

MIGRATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: Greece Report

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p. 6-7,
10-11

Increase in Asylum Applications and Key Nationalities

Between 2019 and 2023, Greece registered 247,523 asylum applications, with 50,039 applications in 2024 (as of September 30). The main asylum-seeking nationalities are Syrians, Afghans, Egyptians, Palestinians, and Eritreans. There has been a notable increase in child arrivals, with six out of ten children under 12 years old, and 22% registered as unaccompanied or separated minors.

Greece has intensified its deterrence measures, including expanded border fences, returns, and restrictive asylum laws. In reaction to the significant number of arrivals in 2019, Greece enacted the "International Protection Act", introducing stringent asylum procedures and punitive measures. The law has faced criticism from human rights organizations for reducing safeguards for asylum seekers and imposing additional pressure on administrative processes.

p. 12-
13

EU Agreements and External Migration Management

Greece strongly supports EU migration deals with Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon. In 2021, Greece designated Turkey as a 'safe third country' for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia, although Turkey has refused to take back asylum seekers since 2020. Greece also supports a €1 billion EU aid package for Lebanon and EU-Egypt agreements to curb irregular migration. These policies reflect a broader strategy of externalising migration control.

p. 14-
16

Integration Challenges

More than 50,000 refugees have left Greece for Germany (2019-2022), highlighting the poor integration prospects. The HELIOS programme has supported 45,221 beneficiaries, but gaps remain in housing, employment and social services. Food insecurity is widespread, with a 2023 report revealing mass hunger among asylum seekers. Recognised refugees lose their financial support within a month and are evicted from accommodation within 30 days, leaving many homeless and vulnerable.

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