



MIGRATION

Migration Developments in Greece in 2023

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Summary

According to ELSTAT the resident population of Greece on 1st January 2023 is estimated at 10,413,982 persons of which 5,090,591 males and 5,323,391 females, marking decreased by 0.5% in comparison to the respective population on 1st January 2022 (10,461,627). This development is the result of the natural decrease of the population¹ and the net migration. The net migration² is estimated at 16,355 persons³, whereas in 2021 it stood at -22,476 persons.⁴

As of September 2023, the total number of immigrants legally residing in Greece is estimated at 758,016, which corresponds to 7.2% of the total population.⁵ This figure includes TCNs (461,598), beneficiaries of international protection (50,113), EU citizens and co-ethnics (246,305). The largest immigrant group in Greece is Albanian, constituting approximately 60.1% of the foreign population.

As per the resident permits, the highest concentration of migrants is found in the category of "other". Comparing data between 2022 and 2023 shows a downward trend in family reunification but an upward trend in employment permits. Approximately 36,200 individual permanent investors were attracted to Greece through the strategic investor permit scheme with Chinese nationals representing the majority of beneficiaries.

In terms of labour market participation, the labour force rate for foreigners reached 69.4% in the third quarter of 2023, marking a significant increase compared to Greek nationals (51.2%). The migrant unemployment rate has been declining steadily, reaching 14.1% in September 2023.

The influx of asylum seekers to Greece saw a dramatic rise in 2022, with a 94.65% increase compared to 2021. This trend continued in the first nine months of 2023, with a 63% increase compared to the same period in the previous year. Notably, arrivals on Aegean islands surged by 433% in September 2023 compared to September 2022, primarily comprising individuals from Syria, Palestine, and Afghanistan. Despite efforts to streamline the asylum process, acceptance rates decreased by 28% compared to September 2022, while pending asylum decisions remained relatively stable. While the influx of asylum seekers remained high in the first nine months of 2023, a considerable number of individuals left Greece through expulsions, returns, and relocations. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum implemented various initiatives, including voluntary return programs and agreements with Frontex, to facilitate returns of irregular migrants.

In response to the conflict in Ukraine, Greece extended temporary protection by issuing temporary protection permits and providing essential services such as access to employment, education, accommodation, and healthcare. Electronic pre-registration systems were established to streamline the process, and the validity period of temporary protection status was extended until March 2024. Significant changes were made to integration support programs, including increased rent subsidies and extended durations.

¹Which amounted to 64,000 persons 75,921 live births as opposed to 139,921 deaths of persons residing in the Greek territory.

²In which are included also TCNs requesting international or temporary protection.

³Corresponding to the difference between 96,662 immigrants and 80,307 emigrants.

⁴57,120 immigrants and 79,596 emigrants.

⁵Data on Estimated Population (1.1.2023) and Migration Flows (2022), available at: <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/de3e26f6-9b77-d2e5-2ca3-e13bcafe482a>

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In September 2022, the number of migrants and asylum seekers housed in Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) across Greek islands decreased by 14% compared to September 2021. However, in September 2023, there was a significant surge, with a 294% increase compared to September 2022, marking the highest number in the last two years. The North Aegean regional unit accommodated the largest number of migrants and asylum seekers. Despite legislative advancements, challenges persist, including delays in asylum application processing, difficulties in accessing the asylum procedure on the mainland, and issues with residence permit renewals. These challenges have implications for the rights and protections afforded to beneficiaries of international protection.

In July 2022, Law 4960/2022 was enacted, introducing key provisions on the National Guardianship System and Accommodation Framework for Unaccompanied Minors. Additionally, the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors oversees the protection and accommodation of unaccompanied minors, while the Emergency Response Mechanism for UAMs provide immediate protection and care for homeless or vulnerable children.

Frontex data reveals a decrease in illegal border crossings from Albania to Greece in 2022. However, the Hellenic Police apprehended a higher number of TCNs for irregular stay and employment in Greece in 2022 compared to 2021.

Following the general election in July 2023, the four pillars of the government's priorities have been introduced, including safeguarding international obligations, ensuring border security, promoting social cohesion and migrant integration, and addressing labor shortages in key sectors of the economy. Key initiatives introduced include bilateral agreements with Egypt and Bangladesh to regulate seasonal migration and combat irregular migration, as well as efforts to attract qualified personnel in high-tech sectors. The government has also emphasized the importance of building a common European migration and asylum policy.

A Fundamental Rights Officer and a Special Commission on Fundamental Rights Compliance were appointed within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to mainstream fundamental rights within the asylum system. However, criticisms have been raised regarding the independence and effectiveness of the Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns.

The new Immigration Code (L. 5038/2023), effective from January 1, 2024, introduces changes to entry and residence requirements for non-EU nationals. It includes provisions for second generation of migrants' origin, and seasonal workers, specifying criteria such as maximum duration of stay, employment contracts, and minimum wage and working hours.

Concerns persist regarding racism and xenophobia, with reports of organized racist violence against refugees, migrants, and LGBTQI+ individuals. There are also allegations of irregular forced returns and human rights abuses at Greece's borders. In summer 2023, the Supreme Court intervened to address alarming incidents of violence against immigrants in the northeastern part of the country.

Greece remained at the forefront of discussions within the European Union regarding migration policies, advocating for a more balanced approach that addresses both security concerns and humanitarian needs. Collaborative efforts were pursued to strengthen external border controls, enhance refugee resettlement programs, and foster greater solidarity among EU member states.

Despite these efforts, Greece continued to face criticism from human rights organizations and advocacy groups over alleged violations of migrants' rights, including reports of pushbacks at sea and inadequate

access to legal assistance. These issues underscored the ongoing challenges and complexities inherent in managing migration in Greece and the broader European context.

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 2022, as well as for the first nine months of 2023, 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 2022-2023. The report outlines the main developments in migration and asylum policy in 2022-2023 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 provides specific information on the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Greece.

Chapter 4 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 5 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 6 outlines the developments relating to the policies and legislation regulating asylum and refugee status.

Chapter 7 discusses policy and legislative developments, including citizenship acquisitions and racism and xenophobia.

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1. The Migrant Population in Greece

The 2021 Census⁶ shows an overall population decrease which is mainly due to the decrease in births by Greek women, the increase in deaths and the immigration of Greeks, with the latest being significant, but nevertheless below 100,000 (Table 1). More specifically, Greek population decrease by 422,007 due to its natural decrease by 326,658 and immigration by 95,349, while foreign population increased by 38,202 as its natural increase of 99,192 exceeded immigration of 60,990.⁷

Table 1: Resident population by sex, age, and citizenship, 2021

CITIZENSHIP	Total	SEX		AGE GROUPS			
		Male	Female	0-24	25-49	50-74	75+
GREECE TOTAL	10,482,487	5,125,977	5,356,510	2,467,326	3,385,106	3,423,531	1,206,524
Greek	9,716,889	4,736,290	4,980,599	2,295,945	3,007,737	3,219,132	1,194,075
EU countries except Greece	116,669	41,776	74,893	19,588	50,852	42,156	4,073
European countries outside EU	439,254	216,022	223,232	98,643	216,386	118,484	5,741
Countries of Africa	33,471	21,667	11,804	9,592	18,086	5,589	204
Countries of the Caribbean, South or Central America	3,565	1,125	2,440	394	1,846	1,244	81
Countries of North America	5,607	2,511	3,096	593	1,941	2,407	666
Countries of Asia	158,530	102,075	56,455	39,530	85,718	32,228	1,054
Countries of Oceania	1,494	641	853	138	483	720	153
Foreigners with undeclared citizenship	3,265	1,751	1,514	610	1,249	1,070	336
Stateless or unspecified citizenship	3,743	2,119	1,624	2,293	808	501	141

Source: 2021 Population Census, [ELSTAT](#)

All in all, the permanent population in Greece decreased by 383,805 due to its natural decrease by 227,466 and immigration by 156,339.

According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum's monthly and yearly reports, in September 2023 the stock of third-country nationals residing in Greece stood at 461.598,⁸ recording a minimal decrease of almost 3% comparing to September 2022 (476,552)⁹ (Figure 1). If we add to that the 50,113 beneficiaries of international protection, plus 226.101 EU citizens and 20.204 co-ethnics, the total number of immigrants legally residing in the country in September 2023 is estimated at 758.016, which corresponds to 7.2% of the total population (of 10,482,487 inhabitants).¹⁰ Similarly, 35,735 asylum applications were

⁶See the Census Results of Population and Housing 2021 here: [Booklet Αποτελεσματα Πληθυσμου 2023 II EN FINAL2 WEB.pdf \(statistics.gr\)](#)

⁷See the article here: [Κατά 422.000 μειώθηκε ο ελληνικός πληθυσμός του 2011 την περίοδο 2011-2021 | ΕΦΣΥΝ \(efsyn.gr\)](#)

⁸Information Note on Legal Migration September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

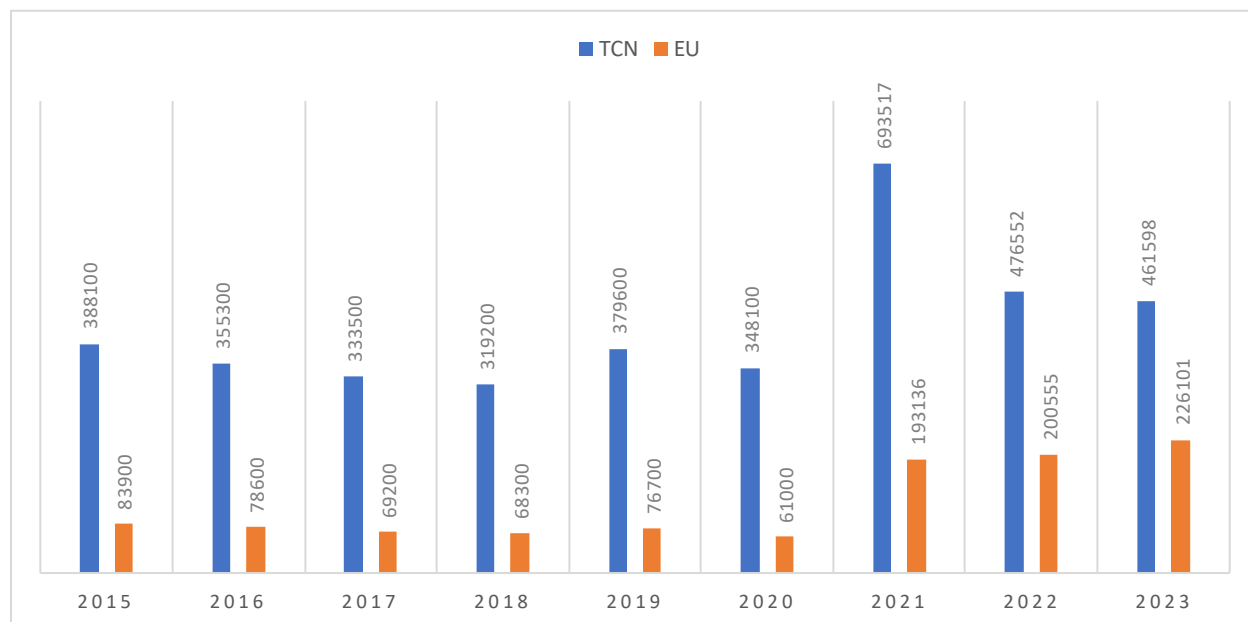
⁹Information Note on Legal Migration September 2023, Section B – Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

¹⁰Census Results of Population and Housing in Greece 2021, Hellenic Statistical Authority, Results published in August 2023.

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lodged in the first nine months of 2023¹¹ (January – September 2023), recording a slight decrease of 4.3% compared to 2022 (37,342).¹²

Figure 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece (TCN and EU citizens), 2015-2023 (as of September)



Source: [Information Note on Migration September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

The data on migration flows from the 2021 national census were published in August 2023. According to the report published by the Hellenic Statistical Authority there are 765,598 people with foreign citizenship from a total of 10,482,487 inhabitants registered in Greece.¹³ According to ELSTAT, as per the 1st of January 2023, the net migration, including also TCNs requesting international or temporary protection, is estimated at 16,355 persons corresponding to the difference between 96,662 immigrants and 80,307 emigrants. In 2021 net migration was estimated at -22,476 persons (57,120 immigrants and 79,596 emigrants) (Figure 2).

¹¹Information Note on Asylum September 2023, page 6 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

¹²Information Note on Asylum September 2023, page 6– Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

¹³Census Results of Population and Housing 2021, Hellenic Statistical Authority, August 2023.

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Figure 2: Immigrants – Emigrants, 1991-2022

Year	Immigrants	Emigrants	Net Migration
1991	151,978	64,628	87,350
1992	110,334	52,389	57,945
1993	107,462	52,929	54,533
1994	86,959	46,813	40,146
1995	98,989	47,967	51,022
1996	95,585	54,628	40,957
1997	113,477	51,794	61,683
1998	116,411	60,119	56,292
1999	84,695	54,175	30,520
2000	109,251	46,993	62,258
2001	98,471	45,909	52,562
2002	67,220	39,378	27,842
2003	63,141	37,433	25,708
2004	66,871	38,041	28,830
2005	70,933	38,583	32,350
2006	63,094	38,368	24,726
2007	63,298	40,400	22,898
2008	66,529	43,044	23,485
2009	58,613	43,686	14,927
2010	60,462	62,041	-1,579
2011	60,089	92,404	-32,315
2012	58,200	124,194	-65,994
2013	57,946	117,094	-59,148
2014	59,014	106,804	-47,790
2015	64,446	109,351	-44,905
2016	116,867	106,535	10,332
2017	112,247	103,327	8,920
2018	119,489	103,049	16,440
2019	129,459	95,020	34,439
2020	84,221	77,837	6,384
2021	57,120	79,596	-22,476
2022	96,662	80,307	16,355

Source: ELSTAT, [Data on Estimated Population \(1.1.2023\) and Migration Flows \(2022\)](#).

In addition, the migration and migrant population statistics published by Eurostat in March 2023 refer to a total of 747.900 non-national population in 2021, which corresponds to 7.1% of the total population residing in Greece.¹⁴ Of these, 632,700 or 6% are citizens of a non-EU country, while citizens of EU member states account for 1.1% (115,200) of the overall non-Greek population in 2021.

Data from the 2023 Labour Force Survey (3rd Quarter)¹⁵ suggests an increase of 4.6% in the total foreign population (aged 15 and over), with 296,600 foreign citizens residing in the country in 2023 (3rd Quarter, out of a total of 9,035,500) compared to 282,900 in 2022 (3rd Quarter 2022, out of a total of 9,048,200).¹⁶

¹⁴Migration Population Statistics, EUROSTAT, March 2023.

¹⁵Labour Force Quarterly Data, 3rd Quarter 2023, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

¹⁶Labour Force Quarterly Data, 3rd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

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Overall, the foreign population (both TCNs and EU-27 citizens) in September 2023 corresponded to 7.2% (758,016) of the total population resident in Greece (Table 2), showing a slight increase of 0.15% comparing to September 2022 (7.25%/756,886).

Table 2: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2023 (as of September 2023)

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population
Total TCN population	461,598	4.40
Total EU27 countries' citizens (non-Greek)	226,101	2.15
Total recognized refugees	50,113	0,48
Total expatriates	20,204	0,20
Total immigrant stock	758,016	7,23
Total population in Greece	10,482,487*	100.00

Sources: [Monthly Information Note September 2023 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#) / *2021 Population Census Data published in August 2023

A closer look at the valid resident permits for TCNs provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in September 2023 (Table 3) point to a slight fall (3.1%) in the number of TCNs, with 461,598 persons comparing to 476,552 in December 2022, or a 3% decrease in the total number of valid resident permits in September 2023 compared to the corresponding month in 2022 (Table 3 and Figure 3).¹⁷

Table 3: Valid resident permits for third-country nationals by gender, 2015-2023

Valid resident permits TCNs	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Men	298.800	303.289	291.785	286.774	286.886	282.426	n/a	n/a	n/a
Women	273.569	276.447	264.801	257.669	260.045	255.466	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	572.369	579.736	556.586	544,43	546.931	537.892	693.517	476.552	461.598

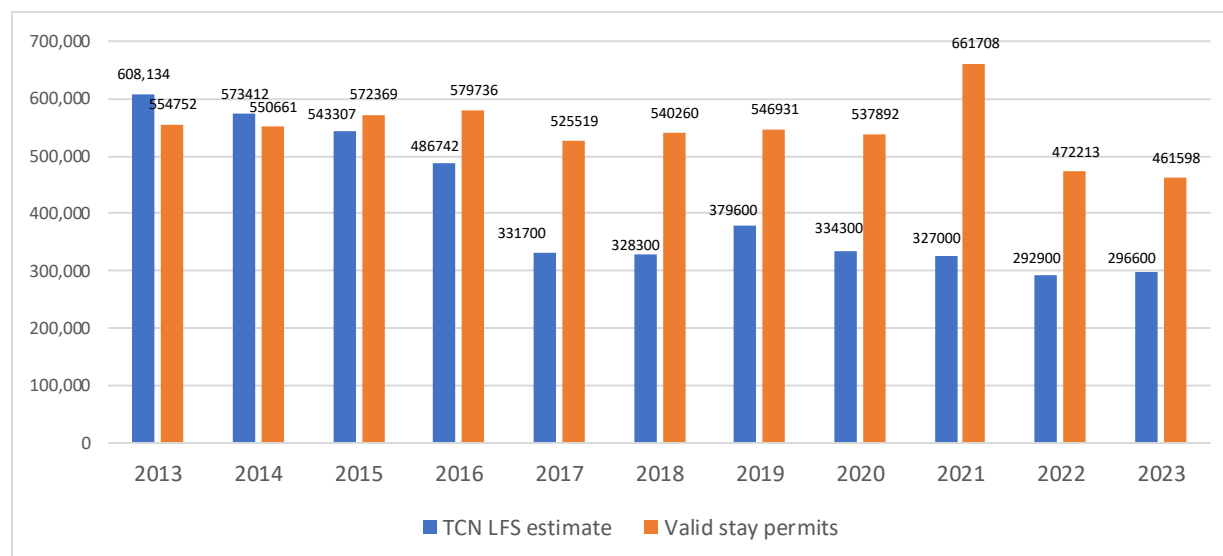
Source: Table compiled by the authors on the basis of data for 2015 provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy, database of permits for TCNs upon request, while data for 2016-2023 are available online. **Note:** Data refer to 31 December of each year. Data for 2020 refer to 30 April. Data for 2023 refer to 30 September 2023.

Comparing two different sources - namely, the resident permit database (September 2023) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) (3rd Quarter 2023) (Figure 3) - 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 35,7%.

¹⁷ There are no gender-based statistics available after April 2020.

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Figure 3: Migrant population stocks in Greece, 2014-2023, 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 2016-2023 are available online/EL.STAT. Labour Force Survey.¹⁸

Composition and Features of the Immigrant Population

An estimated 60.1% of Greece's foreign population is Albanian. The second largest group are Chinese nationals, at 5.7% (Table 4 and Figure 4). The increasing number of Chinese citizens in recent years has continued, with China moving from third place in 2021 (3.9%), to second place in 2022 (4.9) and 2023 (5.7), respectively, with the latter showing an increase of 0.8%. Georgians, Pakistanis, and Russians (at 4.2%, 4.0% and 3.2% 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 2023.¹⁹

Table 4: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 10 nationalities)

Country of Origin	Population		TCN valid permits 2022 -2023			
	Census 2011	Census 2021	on 31.12.2022		on 31.09.2023	
	Number	Number	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	480,851	374,296	285,842	60.5	277,407	60.1

¹⁸Labour Force Survey: 4th quarter 2022, and Labour Force Survey: 3rd quarter 2023.

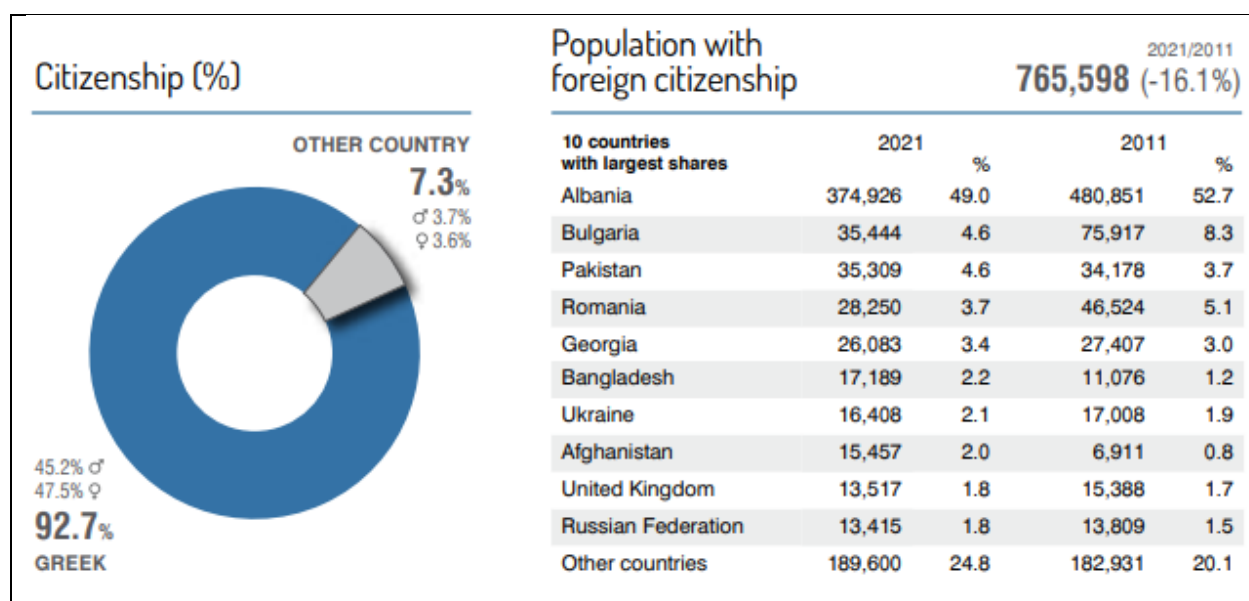
¹⁹Information Note on Legal Migration September 2023 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum (p.3).

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Georgia	27,407	26,083	20,002	4.2	19,520	4.2
China	n/a	n/a	22,951	4.9	26,236	5.7
Pakistan	34,178	35,309	18,217	3.9	18,669	4.0
Ukraine	17,008	16,408	14,735	3.1	13,675	3.0
Russia	13,809	13,415	14,897	3.2	14,722	3.2
India	11,333	n/a	10,090	2.1	9,035	2.0
Egypt	10,455	n/a	10,738	2.3	9,824	2.1
Philippines	9,807	n/a	8,494	1.8	7,237	1.6
Bangladesh	11,333	17,189	9,350	2.0	9,123	2.0

Sources: *Information Note December 2022*, *Information Note September 2023*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, & *National Census 2011*, data published in August 2023.

Figure 4: Migrant population by citizenship, Census 2021

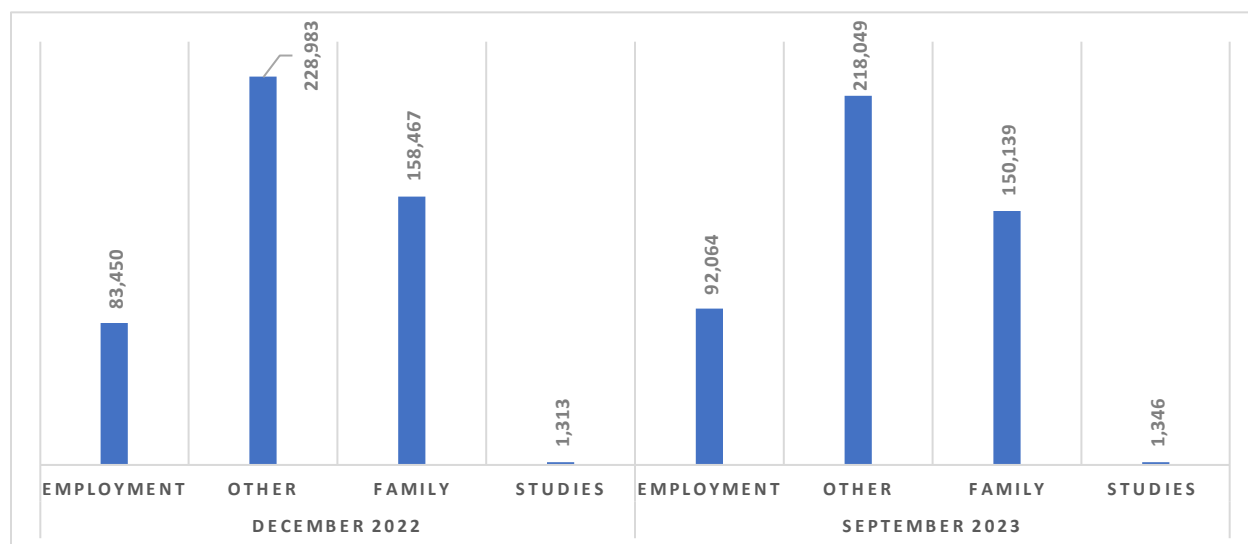


Source: [ELSTAT](#)

The total number of valid resident permits in September 2023 stands at 461,598, marking a decrease of 3% compared to the corresponding month of 2022. A closer look at the valid residence permits by purpose, as provided by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum (September 2023), shows that the highest concentration of migrants is found in the category “other” (218,049), followed by the category of those residing in Greece in the context of “family reunification” (150,139) and “employment” (92,064) (Figure 5).

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Figure 5: Stay permits by purpose (2022-2023)



Sources: [Information Note December 2022](#) & [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Comparing the data for 2023 with that for 2022 reveals a downward trend categories of resident permits form “family reunification” (8,328, 5.3%) and “other” (by 10,934, 4.7%) purposes, whereas the category of resident permits issued for “employment” shows an upward trend (8,614, 9.4%), (Figure 5).

During the last three years the strategic investor permit scheme has attracted approximately 36,200 individual permanent investors (Table 5). By 30 September 2023, 13,935 beneficiaries held this type of permit (of which 2,609 renewal and 11,326 first issuance), a clear upward trend by 93% comparing to 979 resident permits issued in 2020.

Table 5: Permanent residence permit for investment 2021-2023

Type of resident permit	2021			2022			2023 (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	9,610	19,157	28,767	9,802	17,834	27,636	11,326	19,888	31,214
Permanent residence permit for investment (Golden Visa) – RENEWAL	1,168	1,833	3,001	1,630	2,481	4,111	2,609	3,808	6,417

Sources: [Information Note December 2022](#) & [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

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As for their nationalities, their majority came from China, with 8,018 beneficiaries (almost 21% increase comparing to September 2022 (6,360)), followed by Turkey and Lebanon, with 997 and 672 beneficiaries respectively (Table 6).

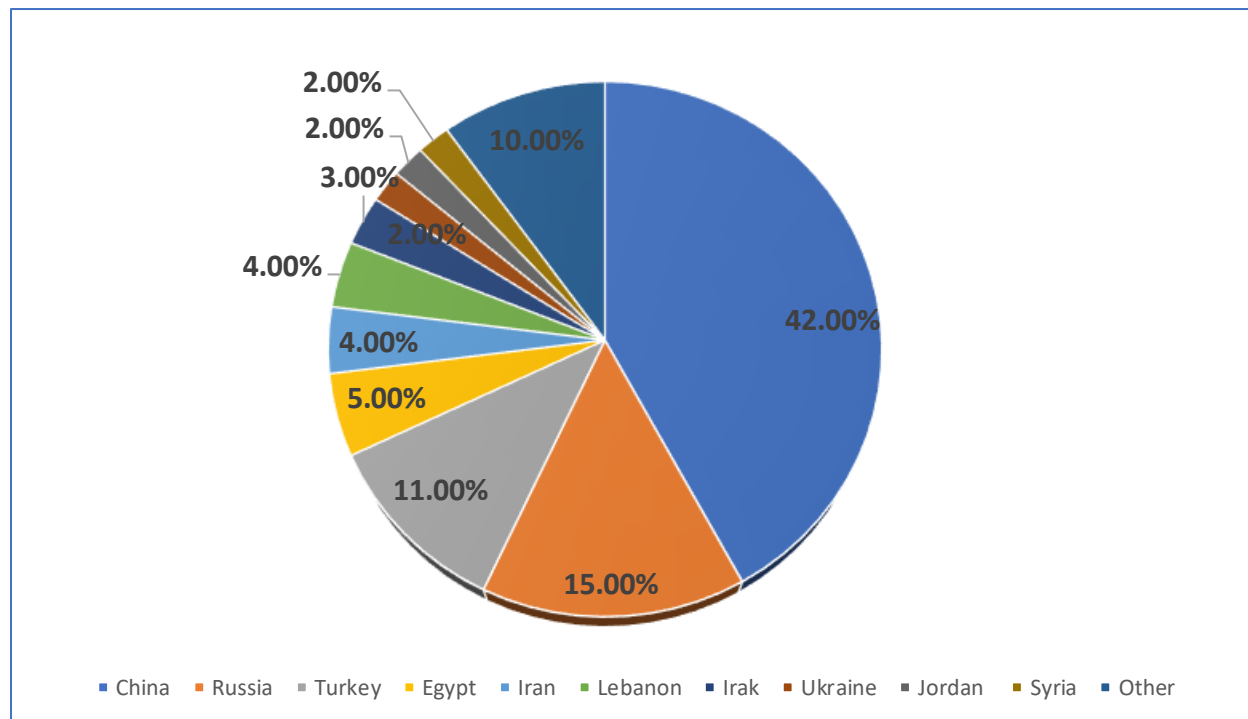
Table 6: Permanent residence permit for investment by nationality, September 2023

PERMANENT INVESTORS – September 2023					
Nationality	Renewal/Reissuance	Percentage	Nationality	First Issuance	Percentage
1 – China	1,091	41,8%	1 – China	6,927	61.2%
2 – Russia	390	14,9%	2 – Turkey	710	6.3%
3 – Turkey	287	11,0%	3 – Lebanon	575	5.1%
4 – Egypt	124	4,8%	4 – Iran	355	3.1%
5 – Iran	110	4,2%	5 – UK	332	2.9%
6 – Lebanon	97	3,7%	6 – Russia	328	2.9%
7 – Iraq	76	2,9%	7 – Egypt	322	2.8%
8 – Syria	59	2,3%	8 – USA	253	2.2%
9 – Jordan	58	2,2%	9 – Israel	157	1.4%
10 – Ukraine	57	2,2%	10 – Ukraine	102	0.9%
Other nationalities	260	10%	Other nationalities	1,265	11.2%
TOTAL	2,609	100.00%	TOTAL	11,326	100.00%

Source: [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

As illustrated in Fig. 6, among the top ten nationalities which benefit from the Golden Visa scheme, China accounted for nearly 57% of the total investors in Greece in September 2023.

Figure 6: Top 10 ethnicities with Golden Visas, September 2023



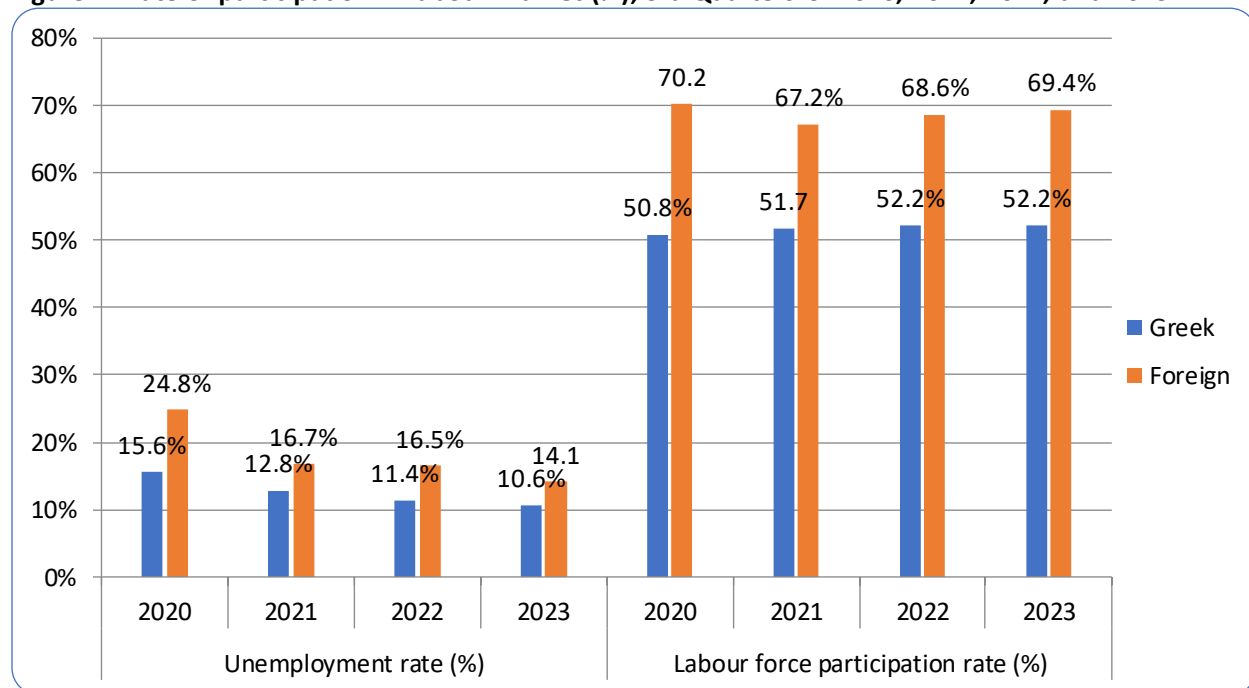
Source: [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Immigrant Labour Market Participation

In Greece in 2022, the foreign population recorded a labour force rate of 65.5%; the corresponding figure for the Greek population is 51.4%.²⁰ In the third quarter of 2023, the labour force rate for foreigners reached 69.4%, marking a year-on-year increase of 5.6%, widening the gap between the Greek and foreign labour force rate by 24.7% (Figure 7).²¹

²⁰Labour Force Survey, 4th Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority

²¹Labour Force Survey, 3rd Quarter 2023, Hellenic Statistical Authority

Figure 7: Rate of participation in labour market (%), 3rd Quarters of 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023

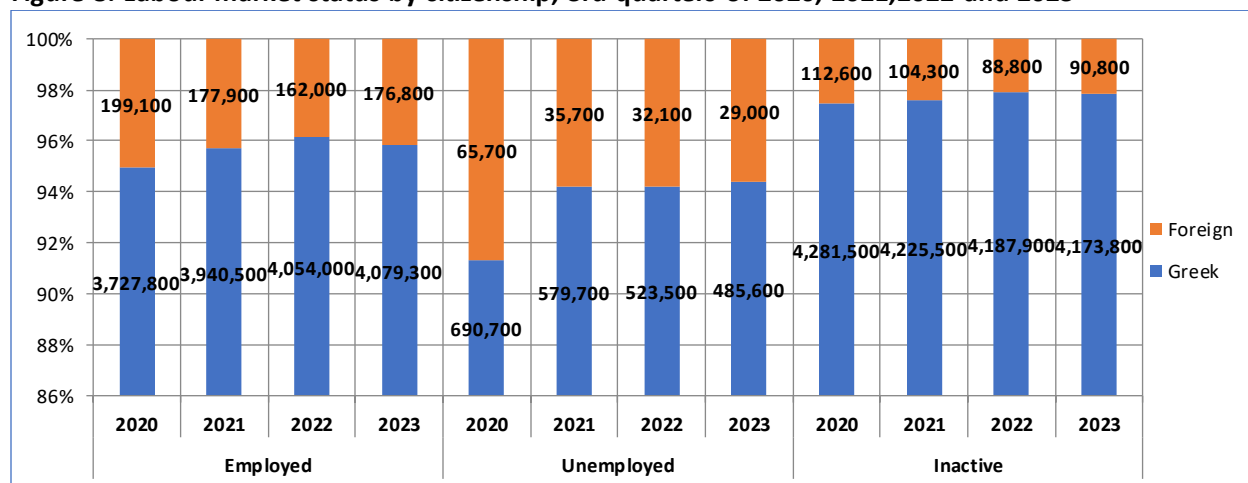
Sources: Graph compiled by the author on the basis of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.) Labour Force Survey, 3rd Quarter of [2020](#), [2021](#), [2022](#), [2023](#)

According to ELSTAT, in the third quarter of 2021, the total number of employed persons was 4,118,300 with the overall employment rate (52.2) recording a 0.6% rise compared to the corresponding quarter of 2020 (51.6% or 3,926,800 employed). This is most likely due to the lift of restrictions imposed by the pandemic on the labour market, whose impact was more pronounced in the first and the second quarters of 2021. 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.²² In the third quarter of 2022, the number of employed Greek citizens stood at 4,216,000, increasing by 0.5% comparing to the corresponding quarter of 2021, whereas the labour force participation of the foreign population was 24% higher than for Greek nationals (68.6% compared to 52.2%) (Figure 8).²³ Finally, in the third quarter of 2023, the total number of employed persons in Greece stood at 4,256,200, with the labour force participation of the foreign population was 18.2% higher than for Greek nationals (69.4% compared to 51.2%).

²²Because 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.

²³Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

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Figure 8: Labour market status by citizenship, 3rd quarters of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023

Sources: Graph compiled by the author on the basis of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.) Labour Force Survey, 3rd Quarters of [2020](#), [2021](#), [2022](#) and [2023](#) – Population by employment status, nationality and gender.

According to the Labour Force Survey, in the third quarter of 2023 the highest unemployment rates were observed among women, and individuals aged up to 24 years. In terms of employment, the highest percentage of the labour force participation is observed among men, aged 30-44 years, and of foreign citizenship.²⁴ In the same period, most of the employed individuals were working as employees (69.1%), whereas a significant share of the labour force has worked as self-employed without employees (20.0%). In addition, part-time employment amounted to 6.6%, while the share of individuals in temporary job positions consisted of 8.1% of the total active labour force. At the same time, part-time employment decreased by 10.5% in comparison with the 2nd quarter of 2023, and by 8.8% compared to the 3rd quarter of 2022.²⁵

The outlook for the occupational categories showed that the largest shares of those employed are service, shop, and market sale workers (22.6%) and professionals (21.6%). In comparison with the 2nd quarter of the same year, the largest increase was observed in skilled agricultural and fishery workers (3.4%), while the largest decrease was in technicians and associate professionals (2.6%). In comparison with the same quarter of 2022, the largest increase occurred in senior officials and managers (8.0%), whereas the largest decrease was observed in technicians and associate professionals (3.6%). As regards the evolution of the percentage of labour force employed in broad sectors of economic activity during the period 3rd quarter 2012 – 2023, fluctuations were observed in the percentage of those working in economic sectors, such as trade, transport and communications, hotels, and food service. Meanwhile, stabilizing trends were

²⁴Press Release, [Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2023](#), Hellenic Statistical Authority.

²⁵Ibid.

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observed in the construction, industry-energy, financial (including real estate and renting) and business activities sectors.²⁶

At the EU level, the EU unemployment rate reached its low point in the twenty-first century in the first half of 2023. More specifically, unemployment rate was 6.0% in September 2023, almost stable compared with September 2022 (6.1%).²⁷ Among European countries in 2021, Greece was at the top of the list with the highest unemployment rate (15.1%) of the EU-27.²⁸ 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%.²⁹ Six months later, in July 2022, Spain had the highest unemployment rate at 12.6%, followed by Greece at 11.4%. The same trend continued in 2023 even though a slight decrease in the unemployment rate was recorded in both Spain (12.0%) and Greece (10.0%) in September 2023.

In September 2023, the euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 6.5%, down from 6.7% in September 2022.³⁰ In Greece, the seasonally-adjusted unemployment was 10% in September 2023 down from 12.1% in September 2022.

With regards to the EU youth unemployment (under 25s), in September 2023, its rate was 14.2%. In Greece, the seasonally-adjusted youth unemployment reached its lowest point in September 2023 (19.4%), marking 14.8% decrease compared with 34.2% recorded in September 2022.³¹

Meanwhile, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rates by sex in Greece, in September 2023, was 8.0% for male and 12.4 for female, clearly demonstrating a downward trend comparing to September 2022 (9.4% and 15.5% respectively).³²

Even though the rate has been falling since 2020, the percentage of unemployed females remained significantly higher than the percentage for men in both 2022 (15.4% v. 9.0) and 2023 (14.4% v. 7.9%) (Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7: Unemployed males and females 3d Quarter 2022

3 rd Quarter 2022	Employed	Unemployed	Persons outside the labour force	Unemployment rate %	Labour force participation rate %
TOTAL	4,216,00	555,600	4,276,600	11.6	52.7

²⁶Supra.

²⁷See the data published by Eurostat here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/17791746/3-03112023-AP-EN.pdf/7de0add9-2fd1-b656-b90d-63aaa97f72ff>

²⁸Unemployment 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/>

²⁹Unemployment rate in EU member states in January 2022, Statista.com, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/>

³⁰See the data published by OECD here: <https://web.archive.org/temp/2024-02-02/664273-unemployment-rates-oecd-updated-september-2023.htm>

³¹See the data published by Eurostat here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20231128-1>

³² Ibid.

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GENDER	Male	2,435,600	232,000	1,700,200	9.0	59.6
	Female	1,780,400	323,600	2,576,500	15.4	45.0

Source: EL.STAT – [Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2022](#)

Table 8: Unemployed males and females, 3rd Quarter 2023

3rd Quarter 2023		Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Unemployment rate %	Labour force participation rate %
TOTAL		4,256,200	514,600	4,264,700	10.8	52.8
GENDER	Male	2,436,800	209,600	1,718,500	7.9	60.6
	Female	1,819,400	305,000	2,546,200	14.4	45.5

Source: EL.STAT - [Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2023](#)

It is interesting to note that although higher than for native Greeks, the migrant unemployment rate fell faster than the rate for Greeks, from 38.6% in 2013 to 25.4% in 2018 and then to 14.1 in September 2023, compared with 26.3% (2013) to 18.6% (2018) and 10.6% (as of September 2023) for Greeks.³³

At the national level, the new Immigration Code (L. 5038/2023) - that shall enter into force on 01.01.2024 - introduces new processes and requirements for the entry and residence of non-EU nationals in Greece.³⁴ In fact, this new Immigration Code (L. 5038/2023) changes the rules of entry for citizens of TCNs to cover domestic labor shortages, such as seasonal workers. This law provides for the extension of the residence permits of immigrants working in the country, as well as simplifying the procedures for obtaining these permits. In addition, the new law provides for the extension of the duration of immigrants' work permits, as well as an increase in the number of seasonal workers who can work in Greece. Below, there is a summary of the main provisions of the new law that regulate the status of seasonal workers:

- a) They can work in the country for a maximum period of up to 9 months per year;
- b) They must have employment contracts in order to be accepted;
- c) They should be invited by licensed employers;
- d) They must have a minimum wage set by law;
- e) They must have a minimum number of working hours per week set by law.

In April 2023, the Ministry of Labour published the Decision No. 35400 which determines the exact number of seasonal workers that Greece can accept from third countries for the period 2023-2024. Of the 167,925 positions, 20,000 are expected to be filled through the bilateral agreements that Greece has signed with Egypt and Bangladesh. Of the remaining 147,925 positions, the majority (113,467 or 76.7%) has been allocated to the primary sector. Of these, 91,630 concern seasonal work of 3 to 9 months, 16,572

³³Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2023

³⁴You can access the new Immigration Code here: [ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ \(migration.gov.gr\)](http://ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ (migration.gov.gr))

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dependent work of twelve months and 5,265 fishermen of Egyptian origin for a maximum period of 11 months based on a relevant bilateral agreement.³⁵

2. Asylum Seekers and Refugee Status

In 2022, 17,836 people arrived in Greece, 8,673 more than in 2021 (8,673) or a 94.65% increase in registered arrival flows in 2022. The corresponding figures for the first nine months of 2023 continued with the same increasing trend, recording an increase of 63% (29,714 arrivals) comparing to the same period in 2022 (11,023 arrivals).³⁶ Furthermore, the flows of arrivals to the Aegean islands for September 2023 show to have increased by 433% compared to the corresponding one in 2022 (Table 9).³⁷

Table 9: Arrival Flows, January 2022 - September 2023

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
Oct. 2022	262	381	163	125	84	140	559	1,714
Nov. 2022	510	502	305	288	56	211	443	2,315
Dec. 2022	495	757	219	169	22	111	297	2,070
Total 2022	2,081	3,642	2,152	1,434	270	1,505	6,752	17,836
January 2023	356	550	272	67	71	56	292	1,664
February 2023	105	219	230	37	47	66	137	841
March 2023	35	639	116	140	6	24	257	1,217
April 2023	22	495	0	66	2	100	253	938
May 2023	79	539	63	78	4	68	530	1,361
June 2023	200	261	29	155	68	315	1,301	2,328
July 2023	319	1,352	211	145	3	548	744	3,322
August 2023	717	1,548	1,236	174	133	1,574	1,190	6,572
September 2023	356	3,639	3,168	469	17	2,944	877	11,470
Total 2023 (as per September)	2,189	9,242	5,325	1,331	351	5,695	5,581	29,714

Source: *Information Note December 2022* and *Information Note September 2023*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum statistics.

³⁵See here: <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/sto-epipedo-tis-proigoumenis-dietias-oi-metakliseis-ergazomenon-apo-trites-chores-gia-tin-periodo-2023-2024/?fbclid=IwAR2zI0oVYiMizl1IOPOCdWNijPnd7koULD3Kz0WDWImQ6Axfj-W8VrxysXE> and here: https://ypergasias.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FEK-2023-Tefxos-B-02189-downloaded-04_04_2023.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1eWIHv6q5cVj_Jzm7jpFDCxir3X9Ydij13cr4OkT3IbEGLYRFNkccV85o.

³⁶*Information Note December 2022* and *Information Note September 2023* – Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics.

³⁷*Information Note A September 2023*, p. 2, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Developments in Greece in 2023

According to UNHCR statistics, in September 2023, there was an increase in arrivals on the islands with 10,839 people arriving, in contrast to August when 5,831 individuals had arrived. The number of arrivals between January and September 2023 has increased by 271% compared to the same period in 2022.³⁸ The majority of new arrivals were received by Lesvos, accounting for 36% of the total, followed by the Dodecanese Islands at 30%, Samos at 22%, Chios at 6%, and other Islands at 6%.³⁹ Most of new arrivals in 2023 are from Syria (6,501), Palestine (4,586), and Afghanistan (4,386). As in the previous year, the majority of arrivals from Afghanistan come in family groups. Almost half of the population were women (21.2%) and children (21%), while 57,8% of the arrivals were men.⁴⁰

In 2023, one-fifth of arrivals are children, whereas in 2022, the proportion was one-third. Of those, almost 6 out of 10 were below the age of 12. Moreover, 17% of all children were registered upon arrival as unaccompanied or separated, mainly from Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria. Approximately 53% of the arrivals are men between the ages of 18 and 39, while only 3% are aged 50 years or older.

While there was a negative balance of returns to arrivals in 2022 (8,673 departures compared with 17,122 arrivals), this trend continued during the first nine months of 2023, when there was a negative balance with 29,714 arrivals compared with 5,140 departures.⁴¹

Compared to September 2022, the number of in-camps residents on the islands increased by 294%, compared to the corresponding month of 2022, with Kos and Leros experiencing the highest increase, at 735% and 711%, respectively (Table 10).⁴²

Table 10: Residents on the Islands (September 2022 – September 2023)

TOTAL RESIDENTS	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL + OTHER ISLANDS
Sep-22	294	1,727	1,117	392	281	3,482
Oct-22	406	1,607	1,129	317	351	3,828
Nov-22	840	1,598	1,095	493	435	4,488
Dec-22	953	1,994	1,029	385	358	4,735
Jan-23	1,068	2,067	983	336	363	4,819
Feb-23	841	1,972	950	336	302	4,438
March-23	483	2,358	890	422	258	4,419
April-23	256	2,512	776	443	286	4,286
May-23	225	2,655	624	288	276	4,075
June-23	344	2,159	526	391	499	3,946
July-23	660	2,874	599	489	714	5,366

³⁸See: [Greece Sea Arrivals Dashboard \(September 2023\) - Greece | ReliefWeb](#)

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰See the data published by UNHCR here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/ar/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.

⁴¹Information Note A September 2023.

⁴²Ibid.

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August-23	1,495	3,351	1,662	638	1,213	8,430
September-23	2,385	5,075	4,264	986	2,355	15,143
Difference from 30/09/2022	711%	194%	282%	152%	738%	294%

Source: [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Under these circumstances, one of the biggest challenges for 2023 was the decongestion of the Aegean islands. As per the transfers of asylum seekers from the islands to the mainland, they increased by 429% in September 2023 compared to the corresponding month of 2022 (Table 11).

Table 11: Transfers from the Islands to the mainland September 2022 – September 2023

	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
September 2022	164	227	162	110	88	0	751
September 2023	606	1,741	687	292	246	399	3,971

Source: [Information Note September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics

The percentage of asylum applications accepted in September 2022 was 57,098 (76% in 1st instance and 24% as of 2nd instance). In the first nine months of 2023 the percentage of asylum applications accepted was 41,290 (74% as of 1st instance and 26% as of second instance), thus 28% smaller compared to the same month of 2022 (Table 12).

Table 12: Recognition of refugee status 1st and 2nd Instances, 2016-2023 (as of September)

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	13.522	312
2020	26.333	480
2021	13,040	730
2022	18,718	665
2023	11,906	533
TOTAL	107,884	2,986
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	110,870	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Meanwhile, the total number of asylum applications in September 2023 were 111% higher than the application for refugee status lodged in September 2022. The 86% of the overall applications (53,033) in

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the period September 2022 – September 2023 were first-time applications while 14% second-time applications.⁴³

Similarly, the number of recognitions of subsidiary protection status at 1st instance marked a sharp drop by 93.53% in 2022, from 3,528 in 2021 to 514 in 2022 (Table 13). In all, 2022 witnessed the lowest ever recognitions of subsidiary protection status, a trend that continued also in the first nine months of 2023. As of September 2023, in total only 629 decisions of subsidiary protection status were issued of which 448 of 1st instance and 181 of 2nd instance.

Table 13: Recognition of Subsidiary Protection Status, 2016-2023 (as of September)

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	514	394
2023	448	181
TOTAL	20,147	2,722
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	22,869	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

The number of pending decisions rise slightly by 0.2%, from 24,993 in September 2022 to 25,043 in September 2023 (Table 14).⁴⁴

Table 14: Pending decisions 1st and 2nd Instances, September 2022 – September 2023

MONTH	PENDING WILLS	PENDING DECISIONS, A' INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS B' INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS – TOTAL	DIFFERENCE (%)	DECISIONS A' INSTANCE	DECISIONS B' INSTANCE
Sep-22	3,731	14,146	4,116	24,993	2.67%	3,966	1,254
Oct-22	3,168	16,663	3,916	23,747	-4.99%	4,574	1,550
Nov-22	860	16,507	3,993	31,360	-10.05%	6,621	1,516
Dec-22	146	17,294	4,921	22,316	4.48%	4,715	688
Jan-23	186	17,472	4,932	22,590	1.23%	4,047	1,281
Feb-23	65	16,942	4,434	21,441	-5.09%	3,516	1,881
March-23	36	15,637	3,910	19,583	-8.67%	4,460	1,642
April-23	24	16,030	3,372	19,426	-0.80%	2,517	1,329
May-23	0	16,154	3,157	19,311	-0.59%	648	444
June-23	0	15,643	2,185	17,828	-7.68%	3,880	1,605

⁴³Information Note September 2023, Annex A, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁴⁴Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

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July-23	0	17,067	1,937	19,004	6.60%	2,687	975
August-23	0	20,271	1,935	22,206	16.85%	3,391	710
Sep-23	0	23,011	2,032	25,043	12.78%	5,657	727

Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Overall, asylum applications in September 2023 were up 111% (35,735) compared to September 2022 (17,298).⁴⁵ A total of 41,290 asylum applications (30,697 of 1st instance and 10,593 of 2nd instance) were accepted in the first nine months of 2023, which marked 87% increase compared to the same period in 2022 (5,279 in total). The Asylum Service issued positive decisions for 40% of the total applications at the 1st instance and 6.7% at 2nd instance, respectively, while in September 2022 the respective positive decisions stood at 27% (1st instance).

In addition, comparing data from September 2022 and September 2023 reveals a slightly increase by 0.2 of overall pending cases, with pending 1st-instance decisions up by 25% and pending 2nd-instance decisions down by 49%.

Regarding Ukrainian displaced persons, in the first nine months of 2023 a total of 26,833 online applications have been submitted and a total of 26,094 temporary protection permits have been issued, of which 69% (18,040) are for women and 31% (8,054) for men. In addition, 22% of the temporary protection permits have been granted to minors under 13 years of age, and 5.2% to minors aged between 13 and 18, with minors accounting for 27% in total of the holders of temporary protection permits.⁴⁶

Finally, in the first nine months of 2023, refugee status and subsidiary protection were granted to 625 unaccompanied minors.⁴⁷

Asylum Applications

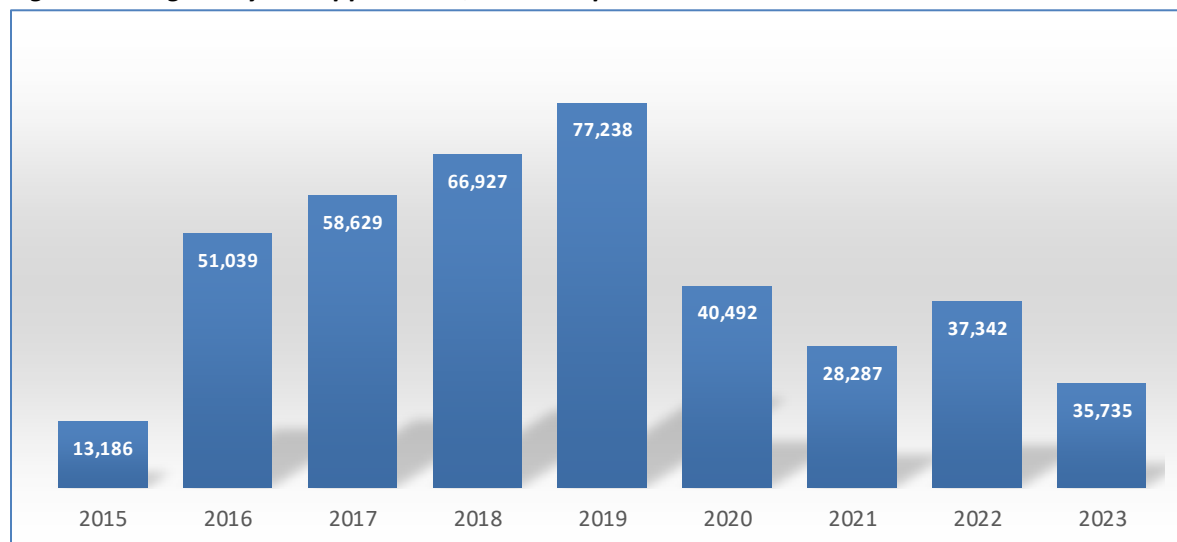
The developments discussed briefly above have had a visible impact on Greece's asylum system in the form of an increase of 35.74 in asylum applications in September 2023 (35,735) compared with the same month of 2022 (23,995) (Figure 9).⁴⁸ However, in 2022 there were 37,342 asylum applications in total.

⁴⁵Information Note on Asylum September 2022 & Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁴⁶Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 20).

⁴⁷Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 12e).

⁴⁸Information Note on Asylum September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 6a)

Figure 9: Lodged Asylum Applications, 2016 – September 2023

Source: *Information Note on Asylum, September 2023*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Of 35,735 applications been lodged as of September, 60% of them on the islands and 40% on the mainland.⁴⁹

As is illustrated in Table 15, nearly 423,000 asylum applications have been lodged in Greece since 2013, more than 60% of which were recorded in the period 2016-2019, which coincides with the refugee crisis.

Table 15: Asylum application per year, 2013-2023 (as of September)

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	37,341
2023	35,735
TOTAL	423,061

Source: *Information Note on Asylum September 2023*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁴⁹Information Note on Asylum September 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 8b)

Migration Developments in Greece in 2023

In relation to the applicants' nationalities in 2022, the most applications were lodged by Afghans (15.1%), followed by Syrians (13.5) and Pakistanis (12.2) (Table 16). As per September 2023, the Syrian along with Afghans headed the list by 13.2% each, while Iraqis, Palestinians and Pakistanis follow with 12.1%, 10% and 8.8%, respectively. Apparently, the situation regarding the applications by country of origin has not changed significantly in 2023 comparing with 2022.⁵⁰

Table 16: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2022 & 2023 (as of September)

Country of origin	2022	Country of Origin	2023
AFGHANISTAN	5,624	SYRIA	4,727
SYRIA	5,050	AFGHANISTAN	4,709
PAKISTAN	4,472	IRAQ	4,307
PALESTINE	2,907	PALESTINE	3,574
IRAQ	2,671	PAKISTAN	3,150
SOMALIA	2,171	SOMALIA	2,041
BANGLADESH	1,945	EGYPT	1,299
EGYPT	1,594	ERITREA	1,560
TURKEY	1,434	TURKEY	1,217
ALBANIA	1,289	REPUBLIC OF CONGO	1,179
OTHER	8,105	OTHER	7,972
Total	37,362	Total	35,735

Source: [Information Note on Asylum Dec.2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#)

It is interesting to highlight the shift in the nationalities of asylum seekers. In contrast to earlier years, in 2019-2022 Afghans (rather than Syrians) topped of list of those applying for asylum in Greece with 23,828, 11,514, 4.618, and 5,624 applications, respectively (Table 16). This can be interpreted in the light of the recent developments in Syria, as well as the likelihood of asylum seekers being returned to Turkey on the basis of the "safe third country" concept.

In 2022, 59,593 first-instance decisions were issued, while a total of 30,697 decisions were issued in the first nine months of 2023.⁵¹ In September 2022, the number of positive decisions stood at 15,238 (14,563 recognitions of refugee status plus 675 subsidiary protections), which represented 50,4% of the overall asylum applications lodged for the seven first months of 2022.⁵² For the same month in 2023, the number of positive decisions stood at 13,068 (12,439 recognitions of refugee status plus 629 subsidiary protections), which represented 37% of the overall asylum applications lodged in the nine first months of 2023 (Table 17).⁵³ 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 to August 2020 (Table 17). In September 2022, there were 4,025 decisions, 6,371 fewer than the 10,396 decisions lodged in the same month in 2021.

⁵⁰ [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 17)

⁵¹ [Information Note on Asylum December 2022 \(Table 9a\)](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023 \(Table 9a\)](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁵² [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 9).

⁵³ [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 9).

Table 17: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2022 & 2023 (as of September)

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	13,040	730
2022	18,719	665
2023 (as of September)	11,906	533
TOTAL	107,884	2,986
TOTAL FOR BOTH DEGREES	110,870	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

The total number of positive decisions on asylum applications in 2022 stood at 20,292, of which 19,384 conferred refugee status and 908 subsidiary protections (Tables 17 & 18). In the first nine months of 2023, the total number of positive decisions on asylum applications stood at 13,102, of which 12,439 conferred refugee status and 669 subsidiary protections.

Table 18: Recognition of subsidiary protection status, 2016-2023 (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
2022	514	394
2023 (as of September)	488	181
TOTAL	20,147	2,722
TOTAL FOR BOTH DEGREES	22,869	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), 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). In September 2023 there were 25,043 pending decisions, 510 higher compared to the 24,993 decisions in September 2022 (Table 19).

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Table 19: Pending asylum decisions from September 2022 to September 2023

MONTH	PENDING DECISIONS 1st INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS 2nd INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS – TOTAL	DIFFERENCE (%)
Jan-22	30,103	5,132	38,225	
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	24,243	1.34%
Sep-22	17,146	4,116	24,993	2.67%
Oct-22	16,663	3,916	23,747	-4.99%
Nov-22	16,507	3,993	21,360	-10.05%
Dec-22	17,249	4,921	22,316	4.48%
Jan-23	17,472	4,932	22,590	1.23%
Feb-23	16,942	4,434	21,441	-5.09%
March-23	15,637	3,910	19,583	-8.67%
April-23	16,030	3,372	19,426	-0.80%
May-23	16,154	3,157	19,311	-0.59%
June-23	15,643	2,185	17,828	-7.68%
July-23	17,067	1,937	19,004	6.60%
Aug-23	20,271	1,935	22,206	16.85%
Sep-23	23,011	2,032	25,043	12.78%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Unaccompanied Minors

In 2022, 42,000 applications for international protection were lodged by unaccompanied minors (UAM) in EU countries, 18,450 more compared to the 23,550 applications in 2021. Compared to 2021, the absolute number of unaccompanied minors increased by 78.34% (from 23,550 to 42,000).⁵⁴ More than half of all the applications made by unaccompanied minors were lodged in five countries: Austria (13,000 or 31%), Germany (7,300 or 17%), The Netherlands (4,200 or 10%), Bulgaria (3,350 or 8%), and Greece (2,875 or 7%) (Table 20).

⁵⁴European Agency for Asylum Report 2023 (Table 5), available at: [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)

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Table 20: UAM Applications in Greece, 2018-2022

Country	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	% Chg. over previous year	Share in EU+ (2020)	Highest share (Citizenship)
GREECE	2,640	3,330	2,800	2,275	2,875	26	7%	Somalia (27%)

Source: [EUAA Report 2023](#)

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, there were 2,573 UAMs in Greece in December 2022, of whom 85% were boys and just 15% girls.⁵⁵ Nine months later, in September 2023, the number of UAMs in Greece had risen to 2,810.⁵⁶ Regarding nationalities, 23.5% of the UAM are from Somalia, 20.1% from Afghanistan, 12.3% from Egypt, 11.6% from Pakistanis and 8.7% from Syrian.

The Voluntary Relocation program for UAMs launched by the EU Commission in March 2020 and coordinated by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, part of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, was completed in March 2023. By March 2023, more than 1,368 UAMs had been relocated in Europe.⁵⁷

The Greek RIS, with support from the EUAA, created and deployed a team of case management reception assistants for reception facilities under its responsibility throughout Greece. Their task was to ensure the identification of needs, referral and follow-up for all persons residing in reception facilities. A standard operating procedure was drafted to create a harmonized system for case management in first- and second-line reception. The NGO Network for Children's Rights highlighted gaps in the identification of vulnerable applicants after the launch of the online registration platform for applying for international protection. The organization encouraged the relevant ministry to set up an identification system that addresses these gaps. The Greek Council for Refugees observed delays in vulnerability assessments and referrals, which led to applicants being interviewed prior to establishing their eventual specific needs.⁵⁸

On 31 December 2022, the ESTIA II scheme – designed to accommodate vulnerable applicants – ended in Greece. Applicants were transferred to larger mainland structures. Several civil society organizations and UNHCR expressed their concern about the modalities of the move and the fact that the needs of vulnerable applicants could not be adequately addressed in larger facilities.⁵⁹

In January 2022, the National Strategy for the Protection of unaccompanied minors was published. As provided in the Strategy, a reform of the guardianship system for unaccompanied minors was deemed necessary. On 22/7/2022 the new Law 4960/2022 on Guardianship and accommodation framework for unaccompanied children was adopted. The new law includes the necessary provisions for the

⁵⁵Data published by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, December 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/asynodeyta-anilika-stoicheia-dekemvrioy-2022/>.

⁵⁶Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 8.5)

⁵⁷Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, March 2023, available at: [Sofia Voultepsi and Iraklis Moskoff bid farewell at the airport to the last 15 unaccompanied minors – 1,368 children: the overall toll of the pioneering relocation program | Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

⁵⁸See the Asylum Report 2023, available here: [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023 Asylum Report EN 0.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023%20Asylum%20Report%20EN%200.pdf)

⁵⁹Ibid.

implementation of the new guardianship scheme, which will provide flexibility to various actors that fulfil specific criteria to provide guardianship services. However, the law has not yet been implemented. The Best Interest Assessment tool, which was drafted and launched by the Greek Dublin Unit based on previous correspondence with other EU countries, UNHCR, UNICEF and EASO was enhanced after the provision of inputs by international and local organizations and NGOs. This tool is an indispensable element of take-charge requests of unaccompanied minors. This tool aims to facilitate the family reunification requests under the Dublin Regulation (EU) 604/2013 by gathering all necessary information required by Member-States when assessing family reunification cases of UAM's. In cases where the assessment cannot be included in the outgoing request, it is forwarded afterwards as a supplementary document.⁶⁰

In July 2022, Law 4960/2022 on National Guardianship System and Accommodation Framework for Unaccompanied Minors and other provisions within the competence of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (A' 145) was adopted.⁶¹ The proposed changes are part of the Code of Reception for the international protection of third-country nationals and stateless persons and temporary protection in case of mass influx of displaced foreigners, which was ratified by Law No 4939/2022 (A' 111). The new initiative sets the rules for a functional and flexible guardianship system, where the State exercises control and supervision, gives directions for the exercise of guardianship duties, and supports the implementation of the programme.

The new Immigration Code (Law 5038) includes a ten-year residence permit for unaccompanied minors who become adults, based on two conditions: They must complete at least three years of Greek schooling by the age of 23, and be accepted in vocational training/apprenticeship or university-level schools or institutions. Previously, migrants from non-EU countries had to complete six years of schooling in Greece by the age of 23 in order to receive the 'M2' residence permit. They also had to have been living legally in Greece for ten years, at least five of which had to be with a Greek family, among other conditions. The code has, however, been criticized by rights groups such as the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), which says unaccompanied migrant minors may be unable to meet the schooling criteria. GCR and 15 other humanitarian and refugee organizations expressed serious concerns over the bill and called for amendments to address what they said were gaps in legal status faced by unaccompanied children in Greece.

Dublin Cases & Relocation

In 2022, 1,077 Dublin transfers to other EU member states took place in the framework of Dublin Regulation, which appears to be significantly decreased compared to 2,133 transfers occurred in 2021. Similarly, there were only 291 Dublin transfers recorded in the first nine months of 2023 (Table 21). Additional obstacles to family reunification under Dublin continued to occur in 2022 and 2023 due to

⁶⁰AIDA Report, 2022 update, p. 75, available at: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf

⁶¹See here: [ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ \(migration.gov.gr\)](https://www.migration.gov.gr/)

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restrictive practices⁶² adopted not only in Greece but by several receiving Member States, which may undermine the right to family life.⁶³

Table 21: Relocation and Dublin Cases, 2022 and 2023 (as of September)

Month/2022	Relocation	Dublin Cases	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	113	140
October	0	44	44
November	0	50	50
December	0	71	71
Total 2022	170	1,077	1,247
Month/2023	Relocation	Dublin Case	Total
January	0	0	0
February	0	0	0
March	26	0	26
April	0	0	0
May	65	16	81
June	114	50	164
August	79	135	214
September	94	90	184
Total 2023	378	291	669

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

As per the relocation program, 5,164 individuals in total, including 1,333 unaccompanied children were relocated to other EU Member States under the voluntary relocation scheme launched by the EU Commission in March 2020.⁶⁴ By the end of 2022, 170 individuals were relocated while in the first nine months of 2023 their numbers stand at 378 (Table 20). This corroborates a clear downward trend comparing to 2021, when 3,571 individuals were relocated to other EU member states under the same scheme.

⁶²Such as requirements for official translations of documents proving family links, sometimes unnecessary DNA tests, age assessments of unaccompanied children to be conducted according to the requested state's methods.

⁶³See the Asylum Report 2023, available here: https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023_Asylum_Report_EN_0.pdf

⁶⁴AIDA Report 2022, page 77, available here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf

Migration Developments in Greece in 2023*Transfers to the Mainland*

A total of 3,971 asylum seekers were transferred to the Greek mainland in September 2023, marking a sharp upward trend comparing to 751 transfers in September 2022.⁶⁵ In all, over the whole 2022, the total number of transports stood at 17,122. (Table 22).

Table 22: Asylum Seekers transferred to Mainland, 2022-2023 (as of September)

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
October	351	415	129	191	105	6	1,197
November	284	252	260	90	110	483	1,479
December	299	293	221	240	167	7	1,227
TOTAL 2022	2,098	1,312	1,155	1,090	708	558	6,921
Month 2023/RIC	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
January	104	387	161	95	105	0	852
February	171	266	124	19	119	0	699
March	177	149	55	30	93	0	504
April	149	171	57	44	58	0	479
May	138	465	216	208	46	0	1,073
June	53	599	117	38	79	0	886
July	151	490	132	46	128	0	947
August	279	1,113	136	73	342	3	1,943
September	606	1,741	687	292	246	399	3,971
TOTAL 2023	943	2,527	862	480	628	0	11,354

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

All in all, the transfers of asylum seekers from the Aegean islands to the Greek mainland have marked an exponential increase of 429% comparing with the same period in 2022.

3. Irregular Migration Flows, Return and Readmissions

According to Frontex (2023), detections of illegal border crossing decreased on the circular route from Albania to Greece in 2022, with the majority of detected illegal border-crossings made by Albanian nationals (Table 23).

⁶⁵[Information Note September 2023, Annex A](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

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Table 23: Fluctuation in Circular Route from Albania to Greece, 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total Share %	Change on prev. year
Circular route from AL to GR	4,550	1,944	1,365	1,092	696	0.5	-42
Albania	4,319	1,867	1,326	1,033	599	86	-22
India	n/a	16	4	10	17	2.4	70
Cuba	n/a	3	6	20	17	2.4	-15
All other	231	74	33	23	63	9.1	117

Source: [Frontex](#)

According to the same Frontex statistics, in 2022, around 331,553 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 2022.

Within the same period, the overall use of fraudulent documents increased by more than 5% in relation to 2021.⁶⁶ EU member states/Schengen Associated Countries reported a total of 19,341 fraudulent documents, and 26,249 fraudulent documents at the EU's external borders and on intra-EU/Schengen secondary movements in 2022.

According to Hellenic Police statistics, the total number of apprehended TCNs for irregular stay and employment in Greece, in 2022, was 22,739 of whose 22,572 were apprehended for irregular stay and 167 for irregular employment (Table 24).

Table 24: TCNs apprehended for irregular stays and employment, 2022

Month	Irregular Stay	Irregular Employment	TOTAL
January	1,329	13	1,342
February	1,408	11	1,419
March	1,626	4	1,630
April	1,442	7	1,449
May	2,039	16	2,055
June	2,500	20	2,520
July	2,209	26	2,235
August	2,727	31	2,758
September	2,509	22	2,531
October	2,030	14	2,044
November	1,553	3	1,556
December	1,200	0	1,200
TOTAL	22,572	167	22,739

Source: Greek Police Database, December 2022⁶⁷

⁶⁶FRONTEx Risk Analysis Report for 2023/2024 available at: <https://prd.frontex.europa.eu/?form-fields%5Bdocument-tag%5D%5B0%5D=1541>, page 20.

⁶⁷Yearly Report for 2022 published by the Greek Police, Table 43,

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The total is higher than in 2021, when 19,185 individuals were apprehended (19,061 for irregular stays and 124 for irregular employment).⁶⁸ Meanwhile, there are no available data for the nationalities of the TCNs apprehended by the Greek Police in 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Finally, during 2022, applicants for international protection as well as rejected asylum seekers continued to remain systematically detained without any proper consideration of the prospect of return to Türkiye despite returns being suspended since March 2020. Several court decisions acknowledged that in the absence of an actual prospect of removal, detention lacks a legal basis.⁶⁹

Returns and Deportations

Regarding the inflows, their numbers in the first nine months of 2023 appear to have been 170% (29,714) higher than in the first nine months of 2022 (11,023).⁷⁰ However, a significant number of those arrivals have since left the country because of expulsions, returns and relocations. Overall, during the first nine months of 2023 there were 5,140 departures compared with 29,714 arrivals as of September 2023 (a ratio of 17:100), whereas in September 2022 there were 6,449 departures compared with 11,023 arrivals (a ratio of 58:100).⁷¹

In the first nine months of 2023, 1,486 IOM returns were recorded compared to 1,599 in the first nine months of 2022; voluntary departures stood at 410 in September 2023, compared with 642 in the corresponding period in 2022. This marks a decrease of 7.07% (returns) and 36.14% (voluntary departures).⁷²

According to the statistics on returns made available by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in December 2022, Greece recorded 7,225 returns of irregularly staying persons, including TCNs and EU citizens (Table 25). Of those, 2,763 were forced returns carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; 1,397 were voluntary departures following the issuance of a return decision, and 3,065 were assisted voluntary returns organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Table 25: Returns by Category, January 2022 & 2023 (as of September)

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

available at: <https://www.astynomia.gr/file/2023/04/epetirida2022.pdf>

⁶⁸Yearly Report for 2021 published by the Greek Police, Table 43,

available at: <https://www.astynomia.gr/file/2022/12/epetirida2021.pdf>

⁶⁹AIDA Report 2022, page 207, available here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf

⁷⁰[Information Note A September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Supra.

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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
October	211	130	286	627
November	245	138	271	654
December	216	236	303	755
Total for 2022	2,763	1,397	3,065	7,225
Month 2023/Category	Forced Return	Voluntary Return	ASR/IOM	Total
January	191	56	276	523
February	168	49	226	443
March	295	46	243	584
April	254	52	155	461
May	292	75	220	587
June	248	69	167	484
July	227	63	199	489
August	275	58	346	679
September	266	67	34	367
Total for 2023 (as of September)	1,675	410	1,486	4,617

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In the first nine months of 2023, Greece recorded 4,617 returns of irregularly staying persons. Of those, 1,675 were forced returns carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; 410 were voluntary departures following the issuance of a return decision, and 1,486 were assisted voluntary returns organized by IOM.⁷³

Regarding returns, in Greece, in 2022 it was in place the “The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants in situations of vulnerability” project is implemented under the program “Asylum and Migration” of the EEA Grants by IOM.⁷⁴ In the context of this project, migrants willing to return to their home country could receive pre-departure counseling to better prepare their return and reintegration, support on the issuance of travel documents, and travel assistance.

In November 2022, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum reached an agreement with Frontex on a series of activities which are expected to bring better results in the process of returning irregular migrants to their countries of origin. The two sides agreed on full implementation of an integrated plan, in order to strengthen actions for voluntary returns. In that context, Frontex will provide tools and technical support, at an administrative and operational level.⁷⁵

In March 2023, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) Executive Director together with then the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum, as well as Minister of Citizens’ Protection, reached an

⁷³Information Note September 2023, Annex A, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁷⁴See here:

https://greece.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration-migrants-situations-vulnerability?fbclid=IwAR38TOZQYNqzz8byW7c8jOCEJgmWFmPUP-39kBVT_GvZDSmIVGzZXfZLIHo

and here: <https://migration.gov.gr/gas/d-o-m/>

⁷⁵<https://migration.gov.gr/mitarachi-frontex-meeting-agreement-on-cooperation-in-voluntary-returns-of-irregular-migrants/>

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agreement on a common plan that would further expand the agency's support to return migrants to their home countries. According to this agreement, Frontex will assist in establishing working relations with countries outside the European Union and further support the Hellenic Republic in the identification as well as counselling of migrants in order to inform them regarding the possibilities to return voluntarily to their home countries.⁷⁶

With the regards to allegation about pushback practices, an increasing number of allegations continued to be reported in 2022 and have been largely criticised inter alia by UN, Council of Europe and European Union monitoring bodies.⁷⁷ In a report issued in April 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants stated that "in Greece, pushbacks at land and sea borders have become de facto general policy".

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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰

On June 15, 2023, a group of 40 survivors of a migrant boat sinking in Greek waters filed a criminal complaint against all parties they deem responsible for the deadly migrant shipwreck.⁸¹ The survivors demanded a thorough investigation into the causes of the sinking and the authorities' response. Greece has launched two inquiries into this tragedy that has claimed at least 78 lives. Supreme Court Prosecutor appointed a Supreme Criminal Court deputy prosecutor to supervise the investigation, while the Kalamata Coast Guard announced the launch of its own inquiry into the sinking of the boat.

⁷⁶See here: <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-executive-director-and-greek-officials-agree-on-cooperation-on-returns-iNUJcF>

⁷⁷AIDA Report 2022, page 19, available here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf

⁷⁸European 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=IwAR1Hlqcwox3tUQijPg4sEHBwJaxE4rO64SLYptwpMrymQ-EnOpnAqEXNIGs>

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰See here: [European Court of Human Rights rules against Greece in landmark migrant rights case - JURIST - News](#)

⁸¹See here: [Greece Launches Inquiry into Deadly Migrant Shipwreck - GreekReporter.com](#)

4. 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.⁸² Under this regime, Ukrainian citizens can enter Greece with their passports and immediately apply for temporary protection.

By December 2022, a total of 21,532 temporary protection permits cards had been issued to displaced Ukrainians, of whom 14,804 were to women and 6,728 to men.⁸³ In 2022, a total of 32,640 Ukrainian citizens arrived in Greece (Table 26).

Table 26: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, March-December 2022

Number of Ukrainians arriving in Greece	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	TOTAL
	14,630	7,759	8,699	232	224	240	231	215	211	199	32,640

Source: Information Note published in December 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

By September 2023, a total of 26,094 temporary protection permits cards had been issued to displaced Ukrainians of whom 18,040 were to women and 8,054 to men (Table 27).⁸⁴ Meanwhile, 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.⁸⁵

Table 27: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, January-September 2023

Number of Ukrainians arriving in Greece	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	TOTAL
	188	184	172	154	157	138	129	1,122

Source: Information Notes published in September 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In view of providing temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine, the EU Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 established the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine by the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC and introduced temporary protection.⁸⁶ Following the Communication from the Commission on operational guidelines for the implementation of Council Decision (2022/C 126 I/01), a Decision of the Minister of Migration and Asylum No 131035/04.03.2022 was issued and activated (P.D. 80/2006), while a Ministerial Decision of

⁸²In Greece, the Presidential Decree 80/2006 on the temporary protection has been activated by the recently (March 2022) issued Ministerial Decision (Protocol No. 131035).

⁸³Information Note on Asylum December 2022, Table 20, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁸⁴Information Note on Asylum September 2023, Table 20, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁸⁵Press 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/>

⁸⁶See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/energopoieitai-to-kathestos-prosorinis-prostasias-ektopismenon-atomon-apo-tin-oykrania%E2%82%AC%99>

the Minister of Migration and Asylum No 172172/28.03.2022 specified the procedure for granting temporary protection.

Electronic pre-registration for temporary protection of displaced Ukrainians is available on the website of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum since March 2022. The platform provides Ukrainian citizens residing in Ukraine the opportunity to declare their basic personal data and receive a special appointment in person at the Regional Offices of the Asylum Service, in order to receive temporary status protection.⁸⁷

Following the decision of the Minister of Migration and Asylum, the validity period of the temporary protection status for the displaced persons from Ukraine in Greece is extended. The temporary extension has a duration of six (6) months, that is from September 4, 2023, to March 4, 2024.⁸⁸ During the above-mentioned extension period, the residence permit already in possession by the beneficiaries of temporary protection will not be renewed, and they do not need to take any further action. Furthermore, new temporary protection residence permits will continue to be issued to displaced persons from Ukraine who will enter Greece for the first time until March 4, 2024. It is noted that all the temporary protection residence permits with a date of issue from 24/3/2022 to 4/3/2024 constitute a title of legal residence in the country with access to labour market, conferring the rights of articles 128 to 131 of the 4939/2022.⁸⁹

Ukrainian citizens granted temporary protection status under the European Directive and Greek legislation have the following rights:⁹⁰

- pursue an activity as an employed or self-employed person,
- access to educational programmes, vocational training, and traineeships,
- access to adequate accommodation,
- access to social assistance, financial support, and medical care.
- children under the age of 18 shall also have the right to education under the same conditions as the Greek citizens.

Furthermore, Ukrainian nationals, beneficiaries of temporary protection, will be able to receive all the services of the HELIOS program, such as integration courses in specialized centers throughout Greece, employment support and housing support, including rent subsidies. Significant changes are also being made to the accommodation criteria of HELIOS such as increase of the rent subsidy by 30% and the extension of the duration of the subsidy for all beneficiaries (until today 6-12 months) to 12 months for all.⁹¹

By the end of 2022, pursuant to the Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Migration and Asylum (708368/25.11.2022), Ukraine was removed from the list of safe countries of origin.⁹²

⁸⁷See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/diathesimi-apo-simera-stin-istoselida-toy-yπουργeioy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-ston-aidiko-syndesmo-apps-migration-gov-gr-temporary-protection-i-ilektroniki-platforma-pro-katagrafis-ektopisthent/>

⁸⁸Παράταση της προσωρινής προστασίας για τους εκτοπισθέντες από την Ουκρανία | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου (migration.gov.gr)

⁸⁹See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/paratasi-tis-prosorinis-prostasias-gia-toys-ektopisthentes-apo-tin-oukrania/>

⁹⁰More than 25,000 Ukrainian citizens under temporary protection in Greece | Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁹¹Homes for Ukrainian refugees via HELIOS | Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁹²EMN country factsheet 2022: Greece (europa.eu)

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5. 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 28).⁹³

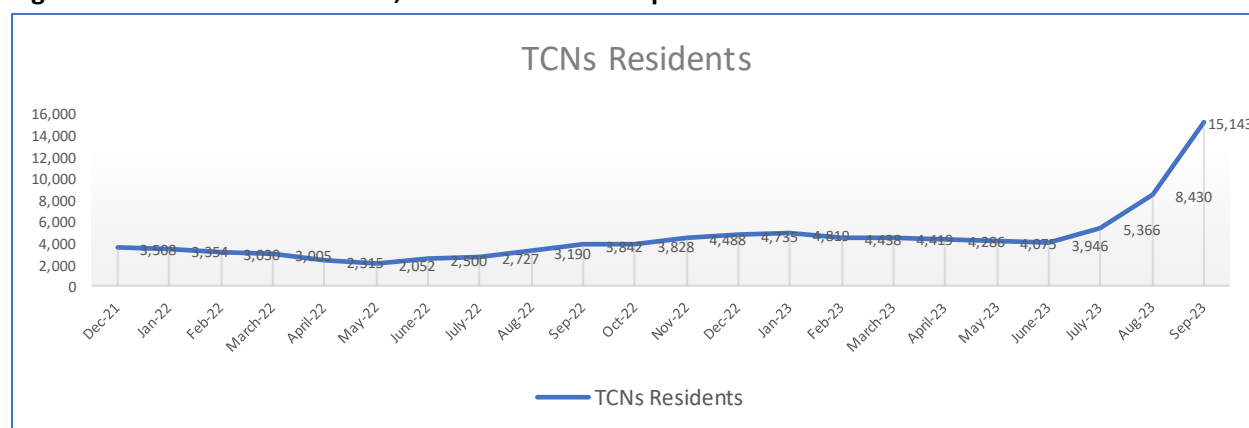
Table 28: Migrants and Asylum Seekers accommodated in RICs, 2022 & 2023 (as of September)

TCNs Resident	Reception and Identification Centres (RICs)					TOTAL*
	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	
Sept-2022	294	1,727	1,117	392	281	3,842
Oct-2022	406	1,607	1,129	317	351	3,828
Nov-2022	840	1,598	1,095	493	435	4,488
Dec-2022	953	1,994	1,029	385	358	4,735
Jan-2023	1,068	2,067	983	336	363	4,819
Feb-2023	841	1,972	950	336	302	4,438
March-2023	483	2,358	890	422	258	4,419
April-2023	256	2,512	776	443	286	4,286
May-2023	225	2,655	624	288	276	4,075
June-2023	344	2,159	526	391	499	3,946
July-2023	660	2,874	599	489	714	5,366
August-2023	1,495	3,351	1,662	638	1,213	8,430
September-2023	2,385	5,075	4,264	986	2,355	15,123
Difference from September 2022	711%	194%	282%	152%	738%	294%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum - *other islands are also included

In September 2023, 15,143 migrants and asylum seekers were accommodated in RICs across the Greek islands, the highest number in the last two years (Figure 10). Compared to September 2022, in September 2023 there was a sharp increase of 294% of migrants and asylum seekers accommodated in RICs across the Greek islands.

Figure 10: TCNs resident in RICs, December 2021 - September 2023



Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁹³Information Note on September 2022 (p.2), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

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Regarding the distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, there was a significant decrease in most regions in the period September 2021 – September 2022. In September 2022, 18,483 TCNs residents were distributed across thirteen regional units of Greece, compared with 40,061 TCNs in the same month of 2021.⁹⁴ In September 2023, there were 30,535 TCNs resident distributed across the thirteen regional units of Greece, with North Aegean regional unit accommodating the largest number of migrants and asylum seekers (Table 29).

Table 29: Distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, September 2022 – September 2023

Regional Unit	TCNs Resident 2022 (as of September)	% of total population 2022	TCNs Resident 2023 (as of September)	% of total population 2023
NORTH AEGEAN	3,046	1.53%	10,170	5.24%
SOUTH AEGEAN	535	0.17%	4,707	1.45%
EPIRUS	720	0.21%	1,771	0.55%
CENTRAL GREECE	2,420	0.44%	2,512	0.50%
CENTRAL MACEDONIA	3,921	0.21%	5,322	0.30%
EAST MACEDONIA AND THRACE	580	0.10%	1,408	0.25%
PELOPONNESE	608	0.11%	712	0.13%
ATTICA	5,679	0.15%	3,245	0.09%
WEST GREECE	146	0.02%	545	0.08%
THESSALY	720	0.10%	143	0.02%
WEST MACEDONIA	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
IOANIAN ISLANDS	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
CRETE	63	0.01%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	18,483	0.17%	30,535	0.29%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2022](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Under the Helios Programme, 35,002 and 35,897 TCNs were had registered in the program during, respectively, the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2022; between the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2022, a significant higher number of TCNs were registered, with 40,021 in the third, and 42,279 in the second quarters of 2022. (Table 30). This trend continued in 2023 with a total of numbers of registration standing at 133,765 in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarters of 2023, respectively.

Table 30: Registration at Helios Programme

REGISTRATIONS AT HELIOS	
1 st quarter of 2022	35,002
2 nd quarter of 2022	35,897
3 rd quarter of 2022	40,021
4 th quarter of 2022	42,279

⁹⁴Information Note on Asylum September 2021 (p. 2), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

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1 st quarter of 2023	43,963
2 nd quarter of 2023	44,625
3 rd quarter of 2023 (as of September 2023)	45,177

Sources: *Information Note on Asylum September 2023*, of Migration and Asylum.

As per nationality, 27.2% of those registered on the Helios Programme are from Afghanistan, 27.1% from Syria, 13.9 from Ukraine, and 10.4% from Iraq.⁹⁵

Another category under the accommodation scheme includes the beneficiaries of the rent housing programme whose numbers reached 1,984 in September 2022, while in the first 3 quarters of 2023 (till 30/09/2023) their numbers was increased by 19% (2,439 in total).⁹⁶

Finally, the category of TCNs beneficiaries of the rent subsidising programme reached 68,392 in the first three quarters of 2023 (till 30 September 2023), while in the same period of 2022 their numbers were lower by 24% with 52,029 TCNs benefiting from this accommodation programme.⁹⁷

Accommodation and Protection of UAMs

On 1 October 2023, there were 64 operational UAM Accommodation Facilities with a total capacity of 1,831 places, 63 semi-Independent living apartments with a total capacity of 252 places, and 5 emergency accommodation facilities of a total capacity of 198 places.⁹⁸ In the same period, out of a total of 1,731 UAMs (83% boys, 17% girls and 10% below 14 years old), 1,107 were in long-term or temporary accommodation facilities, 131 in semi-autonomous accommodation apartments, 123 in emergency accommodation facilities, 364 in RICs, and 6 in accommodation facilities for asylum seekers.⁹⁹

Disaggregated by nationality, the estimated UAM population on 1st October 2023 breaks down as follows: 23% Afghani, 11% Pakistani, 11% Syrian, and 55% other nationalities. Comparing these figures to those from 1st October 2022, the number of UAMs from Afghanistan and Pakistan in October 2023 has fallen by 3% (from 26% in October 2022), and 5% (from 16%), while those from Syria and other countries have been risen by 3% (from 8%) and 6% (from 49%), respectively.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵Information Note on the Helios Program, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, August 2023, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/helios-enimerotiko-fyllo-aygovstos-2023/>

⁹⁶Information Note on the beneficiaries of the rent housing programme, September 2023.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Updated Data on Unaccompanied Minors October 2023, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available at:

https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/%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_2023_07_01.pdf

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Updated Data on Unaccompanied Minors October 2022, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available at:

https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/%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_20220701.pdf

According to a data provided by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors during 2022, the Special Secretariat handled 5,660 requests for accommodation for unaccompanied minors, ensuring a maximum occupancy of 2,500 accommodation places. In addition, approximately 3,000 children living in precarious conditions or homeless in the mainland were identified and housed. Furthermore, in the context of the voluntary relocation scheme more than 1,300 children were transferred in 13 countries across Europe.¹⁰¹

6. Policy and Legislation Regulating Asylum and Refugee Status

In July 2022, Law 4960/2022 on National Guardianship System and Accommodation Framework for Unaccompanied Minors and other provisions within the competence of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (A' 145) was adopted.¹⁰² The changes are part of the Code of Reception that was ratified by Law No. 4939/2022 (A' 111). It sets the rules for a functional and flexible guardianship system.¹⁰³

The above was anticipated by the establishment of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (SSPUAM) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in April 2020 and the Voluntary Relocation scheme. The responsibilities of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors (EAFRD) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum include, among others, the reform of an effective guardianship system that will be put to public consultation, the innovative "Mentorship" program, as well as the "Mental Health Hub" program, which aims to develop the skills of professionals but also to provide psychosocial support to unaccompanied children. In institutional terms, the SSUM has become the competent authority for the protection of UAMs, including their accommodation.¹⁰⁴ Actually, the above mechanism has established the framework of rules for the operation of hospitality centres and supervised apartments for semi-autonomous accommodation. In that context, the programme "HELIOS JUNIOR" for 2,000 children formerly unaccompanied minors who have reached adulthood was adopted.¹⁰⁵ The goal is to facilitate the integration into the labor market of this particularly vulnerable group and their independent living. The action, which is implemented with the co-financing of the European Union (AMIF – Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund) and concerns young people from 18 to 21 years old, comes to strengthen in practice the new legislative framework, according to which the stay in the country of former unaccompanied minors is linked to education. This was then followed by the creation of the Emergency Response Mechanism for UAMs, in January 2021, which is a

¹⁰¹Report of Actions 2022 EAFRD | Ministry of Migration and Asylum

¹⁰²Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, June 2022, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/se-diavoyleysi-to-nomoschedio-toy-ypoyrgeioy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-ethniko-systima-epitropeias-asynodeyton-anilikon-kai-plaisio-filoxenias-asynodeyton-anilikon/>

¹⁰³EMN country factsheet 2022: Greece (europa.eu)

¹⁰⁴The 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.

¹⁰⁵HELIOS JUNIOR for 2,000 children: Another innovative program for Unaccompanied Minors | Ministry of Migration and Asylum

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supportive framework and safety net for children, charged with identifying and providing immediate protection and care to UAMs who are homeless or in precarious living conditions.¹⁰⁶

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.

In a press release on 10 November 2022, the Minister for Migration and Asylum announced the adoption of the National Strategy on Migration.¹⁰⁷ 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 must be returned.¹⁰⁸

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, being implemented by the UNHCR.¹⁰⁹ With this transition, combined with the implementation of the ESTIA housing programme by the same Ministry since September 2020 (ESTIA II, then ESTIA I), Greece's obligation to ensure certain material conditions for asylum seekers is now administered entirely by the state.¹¹⁰ 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. It should be noted that "HELIOS"'s scope is to promote the independent livelihood and social integration of the hosted TCNs. It enhances social integration through housing, integration courses, labour market inclusion, and raising awareness of the local population and promoting the social cohesion. Lastly, by end of 2022 the "ESTIA II" housing programme came to an end.¹¹¹

The reception and identification centres (RIC) of Samos, Kos and Leros were replaced by closed controlled access centers of islands (CCACI) in 2021. A further two centres, on Lesbos and Chios islands, were foreseen for 2022, but in fact they were opened in 2023. Presidential Decree No 77/8.11.2022 (Establishment of Closed Controlled Centres and replacement of Reception and Identification Centres)

¹⁰⁶In 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.

¹⁰⁷Press 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/>

¹⁰⁸ibid.

¹⁰⁹Press 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-oikonomikoy-voithimatos-stoys-aitoyntes-asylo/>

¹¹⁰Press Release, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2020, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/synechizetai-to-2021-to-programma-estia-me-pliri-eyropaiki-chrimatodotisi/>

¹¹¹The "ESTIA" program that had been running in the period 2015-2022 was initially under the administration of the UN High Commission, with funding from the European Commission.

amended Presidential Decree No 106/2020, which provided for the establishment of Controlled Temporary Accommodation Facilities in the mainland, in place of the current reception centers.¹¹²

The Joint Ministerial Decision No. 513542/2022, GG B'4763 was issued for the procedure of providing beneficiaries of international protection with a Residence Permit (ADET). At the same time, Joint Ministerial Decision No 605869/2022 regulates the issuance of a provisional foreigner's insurance and healthcare number (PAYPA), enabling applicants for international protection to access social insurance, healthcare services and the labour market.

Regarding the decisions on safe countries, pursuant to the Joint Ministerial Decision of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Migration and Asylum No. 708368/25.11.2022, Ukraine was removed from the list of safe countries of origin. Pursuant to Joint Ministerial Decision No 78391/2022, Egypt, Benin, and Nepal were added to the national list of safe countries of origin. The national list of safe third countries include Turkey as a safe third country for applicants for international protection from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Albania is also listed as a safe third country for applicants for international protection entering Greece irregularly from the Albanian-Greek borders, and similarly North Macedonia as a safe third country for applicants for international protection entering Greece irregularly from the North Macedonian-Greek borders.

Since August 2022, applicants of international protection whose initial application for international protection has received a final rejection, can book an appointment through an electronic platform in order to submit a subsequent application of international protection. The electronic platform addresses only third-country nationals whose initial application for international protection in Greece has been rejected and who now wish to submit a new application.¹¹³ However, access to asylum on the mainland remains highly problematic. Since September 2022, persons who want to submit an asylum application on the mainland should initially book an appointment through an online platform and then present themselves in one of the two registration facilities in Diavata (Thessaloniki) or Malakasa (Attica) to complete registration of their application. However, access to the online platform is not always possible, in some cases appointments for registration are assigned many months later, and applicants while waiting for the day of their appointment are not protected from detention and do not have access to reception conditions. Lastly, once they present themselves at the registration facilities, they may be subject to de facto detention for a period up to 25 days, contrary to the requirements of Art. 8 of the Reception Directive. Access to the asylum procedure for persons detained in pre-removal centers remains also a matter of concern.¹¹⁴

The Joint Ministerial Decision 788502/11.01.2023 foresees the provision of free legal assistance to applicants for international protection for the exercise of the prescribed appeal before the Appeals Authority.¹¹⁵

¹¹²See here: https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaioмата/367775_proedriko-diatagma-gia-nees-domes-prosfygon

¹¹³See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/platforma-programmatismos-apodosis-rantevoy-gia-yповoli-metagenesteris-aitisis-tis-ypiresias-asyloy/>

¹¹⁴AIDA-GR 2022-Update.pdf (asylumineurope.org)

¹¹⁵See here: ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ (migration.gov.gr)

The Ministerial Decision No. 180838 foresees the automatic extension of residence permits that expired from January 2022 to March 2022.¹¹⁶ In March, the Ministry decided to extend again the residence permits until June 2022. This was the last decision regarding the automatic extension of residence permits.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the post-covid era has created in practice delays since the respective authorities cannot renew the expired residence permits in due time. As a result, it takes more than 2 years for their renewal and in some cases third-country nationals are receiving expired residence permits. Pending the issuance of a new residence permit, beneficiaries of international protection are granted a certificate of application valid for six months. In practice, beneficiaries of international protection holding these certificates are only protected from detention and do not have access to any rights pending their residence permit's renewal.¹¹⁸

7. Political and Institutional Developments

Following the general election that were held in Greece in July 2023, the newly appointed Minister of Migration and Asylum (Mr. Dimitris Keridis), in his programmatic statements¹¹⁹ introduced the four pillars of the New Democracy's government which revolved around the following priorities:

- Safeguarding the country's obligations vis-à-vis the international conventions and international law.
- The security of the country and its borders.
- Social cohesion and the smooth integration of migrants.
- The evolving needs of the Greek economy.

According to the Minister as the Greek economy is experiencing labor shortages in sectors like agriculture, tourism, catering, and construction, there is a high demand for seasonal workers which in turn has led to thousands of requests lodged to the decentralized administrations. To address this, the government has signed bilateral agreements with Egypt and Bangladesh to regulate seasonal migration and combat irregular migration through the means of repatriation. Additionally, according to the same statement, there's a need to attract qualified personnel in high-tech sectors (including Greeks from the diaspora). Elaborating further on integration policies, he made a special reference to the protection for vulnerable groups, such as minors, pointing out the available European financial tools and EU best practices. Finally, at EU level, Mr. Keridis (the Minister of Migration and Asylum) underlined the need to build a common European migration and asylum policy.

In July 2022 and following discussion between the EU Commission and the Greek Authorities on a 'new proposal to mainstream fundamental rights' within the Greek asylum system, a Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) and a Special Commission on Fundamental Rights Compliance (Task Force for Fundamental

¹¹⁶See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/paratasi-oristikon-titlon-diamonis-kai-vevaioseon-katathesis-aitisis-politon-triton-choroneos-kai-tis-30-6-2022/>

¹¹⁷See here: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/%CE%A6%CE%95%CE%9A-%CE%92-1535_-31.03.22.pdf.

¹¹⁸See here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf (p.19)

¹¹⁹[The programmatic statements of the Minister on Migration and Asylum Policy | Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

Rights Compliance) were appointed within the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum publicly announced the first meeting of the Commission in August 2022.¹²⁰

The Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns that commenced operations in early 2022 under the supervision of the National Commission for Human Rights aims to monitor, aims to record and report informal forced return incidents of TCNs from Greece to other countries. It seeks to promote and consolidate respect of the principle of non-refoulement as well as to safeguard guarantees and compliance with legal procedures. But this newly established mechanism for compliance with fundamental rights in reception and asylum procedures has been widely criticized (i.e. from the Greek Ombudsman and the NCHR) as not in line with the independence and effectiveness requirements. In fact, the Greek Government has remained opposed to the development of an independent border monitoring mechanism and has referred to the National Transparency Authority (NTA) as the body responsible amongst others for the investigation of pushback allegations. In January 2023, the Recording Mechanism, presented its first Interim Report in January 2023, where ten civil society organizations recorded at least 50 incidents and 58 testimonies of informal forced returns which, according to testimonies of the alleged victims, occurred between April 2020 and October 2022. The total number of alleged victims in the report was approximately 2,157 third country nationals, including asylum seekers and recognized refugees in Greece.

In February 2023, the government abolished the General Directorate for the Coordination and Management of Immigration and Internal Affairs Programs and the responsibilities of this body were given to the Secretary General of Migration Policy.¹²¹ This decision was highly criticized by the opposition which supported that "the abolition of a key Directorate responsible to manage the 2 billion euros of the European financial fund for the refugee in the period 2021-2027 and the concentration of its responsibilities directly in one person raises significant concerns.

The General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection was established with the Presidential Decision 77/2023 (Government Gazette A' 130/ 27-06-2023) to which the services of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of article 39 of the P.D. 106/2020 were transferred and falls under the responsibilities of the Deputy Minister of Migration and Asylum. The General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, as the competent authority for all the issues regarding the UAMs in the country, has as its strategic objective the planning, implementation, and supervision of the National Strategy for the protection of unaccompanied minors, as well as other policies and interventions to ensure the protection of unaccompanied and separated children, third-country nationals or stateless persons who are in Greece. Its responsibilities regarding unaccompanied minors include:

1. Management of accommodation and relocation requests for unaccompanied minors.
2. Conduct and evaluation of hosting facilities and supervised apartments for minors.

¹²⁰See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/the-fundamental-rights-officer-at-the-ministry-of-migration-and-asylum-was-appointed/>

¹²¹See here: [ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ \(migration.gov.gr\)](https://www.migration.gov.gr/ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ_ΤΗΣ_ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ)

3. Support with regards to social integration of unaccompanied minors.
4. Safeguard of the institutional protection of unaccompanied minors.

The General Secretariat of Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum started on August 2, 2023, the pilot application of a new Toolkit within the framework of the "Harmonization, Establishment and Certification of Best Interest Procedures" program, with the aim of establishing standard tools and harmonizing procedures assessment of the best interests of the child.¹²² This Toolkit consists of the following:

- 1) Theoretical and Legal Framework for the Best Interest of the Child,
- 2) Guidelines and Methodology for the Best Interest Assessment Process,
- 3) Short Best Interest Assessment Form with Instructions for its Completion, and
- 4) Analytical Best Interest Assessment Form with its Instructions.

The "Harmonization, Establishment and Certification of Best Interest Procedures"¹²³ program has been implemented since November 2022, in collaboration with the UNHCR and the European Union Agency for Asylum.

At the national level, the new Immigration Code (L. 5038/2023) - that shall enter into force on 01.01.2024 - introduces new processes and requirements for the entry and residence of non-EU nationals in Greece.¹²⁴ The residence permits that have been or will be issued until then, on the basis of the current Immigration Code L. 4251/2014, will remain in force until their expiry date. After their expiration, they may be renewed within one month, in accordance with the new preconditions set by the L. 5038/2023. Especially as regards residence permits for work and investment purposes, the key changes introduced by the New Immigration Code are summarized below:

1. Electronic Submission of Applications for granting and renewing residence permits (via the platform of the Ministry of Immigration).¹²⁵
2. Change of residence permit type. It is now permissible for a non-EU national who already legally resides in Greece, by virtue of a residence permit or national visa, to submit a request to change the residence permit type they hold, to any residence permit provided in the new Immigration Code, unless otherwise specifically provided.
3. Abolition of the residence permit for executives. The residence permit provided in L. 4251/2014 for BoD members, shareholders, administrators, legal representatives and executives, is abolished. Instead, a new

¹²²Εκκίνηση πιλοτικής εφαρμογής της νέας Εργαλειοθήκης Διαδικασιών Βέλτιστου Συμφέροντος που δημιουργήθηκε από τη Γενική Γραμματεία Ευάλωτων Πολιτών και Θεσμικής Προστασίας του Υπουργείου Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου (migration.gov.gr)

¹²³See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ekkinisi-pilotikis-efarmogis-tis-neas-ergaleiothikis-diadikasion-veltistoy-symferontos-poy-dimioyrgithike-apo-ti-geniki-grammateia-eyaloton-politon-kai-thesmikis-prostasias-toy-ypourgeiou-metanasteysis/>

¹²⁴See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/nomothesia-1-2/kodikas-metanasteysis/>

¹²⁵The applicant receives electronically a certificate of submission, which is valid until the issuance of the decision granting the residence permit.

residence permit is introduced, in the investment purposes category. Beneficiaries of the new residence permit are:

(a) shareholders of a domestic company with a paid-in capital amount or share value of at least 500,000 (among other conditions), or

(b) BoD members, legal representatives and administrators (without remuneration) of domestic companies or legal representatives of branches of foreign companies, which have assets or turnover of at least 4,000,000 euros.

4. Residence permits for investment purposes. This type of residence permit is amended with regards to the required amount of investment. The residence permit for investors in real estate (golden visa) remains in force without new modifications as regards the minimum value of the real estate. However, the deadline for an advance payment of 10% of the value of the real estate, for obtaining the residence permit with a real estate value of 250,000 euros, instead of 500,000 euros (in the areas where it has increased), is extended until 31.07.2023. In any case, the purchase of the real estate must be completed by 31.12.2023.

5. Second generation immigrants, notably children of migrants born and raised in Greece will be able to obtain a residence permit for 10 years (previously, the document was issued for 5 years).¹²⁶ For the unaccompanied children who become adults, the new Code includes a ten-year residence permit based on two conditions: first, that they have completed at least three years of schooling in Greece before they turn 23, and second, that they have been accepted in professional or university-level schools or institutions.¹²⁷

Prior to that, Greece signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on migration and mobility with Bangladesh - a first of its kind between Bangladesh and an EU country - which was ratified by Law 4959/2022 (Government Gazette A' 144).¹²⁸ In 12 December 2022, a Joint Ministerial Decision 716659 (G.G 6271 B') was issued by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Labour and Social Affairs, Citizen Protection, and Migration and Asylum, providing procedures to implement the MoU. Under the MoU, Greece will create employment for 4,000 new Bangladeshi workers each year by providing them temporary work permits for five years in the seasonal category for the agriculture sector.¹²⁹ An estimated 15,000 undocumented Bangladeshi migrants are expected to benefit of this opportunity, many of them undocumented workers and asylum seekers in Greece. According to Bangladeshi sources, many

¹²⁶The previous residence permit for this category required birth in Greece or completion of six years in a school in Greece before age 23; being a member of a Greek family and living legally in Greece with a Greek parent for five consecutive years; and having completed a legal ten-year residence in Greece before applying.

¹²⁷See here: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1207702/parliament-approves-new-migration-code/>

¹²⁸See here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/615876929/%CE%9A%CF%85-%CF%81%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%9C%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B5-%CF%82-%CE%BD-4959-2022-%CE%91-144-1-2#>.

¹²⁹Ibid.

Bangladeshi agricultural workers in Greece are exploited due to their irregular status, receiving wages less than the European country's minimum monthly wage of €713.¹³⁰

Similarly, a bilateral agreement on the employment of 5,000 seasonal farm workers from Egypt in Greece was signed in Cairo in November 2022.¹³¹ The interstate agreement provides for the entry and residence in Greece of workers that will be employed on a seasonal basis in the agricultural sector with a duration of stay of up to nine months per year.¹³²

By order of the Minister of Migration and Asylum, the issuance and renewal of residence permits of the categories "investment interest and purpose", "business executives" and "business owners" for citizens of the Russian Federation are being suspended until further notice.¹³³ However, exceptions apply to the following categories:

- a) citizens of the Russian Federation or Belarus who are members of the family of investors of another nationality;
- b) citizens of the Russian Federation or Belarus who are family members of the investor, a citizen of the Russian Federation or Belarus who have already applied for an extension of their residence permit or have a valid residence permit.¹³⁴

The new Immigration Code (L. 5038/2023) - that shall enter into force on 01.01.2024 - introduces new processes and requirements for the entry and residence of non-EU nationals in Greece.¹³⁵ Especially as regards residence permits for work and investment purposes, the key changes introduced by the New Immigration Code.¹³⁶ For example, the residence permit (provided in L. 4251/2014) for BoD members, shareholders, administrators, legal representatives and executives, is abolished. Instead, a new residence permit is introduced, in the investment purposes category whose beneficiaries fulfill the following criteria:

- (a) shareholders of a domestic company with a paid-in capital amount or share value of at least 500,000 (among other conditions) for certain regional units, or
- (b) BoD members, legal representatives and administrators (without remuneration) of domestic companies or legal representatives of branches of foreign companies, which have assets or turnover of at least 4,000,000 euros.

¹³⁰See here: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/regularisation-workers-greece-open-scope-bangladeshis-mid-sept-3098696>

¹³¹See: <https://www.scribd.com/document/615876940/65%CE%9D%CE%9946%CE%9C%CE%94%CE%A8%CE%9F-51%CE%A1>

¹³²See here: <https://www.ot.gr/2023/01/13/english-edition/land-workers-the-greece-egypt-agreement-was-ratified-by-the-parliament/>

¹³³See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/anastoli-ekdosis-i-ananeosis-adeion-diamonis-ependytikoy-skopoy-gia-polites-tis-rosikis-omospondias-mechri-neoteris>

¹³⁴See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/arsi-anastolis-exetasis-kai-ekdosis-ekkremon-aitiseon-ananeosis-kai-ypovolis-aitiseon-ananeosis-titlon-diamonis-politon-tis-rosikis-omospondias-kai-tis-leykorosias-diatireitai-mechri-neote/>

¹³⁵See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/nomothesia-1-2/kodikas-metanasteysis/>.

¹³⁶The applicant receives electronically a certificate of submission, which is valid until the issuance of the decision granting the residence permit.

However, the deadline for an advance payment of 10% of the value of the real estate, for obtaining the residence permit with a real estate value of 250,000 euros, instead of 500,000 euros is extended until 31.07.2023, if the purchase of the real estate occurred no later than 31.12.2023.

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum announced that the issue of initial residence permit from 16 November 2022 will be done online through the use of the respective platform. Since March 2023, third country national could only renew their residence permits online and not issuing initial ones.¹³⁷

Citizenship Acquisitions

In 2022, a total of 13,259 foreign citizens were granted citizenship by way of naturalization, compared to 10,604 in 2021, 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 51.79% of the total. There is a slight increase compared to 2021, when the second-generation category accounted for the 48.60% of those naturalized. The percentage was this category was 66% in 2020, much higher compared to both 2021 and 2022 (Table 31).

In terms of country of origin, the largest group to successfully apply for Greek citizenship have been Albanian citizens (9,807). In 2022, 70.38% of Greek co-ethnics, 63.75% of foreigners and 87.07% of second-generation applicants granted citizenship were Albanian nationals. The same trend was in 2020 and 2021, when Albanians also dominated all the categories.¹³⁸

In 2021, citizenship acquisitions fell by over 50% in every individual category in comparison to 2018 (Table 29). According to the General Secretariat for Citizenship, this was mainly due to the transfer of citizenship 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 2019,¹³⁹ 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.

¹³⁷See here: [Έναρξη ηλεκτρονικών αιτήσεων για την αρχική χορήγηση αδειών διαμονής σύμφωνα με τις διατάξεις του ν. 4251/2014 και του π.δ. 106/2007 | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου \(migration.gov.gr\)](#)

¹³⁸2022 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/20230725-StatistikaStoixeia2022.pdf>

¹³⁹2020 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/20210709-StatistikaStoixeia2020.pdf>

Table 31: Acquisition of Greek Citizenship by category (2011-2022)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Naturalizations of co-ethnics	13,495	22,574	15,791	8,563	7,476	3,726	2,937	1,117	1.463	1,198	1,158
Naturalizations of other nationalities	1,149	1,866	2,019	1,487	3,624	3,486	2.530	1,882	1.817	2,843	3,150
Birth or study in Greece	5,543	529	0,000	0,305	19,367	25,528	21,559	12,868	9.099	5,154	6,867
Other provisions	0,928	1,917	2,029	1,529	1,183	0,978	0,883	0,382	876	623	723
Under-age children of naturalized adults (parents)	0,622	3,337	1,990	2,294	1,837	1,096	0,501	0,585	547	777	1,136
Co-ethnics from countries of the former Soviet Union	-	-	-	-	-	13	190	100	71	9	225
Total	21,737	30,223	21,829	14,178	33,487	34,814	28,410	16,834	13.873	10,604	13,259

Source: [Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, Statistics 2022](#)¹⁴⁰

Law 4915/2022, which was passed on March 22, 2022, included some amendments concerning the acquisition of the Greek citizenships (articles 34-36). More specifically, these articles include amendments regarding the suspension and rejection of applications for the acquisition of the Greek citizenship in case of criminal obstacles.¹⁴¹ The above amendments were incorporated into the Greek Citizenship Code,¹⁴² as applicable after the changes of Law 4735/2020. Meanwhile, Decision no. 738/07.01.2022 determines the procedure of conducting the oral interview, which is one of the requirements for the acquisition of the Greek citizenship.¹⁴³

Racism and Xenophobia

According to the 2022 Annual Report¹⁴⁴ published by the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) the key trends are the following:

- Existence of racism against refugees/migrants and LGBTQI+ individuals in the context of managing their daily lives (i.e. incidents of racist violence and/or racist behaviors during the daily activities of the victims, e.g. in public transportation, in the neighbourhood etc. These incidents are usually of low intensity and their perpetrators are individuals.)

¹⁴⁰2012-2021 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>

¹⁴¹See here: https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/01_FEK-2022-Tefxos-A-00063.pdf

¹⁴²See here: <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/166497/nomos-3284-2004>

¹⁴³See here: <https://g2red.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/738.07.01.2022-1.pdf>

¹⁴⁴Racist Violence Recording Network -2022 Annual Report - R.S.A. (rsaegan.org)

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- Occurrence of incidents of organized racist violence, although to a limited extent, against refugees/migrants and LGBTQI+ individuals.
- Targeting of human rights defenders, within Greek territory, especially those operating at the borders.

As highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur “*human rights defenders promoting and protecting the rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, including human rights lawyers, humanitarian workers, volunteers and journalists, have been subjected to smear campaigns, a changing regulatory environment, threats and attacks and the misuse of criminal law against them to a shocking degree*”.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.

The Human Rights Watch 2022 Report¹⁴⁷ sum up the situation in Greece as follows “*Greece hosts large numbers of asylum seekers while failing to protect their rights, including by pushing new arrivals back to Turkey. Migrant children face homelessness and lack of access to adequate healthcare and education. Victims of hate crimes are reluctant to report attacks to the police. Authorities failed to address rising violence against women and instituted measures that could heighten risks for some domestic violence survivors. Curbs on civil society groups assisting migrants and interference with independent media raised concerns about the state of rule of law in the country.*”

In August 2023 Greece’s Supreme Court intervened into the alarming “racist” and “hatred” incidents in the North-Eastern part of the country, after one more “self-proclaimed sheriff” arrested and beat irregular migrants.¹⁴⁸ The Supreme Court requested the Public Prosecutor in Athens responsible for racism, human trafficking and mistreatment of nationals or foreigners to investigate into what it terms an “alarming phenomena of violence” against immigrants and incitement to ‘racist pogroms’.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵AIDA Report 2022, page 19, available here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf

¹⁴⁶E.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

¹⁴⁷World Report 2022: Greece | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

¹⁴⁸Supreme Court investigates alarming “racist” incidents in NE Greece (keeptalkinggreece.com)

¹⁴⁹‘No guns, no knives:’ Civilian militias ‘hunting’ migrants on Greek border amid devastating wildfires | International | EL PAÍS English (elpais.com)

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 2022 and the first nine months of 2023 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 2022-2023. The report outlines the main developments in migration and asylum policy in 2022-2023 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 2022-2023.

During the period of reference, Greece experienced significant developments in migration. The country continued to grapple with managing refugee and migrant flows, particularly from neighboring regions affected by conflict and instability. Efforts were made to improve reception and integration policies, but criticism persisted regarding asylum procedures and conditions in migrant camps. There were notable shifts in migration patterns, with increased attempts at irregular migration via land and sea routes, leading to heightened security concerns. In 2023, the country continued efforts to manage migration, focusing on enhancing asylum procedures, decongesting overcrowded camps, and advocating for a balanced EU approach to migration policies. Despite these efforts, Greece faced criticism over alleged violations of migrants' rights, underscoring the ongoing challenges in migration management.