [Information Note on Migration September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

It should be noted that the data on migration flows from the 2021 national census is not yet available. In a statement issued by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), it was announced that the release of the above data, which were initially scheduled for 29/12/2022, had been postponed so it could be compiled on the basis of the final data of the 2021 Population-Household Census.⁶ However, according to a preliminary estimate of the population on 1.1.2021, there were 84,221 immigrants and 77,837 emigrants

¹ [Information Note on Legal Migration September 2022](#) – Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

² [Information Note on Legal Migration September 2021](#) – Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

³ Census Results of Population and Housing in Greece 2021, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at: https://elstat-outsourcers.statistics.gr/census_results_2022_en.pdf

⁴ [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), page 6 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁵ [Information Note on Asylum September 2022 Section A](#), page 5 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁶ Press Releases on Population, Hellenic Statistical Authority, December 2022, available at: https://www.statistics.gr/news-announcements/-/asset_publisher/oj6VK3PQ0oCe/content/census-2021

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registered, with a net migration estimated at 6,384 persons from a total of 10,678,632 inhabitants registered in Greece.⁷

In addition, the migration and migrant population statistics published by Eurostat in March 2022 refer to a total of 84,200 immigrants in 2020, which corresponds to 8.9% of the total population residing in Greece.⁸ Of these, 55,900 or 66.3% are non-EU citizens, while citizens of EU member states account for 8.9% (7,500) of the overall non-Greek population in 2020.

It would be useful here to refer to the 2011 census, according to which 912,000 foreigners (713,000 TCNs and 199,000 non-Greek EU citizens) were registered in Greece, thus accounting for 8.3% (6.5 and 1.8% respectively) of the total population resident in the country.⁹

Data from the 2022 Labour Force Survey (3rd Quarter)¹⁰ suggests a decrease of 10.9% in the total foreign population (aged 15 and over), with 287,300 non-Greek citizens residing in the country in 2022 (3rd Quarter, out of a total of 9,051,970) compared to 321,675 in 2021.¹¹ Overall, the foreign population (both TCNs and EU-27 citizens) in September 2022 corresponded to 7.25% (756,886) of the total population resident in Greece (Table 1), showing a decrease of 1.24% comparing to 2021 (8.49 % / 886,653).

Table 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2022 (as of September 2022)

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population
Total TCN population	476,552	4.56
Total EU27 countries' citizens (non-Greeks)	200,555	1.92
Total recognized refugees	60,019	0.58
Total expatriates	19,760	0.20
Total immigrant stock	756,886	7.25
Total population in Greece	10,432,481*	100.00

Sources: [Monthly Information Note September 2022 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#) / *2021 Population Census

⁷ Methodological Note, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/a483cf24-b563-4ef8-8ae9-d502d7d21675>

⁸ Migration Population Statistics, EUROSTAT, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics#Migrant_population:_23.7_million_non-EU_citizens_living_in_the_EU_on_1_January_2021

⁹ While the 2011 national census does not provide the most up-to-date data for 2019-2020, it is worth consulting as regards the total migrant population residing in Greece, since it does not distinguish between legal and undocumented residents.

¹⁰ Labour Force Quarterly Data, 3rd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/>

¹¹ Employment and Unemployment Statistics, EUROSTAT, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/database?fbclid=IwAR36WlJLuUt5zo5fGgYji7lrpRnK74xqINQpNDEmR1sY0FNeN_h8Zn1Sw

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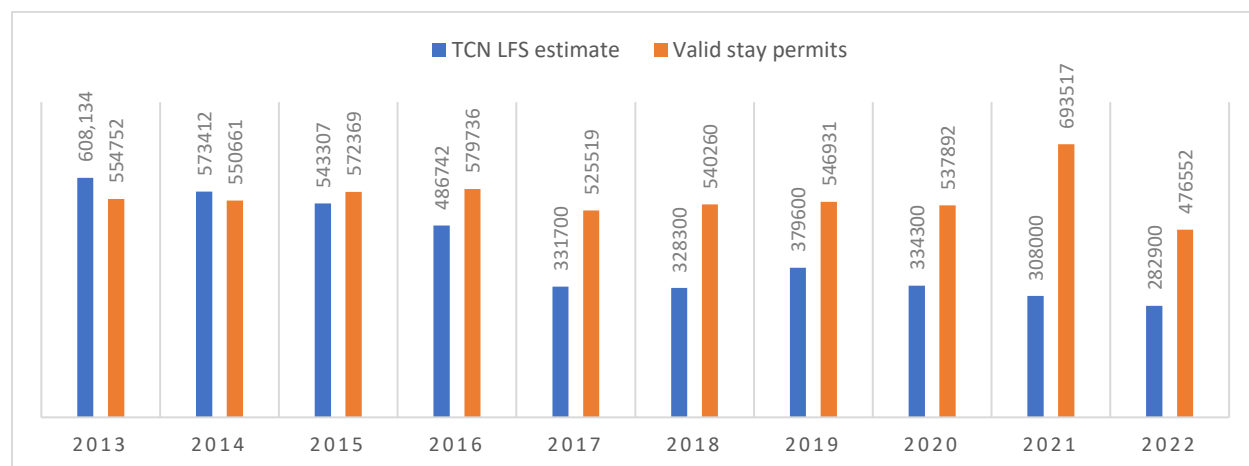
A closer look at the valid resident permits for TCNs provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in September 2022 (Table 2) point to a fall (30%) in the number of TCNs, with 476,552 persons comparing to 693,517 in December 2021, while the gender distribution remains the same (Table 2 and Figure 2).¹²

Table 2: Valid resident permits for third-country nationals by gender, 2014-2022

Valid resident permits TCNs	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Men	288.837	298.800	303.289	291.785	286.774	286.886	282.426	n/a	n/a
Women	261.824	273.569	276.447	264.801	257.669	260.045	255.466	n/a	n/a
Total	550.661	572.369	579.736	556.586	544,43	546.931	537.892	693.517	476.552

Source: Table compiled by the authors on the basis of data for 2014-2015 provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy, database of permits for TCNs upon request, while data for 2016-2022 are available online. *Note:* Data refer to 31 December of each year. Data for 2020 refer to 30 April.

Comparing two different sources—namely, the resident permit database (September 2022) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) (3rd Quarter 2022) (Figure 2)—reveals the discrepancy between the migrant population stock (calculated on the basis of resident permits database) and the LFS (in the age cohort over 15), which stands at 41%.

Figure 2: Migrant population stocks in Greece, 2014-2022, comparing LFS and Resident Permit Data

Source: Graph compiled by the authors on the basis of data for 2014-2015 provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy, database of permits for TCNs, upon request. Data for 2016-2022 are available online/EL.STAT. Labour Force Survey.¹³

Composition and Features of the Immigrant Population

An estimated 61.4% of Greece's foreign population is Albanian. The second largest group are Chinese nationals, at 4.7% (Table 3). The increasing number of Chinese citizens in recent years has continued, with China moving from third place in 2021, at 3.9%, to second place in 2022. Georgians, Pakistanis and

¹² There are no gender-based statistics available after April 2020.

¹³ [Labour Force Survey: 4th quarter 2021](#), and [Labour Force Survey: 3rd quarter 2022](#).

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Ukrainians (at 4.2 %, 3.8 % and 3.1 % respectively) are the third, fourth and fifth largest immigrant communities, according to the information note published by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in September 2022.¹⁴

Table 3: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 10 nationalities)

Country of Origin	Population		TCN valid permits 2021-2022		
	Census 2011	on 31.12.2021		on 31.09.2022	
	Number	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	480,851	435,642	62.8	292,531	61.4
Georgia	27,407	30,555	4.4	19,934	4.2
China	n/a	27,252	3.9	22,520	4.7
Pakistan	34,178	26,673	3.8	18,256	3.8
Ukraine	17,008	21,703	3.1	14,978	3.1
Russia	13,809	18,974	2.7	14,699	3.1
India	11,333	16,926	2.4	10,118	2.1
Egypt	10,455	15,052	2.2	10,466	2.2
Philippines	9,807	13,037	1.9	8,771	1.8
Bangladesh	11,333	12,697	1.8	9,253	1.9
TOTAL	101,667	618,511	100	421,526	100

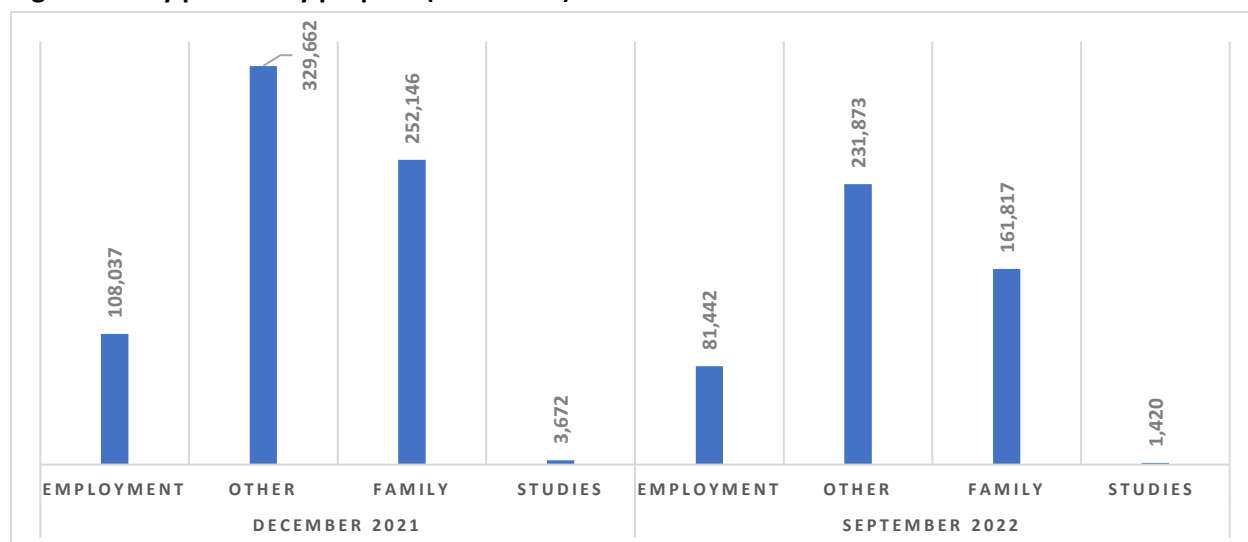
Sources: [Information Note December 2021](#), [Information Note September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum, & [National Census Data 2011](#)

A closer look at the valid residence permits by purpose, as provided by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum (September 2022), shows that the highest concentration of migrants is found in the category “other” (231,873), followed by the category of those residing in Greece in the context of “family reunification” (161,817) (Figure 3).

¹⁴ There has been no data available on resident permits distributed by gender since May 2020.

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Figure 3: Stay permits by purpose (2021-2022)



Sources: [Information Note December 2021](#) & [Information Note September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Comparing the data for 2022 with that for 2021 reveals a downward trend in resident permits issued for “other” (by 14.2 %) and “family reunification” (15.5%) purposes (Figure 3). This could be explained by higher rates of employment among migrants (Table 4). This is corroborated by the rise in the number of permits in the “other” category, from 260,180 in 2020 to 329,662 in December 2021. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum attributes these upward trends to residence permits which expired between 01.01.2020 and 30.12.2021 being automatically extended due to the pandemic. However, since 2022, there has been a decrease in the number of permits in all categories.

Table 4: Long-term permits, by type 2016-2022 (as of September)

Type of resident permit	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Employment	65,671	49,687	65,458	70,944	70,033	108,037	81,442
Other	267,894	267,215	279,003	277,548	260,180	309,662	231,873
Family	244,077	207,241	205,914	196,824	177,069	252,146	161,817
Studies	2,094	1,376	1,493	1,615	1,170	3,672	1,420
Total	579,736	525,519	551,868	546,931	508,452	693,517	476,552

Sources: [Information Note December 2021](#) & [Information Note September 2022](#), Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum

It should be highlighted that the residence permits issued for “other” reasons includes long-term residence permits of 10-year or indefinite duration as well as EU long-term resident permits. Ten-year and EU long-term permits account for the largest share of long-term permits, with more long-term permits issued to men than to women. In fact, the difference is significant, with men representing the 83 % of the

total holders of EU long-term residence permits. This can be explained by the fact that more than 47% of women hold resident permits for “family reunifications”, while it is estimated that 40% of female migrants work informally in the domestic care sector.¹⁵ In practice, this means that, since their legal status depends on their husbands’, they do not fulfil the criteria to apply independently for an EU long-term resident permit or any other long permit category. However, there are no resident permit data available after May 2020 which is distributed by gender and sub-categories under the respective headings, including “other” and “family reunification”.

Regarding the category of “strategic investments”, the Migration and Integration Code (L.4251/2014) contains provisions that facilitate the stay of TCNs whose investments are characterized as strategic via the provision of extended stay time limits for representatives of investment bodies and their partners. It also allows for the granting of residence permits to third country nationals who purchase real estate in Greece whose value exceeds 250,000 Euro, and their family members.¹⁶ Their permits are renewable every five years, provided the TCN still owns the relevant property or other investment. With a view to making the system even more attractive for foreign investments, Law 9907/2019¹⁷ provided for the acceleration of the examination and issuance process for so-called Golden Visas for TCN investors. According to the relevant provisions, the procedures should be completed within two months in order to protect the credibility and prestige of the program. In addition, Article 155 of Law 4764/2020 includes new provisions governing the issuing of residence permits for investments. Introduced in the light of the Covid pandemic and worldwide travel ban, the new law allows investors to apply for residence permits through proxies without setting foot in Greece.¹⁸

During the last three years the strategic investor permit scheme has attracted approximately 22,454 permanent investors (Table 5). By 30 September 2022, 10,697 beneficiaries held this type of permit, a clear upward trend by 91% comparing to 979 resident permits issued in 2020.

¹⁵ Labour Market Barriers and Enablers, SIRIUS Report, June 2018, available at: <https://www.sirius-project.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/SIRIUS%20WP1-D1.2.pdf>

¹⁶ Law 4635/30-10-2019 “Invest in Greece and other provisions”, available at: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-epikheireseis/nomos-4635-2019-phek-167a-30-10-2019-1.html>

¹⁷ https://www.dsa.gr/sites/default/files/news/attached/fek_v_1106_3.4.2019.pdf

¹⁸ The changes include: 1. No travel required for investors to enter Greece for the submission of applications. 2. Power of Attorney: Golden visa applications can now be submitted through a proxy (e.g. a lawyer in Greece) in the form of power of attorney at consulates abroad. 3. Biometric data: TCNs and Non-EU citizens must enter Greece within a 12-month period beginning from the date of the confirmation receipt for the application, in order to submit their biometric data. Greece offers golden visa, that is immediate permanent residence permits in the Schengen area for the following popular investment routes: 1. Real estate – 250,000 euro. 2. Bank deposit – 400,000 euro (1 year). 3. Government bonds and securities – 400,000 euro (3 years) and, 4. Strategic investment – 300,000 euro.

Table 5: Permanent residence permit for investment 2020-2022

Type of resident permit	2020			2021			2022 (as of September)		
	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL
Permanent residence permit for investment (Golden Visa) – FIRST ISSUANCE	821	5,240	6,061	9,610	19,157	28,767	9,292	7,349	26,641
Permanent residence permit for investment (Golden Visa) – RENEWAL	158	16,754	16,912	1,168	1,833	3,001	1,405	2,202	3,607

Sources: [Information Note December 2021](#) & [Information Note September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

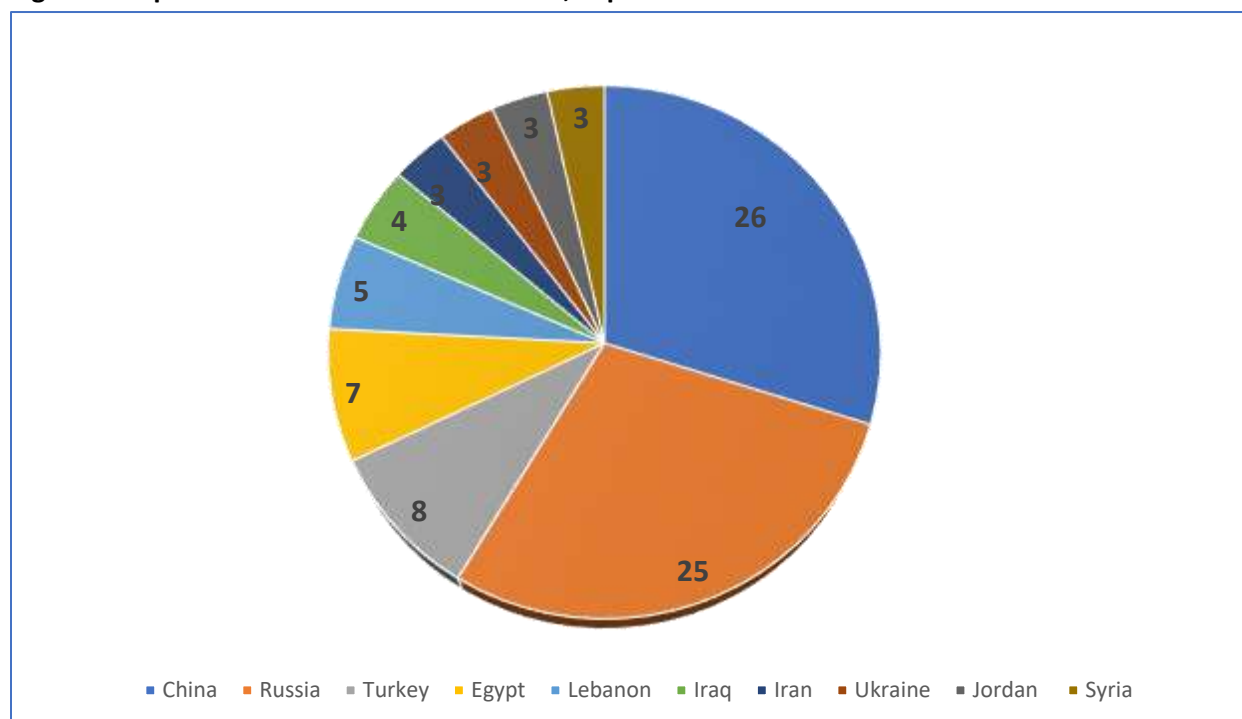
As for their nationalities, their majority came from China, with 5,990 beneficiaries (almost 4% decrease comparing to 2021), followed by Turkey and Russia, with 589 and 414 beneficiaries respectively (Table 6).

Table 6: Permanent residence permit for investment by nationality, September 2022

PERMANENT INVESTORS – September 2022					
Nationality	Renewal/Reissuance	Percentage	Nationality	First Issuance	Percentage
1 - China	370	26.33%	1 - China	5,990	64.46%
2 - Russia	353	25.12%	2 - Turkey	589	6.34%
3 - Turkey	112	7.97%	3 - Russia	414	4.46%
4 - Egypt	93	6.62%	4 - Lebanon	377	4.06%
5 - Lebanon	69	4.91%	5 - Iran	243	2.62%
6 - Iraq	52	3.70%	6 - Egypt	240	2.58%
7 - Iran	50	3.56%	7 - USA	146	1.57%
8 - Ukraine	48	3.42%	8 - UK	144	1.55%
9 - Jordan	43	3.06%	9 - Israel	90	0.97%
10 - Syria	38	2.70%	10 - Iraq	88	0.95%
Other nationalities	177	12.60%	Other nationalities	971	10.5%
TOTAL	1,405	100.00%	TOTAL	9,292	100.00%

Source: [Information Note September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

As illustrated in Fig. 4, among the top ten nationalities which benefit from the Golden Visa scheme, China accounted for nearly 26% of the total investors in Greece in September 2022.

Figure 4: Top 10 ethnicities with Golden Visas, September 2022

Source: *Information Note September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum*

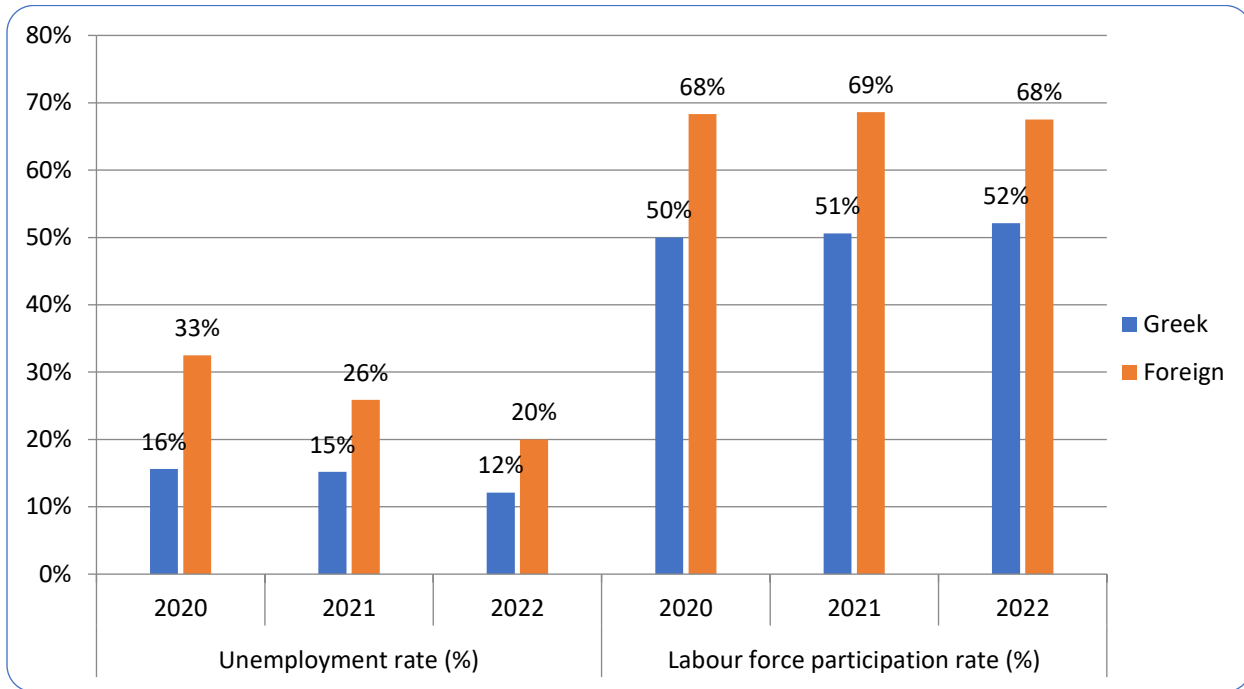
As of 16 November 2021, all TCN resident permits are renewed electronically.¹⁹ The new service provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum concerns approximately 700,000 beneficiaries, of whom 250,000 are holders of residence permits which expire on 31/12/2021. According to the press release announcing the new online services, the aim is to avoid overcrowding and long waits, as well as to accelerate the application processes for residence permits.

Immigrant Labour Market Participation

In Greece in 2021, the foreign population recorded an activity rate of 64.35%; the corresponding figure for the Greek population is 50.3%.²⁰ In the third quarter of 2022, the activity rate for foreigners reached 68.6%, marking a year-on-year increase of 6.1%, widening the gap between the Greek and foreign populations by 24% (Figure 5).

¹⁹ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ilektroniki-ananeosi-olon-ton-katigoron-titlon-diamonis-ton-politon-triton-choron/>

²⁰ Labour Force Quarterly Data, 3rd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/->

Figure 5: Rate of participation in labour market (%), 2nd Quarters of 2020, 2021 and 2022

Sources: Graph compiled by the author on the basis of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.) Labour Force Survey, Labour Force Survey, 2022, 2nd Quarter of 2020, 2021 and 2022.²¹

According to EL.STAT, in the first quarter of 2021, the total number of employed persons was 3,625,100 with the overall employment rate recording a 0.9% fall compared to the corresponding quarter of 2020 (3.852,600).²² This is most likely due to the impact of the pandemic on the labour market, which was more pronounced in the first quarter of 2021.²³ In the fourth quarter of 2021, the number of employed Greek citizens rose to 3,907,700, while the corresponding number for foreign citizens fell during the same period to 145,500.²⁴ It should be noted that there has been a rising trend in the number of employed persons in Greece since the final months of 2021 and the end of the Covid restriction measures.²⁵ In the first quarter of 2022, the number of employed Greek citizens stood at 3,901,000, increasing to 4,013,500 in the second quarter; the number of employed foreign citizens stood at 143,000 in the first quarter of 2022, increasing to 153,700 for the second quarter of the same year (Figure 6). In the third quarter of 2022, the total

²¹ Labour Force Quarterly Data, 2nd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at:

<https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/2022-Q2>

²² EL.STAT Labour Market Report for the First Quarters of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Available here:

<https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/2022-Q2>

²³ As the consequence of the lockdown restrictions, people whose work contracts were suspended are formally considered employed if the duration of the suspension is less than 3 months, or if they received more than 50% of their salary.

²⁴ EL.STAT Labour Market Report for the First Quarters of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Available here:

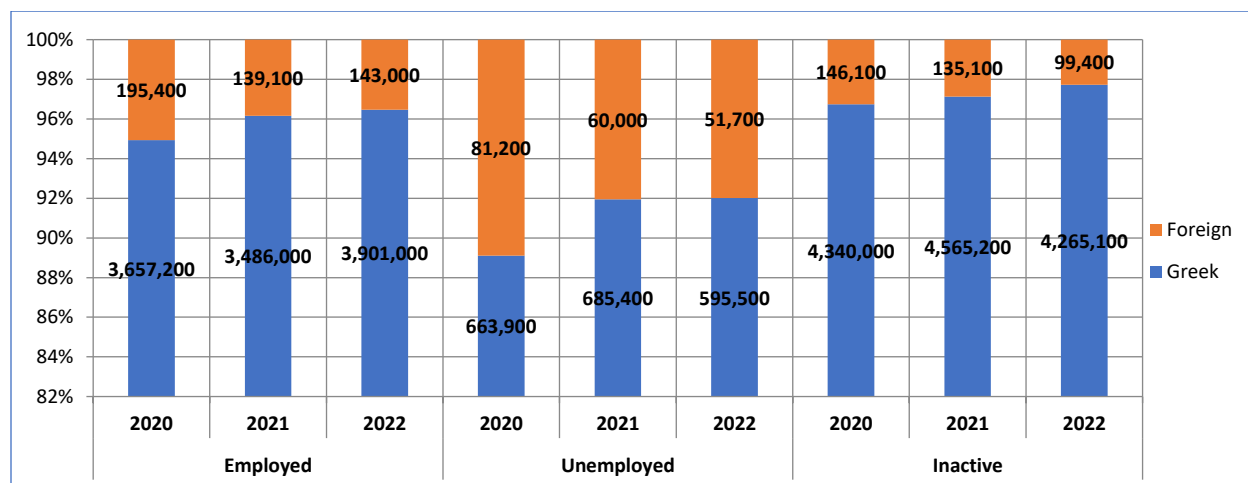
<https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO01/2022-Q2>

²⁵ Because of lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employers whose work contracts were suspended were still considered employed if the duration of the suspension was less than 3 months or if they received more than 50% of their salary. It should be noted that immigrants who were uninsured and found themselves unemployed as a result of the pandemic were unable to benefit from the suspension process.

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number of employed persons in Greece stood at 4,216,000, with the labour force participation of the foreign population was 24% higher than for Greek nationals (68.6% compared to 52.2%).²⁶

Figure 6: Labour market status by citizenship, 1st quarters of 2020, 2021 and 2022



Sources: Graph compiled by the author on the basis of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.) Labour Force Survey, 1st Quarters of 2020, 2021 and 2022 – Population by employment status, nationality and gender.²⁷

The occupations in which the largest shares of employed TCNs work are service work and shop and market sales (23.2%) and professionals (19.9%). Compared to the previous quarter, the largest increase was in the service work/shop and market sales and clerks sectors (11.7% and 8.3%, respectively), while the percentage of TCNs employed as professionals fell (-1.2%). In comparison with the same quarter in 2020, the largest increase occurred in skilled agricultural and fishery workers and craft and related trade workers (11.5% and 8.7%, respectively); the largest decrease was among technicians and associate professionals (-4.5%).²⁸

Since the 1st quarter of 2010, the share of low skilled non-manual occupations has increased significantly, while the share of skilled manual occupations has fallen - though the percentage increased slightly in 2021.²⁹ The share of highly skilled non-manual occupations increased slightly, while the share of semi-skilled occupations has remained relatively stable since 2011. In the meantime, the share of workers in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishing has been in decline since 2014, though they increased in the first two quarters of 2021. This is probably related to the introduction of Article 42 of the Legislative Content Act (AD 90/1.5.2020) that exempts TCNs who transfer for employment in the seasonal rural economy from visa requirements. In addition, Article 24, "Employment of TCNs in rural economy" of Law 4690/30.05.2020 provides for the automatic extension of the validity of work permits for a period of six (6) months after their expiration date. According to Article 47, "Extension of national visas entry of TCNs" of the same law, the validity of national entry visas which were granted to TCNs and expired after 11

²⁶ Press Release, [Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2022](#), Hellenic Statistical Authority.

²⁷ Labour Force Quarterly Data, 2nd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJ001/2022-Q2>

²⁸ Press Release, [Labour Force Survey: 2nd Quarter 2020](#), Hellenic Statistical Authority.

²⁹ Ibid.

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March 2020 or on 31 August 2020 was automatically extended until 30 September 2020. This has since been subject to a further extension, to 31 December 2021.

At the EU level, unemployment remained high in both 2021 and 2022, though it has been falling since July 2022.³⁰ The EU unemployment rate was 6% in September 2022, down from 6.3% at the start of the year.³¹ Among European countries in 2021, Greece was at the top of the list with the highest unemployment rate (15.1%) of the EU-27.³² This trend continued into the first months of 2022, with Greece remaining at the top of the list in January 2022 (13.3%), followed by Spain with 12.7%.³³ Six months later, in July 2022, Spain had the highest unemployment rate at 12.6%, followed by Greece at 11.4%.

According to statistics from the OAED (the Greek manpower organization), the number of unemployed workers registered in 2020, 2021 and 2022 (up to August) was 1,036,582,403; 977,325 and 638,361 respectively.³⁴

Even though the rate has been falling since 2020 (Table 7), the percentage of unemployed females remained significantly higher than the percentage for men in both 2021 and 2022 (Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 7: Unemployed males and females 1st Quarter 2021

1 st Quarter 2021		Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unemployment rate %	Labour force participation rate %
TOTAL		3,625,100	745,400	4,700,300	17.1	48.2
GENDER	Male	2,114,900	335,900	1,920,700	13.7	56.1
	Female	1,510,200	409,500	2,779,700	21.3	40.8

Source: EL.STAT

It is interesting to note that the migrant unemployment rate fell faster than the rate for native Greeks after 2013, from 38.6% in 2013 to 25.4% in 2018 compared with 26.3% to 18.6% for Greeks. This trend is observable among women, with unemployment rates for migrant and native women almost converging in 2015 (29.2% vs. 28.2%, down from 39.5% and 30.4% respectively in 2013).³⁵

³⁰ Unemployment Rate in the European Union (EU27) from January 2000 to October 2022, Statista.com, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/685957/unemployment-rate-in-the-european-union/>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Unemployment rate in the European Union in October 2022 by country, Statista.com, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1115276/unemployment-in-europe-by-country/>

³³ Unemployment rate in EU member states in January 2022, Statista.com, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>

³⁴ Statistical Data Published by DYPA, the Greek Public Employment Service (formerly OAED), available at: <https://www.dypa.gov.gr/statistika?tab=statistika-stoikhia&tab2=xronologhikes-seires-ton-rown-misthotis-apaskholisis-ston-idiotiko-tomea&tab3=>

³⁵ Kapsalis, A. (2020), Greek Unions Facing the Challenge of Modern Immigration Flows, INE GSEE (in Greek), https://www.inegsee.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/MELETH_47_E-BOOK.pdf

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Table 8: Unemployed males and females, 1st Quarter 2022

1 st Quarter 2022		Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unemployment rate %	Labour force participation rate %
TOTAL		4.044,000	647,200	4.364,600	13.8	51.8
GENDER	Male	2.346,500	274,600	1.748,300	10.5	60.0
	Female	1.697,600	372,600	2.616,300	18.0	44.2

Source: EL.STAT

2. Asylum Seekers and Refugee Status

In 2021, 9,163 people arrived in Greece, 5,685 fewer than in 2020 (14,848) or a 41% decrease in registered arrival flows in 2021. The corresponding figures for the first nine months of 2022 reversed the above trend, recording an increase of 57% (14,362 arrivals) comparing to the same period in 2021 (6,137 arrivals) (Table 9).³⁶

Table 9: Arrival Flows, January 2021-September 2022

Month & Year	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	FYLAKIO EVROS	TOTAL
January 2022	102	122	18	30	0	3	165	440
February 2022	167	53	6	26	0	1	246	499
March 2022	225	108	38	32	0	0	565	968
April 2022	27	77	170	14	13	47	781	1,129
May 2022	118	224	28	2	0	54	589	1,015
June 2022	26	320	164	137	0	320	486	1,453
July 2022	21	268	125	112	0	178	702	1,406
August 2022	54	219	317	211	5	264	893	1,963
Sep. 2022	26	472	546	110	90	176	730	2,150
Total 2022	1,485	2,288	1,704	1,022	108	1,269	6,486	14,362
January 2021	22	140	0	26	0	0	104	292
February 2021	0	263	0	0	0	0	136	399

³⁶ [Information Note December 2021](#) and [Information Note September 2022](#) – Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics.

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March 2021	0	306	0	41	0	0	559	906
April 2021	31	166	0	0	0	8	661	866
May 2021	4	84	0	10	0	15	405	518
June 2021	17	58	20	0	0	2	528	625
July 2021	42	14	36	10	0	8	460	570
August 2021	29	95	55	49	37	298	667	1,230
Sep. 2021	25	47	14	25	0	171	449	731
Oct. 2021	492	86	117	54	0	49	307	1,105
Nov. 2021	154	153	108	91	0	6	277	789
Dec. 2021	48	139	53	178	0	0	296	714
Total 2021	869	1,743	403	521	37	650	5,030	9,163

Source: *Information Note September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum statistics.*

The downward trends recorded in 2021 can mainly be attributed to the suspension of the asylum procedure and the subsequent suspension of Asylum Service operations in the context of tensions at the Greek-Turkish border and Greece's COVID-19 response. However, according to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the fall in both arrivals and accommodation in premises/camps across the country can be mainly attributed to the introduction of drastic measures focused on the decongestion of the Aegean islands and Evros; a significant increase in deportations, returns and relocations; and the acceleration of asylum procedures.³⁷

According to UNHCR statistics, the total arrivals in the first nine months of 2022 stood at 14,680, of whom 9,485 arrived by sea and 5,195 by land (Table 10).³⁸ The majority of the registered population that arrived by sea were from Palestine (18.1% or 943), Afghanistan (16% or 832), Somalia (15.5% or 805), and Syria (9.7% or 508). Almost half of the population were women (30.4%) and children (17.4%), while 52.2% of the arrivals were men.³⁹

³⁷ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, January 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/etos-anaktisis-toy-elegchoy-tis-metanasteytikis-krisis-itan-to-2020/> (in Greek).

³⁸ Statistical Data published by the UN Refugee Agency, available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/ar/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.

³⁹ Statistical Data published by the UN Refugee Agency, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/ar/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.

Table 10: Land and sea arrivals from 2014 to 2022

YEAR	SEA ARRIVALS	LAND ARRIVALS	DEAD AND MISSING
2014	41,038	2,280	405
2015	856,723	4,907	799
2016	173,450	3,784	441
2017	29,718	6,592	59
2018	32,494	18,014	174
2019	59,726	14,887	102
2020	9,714	5,982	102
2021	4,331	4,826	115
2022	9,485	5,195	n/a

Source: UNHCR

While there was a positive balance of returns to arrivals in 2021 (11,581 departures compared with 8,748 arrivals),⁴⁰ this trend did not continue during the first nine months of 2022, when there was a negative balance with 11,023 arrivals compared with 6,449 departures.

One of the biggest challenges for 2020 was the decongestion of the Aegean islands. Compared to 2019, the number of in-camps residents on the islands fell by 60%, with Kos and Leros experiencing the highest falls, at 79 and 76%, respectively (Table 11).⁴¹

Table 11: Residents on the Islands (December 2020- December 2021)

TOTAL RESIDENTS	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL + OTHER ISLANDS
Dec-20	863	9,189	3,556	2,693	667	17,005
Jan-21	788	8,764	3,347	2,669	630	16,231
Feb-21	509	8,835	3,445	2,001	397	15,220
March-21	364	8,161	3,151	1,617	385	13,708
April-21	309	7,143	2,435	1,275	238	11,434
May-21	253	6,986	1,854	1,072	84	10,289

⁴⁰ See the [Information Note December 2021 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#).

⁴¹ See the [Yearly Information Note December 2020 -Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#).

Migration Developments in Greece in 2022

June-21	225	5,200	1,370	693	78	7,602
July-21	241	4,668	874	565	103	6,477
Aug-21	257	3,752	628	427	162	5,264
Sep-21	273	3,338	316	337	143	4,490
Oct-21	627	3,127	369	282	95	4,532
Nov-21	646	2,340	456	272	57	3,795
Dec-21	572	2,024	413	455	30	3,508
Difference from 31/12/2020	-34%	-78%	-88%	-83%	-96%	-79%

Source: [Information Note August 2021, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

The declining numbers continued in 2021 (Table 12). Similarly, the residents on islands fell by 79% in 2021 and 14% in 2022 (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12: Residents on the Islands (September 2021 - September 2022)

TOTAL RESIDENTS	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL + OTHER ISLANDS
Sep-21	273	3,338	316	337	143	4,490
Oct-21	627	3,127	369	282	95	4,532
Nov-21	646	2,340	456	272	57	3,795
Dec-21	572	2,024	413	455	30	3,508
Jan-22	407	2,067	402	422	25	3,354
Feb-22	369	1,885	340	398	16	3,030
March-22	447	1,769	330	330	108	3,005
April-22	195	1,281	438	246	144	2,315
May-22	185	1,223	387	156	102	2,062
June-22	318	1,351	499	221	100	2,500
July-22	230	1,484	509	263	234	2,727
Aug-22	310	1,470	727	394	258	3,190
Sep-22	294	1,727	1,117	392	281	3,842
Difference from 31/12/2020	8%	-49%	253%	16%	97%	-14%

Source: [Information Note September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics](#)

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Table 13: Transfers from the Islands to the mainland 2020-2022

	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
Dec. 2020 – Dec. 2021	859	8,066	2,645	1,980	775	764	15,089
Sep. 2021 – Sep. 2022	1,322	3,165	824	785	412	613	7,121

Source: *Information Note September 2022*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics

In September 2022, the number of newly arrived migrants Greece fell by 54% compared to 2021. Of the new arrivals, 1.53% were resident on the islands of the North Aegean, compared with 1.95 % in the same month in 2021.⁴² In absolute numbers, there were 18,438 recorded arrivals between January and September 2022, of whom 3,842 were accommodated on the islands, a decrease of 14% compared to September 2021.

Regarding the inflows, their numbers in the first nine months of 2022 appear to have been 80 % higher than in the first nine months of 2021.⁴³ However, a significant number of those arrivals have since left the country as a result of expulsions, returns and relocations. Overall, during the first half of 2022 there were 6,449 departures compared with 11,023 arrivals (a ratio of 59:100); as of September 2022, there were 787 departures compared with 2,150 arrivals (a ratio of 37:100).⁴⁴

In the first nine months of 2022, 2,205 IOM returns were recorded compared to 1,955 in the first three quarters of 2021; voluntary departures stood at 589 in the first nine months of 2021, compared with 893 in the corresponding period in 2022. This marks an increase of 13% (returns) and 52% (voluntary departures).⁴⁵

The percentage of asylum applications accepted in 2021 was 44.57% in 1st instance and 11,90 as of 2nd instance or of second time applications accepted (Table 14). In the first nine months of 2022 the percentage of asylum applications accepted was 50.44% (as of 1st instance), thus higher compared to 2021, and 6.59% in 2nd instance, respectively.

⁴² Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, October 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/meiomenos-kata-54-o-arithmos-ton-synolika-diamenonton-se-schesi-me-perysi/> (in Greek)

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Supra.

Table 14: Asylum Decisions, 1st and 2nd Instances, 2021 and 2022

Total Percentage of Recognition 2021		Total Percentage of Recognition 2022	
1st Instance	2nd Instance	1st Instance	2nd Instance
44.57	11.90	50.44	6.59

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Meanwhile, the total number of first-time applications for refugee status accepted in 2021 was 70% lower than in 2020 (Table 15), while the number of second-time applications for recognized refugee status was slightly higher in 2021 (730, up from 480). In the first nine months of 2022, 14,027 first-time applications for refugee status were accepted, which was 986 more than in 2021; 536 second-time applications for refugee status were accepted, 194 fewer than in 2021.

Table 15: Recognition of refugee status 1st and 2nd Instances, 2016-2022

TOTAL DECISIONS ON REFUGEE STATUS ISSUED IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS		
YEAR	Recognition of Refugee Status (1 st Instance)	Recognition of Refugee Status (2nd Instance)
2016	2.451	6
2017	9.298	80
2018	12.616	180
2019	13.516	312
2020	26.318	480
2021	13,041	730
2022	14,027	536
TOTAL	91,286	2,324
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	93,610	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Similarly, the number of recognitions of subsidiary protection status at 1st instance marked a sharp drop by 60%, from 7,943 in 2020 to 3,528 in 2021 (Table 16). In all, 2022 witnessed the lowest ever recognitions of subsidiary protection status.

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Table 16: Recognition of Subsidiary Protection Status, 2016-2022

TOTAL DECISIONS OF SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION STATUS ISSUED THE LAST FIVE YEARS		
YEAR	Protection Status (1st Instance)	Protection Status (2nd Instance)
2016	249	1
2017	1,045	43
2018	2,573	94
2019	3,843	311
2020	7,943	565
2021	3,528	1,133
2022	346	329
TOTAL	19,534	2,476
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	22,010	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

The number of pending decisions fell by almost 50%, from 42,900 in September 2021 to 24,993 in September 2022 (Table 17).⁴⁶

Table 17: Pending decisions 1st and 2nd Instances, 2021-2022

MONTH	PENDING DECISIONS, A' INSTANCE	PENDING	PENDING DECISIONS B' INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS – TOTAL	DIFFERENCE (%)	DECISIONS A' INSTANCE	DECISIONS B' INSTANCE
Jan-21	56,044	18,553	2,600	77,197	-3.49%	3,485	1,674
Feb-21	54,441	18,244	2,249	74,934	-2.93%	4,189	1,226
March-21	49,462	16,869	1,931	68,262	-8.90%	7,774	1,094
April-21	48,655	16,578	2,880	68,113	-0.22%	3,698	954
May-21	47,683	16,134	2,842	66,659	-2.13%	3,636	984
June-21	46,247	10,545	3,153	59,945	-10.07%	9,502	1,141
July-21	43,849	3,619	4,201	51,669	-13.81%	12,089	770
Aug-21	42,073	3,239	4,833	50,145	-2.95%	4,536	1,032

⁴⁶ See [Information Note August 2021 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

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Sep-21	35,524	2,554	4,822	42,900	-14.45%	11,270	1,827
Oct-21	34,311	2,637	5,003	41,951	-2.21%	3,633	1,836
Nov-21	34,178	3,069	4,926	42,170	0.52%	3,764	1,809
Dec-21	31,787	3,069	5,258	40,114	-4.88	4,834	1,605
Jan-22	30,103	2,990	5,132	38,225	-4.71	3,789	1,451
Feb-22	27,847	3,118	4,814	35,779	-6.40	4,374	1,946
March-22	26,156	3,314	4,550	34,020	-4.92	4,247	1,819
April-22	23,789	4,048	4,540	32,377	-4.83	4,587	1,222
May-22	20,608	4,421	4,208	29,237	-9.70	6,279	1,736
June-22	18,177	2,404	3,972	24,553	-16.02	8,135	1,560
July-22	17,096	2,904	4,020	24,020	-2.17	4,329	1,418
Aug-22	17,031	3,130	4,182	24,343	1.34	3,826	1,101
Sep-22	17,146	3,731	4,116	24,993	2.67	4,025	1,254

Source: *Information Note on Asylum September 2022*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Overall, asylum applications in September 2022 were up 32% compared to August 2022.⁴⁷ A total of 5,279 asylum applications (1st and 2nd instance) were accepted in September 2022, which was a 7% increase compared to August 2022. The Asylum Service issued positive decisions for 26.9% of the total applications, while the bulk of the 1st instance applications (55.6%) were rejected.

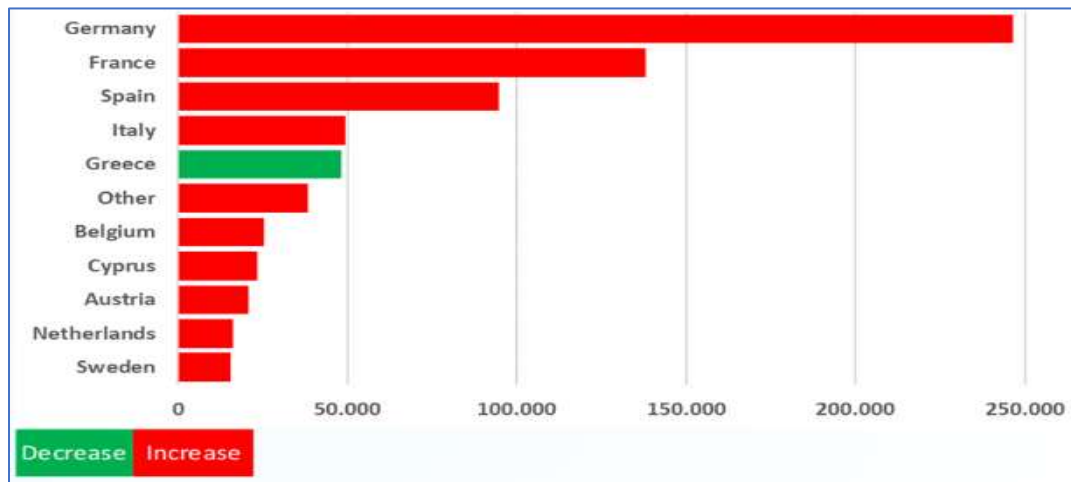
As of 30/09/2022, a total of 2,949 final decisions had been issued on 2nd-instance or the period 2016-2022, of which just 2.7% were positive. In the first nine months of 2022, 945 decisions were issued, of which 26 were positive (2.8%), while a total of 381 final decisions were issued in 2021.⁴⁸

In addition, a significant reduction can be observed in the acceptance of 1st- and 2nd-instance applications. Comparing data from September 2021 and September 2022 reveals a 425 reduction overall in pending cases, with pending 1st-instance decisions down by 52% and pending 2nd-instance decisions down by 15%. This is further corroborated by Eurostat, according to which the Greek Asylum Service has been steadily reducing the asylum backlog since the end of 2020.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, October 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/meiomenos-kata-54-o-arithmos-ton-synolika-diamenonton-se-schesi-me-perysi/> (in Greek)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/decrease-of-the-asylum-service-backlog-eurostat/> (in Greek)

Figure 7: EU Annual Asylum Statistics 2022

Source: [Eurostat Data](#)

Since August 2022, applicants for international protection whose initial application was rejected have the right to submit a new application by booking an appointment through an electronic platform available in English, Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, Kurmanji, Dari, Pasto, Albanian, Turkish, Urdu and Georgian.⁵⁰

In June 2021, the Asylum Service announced the replacement of the International Protection Card (triptych) with a new one. The newly introduced card, which is in the form of a smart card with a built-in microprocessor, is registered and renewed electronically.⁵¹

In March 2021, in the context of the digitization of the Asylum process and following the automatic and retroactive issuance to asylum seekers residing in Greece of a Temporary Insurance and Health Care Number for Foreigners (PAAYPA), the Ministry of Migration and Asylum proceeded with the digital issuance of a Tax Identification Number (AFM) to TCNs or stateless persons who hold International Protection Applicant Status.⁵²

Regarding Ukrainian displaced persons, a total of 21,039 online applications have been submitted and 19,783 temporary protection permits issued, of which 69.4% are for women and 30.6% for men. In addition, 25% of the temporary protection permits have been granted to minors under 13 years of age, and 5.8% to minors aged between 13 and 18, with minors accounting for 30.8% in total of the holders of temporary protection permits, with 24 % aged 18-34 and 36.6% aged 35-64; 8.6% of the holders are adults over 65.⁵³

⁵⁰ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, August 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/platforma-programmatismos-apodosis-rantevoy-gia-yppovoli-metagenesteris-aitisis-tis-ypiresias-asyloy/>

⁵¹ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, June 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/antikatastasi-deltion-aitoyntos-diethni-prostasia-triptychon-apo-tis-nees-kartes/> (in Greek)

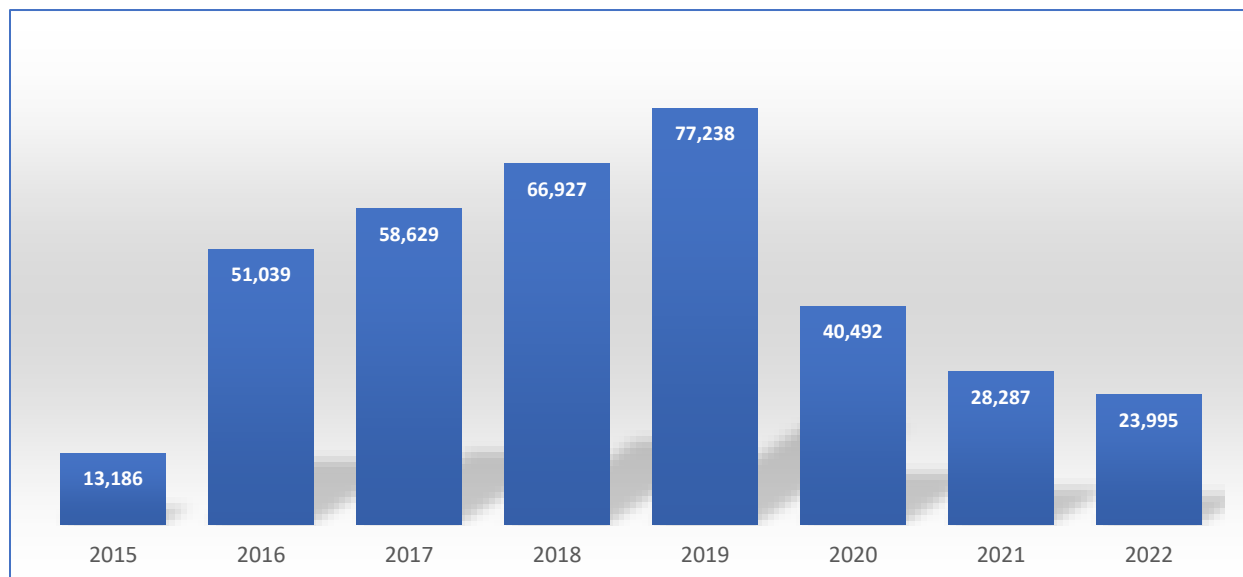
⁵² Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, March 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/apodosi-afm-stoys-aitoyntes-diethni-prostasia/> (in Greek)

⁵³ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, October 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/meiomenos-kata-54-o-arithmos-ton-synolika-diamenonton-se-schesi-me-pervsi/>

Asylum Applications

The developments discussed briefly above have had a visible impact on Greece's asylum system in the form of a sharp decrease in asylum applications in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 8). In 2020, 40,492 asylum applications were lodged in Greece; in 2021, there were 28,287 asylum applications in total, 74% of which were made on the mainland and 26% on the islands.

Figure 8: Lodged Asylum Applications, 2015 – 30 September 2022



Source: [Information Note on Asylum, September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In 2022, 23,995 applications had been lodged as of September, 68 % of them on the mainland and 32 % on the islands (Figure 8 and Table 18).

Table 18: Asylum Applications (September 2021 & September 2022), Geographical Distribution

LOCATION	NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS Sep.2021	NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS Sep.2022
ATTICA	298	584
PIRAEUS	3	184
FYLAKIO	297	501
LESVOS	34	473
ALIMOS	34	217
THESSALONIKI	95	156
CORINTH	149	142
SAMOS	38	310

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THRACE	78	75
AMYGDALAZA	302	238
HERACLION	21	74
DIRECTORATE OF ALBANIA & GEORGIA, THESSALONIKI	62	40
LEROS	86	230
PATRA	47	39
CHIOS	74	152
KOS	96	97
XANTHI	5	18
IOANNINA	29	51
DIRECTORATE FOR CRIMINAL PRISONERS, ATTICA	62	31
RHODES	3	11
DIRECTORATE OF PAKISTAN, ATTICA	1	n/a
DIAVATA	n/a	180
MALAKASA	n/a	138
FAST TRACK	34	n/a
TOTAL	1,782	3,941

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

As is illustrated in Table 20, nearly 374,038 asylum applications have been lodged in Greece since 2013, more than 74% of which were recorded in the period 2016-2019, which coincides with the refugee crisis.

Table 19: Asylum application per year, 2013-2022

YEAR	ASYLUM APPLICATIONS
2013	4,814
2014	9,431
2015	13,186
2016	51,039
2017	58,629
2018	66,927
2019	77,238
2020	40,492
2021	28,287
2022 (as of Sep.)	23,995
TOTAL	374,038

Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

In relation to the applicants' nationalities in 2020, the most applications were lodged by Afghans (11,514), followed by Syrians (7,768) and Pakistanis (4,146) (Table 21). In 2021, the Afghans headed the list once again, but in smaller numbers (4,618). Pakistani and Syrians following once again, with 4,273 and 3,870 applications respectively.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The updated data for 2022 are not yet available.

Table 20: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2020 & 2021

Country of origin	2020	2021
Afghanistan	11,514	4,618
Syria	7,768	3,870
Pakistan	4,146	4,273
Republic of Congo	1,929	821
Bangladesh	1,745	2,731
Iraq	1,675	1,622
Turkey	1,601	1,923
Somalia	1,542	1,541
Albania	1,334	1,467
Palestine	1,273	n/a
Egypt	n/a	900
Other	6,032	4,554
Total	40,559	28,320

Source: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

It is interesting to highlight the shift in the nationalities of asylum seekers. In contrast to earlier years, Afghans (rather than Syrians) topped of list of those applying for asylum in Greece (Table 20) in 2020 and 2021. This can be interpreted in the light of the recent developments on the Syrian front, as well as the likelihood of asylum seekers being returned to Turkey on the basis of the “safe third country” concept. In 2019-2021, Afghans were the largest group of applicants with 23,828, 11,514 and 4.618 applications in the three years.⁵⁵

In 2021, 88,086 first-instance decisions were issued, while a total of 57,098 decisions were issued in the first nine months of 2022. In September 2021, the number of positive decisions stood at 962 (926 recognitions of refugee status plus 36 subsidiary protections), which represented only 9% of the overall asylum applications lodged for 2021. For the same month in 2022, the number of positive decisions stood at 1,084 (1,037 recognitions of refugee status plus 47 subsidiary protections), which represented 27% of the overall asylum applications lodged in the nine first months of 2022.

A year-on-date comparison for January-September 2019 and 2020 reveals that first-instance asylum decisions for 2020 increased by 82%, while August 2021 witnessed a marked decrease of 97% comparing

⁵⁵AIDA 2020, Country Report: Greece, p.18, available at: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/report-download_aida_gr_2019update.pdf

to August 2020 (Table 21). In September 2022, there were 4,025 decisions, 6,371 fewer than the 10,396 decisions lodged in the same month in 2021.

Table 21: Recognition of refugee status, 2016-2022 (Jan-Sep)

TOTAL DECISIONS ON REFUGEE STATUS ISSUED OVER THE LAST SEVEN YEARS		
YEAR	Recognition of Refugee Status (1st Instance)	Recognition of Refugee Status (2nd Instance)
2016	2,451	6
2017	9,298	80
2018	12,616	180
2019	13,521	312
2020	16,332	480
2021	13,041	730
2022	14,027	536
TOTAL	91,286	2,324
TOTAL FOR BOTH DEGREES	93,610	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

The total number of positive decisions on asylum applications in 2021 stood at 17,412, of which 13,771 conferred refugee status and 3,641 subsidiary protections. Over the first nine months of 2022, the total number of positive decisions on asylum applications stood at 15,238, of which 14,563 conferred refugee status and 675 subsidiary protections (Tables 22 and 23).

Table 22: Recognition of subsidiary protection status, 2016-2022 (Jan to Sep)

TOTAL DECISIONS ON SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION STATUS ISSUED OVER THE LAST SEVEN YEARS		
YEAR	Protection Status (1st Instance)	Protection Status (2nd Instance)
2016	249	1
2017	1,045	43
2018	2,573	94
2019	3,846	311
2020	7,947	565
2021	3,528	1,113

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2022	346	329
TOTAL	19,534	2,476
TOTAL FOR BOTH DEGREES	22,010	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Pending asylum decisions (first- and second-instance) have been falling since December 2019. In August 2021, there were 50,145 pending decisions, which equate to just 48% of the number of pending decisions in August 2020 (96,041). This trend continued in 2022, with 24,343 pending asylum decisions in August 2022, a fall of 25,802 compared with August 2021 (50,145) (Table 23).

Table 23: Pending asylum decisions from December 2019 to September 2022

MONTH	PENDING DECISIONS 1st INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS 2nd INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS – TOTAL	DIFFERENCE (%)
Jan-20	93,327	14,410	140,591	1%
Feb-20	97,023	12,379	138,462	-1.51%
March-20	92,665	11,657	131,822	-4.80%
April-20	77,070	9,121	114,622	-13.05%
May-20	74,743	8,556	108,492	-5.35%
June-20	73,725	7,985	102,814	-5.23%
July-20	73,002	7,725	99,108	-3.60%
Aug-20	70,607	7,755	96,041	-3.09%
Sep-20	66,639	6,466	90,678	-5.58%
Oct-20	64,420	5,276	87,922	-3.04%
Nov-20	60,329	3,951	83,304	-5.25%
Dec-20	57,347	3,651	79,986	-3.98%
Jan-21	56,044	2,600	77,197	-3.49%
Feb-21	54,441	2,249	74,934	-2.93%
March-21	49,462	1,931	68,262	-8.90%
April-21	48,655	2,880	68,113	-0.22%
May-21	47,683	2,842	66,659	-2.13%

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June-21	46,247	3,153	59,945	-10.07%
July-21	43,849	4,201	51,669	-13.81%
Aug-21	42,073	4,833	50,145	-2.95%
Sep-21	35,524	4,822	42,900	-14.45
Oct-21	34,311	5,003	41,951	-2.21
Nov-21	34,178	4,925	42,170	0.52
Dec-21	31,787	5,258	40,114	-4.88
Jan-22	30,103	5,132	38,225	-4.71
Feb-22	27,847	4,814	35,779	-6.40
March-22	26,156	4,550	34,020	-4.92
April-22	23,789	4,540	32,377	-4.83
May-22	20,608	4,208	29,237	-9.70
June-22	18,177	3,972	24,553	-16.02
July-22	17,096	4,020	24,020	-2.17
Aug-22	17,031	4,182	24,343	1.34
Sep-22	17,146	4,116	24,993	2.67

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) – Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Despite the fall in both asylum applications and the number of 1st-instance decisions, significant delays are reported at the first instance. At the end of 2021, more than half of the pending 1st-instance applications (58.08%) had been pending for a period exceeding 12 months (18,463 out of the 31,787 applications pending at the end of 2021). In 45.27% of the pending applications, interviews had not yet been conducted (14,390 out of the total 31,787 applications pending at the end of 2021). Of those, interviews were scheduled for 2022 in 10,368 pending cases (32.61%); in 2023 in 3,311 pending cases (10.41%) and after 2023 in 711 pending cases (2.2%).⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the ineffectiveness of the access to the procedure provided via Skype was reiterated by the Greek Ombudsman in January 2021.⁵⁷

Unaccompanied Minors

In 2021, about 23,550 applications for international protection were lodged by unaccompanied minors (UAM) in EU countries; such applications represent 4% of the total. Compared to 2020, the absolute

⁵⁶ AIDA report 2021, available at: <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/>

⁵⁷ AIDA report updated in June 2022, available at: https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/#_ftn5

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number of unaccompanied minors increased by 66% (from 14,225 to 23,550).⁵⁸ More than half of all the applications made by unaccompanied minors were lodged in five countries: Austria (24%), Germany (14%), Bulgaria (13%), Greece (10%) and Belgium (8%).

Compared to 2020, applications by unaccompanied minors in Greece fell by 19%, whereas they rose by 309% in Austria, 296% in Bulgaria, 49% in Belgium and 46% in Germany. In 2020, the highest share of applications in Greece were from Afghanistan (32%), while in 2021 they were from Pakistan (Table 24).

Table 24: UAM Applications in Greece, 2015-2021

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Chg. over previous year	Share in EU+ (2020)	Highest share (Citizenship)
GREECE	420	2,350	2,455	2,640	3,330	2,800	2,275	-19	10%	Pakistan (27%)

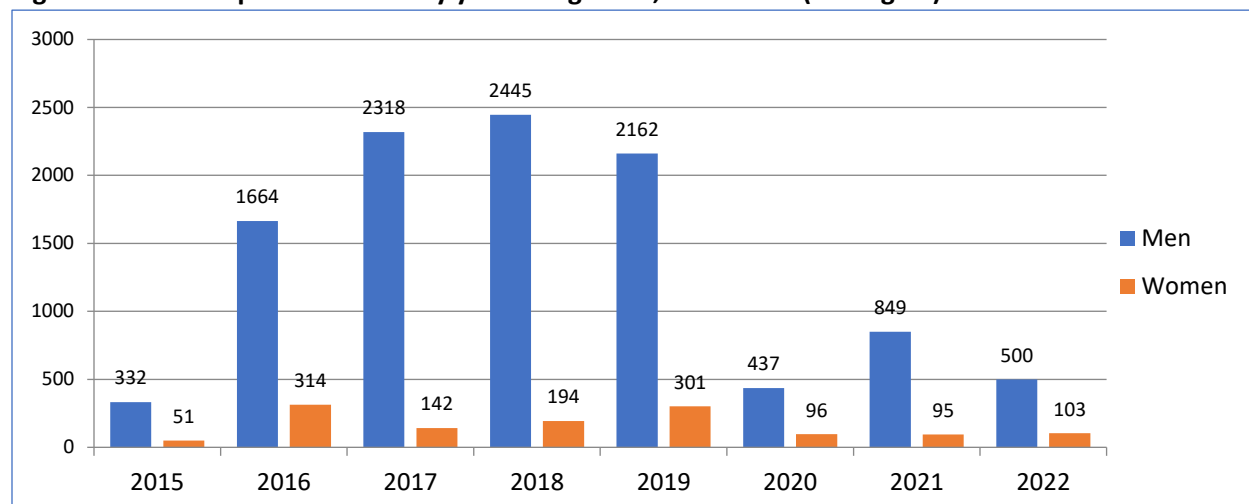
Source: [EUAA Report 2022](#)

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, there were 2,225 UAMs in Greece in December 2021, of whom 91 % were boys and just 9 % girls.⁵⁹ Nine months later, in September 2022, the number of UAMs in Greece had risen slightly, to 2,528 (85% boys and 15% girls).⁶⁰ Regarding nationalities, 28 % of the UAM are Afghan, 15 % Pakistani and 8 % Syrian.

⁵⁸ European Agency for Asylum Report 2022, <https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2022/table-5-unaccompanied-minors-eu-countries-reporting-country-and-main-citizenship-2016-2021>

⁵⁹ Data published by the Social Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), December 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/%CE%99%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82-2022.pdf> (in Greek).

⁶⁰ From the 2,528 UAMs, the 1,813 are in Accommodation Facilities, 217 in Semi-Autonomous Living Apartments, 197 in Emergency Accommodation Facilities, 280 Reception and Identification Centers, and 21 in Asylum Seekers Accommodation Facilities. Data published by the Social Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), November 2022, available at: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/%CE%95%CE%93%CE%A0%CE%91%CE%91%CE%A3%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC-%CE%A3%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1_20221101.pdf (in Greek).

Figure 9: Unaccompanied minors by year and gender, 2015-2022 (31 August)

Source: [Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistical Data](#) on Accompanied Minors under the category Reception and Identification Service.

For the Voluntary Relocation program for UAMs launched by the EU Commission in March 2020 is now in its third year, and is implemented and coordinated by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, part of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum.⁶¹ By the end of 2021, 1,199 UAMs had been relocated to other EU member states under the above scheme.⁶² By May 2022, more than 1,200 UAMs had been relocated in Europe (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Relocation of UAMs, 2020-2022 (May)

Source: [Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistical Data](#) on the Relocation Scheme for UAMs

⁶¹ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, May 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/dyo-chronia-leitoyrgias-gia-to-programma-ethelontikis-metegkatastasis/>

⁶² AIDA report 2021, available at: <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/>

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Dublin Cases & Relocation

In 2021, 2,133 Dublin transfers to other EU member states took place in the framework of Dublin Regulation, while there were 1,078 such cases in the first nine months of 2022 (Table 25).

Table 25: Relocation and Dublin Cases, 2021 and 2022

Month/2021	Relocation	Dublin Cases	Total
January	0	19	19
February	55	5	60
March	62	23	85
April	49	272	321
May	48	248	296
June	24	397	421
July	49	365	414
August	0	107	107
September	22	242	264
October	3	218	221
November	37	122	159
December	9	115	124
Total 2021	358	2,133	2,491
Month/2022	Relocation	Dublin Case	Total
January	34	105	139
February	6	60	66
March	12	157	169
April	25	76	101
May	51	95	146
June	7	115	122
July	8	156	164
August	0	35	35
September	27	109	136
Total 2022	170	908	1,078

Sources: [Yearly Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

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As per the relocation program, 358 individuals were relocated in 2021 and 170 in the first nine months of 2022 (Table 25). By the end of 2021, 3,571 individuals had been relocated to other EU member states under the voluntary relocation scheme launched by the EU Commission in March 2020.⁶³

Transfers to the Mainland

A total of 751 asylum seekers were transferred to the Greek mainland in September 2022, which was the highest number of transfers in the first nine months of 2022. The lowest number of transfers were recorded in January and March 2022, with 200 and 310 people respectively transferred to the mainland. In all, over the whole year, the total number of transports stood at 7,121, compared with 14,479 transfers in 2021 (Table 26).

Table 26: Asylum Seekers transferred to Mainland, 2021-2022

Month 2022/RIC	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
January	42	77	45	27	5	4	200
February	115	140	42	33	0	12	342
March	82	146	38	36	0	8	310
April	181	209	47	130	24	23	614
May	125	122	61	58	62	12	440
June	126	127	48	58	42	0	401
July	156	129	68	57	42	0	452
August	173	175	34	60	63	3	508
September	164	227	162	110	88	0	751
TOTAL 2022	1,322	3,165	824	785	412	613	7,121
Month 2021/RIC	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
January	9	328	90	22	101	28	578
February	98	106	134	598	63	9	1,008
March	111	452	220	56	93	14	946
April	107	1,466	316	229	69	10	2,197
May	132	491	401	206	145	11	1,386
June	126	2,285	506	381	4	29	3,331

⁶³ AIDA report 2021, available at: <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/>

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July	21	640	304	66	28	51	1,110
August	43	357	213	164	20	23	820
September	17	394	100	56	14	67	648
October	44	466	75	67	31	257	940
November	63	819	17	47	26	148	1,120
December	34	134	87	46	15	79	395
TOTAL 2021	805	7,938	2,463	1,938	609	726	14,479

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) - Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Covid-19 Restrictions

At the start of June 2021, Greece started rolling out coronavirus vaccinations in the migrant camps on the islands of Lesbos, Samos and Chios.⁶⁴ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 9,400 people were accommodated in migrant camps on the northern Aegean islands at the time.⁶⁵ In the mainland camps, with the support of the UNCHR, the authorities began a dedicated vaccination campaign until the temporary number for vaccination becomes available to all those who do not had a social or health security number.⁶⁶ In an effort to ensure that everyone was vaccinated against Covid-19, the Greek authorities issued a temporary AMKA number⁶⁷ to all foreigners and uninsured individuals.⁶⁸

In August 2021, the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum's online platform⁶⁹ for making appointments for some type of residence permits and services came online. The automatic renewal of residence permits became possible through the same online platform in December 2021.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Faster roll-out can help prevent a new spike in COVID-19 infections, ReliefWeb, July 2021, available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/02/greece-extends-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-to-migrants-camps>

⁶⁵ Greece extends COVID-19 vaccination campaign to migrants camps, Euronews, June 2021, available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/02/greece-extends-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-to-migrants-camps>

⁶⁶ Faster roll-out can help prevent a new spike in COVID-19 infections, ReliefWeb, July 2021, available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/02/greece-extends-covid-19-vaccination-campaign-to-migrants-camps>

⁶⁷ An 11-digit social security number (AMKA).

⁶⁸ Greece to Give Temporary AMKA Number for Vaccinations, Greek News, March 2021, available at: <https://news.gtp.gr/2021/03/05/how-to-get-a-temporary-amka-number-in-greece-for-vaccination/>

⁶⁹ The official website of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum for online applications and appointments, available at: <https://applications.migration.gov.gr/metanasteusi/>

⁷⁰ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, August 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/nees-ilektronikes-ypiresies-apo-to-ypovrgeio-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-energopoiisi-tis-platformas-ilektroniko-rantevoy/> (in Greek).

3. Irregular Migration Flows, Return and Readmissions

According to Frontex (2022), detections of illegal border crossing decreased on the circular route from Albania to Greece in 2021, with the majority of detected illegal border-crossings made by Albanian nationals (Table 27).

Table 27: Fluctuation in Circular Route from Albania to Greece, 2018-2021

	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total Share %	Change on prev. year
Circular route from AL to GR	4,550	1,944	1,365	1,092	0.5	-20
Albania	4,319	1,867	1,326	1,033	95	-22
Egypt	0	0	0	16	1.5	n/a
All other	231	74	33	23	2.1	-30

Source: [Frontex](#)

According to the same Frontex statistics, in 2021, around 200,000 illegal border-crossings (IBC) were reported by EU member states. This was the highest number of registered IBCs since 2017. The Central Mediterranean, Western Balkan and Western African routes were the top three used, with the highest volumes of IBCs recorded on entry over the whole of 2021.

Within the same period, the overall use of fraudulent documents increased by more than 20% in relation to 2020.⁷¹ EU member states/Schengen Associated Countries reported a total of 19,500 fraudulent document users, who were caught using 25,000 fraudulent documents at the EU's external borders and on intra-EU/Schengen secondary movements in 2021.

The increased number of detections in 2021 were mostly the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictive measures, which made border crossings much more difficult to make than before the COVID-19 outbreak. Apart from the increased number of counterfeit health/vaccination certificates, a lot of other supporting documents were also fraudulent, in particular work-related documents justifying border crossings for certain categories of third-country nationals who would otherwise not have been able to enter the EU/Schengen area.⁷²

According to Hellenic Police statistics, the total number of apprehended TCNs for irregular stay and employment in Greece, in 2021, was 19,185 of whose 19,061 were apprehended for irregular stay and 124 for irregular employment (Table 28).

⁷¹ FRONTEX Risk Analysis Report for 2022/2023 available at: <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/document/risk-analysis-for-2022-2023/>

⁷² Ibid.

Table 28: TCNs apprehended for irregular stays and employment, 2021

Month	Irregular Stay	Irregular Employment	TOTAL
January	1,212	7	1,219
February	1,123	11	1,134
March	1,671	5	1,676
April	1,644	20	1,664
May	1,405	10	1,415
June	1,798	5	1,803
July	1,994	11	2,005
August	1,495	6	1,501
September	1,766	15	1,781
October	1,906	16	1,922
November	1,858	12	1,870
December	1,189	6	1,195
TOTAL	19,061	124	19,185

Source: Greek Police Database, December 2021⁷³

The total is slightly lower than in 2020, when 21,846 individuals were apprehended (21,538 for irregular stays and 308 for irregular employment).⁷⁴ Meanwhile, there are no available data for the nationalities of the TCNs apprehended by the Greek Police in 2020 and 2021.

Returns and Deportations

According to the statistics on returns made available by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in December 2021, Greece recorded 7,013 **returns** of irregularly staying persons, including TCNs and EU citizens (Table 31), in 2021. Of those, 3,276 were **forced returns** carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; **100** were **voluntary departures** following the issuance of a return decision, and **2,737** were **assisted voluntary returns** organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In the first nine months of 2022, Greece recorded 5,189 returns of irregularly staying persons. Of those, 2,091 were forced returns carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; 893 were voluntary departures following the issuance of a return decision, and 2,205 were assisted voluntary returns organized by IOM.

⁷³Yearly Report for 2021 published by the Greek Police, available at:

https://www.astynomia.gr/?option=ozo_content&lang&perform=view&id=93710&Itemid=2443

⁷⁴Yearly Report for 2020 published by the Greek Police, available at:

<http://www.astynomia.gr/images/stories/2021/files21/05062021statistika.pdf>

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Table 29: Returns by Category, January 2021 & 2022

Month 2022/Category	Forced Return	Voluntary Return	ASR/IOM	Total
January	187	53	210	450
February	199	70	194	463
March	233	66	265	564
April	191	83	230	504
May	277	115	269	661
June	262	94	284	640
July	269	161	147	577
August	238	137	315	690
September	235	114	291	640
Total for 2022	2,091	893	2,205	5,189
Month 2021/Category	Forced Return	Voluntary Return	ASR/IOM	Total
January	234	55	185	474
February	220	45	363	628
March	260	42	181	483
April	223	51	203	477
May	342	78	127	547
June	311	56	215	582
July	346	96	219	661
August	243	96	237	576
September	337	70	225	632
October	243	78	260	581
November	278	90	272	640
December	239	243	250	732
Total for 2021	3,276	1,000	2,737	7,013

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) - Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Regarding voluntary returns, since September 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported the return of 8,000 people from Greece to their home countries under the Assisted

Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme.⁷⁵ The returnees originated from 46 countries, with the largest percentage from Pakistan and Georgia (54%), followed by Iraq (16%) and Iran (4%).⁷⁶

Detention

According to the statistics on detention,⁷⁷ the total number of TCNs detained in Pre-removal Detention Facilities (PRDFs) during 2021 was 12,020, of whom 6,447 were asylum seekers. At the end of 2021, there were 2,715 persons in administrative detention, of whom 1,344 were asylum seekers.

Out of the total number of detainees at the end of 2021, 2,335 were detained in pre-removal facilities and 380 (13.9%) in other detention facilities such as police stations. By the end of 2021, around 30 % of the detainees in Pre-removal Detention Facilities (700 out of 2,335) had been detained for a period exceeding 6 months.⁷⁸ Overall, there were seven active Pre-removal Detention Facilities (PRDF) in Greece at the end of 2021.

In cases of non-feasible return, detention is imposed even when removal is not feasible. This occurs in cases in which applicants have been rejected on the basis of the Turkey listed as a safe third-country. This is also relevant in the case of Afghan nationals who remain in detention, despite the deterioration in the security and human rights situation in Afghanistan since August 2021 and the fact that returns to Afghanistan have been suspended.⁷⁹

The major concerns regarding detention conditions are summarized in the Greek Ombudsman's Special Report on returns of third country nationals, published in June 2021.⁸⁰ According to the report, the main problems are: overcrowding, especially in police stations; a lack of doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers; a total lack of interpretation services; a lack of recreational activities; poor structures and hygiene conditions and a lack of light and heating; inadequate cleaning; a lack of clothing; a lack or limited access to open air spaces.⁸¹

Regarding legal remedies in the case of detention, it is argued that the possibility of detained persons challenging detention orders is restricted in practice, due to gaps in the provision of interpretation services and the lack of free legal aid, resulting in a lack of access to judicial remedies. Out of the total of 12,020 detention orders issued in 2021, only 2,803 (23.3%) were challenged before a court.⁸²

⁷⁵ Over 8,000 migrants were assisted with voluntary returns from Greece over the last three years, International Organization for Migration, August 2022, available at: https://greece.iom.int/news/over-8000-migrants-assisted-voluntary-return-greece-last-3-years-iom?fbclid=IwAR0p5UcJb_4Q1fwmO3iC7W5X4qLuYO8MzFcfnCv2hXz_HCgk5DJRu43N0MY

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ AIDA Report on Greece, p.204, available at: <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Supra.

⁸⁰ Return of Third Country Nationals, Special Report 2021, The Greek Ombudsman, available at: https://www.theioi.org/downloads/1852m/ethsia-ekthesi_2021_eng.pdf & Greek Ombudsman publishes Special Report on Returns of third country nationals, International Ombudsman Institute, July 2022, available at: <https://www.theioi.org/loi-news/current-news/greek-ombudsman-publishes-special-report-on-returns-of-third-country-nationals>

⁸¹ Return of Third Country Nationals, Special Report 2021, The Greek Ombudsman, available at: https://www.theioi.org/downloads/1852m/ethsia-ekthesi_2021_eng.pdf

⁸² AIDA Report on Greece, p. 217, available at: <https://ecre.org/aida-2021-update-greece/>

Alleged Push-backs

A significant increase in reports and testimonies about irregular forced returns (pushbacks) at Greece's sea and land borders was noted in 2019-2021.⁸³ Accusations from human rights groups, along with mounting evidence gathered by migrants and reporters, point to the Greek authorities routinely rounding up and expelling migrants without their being permitted to complete asylum requests; this is often done in an indiscriminate and violent manner.⁸⁴

The Greek authorities have also been accused of pushing back migrants in flimsy dinghies in the Aegean Sea, sometimes disabling the engines and leaving the migrants to drift back into Turkish waters. This crisis, together with a similar standoff between Greece and Turkey with asylum seekers caught in the middle, has laid bare a growing gulf between European laws and norms on the treatment asylum seekers should receive and the reality on the ground.

According to the Greek Council for Refugee (GCR), the allegations of push-backs are consistent and increasingly common, and implemented against inter *alia* large families, pregnant women, victims of torture, children and other persons belonging to vulnerable groups.⁸⁵

The Greek Helsinki Monitor filed a criminal complaint to the High Court Prosecutor concerning the push-back of 1,389 people by the Greek Coastguard, based on evidence from numerous sources (including IOM, UNHCR, the Alarmphone hotline, Human Rights Watch, the Legal Centre Lesvos, and the Border Violence Monitoring Network). In a press release, they expressed increasing concern about: *“the disappearance and pushbacks of refugees and migrants from humanitarian distribution sites, refugee camps and pre-removal centres in Greece. The illegal pushback and disappearance of refugees and migrants is systematically followed by the state-wide dismissal of credible evidence and the perpetual refusal to open a free and fair investigation into the whereabouts of the missing”*.⁸⁶

In April 2021, another NGO, the Legal Centre Lesvos, filed a lawsuit against the Greek state before the European Court of Human Rights.⁸⁷ It accuses Athens of a shocking level of violence in sophisticated inter-

⁸³ E.U. Interpreter Says Greece Expelled Him to Turkey in Migrant Roundup, The New York Times, available at:

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/01/world/europe/greece-migrants-interpreter-expelled.html?campaign_id=51&emc=edit_mbe_20211201&instance_id=46649&nl=morning-briefing%3A-europe-edition®i_id=73352426&segment_id=75736&te=1&user_id=568e73d5bb8af1698f2f1d926f5f698a

⁸⁴ Greece: Illegal Pushbacks Continue as Arrivals Drop Under “Strict but Fair” Immigration Policy – New “Closed Controlled” Camps Faces Massive Criticism, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, September 2021, available at:

<https://ecre.org/greece-illegal-pushbacks-continue-as-arrivals-drop-under-strict-but-fair-immigration-policy-new-closed-controlled-camps-faces-massive-criticism/>

⁸⁵ GCR – Greek Council for Refugees (2019), The new normality: Continuous pushbacks of third country nationals on the Evros river. Available at: <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1028-the-new-normality-continuous-pushbacks-of-third-country-nationals-on-the-evros-river>

⁸⁶ Border Violence Monitoring Report 2021, Border Violence Monitoring Network, available at:

<https://www.borderviolence.eu/15638-2/>

⁸⁷ Greece accused of ‘shocking’ illegal pushback against refugees at sea, The Guardian, April 2021, available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/26/greece-accused-of-shocking-pushback-against-refugees-at-sea>

agency operations that form part of an illegal pushback strategy designed to stop the arrival of refugees and migrants.⁸⁸

An interim report published by the Greek Ombudsman in April 2021 refers to a pattern of arbitrary detention, a refusal to register new arrivals or to allow them to apply for asylum, and ultimately forceful (and sometimes violent) returns to Turkey.⁸⁹

On 3 May 2021, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights wrote to the Greek authorities expressed her concern about an “increase in reported instances in which migrants who have reached the Eastern Aegean islands from Turkey by boat, and have sometimes even been registered as asylum seekers, have been embarked on life-rafts by Greek officers and pushed back to Turkish waters”.⁹⁰ Her letter to the Hellenic Ministers for Citizens’ Protection, Migration and Asylum, and Shipping and Island Policy urged the Greek authorities to put an end to pushback operations at Greece’s land and sea borders with Turkey, and to ensure that independent and effective investigations are carried out into all allegations of pushbacks and of ill-treatment by members of security forces in the context of such operations.⁹¹

On 13 July 2021, in a public response to publications about alleged pushbacks, the Hellenic Minister for Migration and Asylum stated: “*Allegations affecting Greece are clearly unfounded, rely on footage or testimonials provided for from the country of departure. Numerous cases have been investigated, including by the European Union and reports have found no evidence of any breach of EU fundamental rights.*”⁹²

On 23 July 2021, in a press release launching its report entitled *Greece: Violence, lies and pushbacks*, Amnesty International highlighted the fact that Greece’s pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are *de facto* border policy.⁹³ As stated in this report, new research by Amnesty International has revealed that Greek border forces are violently and illegally detaining groups of refugees and migrants before summarily returning them to Turkey, in contravention of their human rights obligations under EU and international law.⁹⁴

Amidst the mounting accusations against Greece, in September 2021, the European Commission urged Greece to set up an “independent” mechanism to monitor and prevent pushbacks of migrants at its

⁸⁸ It refers to an incident in October 2020, in which a fishing boat which had set sail from Marmaris in Turkey for Italy with 200 people on board, including 40 children and a pregnant woman, ran into difficulties in a storm off the south coast of Crete. Greek patrol boats reportedly forced the passengers into several small life rafts, towed them back to Turkish waters, and abandoned at sea without food, water, life jackets or any means to call for help.

⁸⁹ The Greek Ombudsman, *Alleged pushbacks to Turkey of foreign nationals who had arrived in Greece seeking international protection*, Interim Report, <https://bit.ly/3DsULkI>

⁹⁰ Letter from Council of Europe Commissioner dated 3 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3DtHtsQ>.

⁹¹ Council of Europe, “Greek authorities should investigate allegations of pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants, ensure an enabling environment for NGOs and improve reception conditions”, 12 May 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3NEvgOG>

⁹² Statement by the Hellenic Minister for Migration & Asylum, Mr Notis Mitarachi, about alleged ‘pushbacks’, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, July 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/statement-by-the-minister-of-migration-asylum-of-greece-mr-notis-mitarachi-about-alleged-pushbacks/>

⁹³ Greece: Violence, Lies and Pushbacks, Amnesty International 2021, available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/EUR2543072021ENGLISH.pdf>

⁹⁴ Greece: Pushbacks and violence against refugees and migrants are *de facto* border policy, Amnesty International Press Release, June 2021, available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/06/greece-pushbacks-and-violence-against-refugees-and-migrants-are-de-facto-border-policy/>

borders as a condition for releasing an additional €15.83 million in migration funding that had been requested by Athens.⁹⁵

Regarding pushbacks at Greece's land border, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants noted that there have been allegations that "*pushbacks are also reportedly carried out from urban areas, including reception and detention centres*".⁹⁶

In relation to pushbacks at sea, the Aegean Boat Report's Annual Report for 2021 refers to 902 boats carrying a total of 26,202 people being apprehended by the Turkish Coast Guard and Police in 2021. Of these, 5,220 people had already arrived on the Greek Aegean islands before being "*arrested by police, forced back to sea and left drifting in life rafts*".⁹⁷

In its annual review of Greece for 2021, Human Rights Watch describes the "*heavy-handed and often abusive immigration controls*" employed by Greece and the "mounting chorus of criticism" of its policy of pushbacks.⁹⁸

In a statement on 21 February 2022, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees expressed its concerns about recurrent and consistent reports from Greece's land and sea borders with Turkey, where the UNHCR has recorded almost 540 reported incidents of informal returns by Greece since the beginning of 2020.⁹⁹

In a statement on 18 February 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) sent out a clear alarm signal about the mounting migrant deaths and continuous reports of pushbacks at the EU border between Greece and Turkey.¹⁰⁰

Following a hearing with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, the ECRE published a statement which highlights the fact that, despite ever-mounting evidence of violent pushbacks in the Evros region and the Aegean Sea, the Greek government continues its strategy of deflection and denial.¹⁰¹

The European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), in a letter to the European Commission, expressed its concern about "*the continuing reports of dozens of people seeking international protection pushed back from Greece to Turkey through the land border area of the Evros*

⁹⁵ Commission asks Greece for transparency on pushbacks to release migration funds, Euractiv, September 2021, available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/commission-asks-greece-for-transparency-on-pushbacks-to-release-migration-funds/>

⁹⁶ Report on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea, 12 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3tWayFO>

⁹⁷ Aegean Boat Report, Annual Report 2021, <https://aegeanboatreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/abr-annual-report-2021-pdf.pdf>

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, Greece: Events of 2021, <https://bit.ly/372FryZ>

⁹⁹ UNHCR, News Comment: UNHCR warns of increasing violence and human rights violations at European borders, 21 February 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/2/62137a284/news-comment-unhcr-warns-increasing-violence-human-rights-violations-european.html>

¹⁰⁰ IOM Concerned about Increasing Deaths on Greece-Turkey Border, 18 February 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3tWmyHk>.

¹⁰¹ ECRE, Greece: Hearing Reveals Hostile Environment for Human Rights Defenders, Strategy of Deflection and Denials on Pushbacks Continue, ESTIA Cash Scheme Unravels as Government Takes Over, 15 October 2021, <https://bit.ly/3LmNohy>.

River".¹⁰² It points to the escalation of the situation with reports of loss of life, inhumane behaviour, denial of access to the asylum procedure and "*refoulements at the EU's external borders with the involvement of the Greek police authorities, in stark contravention of Articles 1, 2, 14, 18 and 19 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 6 of the Asylum Procedures Directive*".¹⁰³

On 7 July 2022, the European Court of Human Rights issued a historic ruling concerning Greece's illegal and life-threatening practice of pushing boats carrying asylum seekers back to Turkey.¹⁰⁴ Eight years after the tragic event of Farmakonisi, in which eleven women and children lost their lives in what survivors describe as a pushback operation, the Court ruled that the Greek authorities had not done all that could reasonably be expected of them during the operation to prevent the tragedy and protect the people on board.¹⁰⁵ The court also found that the authorities had not carried out a thorough investigation capable of shedding light on the circumstances in which the boat sank, violating the right to life of the applicants and their relatives.

4. Reception System, Accommodation, Integration

In September 2022, a total of 3,842 migrants and asylum seekers were accommodated in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) across the Greek islands, a notable decrease of 14 % comparing to September 2021 (4,490) (Table 30).

Table 30: Migrants and Asylum Seekers accommodated in RICs, 2021 & 2022

TCNs Resident	Reception and Identification Centres (RICs)					
	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL*
Jan- 2022	407	2,067	402	433	25	3,354
Feb-2022	369	1,885	340	398	16	3,030
March-2022	447	1,769	330	330	108	3,005
April-2022	195	1,281	438	246	144	2,315
May-2022	185	1,223	387	156	102	2,062
June-2022	318	1,351	499	221	100	2,500

¹⁰² European Parliament's LIBE Committee intervenes on the continued pushbacks in the Evros region, 17/06/2022, <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1982-european-parliament-s-libe-committee-intervenes-on-the-continued-pushbacks-i%E2%80%A6>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ European Court Slams Greece Over Deadly Migrant Pushback, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/08/european-court-slams-greece-over-deadly-migrant-pushback?fbclid=IwAR1Hlqcwox3tJQujPg4sEHBWJaxE4rO64SLYptwpMrymQ-EnOpnAqEXNIGs>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

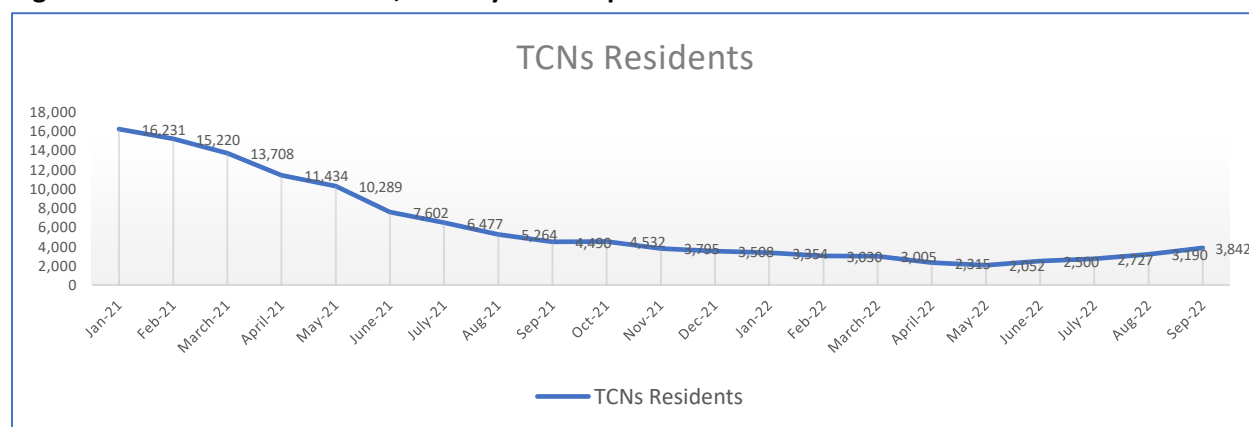
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July-2022	230	1,484	509	263	234	2,727
Aug-2022	310	1,470	727	394	258	3,190
Sept-2022	294	1,727	1,117	392	281	3,842
Difference from 2021	8%	-49%	253%	16%	97%	-14%
TCNs Resident	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL
Jan-2021	788	8,764	3,347	2,669	630	16,231
Feb-2021	509	8,835	3,445	2,001	397	15,220
March-2021	364	8,161	3,151	1,617	385	13,708
April-2021	309	7,143	2,435	1,275	238	11,434
May-2021	253	6,986	1,854	1,072	84	10,289
June-2021	225	5,200	1,370	693	78	7,602
July-2021	241	4,668	874	565	103	6,477
Aug-2021	257	3,752	628	427	162	5,264
Sep-2021	273	3,385	316	337	143	4,490
Oct-2021	627	3,129	369	282	95	4,532
Nov-2021	646	2,340	456	272	57	3,795
Dec-2021	572	2,024	413	455	30	3,508
Difference from 2020	-34%	-78%	-88%	-83%	-96%	-79%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum - *other islands are also included

In June 2022, only 2,052 migrants and asylum seekers were accommodated in RICs across the Greek islands, the lowest number for 21 months (Figure 11).

Figure 11: TCNs resident in RICs, January 2021-September 2022



Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Migration Developments in Greece in 2022

Regarding the distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, there was a general decrease in most regions. In September 2022, 18,438 TCN residents were distributed across thirteen regional units of Greece, compared with 32,647 TCNs in 2021 (Table 31).

Table 31: Distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, September 2022

Regional Unit	TCNs Resident 2021	% of total population 2021	TCNs Resident 2022	% of total population 2022
NORTH AEGEAN	2,706	1.36%	3,046	1.53%
SOUTH AEGEAN	513	0.17%	535	0.17%
EPIRUS	2,113	0.63%	720	0.21%
CENTRAL GREECE	3,882	0.71%	2,420	0.44%
CENTRAL MACEDONIA	6,478	0.34%	3,921	0.21%
ATTICA	12,712	0.33%	5,679	0.15%
WEST MACEDONIA	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
THESSALY	1,675	0.23%	720	0.10%
PELOPONNESE	949	0.16%	608	0.11%
EAST MACEDONIA AND THRACE	875	0.14%	580	0.10%
CRETE	434	0.07%	0	0.00%
WEST GREECE	310	0.05%	146	0.02%
IOANIAN ISLANDS	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	32,647	0.30%	18,438	0.17%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In terms of organized accommodation, apart from the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on Greek islands and the mainland facilities, there are also a number of Open Hospitality Structures (state-run sites) on the mainland (Table 31). In September 2022, the overall number of TCNs accommodated in organized facilities was 54% lower than in September 2021 (Table 32).

Migration Developments in Greece in 2022

Table 32: Categories of Organized Accommodation, December 2020-September 2022

Month	Total Population	Difference in %	Facilities	Estia	Hotels	RICs
Jan-2022	31,508	-3%	15,309	12,974	0	3,215
Feb-2022	29,071	-8%	13,578	12,622	0	2,871
Mar-2022	27,396	-6%	12,511	11,933	0	2,952
April-2022	24,529	-10%	11,629	10,563	0	2,337
May-2022	21,725	-11%	11,083	8,645	0	1,997
June-2022	20,557	-5%	9,968	8,138	0	2,451
July-2022	18,921	-8%	8,953	7,264	0	2,704
Aug-2022	18,587	-2%	8,781	6,595	0	3,211
Sept-2022	18,438	-1%	8,897	5,662	0	3,879
Difference Dec. 2020 – Dec. 2021		-54%				
Month	Total Population	Difference in %	Facilities	Estia	Hotels	RICS
Dec-2020	64,627		29,747	20,356	0	14,524
Jan-2021	64,259	-1%	29,479	20,805	0	13,975
Feb-2021	62,293	-3%	28,512	20,805	0	12,976
Mar-2021	59,244	-5%	26,679	20,956	0	11,609
April-2021	55,493	-5%	24,285	20,975	0	10,233
May-2021	53,705	-3%	23,539	20,991	0	9,175
June-2021	49,200	-8%	21,672	20,742	0	6,786
July-2021	46,380	-5%	20,591	20,029	0	5,760
Aug-2021	42,181	-6%	20,020	17,387	0	4,774
Sep-2021	40,061	-5%	19,162	16,723	0	4,176
Oct-2021	37,951	-5%	18,147	15,477	0	4,327
Nov-2021	35,182	-7%	16,729	14,686	0	3,767
Dec-2021	32,647	-7%	15,912	13,326	0	3,409
Difference Aug-2020 – Aug.2021		-49%				

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

On 24 October 2021, 367 Afghan nationals arrived in Athens as part of the commitments made by Greece and other EU member states to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghans at risk.¹⁰⁶ All of the 367 Afghan citizens had come to Greece for temporary accommodation, with the transfer to apartments being carried out with the assistance of the IOM.

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum has undertaken to implement the financial assistance program for applicants for international protection--the responsibility, until recently, of the UNHCR.¹⁰⁷ The same Ministry also monitors the implementation of the (EU-funded) "Helios" program which is implemented by the IOM. Its main mission is to promote the independent living and social integration of the beneficiaries.

Under the Helios Programme, 33,200 and 34,152 TCNs were had registered in the program during, respectively, the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2021; between the 1st and 3rd quarters of 2022, a slightly higher number of TCNs were registered, with 35,002 in the first, 35,002 in the second, and 39,794 in the third (Table 33).

Table 33: Registration at Helios Programme

REGISTRATIONS AT HELIOS	
3 rd quarter of 2021	33,200
4 th quarter of 2021	34,152
1 st quarter of 2022	35,002
2 nd quarter of 2022	35,002
3 rd quarter of 2022	39,794

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2021](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

As per nationality, 30.3 % of those registered on the Helios Programme are from Afghanistan, 30.2 % from Syria, 11.5 from Iraq, and 7.7% from Ukraine.¹⁰⁸

Since April 2022, the number of places provided under the "ESTIA II" housing program have been limited to 10,000, down from 27,000 in 2021; this is because the programme will finish at the end of 2022.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Arrival of 367 Afghan citizens in Athens, Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, October 2021, available at:

<https://migration.gov.gr/en/afixi-367-afganon-politon-stin-athina/>

¹⁰⁷ The Ministry for Migration and Asylum undertakes the provision of financial aid to asylum seekers as of Friday, October 1 2021, Press Release, Ministry of migration and Asylum, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/to-y-poyrgeio-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-analamvanei-apo-tin-paraskeyi-1i-oktovrioy-2021-tin-parochi-oikonmikoy-voithimatos-stoys-aitoyntes-asylo/>

¹⁰⁸ Information Note on the Helios Program, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, September 2022, available at:

<https://migration.gov.gr/en/enimerotiki-anafora-helios/>

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that the "ESTIA" program has been running since 2015, initially under the administration of the UN High Commission, with funding from the European Commission, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/oloklironetai-to-programma-stegasis-estia-ii-to-2022/>

Accommodation and Protection of UAMs

On 1 November 2022, there were 71 operational UAM Accommodation Facilities with a total capacity of 1,994 places.¹¹⁰ In the same period, out of a total of 2,528 children (85% boys, 15% girls and 7% below 14 years old), 1,813 were in long-term or temporary accommodation facilities, 217 in semi-autonomous accommodation apartments, 197 in emergency accommodation facilities, 280 in RICs, and 21 in accommodation facilities for refugee applicants.¹¹¹

Disaggregated by nationality, the estimated UAM population in November 2022 breaks down as follows: 28% Afghani, 1 % Pakistani, 8% Syrian, and 49% other nations. Comparing these figures to those from November 2021, the number of UAMs from Pakistan and Syria has fallen from 24% and 12% respectively, while the number of UAMs from other nations has risen from 35%. The Afghans remain at similar levels from 2021.¹¹²

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Greece's Special Secretariat for the Protection of UAMs (SSPUAM) announced in June 2022 that 668 unaccompanied children living in insecure conditions in Greece had received immediate protection and accommodation services.¹¹³ Of those, 247 were identified as homeless, 128 were detected by the Greek authorities, and 121 were in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs). Following the children's transfer to the emergency accommodation facilities, the SSPUAM found lasting solutions for 465 children with the support of the IOM: 409 were referred to long-term shelters; two to semi-independent living facilities; 43 were enrolled in adulthood schemes; ten were reconnected with their families; and one was relocated to another European country.¹¹⁴

5. Policy and Legislation Regulating Asylum and Refugee Status

In a press release on 10 November 2022, the Minister for Migration and Asylum announced the adoption of the National Strategy on Migration.¹¹⁵ According to the press release the new closed controlled centres have been designed to have separate areas for the general population and vulnerable groups, along with a Pre-Departure Detention Centre for illegal migrants who have to be returned.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Updated Data on Unaccompanied Minors, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available at: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/%CE%95%CE%93%CE%A0%CE%91%CE%91_%CE%A3%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC-%CE%A3%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1_20221101.pdf

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Data on Unaccompanied Minors, National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), November 2021, available at: https://www.ekka.org.gr/images/STATISTIKA/GR_EKKA_Dashboard_20211115.pdf

¹¹³ The IOM emergency accommodation facilities operating under the National Emergency Response Mechanism for UAMs are coordinated by the SSPUAM in collaboration with the UNHCR, Arsis, the Network for Children's Rights and Metadras, <https://greece.iom.int/news/iom-has-provided-accommodation-and-protection-over-650-unaccompanied-children-2022>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Press Release, National Strategy on Migration: Commitments that Became a Reality, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ethniki-stratigiki-gia-to-metanasteytiko-desmeyseis-poy-den-emeinan-sta-logia/>

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

On 20 June 2022, the draft law of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, entitled "*National system of guardianship of unaccompanied minors and accommodation framework for UAMs*", was put out to consultation.¹¹⁷ Apart from the issues relating to guardianship, the draft law established the framework of rules for the operation of hospitality centres and supervised apartments for semi-autonomous accommodation. In addition, the National Registry for the Protection of UAMs was established and charged with creating a comprehensive recording system of UAMs and collecting the information required for the operational needs of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of UAMs of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum. However, the National Emergency Response Mechanism was also established and charged with identifying and providing immediate protection and care to UAMs who are homeless or in precarious living conditions.¹¹⁸

In a recent report, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) of the European Parliament highlighted a trend towards improved protection for UAMs in Greece, which it attributes to recent legislative changes including *inter alia* the establishment of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum (April 2020), and the Voluntary Relocation program.

In institutional terms, following the establishment of the Special Secretary for UAMs (SSUM) under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in February 2020, and the coming into force of Law 4756/2020 in November of the same year, the SSUM has become the competent authority for the protection of UAMs, including their accommodation. The National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) remains responsible for the representation of UAMs, through the guardianship, too, provided under Law 4554/2018, under the supervision of the Directorate for the Protection of Children and Families of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.¹¹⁹

According to a Circular issued by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum on 24 November 2021, asylum applications should be submitted at designated points at the borders or at competent pre-designated first reception services on the mainland.¹²⁰ Serious concerns were expressed that the procedure will lead to the use of de facto detention, as the above Circular foresees that a restriction of liberty within the premises of a reception and identification centre is also applicable to those transferred to the designated locations in order to lodge an asylum application.¹²¹

On 1 October 2021, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum took responsibility for implementing the financial assistance program for applicants for international protection; until then, the program had been

¹¹⁷ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, June 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/se-diavoyleysi-tonomoschedio-toy-y-poyrgeioy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-ethniko-systima-epitropeias-asynodeyton-anilikon-kai-plaisio-filoxenias-asynodeyton-anilikon/> (in Greek)

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Articles 13 & 14 [Law 4756/2020](#)

¹²⁰ See the instruction available on the website of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum: <https://migration.gov.gr/gas/diadikasia-asyloy/i-aitisi-gia-asylo/>

¹²¹ AIDA Country Report updated in May 2022, available at: https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/#_ftn5

implemented by the UNHCR.¹²² With this transition, combined with the implementation of the ESTIA housing programme by the same Ministry since September 2020 (ESTIA II, then ESTIA 2021), Greece's obligation to ensure certain material conditions for asylum seekers is now administered entirely by the state.¹²³ The same Ministry also monitors the implementation of the "Helios" program, which is funded by the EU and implemented by the IOM. Its main mission is to promote the independent living and social integration of its beneficiaries.

Following a legislative change introduced in September 2021 and further clarified by a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) in December 2021, each subsequent asylum application after the first is subject to a fee amounting to EUR 100 per applicant and, in the case of families, to a EUR 100 fee per family member. This 'fee' policy has raised concerns about access to the asylum procedure, as highlighted by EU Commissioner Johansson herself. As a reaction to that, an application for the annulment of the JMD in question has been submitted by the Greek Refugee Council (GCR) and Refugee Support Aegean (RSA) to the Council of State and is currently pending.

Furthermore, Article 40 of the Deportations and Return Bill introduced by the Greek Government in September 2021 has met with harsh criticism.¹²⁴ In a statement, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, said that "*The Greek parliament should reconsider a legislative proposal currently being discussed, which would seriously hinder the life-saving work carried out at sea by NGOs, and their human rights monitoring capacities in the Aegean*". She urged Greek legislators to reject the restrictions envisaged in Article 40 and to recognize the human rights work of NGOs saving lives at sea is in keeping with their status as human rights defenders. Article 40 of the above bill includes conditions and restrictions on the activities of civil society organization in areas for which the Greek Coast Guard is competent.¹²⁵ The same legislation reduces the grace period for voluntary deportations from 30 days to between a week and 25 days, while also making it more difficult for migrants to challenge a deportation order by applying a stricter definition of what can be regarded as "humanitarian grounds", and reducing the period in which they can take legal action against such a decision to 30 days after it is issued. However, younger migrants and unaccompanied minors who are not granted asylum, but cannot be deported, will be granted full health care and social security coverage.

During 2021, the Asylum Service resorted in a significant number of cases to not communicating 1st-instance decisions to the applicant in person. This practice--the 'fictitious service' of decisions--has

¹²² Press Release, The Ministry for Migration and Asylum Undertakes the Provision of Financial Aid to Asylum Seekers as of Friday, October 1 2021, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/to-y-poyrgeio-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-analamvanei-apo-tin-paraskeyi-1i-oktovrioy-2021-tin-parochi-oikonomiky-voithimatos-stoys-aitoyntes-asylo/>

¹²³ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2020, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/synechizetai-to-2021-to-programma-estia-me-pliri-eyropaiki-chrimatodotisi/>

¹²⁴ Greece's Parliament should align the deportations and return bill with human rights standards, Council of Europe, November 2021, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/greece-s-parliament-should-align-the-deportations-and-return-bill-with-human-rights-standards>

¹²⁵ Ibid.

resulted in deadlines for the submission of an appeal expiring without the applicant having been informed of the issuance of the decision.¹²⁶

In terms of promoting social integration, according to new rules that took effect on 1 July 2021, asylum seekers who had managed to secure independent housing in Greece are no longer able to access financial assistance from the government. To be eligible for cash aid, they must abandon their homes and move into facilities run by the state or its partner organizations.¹²⁷

In June 2021, Turkey was designated a safe country for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia by dint of a Joint Ministerial Decision (JMC) of the Hellenic Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Migration and Asylum.¹²⁸ Previously, early in 2021, Pakistan and Bangladesh had been added to the list as countries from which a large number of immigrants enter Greece.¹²⁹ The national legislation, which incorporates the relevant EU directive, stipulates what happens when a 'safe' third country, notably Turkey, does not cooperate. According to the respective provision: "*where the third country does not allow the applicant to enter its territory, his/her application shall be examined on the merits by the Competent Decision Authorities*". This is illustrated by the fact that the joint request made by Greece and the EU to return 1,450 individuals from the Greek islands to Turkey, on the grounds that it was a safe third country, has been pending for more than 9 months. For those applicants who are rejected, there are neither support programs nor detention facilities available.

Regarding housing, the beneficiaries of international protection residing in accommodation facilities must leave within 30 days of being granted international protection. Due to the lack of proper integration mechanisms for recognized beneficiaries of international protection, this could expose them to the risk of homelessness.¹³⁰ In 2021, taking into consideration the conditions that they would face upon return, several national courts across the EU suspended the return of beneficiaries of international protection to Greece.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Walling Off Welcome: New reception facilities in Greece reinforce a policy of refugee containment and exclusion, Danish Refugee Council Report, September 2021, available at: <https://pro.drc.ngo/media/qamnx0m5/greece-09-21-walling-off-welcome-joint-policy-briefing-september-2021.pdf>

¹²⁸ In November 2020, the Greece Ministry of Migration and Asylum established a working group to draft and update the list of safe third countries and safe countries of origin. The working group for the designation of safe third countries and safe countries of origin was established on 17 November 2020. It is responsible for submitting proposed reforms of the legislative and regulatory framework governing the definition of third countries designated as safe, as well as those designated as safe countries of origin (Articles 86-87 of Law 4636/2019), <https://migration.gov.gr/omada-ergasias-gia-ton-kathorismo-asfalon-triton-choron/>
<https://migration.gov.gr/asfali-triti-chora-charaktirizei-gia-proti-fora-i-elliniki-nomothesia-tin-toyrkia-afora-aitoyntes-asylo-apo-syria-afganistan-pakistan-mpagklantes-kai-somalia/>

¹²⁹ Press Release, Bangladesh and Pakistan on the List of Safe Countries, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, January 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/asfaleis-chores-katagogis-to-mpagklantes-kai-to-pakistan/>

¹³⁰ AIDA Country Report Updated in May 2022, available at: <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>

¹³¹ Ibid.

6. Political and Institutional Developments

On 15 June 2021, in order to offer better services during the pandemic, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum introduced digital services for TCNs for employment in agricultural work on its electronic platform.¹³² As well as accelerating and simplifying procedures, the new electronic procedure is also expected to provide real-time information from the country's border stations, allowing delays to be minimized and providing direct access to the Independent Public Revenue Authority, EFKA and the Ministry of Labour. This was preceded by the decision introduced in March 2021 to digitize the process of applying for a residence permit for exceptional reasons.¹³³

On 17 March 2021, by decision of the Greek Prime Minister, a committee was established to draft the National Strategy for Equality LGBTQI+1.¹³⁴ The report includes a roadmap with guidelines for combating discrimination and consolidating equality and draws on the strategy adopted by the European Union as well as best practices applied in other countries.

In 2021, the digital visa was established. In addition, provisions were introduced for a national 12-month visa which can then be converted into a work permit for qualified executives who want to live in Greece and work digitally in their country. According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Greece has made many organized efforts to attract people with higher levels of education and wealth/income. The Minister for Immigration and Asylum emphasized that *"our priority is to attract a workforce and that is why we legislated the five-year seasonal employment permit, with Greece becoming the first country in the European Union to test a multi-year but also seasonal immigration policy of this sort"*, adding that *"which is to say a labour force that will not come with their families, will not stay permanently in our country and will not be naturalized; instead, as the Gulf countries did with great success, they will come to work for nine months--a period that covers us in the agricultural sector, tourism and other industries--and then return to their own countries for three months. That's the main thing we're looking at, right now, in bilateral deals like the one with Bangladesh"*. On 26 September 2022, during a speech, the Minister for Immigration and Asylum stated, answering a related question, that *"From November [22], when the registration platform is implemented, the first 4,000 workers will arrive legally. It is to assist our agricultural production."*¹³⁵

Citizenship Acquisitions

In 2021, citizenship acquisitions fell by over 50% in every individual category in comparison to 2018 (Table 34). According to the General Secretariat for Citizenship, this was mainly due to the transfer of citizenship

¹³² Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, June 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/se-leitoyrgia-apo-15-06-i-psifiaki-aitisi-metaklisis-politi-tritis-choras-omala-exelissetai-i-diadikasia-ypovolis-aitiseon-apo-toys-ergodotes/> (in Greek)

¹³³ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, April 2021, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/to-yvoyrgeio-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-psifiopoiise-ti-diadikasia-aitiseos-adeias-diamonis-gia-exairetikoy-logoy/>

¹³⁴ The National Strategy for the Equality of LGBT, available at: <https://primeminister.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ethniki-statigiki-gia-thn-isothta-ton-loatki.pdf> (in Greek)

¹³⁵ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, September 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/notis-mitarakis-14-simeia-veltiosis-sti-diacheirisi-toy-metanasteytikoy-i-ellada-echei-synora-kai-ta-prostatevoyme/> (in Greek)

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services after 1/1/2019 from Decentralized Administrations to the Ministry of Interior, as well as to the parliamentary elections of July 2019.

The downward trend continued in 2020, with a 17.6% decrease compared to 2019,¹³⁶ and in the 2021, when numbers were down almost 16% compared to 2020. According to the General Secretariat for Citizenship, this was due to Covid-19, which impacted negatively on citizenship services.

Table 34: Acquisition of Greek Citizenship by category (2011-2021)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Naturalizations of co-ethnics	12,616	13,495	22,574	15,791	8,563	7,476	3,726	2,937	1,117	1,463	1,198
Naturalizations of other nationalities	0,930	1,149	1,866	2,019	1,487	3,624	3,486	2,530	1,882	1,817	2,843
Birth or study in Greece	3,103	5,543	529	0,000	0,305	19,367	25,528	21,559	12,868	9,099	5,154
Other provisions	0,946	0,928	1,917	2,029	1,529	1,183	0,978	0,883	0,382	876	623
Under-age children of naturalized adults (parents)	1,627	0,622	3,337	1,990	2,294	1,837	1,096	0,501	0,585	547	777
Co-ethnics from countries of the former Soviet Union	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	190	100	71	9
Total	19,222	21,737	30,223	21,829	14,178	33,487	34,814	28,410	16,834	13,873	10,604

Source: Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, Statistics 2021¹³⁷

In 2021, a total of 10,604 foreign citizens were granted citizenship by way of naturalization, compared to 13,873 in 2020, 16,834 in 2019, 28,410 in 2018 and 33,487 in 2017; the second-generation category (those who obtained citizenship because of birth or study in Greece) accounted for 49% of the total. However, the decrease was significant even in this category, since the second-generation category accounted for a full 66% of those naturalized in 2020.

In terms of country of origin, the largest group to successfully apply for Greek citizenship have been Albanian citizens. In 2019 alone, 82.2% of Greek co-ethnics, 64.82 of foreigners and 91.35% of second-

¹³⁶ 2020 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/20210709-StatistikaStoixeia2020.pdf>

¹³⁷ 2012-2021 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/20220720-Stats-Category-2012-2021.pdf>

generation applicants granted citizenship were Albanian nationals. This trend did not change in 2020 and 2021, when Albanians also dominated all the categories.¹³⁸

The Law 4604/2019 introduced a series of amendments to the Greek Citizenship Code. These included *inter alia* the replacement of the citizenship interview with a standardized citizenship test and a reduction in the citizenship application fee from 700 to 550 Euros, with a €200 fee payable if a failed applicant sought a re-examination of their case. In addition, arrangements were made which sought to standardize the language proficiency test in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. In addition, minors with severe disabilities, citizens suffering from chronic mental disorders, and people over 65 years of age were also given the opportunity to acquire Greek citizenship.¹³⁹

The Citizenship Code was amended once again in March 2020.¹⁴⁰ The new Code required applicants to: (1) have a sufficient knowledge of the Greek language; (2) be normally integrated into the economic and social life of the country; and (3) be able to actively participate in the nation's political life (by being familiar with Greek political institutions and political history). A book with information on Greek history, civilization, geography and so on was issued by the Ministry of Interior especially for foreigners wanting to apply for naturalization.¹⁴¹

The adoption of Law 4735/2020 changed the naturalization system through the introduction of Greek Language Examinations.¹⁴² This law changed the naturalization process completely through the introduction of compulsory exams testing applicants' knowledge of the country's history and culture; previously, foreigners had only had to take an oral examination before the naturalization committee. Under the new rules, the foreigner takes two exams, the first written and the second an oral interview. The exams are held twice a year and the dates are set by the Ministry of Interior.

In addition, a Ministerial Decision (2984/2021) established specific and very strict economic criteria for the first time. The Decision clarifies that a foreign national who wishes to become a Greek citizen must prove that he/she has an annual income that ensures an adequate standard of living without burdening the country's welfare system. Saying that, on the basis of the current minimum wage, an adequate standard of living means in practice that an applicant's annual income must be equal to, or exceed, the amount of 7,800 euros. Applicants must demonstrate this income, not only for the previous year, but for all the years of prior legal residence required for the naturalization application.

¹³⁸ 2021 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/20220722-StatistikaStoixeia2021.pdf>

¹³⁹ MDPTM - Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunication and Media (2019), Newsletter on the Refugee-Migration Issue, No 5 (January – December 2018). Available at: <https://infocrisis.gov.gr/3990/newsletter-on-the-refugee-migration-issue-no-5-january-december-2020/?lang=en>

¹⁴⁰ Prior to the amendment, refugees could apply for citizenship on condition that *inter alia* they had been lawfully resident in Greece for a period of 3 years. The amended legislation has increased this period to 7 years (Article 36, Law 4674/2020), which is comparable with the time required for foreigners residing in Greece on other grounds, available at: <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/content-international-protection/status-and-residence/naturalisation/>

¹⁴¹ Ministry of Interior, Directorate of Citizenship, *Greece as a Second Homeland: Book of information on Greek history, geography and civilisation*, available in Greek at: <https://bit.ly/2Uuf4A0>.

¹⁴² Law 4735, available at: https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/202010_4735.pdf (in Greek)

In the case of recognized refugees, the minimum period of lawful residence required prior to submitting an application for citizenship was increased from 3 to 7 years, with the introduction of a €100 submission fee.¹⁴³ The applicant must undergo both a written test and a new form of interview at which a committee determines whether the applicant is adequately integrated into the economic and social life of the country based on specific rules, common standards, and a unified methodology compiled by the National Transparency Authority (NAC) in the form of a multi-page Practical Interview Guide.

Racism and Xenophobia

According to the 2021 Annual Report published by the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), 72 incidents of racist violence were recorded in 2021.¹⁴⁴ In 28 incidents, migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers were targeted due to their national origin, religion or colour, or human rights defenders due to their association with refugees and migrants. In three out of 36 incidents, LGBTQI+ refugees were targeted due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. On the basis of the Network's recordings, 2021 was the first year since its establishment that no incidents of organized violence against refugees and migrants by far-right groups were recorded.¹⁴⁵

The years 2019-2022 witnessed a significant increase in the number of reports and testimonies relating to irregular forced returns (push-backs) occurring at Greece's sea and land borders, creating space for racist trends and behaviours.¹⁴⁶ Human-rights groups have claimed that Greek authorities routinely round up and expel migrants without permitting them to complete asylum requests, often in an indiscriminate and violent way, and there is mounting evidence gathered by migrants and reporters to back these accusations up. Greek authorities have also been accused of pushing back migrants in flimsy dinghies in the Aegean Sea, sometimes disabling the engines and leaving the migrants to drift back into Turkish waters. This crisis, together with a similar standoff between Greece and Turkey last year in which asylum seekers found themselves caught in the middle, has laid bare a growing gulf between the treatment European laws and norms require asylum seekers to receive and the reality on the ground.

In a populist move designed to pass the message that foreigners are taking over Greek schools, a Greek lawmaker from the ruling conservative New Democracy party caused turmoil in September 2021 when he re-tweeted an article that made public a list with the names of "foreign" underage children in a kindergarten. This incident caused the Prosecutor's Office of First Instance to launch a preliminary investigation into who leaked the list and how.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ AIDA Report, p. 24, available at: [AIDA-GR 2021update.pdf](#)

¹⁴⁴ 2021 Annual Report, Racist Violence Recording Network, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2022/09/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2021_ENG_fn.pdf

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.6.

¹⁴⁶ E.U. Interpreter Says Greece Expelled Him to Turkey in Migrant Roundup, The New York Times, December 2021, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/01/world/europe/greece-migrants-interpreter-expelled.html?campaign_id=51&emc=edit_mbe_20211201&instance_id=46649&nl=morning-briefing%3A-europe-edition®i_id=73352426&segment_id=75736&te=1&user_id=568e73d5bb8af1698f2f1d926f5f698a

¹⁴⁷ Unprecedented racism incident puts Greek PM to the test, Euractiv, September 2021, available at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/unprecedented-racism-incident-puts-greek-pm-to-the-test/

In May 2021, the CoE commissioner for human rights urged the Greek authorities to investigate allegations of migrants being pushed back and mistreated, to ensure an enabling environment for NGOs, and to improve reception conditions.¹⁴⁸

Upon the introduction of Law 4825/2021 (in September 2021) on “*reforming of procedures for deportations and returns of TCNs, attracting investors and digital nomads, issues of residence permits and procedures for granting international protection, provisions relating to the competence of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum and the Ministry of Citizen Protection and other urgent provisions*”¹⁴⁹, the CoE commissioner for human rights raised the alarm, arguing that the law undermines the right to asylum and weakens safeguards against detention and return, while increasing the risk of persecution or other human rights abuse.¹⁵⁰ In the letter the CoE commissioner urged the Hellenic Parliament to align its deportations and return bill with human rights standards.¹⁵¹

In March 2021, three UN special rapporteurs addressed a joint letter to the government expressing concern about the 2020 regulations hampering the work of NGOs focused on asylum and migration.¹⁵² Furthermore, the European Commission rule of law report expressed concern about the narrowing space in which civil society groups can work with migrants and asylum seekers.¹⁵³

In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights issued interim measures vis-à-vis at least thirteen cases regarding the living conditions of vulnerable people trapped in migrant camps on the Aegean islands; the Court requested both the urgent transfer of individuals and their families into safer accommodation, and their being granted immediate access to urgently needed medical care.¹⁵⁴

In a landmark decision in January 2021, the European Committee of Social Rights found Greece in violation of the rights of children asylum-seekers, citing inadequate, unhealthy and dangerous living conditions, homelessness, and inadequate access to healthcare and education.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Greek authorities should investigate allegations of pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants, ensure an enabling environment for NGOs and improve reception conditions - Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, May 2021, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/greek-authorities-should-investigate-allegations-of-pushbacks-and-ill-treatment-of-migrants-ensure-an-enabling-environment-for-ngos-and-improve-recept>

¹⁴⁹ [Κατατεθέντα Σχέδια/Προτάσεις Νόμων \(hellenicparliament.gr\)](https://www.hellenicparliament.gr)

¹⁵⁰ [Comments DeportationBill.pdf \(rsaegean.org\)](#) & [World Report 2022: Greece | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹⁵¹ [Greece's Parliament should align the deportations and return bill with human rights standards - Commissioner for Human Rights \(coe.int\)](#)

¹⁵² <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26314>

¹⁵³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021_rolr_country_chapter_greece_en.pdf

¹⁵⁴ [World Report 2022: Greece | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹⁵⁵ [Decision on the merits: International Commission of Jurists \(ICJ\) and European Council for Refugees and Exiles \(ECRE\) v. Greece, complaint No. 173/2018 \(coe.int\)](#)

7. Ukrainian Refugees

Persons who were permanently resident in Ukraine and fled the country after 24 February 2022 are entitled to temporary protection in the EU with a 90-day visa being provided on entrance.¹⁵⁶ Under this regime, Ukrainian citizens can enter Greece with their passports and immediately apply for temporary protection. This protection is granted to all applicants without an assessment process. With an initial duration of 12 months, it may be extended for a further six or twelve months, depending on how the conflict and hostilities develop. The temporary protected persons are issued the relevant “residence” permit shortly after application, and it provides the holder with working rights, a TIN, and a social insurance number.

By September 2022, a total of 19,783 temporary protection permit cards had been issued to displaced Ukrainians, of whom 69% were women and 31% men.¹⁵⁷ Between March and September 2022, a total of 31,783 Ukrainian citizens arrived in Greece (Table 35).

Table 35: Arrivals of Ukrainian citizens in Greece

Number of Ukrainians arriving in Greece	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	TOTAL
	14,630	7,759	8,699	n/a	224	240	231	31,783

Source: Monthly Information Notes published by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in September 2022, a grand total of 75,942 Ukrainians had arrived in Greece since the start of the war and 20,135 applications for temporary protection had been submitted.¹⁵⁸

By decision of the Minister for Immigration and Asylum, the examination of applications for the renewal of residence permits under Articles 16 and 20B of Law 4251/2014 submitted by citizens of the Russian Federation and of Belarus, including their family members, and the issuance of decisions on pending applications, were suspended.¹⁵⁹ New applications for the granting of residence permits by citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus who fall into the "business executives" category under the terms of article 17 of Law 4251/2014, as well as applications for the renewal of residence permits by such individuals, were also suspended.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ In Greece, the Presidential Decree 80/2006 on the temporary protection has been activated by the recently (March 2022) issued Ministerial Decision (Protocol No. 131035).

¹⁵⁷ [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum, page 13.

¹⁵⁸ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, September 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/notis-mitarakis-14-simeia-veltiosis-sti-diacheirisi-toy-metanasteytikoy-i-ellada-echei-synora-kai-ta-prostateyoyme/> (in Greek)

¹⁵⁹ Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, April 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/arsi-anastolis-exetasis-kai-ekdosis-ekkremon-aitiseon-ananeosis-kai-yvolis-aitiseon-ananeosis-titlon-diamonis-politon-tis-rosikis-omospondias-kai-tis-leykorosias-diatireitai-mechri-neote/>

¹⁶⁰ Press Release, Suspension of Issuance or Renewal of Residence Permits for Investment Purposes for Citizens of the Russian Federation Until Further Notice, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, February 2022, available at:

8. Concluding remarks

This report offers an overview of the most recent trends and developments in international migration flows and policies in Greece. It contains data and policy information pertaining to the whole of 2021 and the first nine months of 2022 which are deemed useful for identifying emerging trends. This report also discusses the characteristics of the immigrant population in Greece, its size and main socio-demographic features, as well as its participation in the labour market. Special attention is paid to the current situation as regards the flows and stock of asylum seekers and irregular migrants through Greek-Turkish sea and land borders in 2021-2022. The report outlines the main developments in migration and asylum policy in 2021-2022 and the challenges facing the country with regard to the governance of migration and integration policies. Special attention is paid to the reception and accommodation of Ukrainians in Greece in 2022.

The report identifies three main trends that have characterized Greek migration governance in 2021-2023: a shift in focus away from humanitarian response and towards security policy; the intensification of border surveillance through the use of advanced technological means; and an emphasis on the management of legal (labour) migration in as a response to Greece's ageing population and declining economic indicators.