



Information guide for advisory services

Transfer to Greece

Information for refugees who are returned
under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR



Transfer under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR

Under the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR, replacing the Dublin Regulation), refugees may be transferred to the EU country responsible (in most cases, the country of first entry), so that the asylum procedure is carried out there. Refugees who have already been recognised in another EU country will be returned to that country on the basis of the safe third country clause because their asylum application is not admissible in Germany.

For many refugees, their imminent return to another EU country creates great uncertainty.

Our guide is intended for advisers, voluntary support groups and people who are affected. It is supposed to show existing services and contacts. Refugees will be given information about their situation after being returned as well as addresses of organisations they may contact locally for support.

However, no assessment of these organisations and services is made. Many services offering help are short-term projects and not subsidised on a regular basis. Consequently, there is often only a small number of permanent support structures.

We therefore do not claim that the list is exhaustive. This report must not be used as general proof of existing services offering help.

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Introduction

Resumption of transfers to Greece

Transfers of refugees to Greece under the Dublin Regulation had been suspended between 2011 and 2017 because of the living and reception conditions for asylum seekers. According to a recommendation of the EU Commission, transfers were resumed in 2017. Only asylum seekers who entered Greece after 15 March 2017 or for whom Greece is responsible from that date for another reason are returned. Vulnerable persons are not supposed to be returned. Since the middle of 2025, an individual assurance from the Greek authorities that the returned person will be accommodated in a suitable manner and that their asylum procedure will be carried out according to EU law is not demanded any longer for healthy, single, young men who are fit for work.¹

In fact, there have hardly been any transfers from Germany to Greece in the last few years. Only in 2024 and 2025 did transfers resume, concerning a bit more than 20 persons in each case.²

Problems for asylum seekers who are returned to Greece under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR:

According to various reports, returnees in Greece experience delays in registration resulting in waiting times of several months and face problems with access to the asylum procedure. Meanwhile, they have no access to reception centres and health care because they have no proof of their asylum seeker status.

Asylum seekers who entered Greece via Turkey run the risk of being taken into custody and returned to the Greek island responsible for them; their asylum application is rejected as inadmissible because Turkey is regarded as a safe third country.³

¹ Reply of the German Federal Government to a question posed by MPs and the parliamentary party "DIE LINKE", Document No. 21/1668. Additional information on asylum statistics for the first half-year of 2025 – questions on key issues of the Dublin procedure, p. 24, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/308/1930849.pdf>

² Reply of the German Federal Government to a question posed by MPs and the parliamentary party "DIE LINKE", Document No. 20/15133. Additional information on asylum statistics for 2024 – questions on key issues of the Dublin procedure, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/151/2015133.pdf>, p. 10; reply of the German Federal Government to a question posed by MPs and the parliamentary party "DIE LINKE", Document No. 21/4911. Additional information on asylum statistics for 2025 – questions on key issues of the Dublin procedure, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/049/2104911.pdf>, p. 7

³ Cf. Country Report: Greece, 2024 update; aida Asylum Information Database, September 2025; <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/>, p. 21 and pp. 134 ff; Demokratische Jurist*innen Schweiz:

Removal of asylum seekers who are recognised in Greece

The asylum application of persons who already have protection status in Greece and subsequently seek asylum in Germany is usually rejected as inadmissible. Due to inhumane living conditions, however, deportation to Greece was not possible for some years. In Germany, the previous ruling to stop taking decisions on asylum applications lodged by persons who have been recognised in Greece was set aside in April 2022. Accordingly, asylum applications can be rejected as inadmissible if there is no danger of any violation of human rights in Greece. In 2025, the German Federal Administrative Court ruled that healthy, young, single, male beneficiaries of protection who are fit for work may be deported to Greece. Since then, more persons have been deported or asked to return on a voluntary basis. For other groups of persons (families, women, vulnerable person), the individual case is examined.

Problems for recognised refugees who return to Greece:

Civil-society organisations report on various administrative obstacles making it harder for beneficiaries of international protection to have access to their rights. Especially beneficiaries of protection returning from other EU countries must deal with a large number of bureaucratic matters (e.g. renewal of residence permit, travel document, tax number, social security number) involving long waiting times, without which they cannot gain access to accommodation, health care or work.⁴ Non-governmental relief organisations can only provide limited help because of restricted funds and reduced capacities.

Since 2025, the organisation Refugee Support Aegean (RSA) has supported 50 beneficiaries of protection who were deported from other EU countries or returned of their own accord; the organisation reports that the persons concerned usually face homelessness and precarious living conditions.⁵

Expert Opinion: No returns to Greece – Dublin Returnees Face Real Risk of Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, February 2025, <https://www.djs-jds.ch/de/djs-schweiz/aktivitaeten/publikationen/no-returns-to-greece-fuer-dublin-rueckueberstellte-besteht-die-reale-gefahr-einer-unmenschlichen-oder-erniedrigenden-behandlung>

⁴ Foundation Pro Asyl/Refugee Support Aegean RSA: Recognised refugees in Greece 2026: Access of beneficiaries of international protection to documents and socio-economic rights, April 2026, <https://rsaegean.org/en/recognised-refugees-in-greece-2026/>, p. 61; Equal Rights Beyond Borders: *International Schutzberechtigte in Griechenland. Rechtliches Gutachten zur Situation von anerkannt Schutzberechtigten in Griechenland mit Schwerpunkt auf Unterbringung, Zugang zu Integrationsprogrammen und zum Arbeitsmarkt sowie der spezifischen Situation von Frauen* (Beneficiaries of international protection in Greece. Legal expert opinion on the situation of recognised beneficiaries of protection in Greece focusing on accommodation, access to integration programmes and the labour market as well as the specific situation of women), April 2026, <https://directus.equal-rights.org/assets/ecc3dc47-c288-4824-9b5a-8338cd38fba5.pdf>

⁵ Pro Asyl/RSA 2026, p. 62

Procedure after re-entry into Greece

The German authorities inform the Greek Asylum Service of the arrival of persons who are returned to Greece under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR. Before departing, the persons to be transferred receive a laissez-passer as travel document from the German foreigners' registration office; that document specifies by which date they must report to the competent authority in Greece.

Most returnees arrive at the airport in Athens. Upon arrival in Greece, they are received by the police and referred to the Asylum Service. Returnees must report to the regional Asylum Service responsible for them, so that they can be registered and their asylum application can be admitted or resumed.

What needs to be done first?

That depends on whether the person concerned left Greece while the asylum procedure was in progress or whether he/she had not yet initiated an asylum procedure in Greece before his/her departure. Depending on the situation, different steps must be taken.

1. The person concerned had not yet lodged an asylum application in Greece before his/her departure.

As soon as the person concerned arrives in Greece, he/she tells the police that he/she wants to apply for asylum. The person is then referred to the Asylum Service in order to lodge the application for asylum.

2. The person concerned had already lodged an application for asylum in Greece and left Greece during the asylum procedure:

a) A decision in favour of granting the asylum application has been taken:

Protection status has been granted. The person concerned has residence status in Greece. Upon return to Greece, he/she must apply for a residence permit, unless he/she received such a permit before departure. The application for a residence permit is filed with the Greek police. To do so, confirmation from the competent Greek Asylum Service is required.

b) No decision has yet been taken on the asylum application:

Asylum seekers are obliged to remain in Greece until their asylum application has been processed. If they left the country beforehand without permission from the Asylum Service, this may be considered a withdrawal of the asylum application.

Therefore, the person concerned must contact the Asylum Service immediately after returning to Greece and state that he/she is still interested in his/her application being processed. Then the Asylum Service will decide whether it continues to handle the application and invite the person concerned to an interview if necessary.

If less than nine months have passed since the asylum procedure was discontinued, the original procedure may be resumed. Otherwise, a subsequent application must be lodged.

If a decision against the application is taken, an appeal may be lodged.

c) The asylum application was rejected with final and binding effect:

An appeal may be lodged against the rejection within the period specified in the notice.

If an appeal had already been lodged before the applicant left Greece, the Greek Asylum Service will re-examine the application and invite him/her to an interview if necessary.

3. Recognised refugees in Greece:

The person concerned had already been granted protection status when he/she left Greece.

Beneficiaries of protection leaving Greece do not normally lose their status. Upon return to Greece, they must apply for an extension of their residence permit if it has expired or for a new residence permit if they had not yet received such a permit before departure.

When they arrive at the airport, the Greek police will establish their identity. Subsequently, they can leave the airport. Usually, they are not informed of the

administrative matters they have to deal with and which authorities are responsible for them, nor do they get any advice on accommodation.⁶

What should recognised refugees consider when returning to Greece:

- Make sure you have valid Greek travel and residence documents:
If possible, returnees should make sure they have a valid Greek residence permit and a valid travel document already before leaving Germany. It is possible to apply for an extension by e-mail (see description below) while still in Germany. Further steps must be taken in person in Greece.
- Coordinate your departure with the competent foreigners' registration office
- Obtain information on the support programme HELIOS+ and the bridging programme (see below: support programmes):
- If you are qualified for HELIOS (i.e. if you were recognised in Greece less than 2 years ago): contact IOM Greece as soon as possible; this can already be done from Germany as soon as a decision on return to Greece has been taken.
- Arrange accommodation (stay with friends or family in Greece or book a room in a hostel for the first few days)
- Expect long waiting times until you can obtain the required documents and, for example, you can take up work
- In Greece: apply for a social security number and tax number (see under: [Tax number and social security number](#)), open a bank account
- Contact IOM, the local integration centre KEM and local NGOs

⁶ Foundation Pro Asyl/Refugee Support Aegean RSA: *Stellungnahme zur Situation von international Schutzberechtigten in Griechenland* (Statement on the situation of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece), April 2025, https://www.proasyl.de/wp-content/uploads/20250407_PRO-ASYL-RSA_Stellungnahme-zur-Situation-Schutzberechtigter-in-Griechenland.pdf, p. 42; Pro Asyl/RSA 2026, p. 62

Residence permit (ADET)

For the **first issue of a residence permit** in Greece, beneficiaries of international protection require a certificate from the Greek Asylum Service. Then they can apply to the Greek police for a residence permit.

To **extend the residence permit**, returnees must, first of all, contact the Greek Asylum Service responsible for beneficiaries of international protection (Autonomous Asylum Unit AAU). An application for extension must be sent to GAS.residencepermits@migration.gov.gr by e-mail. (This may already be done from Germany.) The Asylum Service informs the applicant by e-mail whether the residence permit can be granted or renewed. Then further documents must be delivered to the competent passport office of the Greek police in person. As soon as the residence permit is issued, it must be collected from an office of the Asylum Service at the place of residence on a certain date.

Description of the application procedure and addresses of the competent authorities: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/aitoyntes-kai-dikaioychoi/adeies-diamonis/> → How to renew your residence permit

An application for extension of the residence permit must be made within 30 days of expiry. A penalty (currently €100) must be paid if the application is made after the 30-day period unless there are valid reasons for the delay.

Especially in the case of applications for an extension, there are waiting times of several months up to more than one year until the residence permit is issued. In the meantime, the person concerned can request a certificate of status from the Asylum Service which confirms that an application for extension has been made. However, this certificate is not accepted as proof of identity by other authorities.⁷ A valid residence permit is needed in order to apply for a social security number. Without this number, returnees have no access to health care, social services and the labour market.

Travel document

In addition, returnees require a valid travel document. It is required because the residence permit is often not accepted as an identification document to prove one's identity, e.g. to open a bank account or to take up employment.

⁷ Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, pp. 20 ff; Refugee Support Aegean RSA: Policy Note: Recognised refugee statistics in Greece in 2025, March 2026, <https://rsaegean.org/en/recognised-refugee-statistics-in-greece-in-2025/>

To apply for a travel document, you must make an appointment with the competent passport office of the local police. An application for extension of a travel document is made by sending an e-mail to the Asylum Service at GAS.traveldoc@migration.gov.gr. (This can already be done from Germany.)

There are long waiting times of several months up to more than one year until the travel document is issued.⁸

Information provided by the Asylum Service on application for/extension of travel documents: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/aitoyntes-kai-dikaioychoi/taxidiotika-eggrafa/>

The procedures and competent authorities regarding the application for documents are very complex and can only be described here in abridged form. A detailed description is included in the report "Recognised Refugees 2026" by Refugee Support Aegean (RSA)⁹.

Returnees should contact one of the advisory centres named in the annex to get support.

Even if the person concerned still has valid Greek documents, the authorities in Germany do not always hand them over before departure, so that they have to be reapplied for.

Support programmes for recognised refugees

Greek integration programme HELIOS+

HELIOS+ is an integration programme for beneficiaries of international protection in Greece. Services include individual advice, support in connection with integration into the labour market (careers guidance, professional training), language courses, psychosocial support, help with search for accommodation and rent allowance.

To gain access to the programme, the following requirements, among others, must be met:

- International protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection) or temporary protection must have been granted;

⁸ Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, pp. 25/26

⁹ Pro Asyl/RSA 2026

- recognition must have taken place not more than 24 months ago;
- the person concerned must be unemployed.

To prove this, the following documents, among others, are required:

- valid residence permit
- confirmation of unemployment by Greek job centre
- social security number AMKA
- tax number AFM
- access to the tax portal TAXISnet
- lease (to receive rent allowance)

The programme is implemented by IOM Greece and regional partner organisations. Registration takes place via IOM Greece. You will find information about the programme, hotline and addresses of HELIOS+ centres at <https://greece.iom.int/helios>. Returnees should contact IOM Greece as soon as possible to find out whether they can be admitted to the programme.

There is only a limited number of places in the programme, so that only a small part of the beneficiaries of protection can gain access. Some of the projects already end in 2026. It is not certain whether financing will continue. For beneficiaries of protection returning from other EU countries, access to the programme is difficult because of the requirements for participation to be met.

German-Greek bridging programme

The bridging programme is intended for persons with protection status in Greece who currently reside in Germany. The programme is to provide support in connection with returning to Greece and comprise the following services: collection from the airport, accommodation for up to 4 months, social counselling, financial support for up to 2 months and support with regard to admission to the integration programme Helios+. Returnees who have been admitted to the programme will be accommodated temporarily in a reception centre near Serres after arriving at the airport in Thessaloniki.¹⁰

¹⁰ Information provided by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, bridging project support team, of 10/6/2026; reply of the German Federal Government to a question posed by MPs and the parliamentary party "Die Linke", Document No. 21/1883. Returning recognised beneficiaries of protection in Greece and the HELIOS+ programme, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/21/023/2102339.pdf>

To gain access to the programme, the person concerned must enjoy international protection in Greece, recognition must have taken place not more than 20 months ago and the asylum application in Germany must have been rejected, refused as inadmissible or not have been decided yet. Syrian citizens can currently not take part in the bridging programme.

The programme is implemented by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, BAMF) together with the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). It will probably continue until 31/12/2026¹¹.

For further information on the programme, you should contact BAMF (BRIDGING-Project@bamf.bund.de). BAMF will send an information letter and check by means of a questionnaire whether the person concerned is entitled.

To organise your voluntary departure to Greece, coordination with the competent foreigners' registration office is required; the office may help with organising the departure. A valid travel or identification document is required for departure to Greece and crossing the border. If you do not have a valid document, the foreigners' registration office may issue a substitute passport (*laissez-passer*). The bridging programme does not include any funding for departure costs.

Further information and an assessment of the programmes are included in the statement: "*International Schutzberechtigte in Griechenland*" (Beneficiaries of international protection in Greece) by Equal Rights Beyond Borders¹² and the "*Bericht zur Situation von Rückkehrern und Schutzberechtigten in Griechenland*" (Report on the situation of returnees and beneficiaries of protection in Greece) by Michael Kientzle¹³.

¹¹ Information provided by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, bridging project support team, of 10/6/2026

¹² Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2026, pp. 17 ff

¹³ Kientzle, Michael: *Bericht zur Situation von Rückkehrern und Schutzberechtigten in Griechenland, eine Recherche im Auftrag von NAOMI Thessaloniki* (Report on the situation of returnees and beneficiaries of protection in Greece, an investigation on behalf of NAOMI Thessaloniki), May 2026, https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2140788/Bericht_Rueckkehrer_Griechenland_Kientzle_NAOMI_2026.pdf, pp. 76-84

Residence status in Greece

The documents presented by those seeking advice should be used to examine what kind of status the person concerned had before departure from Greece. In Greece, the following residence permits are granted to refugees:

International protection:

- Refugee status: residence permit for three years.
It is possible to apply for a travel document. There is a right to family reunification, i.e. family members from the country of origin may join the refugee in Greece.
- Subsidiary protection: residence permit for one year, which may be extended for two years.
It is possible to apply for a travel document. There is no right to family reunification, i.e. family members from the country of origin may not join the refugee in Greece.

Procedures under the law of residence / asylum procedures

Asylum seekers must register with the Asylum Service. Appointments must be booked online: https://asylum.migration.gov.gr/international-protection-registration/registration_appointment. Registration takes place at a reception centre, on the mainland either in Diavata (Thessaloniki region) or Malakasa (Athens region).

During registration, the refugee's fingerprints and photographs are taken and he/she is asked briefly about the reasons for applying for asylum. Moreover, a date is set for the interview and the applicant is given a residence document as asylum seeker (Asylum Seeker's Card or International Protection Applicant Card), which is valid for up to one year. It is extended if the asylum procedure takes longer. This document entitles the holder to remain in Greece until the asylum procedure is completed. In addition, it enables access to health care in public hospitals.

Interpreters

Both during registration and during the interview, the applicant is entitled to an interpreter. If there are not enough interpreters, the procedure is interrupted.¹⁴

Legal advice

The applicant may bring a lawyer or another adviser to the interview; however, this is done at his/her own expense. NGOs offer free legal advice; it depends on the capacities available.

Decision

After the interview, the Asylum Service decides whether refugee status or subsidiary protection is granted or whether the application is rejected. The applicant is informed some months after the interview, either personally or by post or e-mail or via an online application of the Asylum Service. The notice may also be sent to engaged lawyers or representatives.

After a decision in favour of granting the asylum application has been taken (refugee status or subsidiary protection), the refugee may apply for a residence permit ("ADET"). It takes a few months to issue the residence permit.

Appeal

An appeal may be lodged against a rejected asylum application within the time limit specified in the notice of rejection. The appeal must be written in Greek. Legal advice should be sought before lodging such an appeal. The asylum seeker concerned is entitled to free legal assistance during the appeal procedure.

Safe countries of origin

The following countries are considered safe countries of origin: Egypt, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Georgia, the Gambia, Ghana, India, Morocco, Moldavia, Bangladesh, Benin, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia. For persons from safe countries of origin, an accelerated procedure is carried out. For an appeal against a negative decision, a shorter time limit than for the regular procedure applies.

¹⁴ Cf. aida 2025, p. 73, pp. 78 ff

Safe third countries

Since June 2021, Turkey is considered a safe third country for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia. Asylum applications lodged by persons from these countries who previously stayed in Turkey can be rejected as inadmissible. Such applications will not be examined in terms of content. However, no asylum seekers have been deported from Greece to Turkey since 2020.¹⁵

Subsequent application

A subsequent application may be lodged if the initial application was rejected with final effect or the application was withdrawn. The procedure examines whether there are new material circumstances concerning the situation in the country of origin or the asylum seeker's situation. To lodge a subsequent application, it is possible to book an appointment on this website:

https://asylum.migration.gov.gr/international-protection-registration/subsequent_registration_appointment?lang=en

Competent authorities¹⁶

Stage of the procedure	Competent authority	English name
Application	Υπηρεσία Ασύλου	Asylum Service
Dublin procedure	Υπηρεσία Ασύλου	Asylum Service
Refugee status determination	Υπηρεσία Ασύλου	Asylum Service
First appeal	Ανεξάρτητες Επιτροπές Προσφυγών (Αρχή Προσφυγών)	Independent Appeals Committees (Appeals Authority)
Onward appeal	Διοικητικό Πρωτοδικείο Αθηνών ή Θεσσαλονίκης	First Instance Administrative Court of Athens or Thessaloniki
Subsequent application (admissibility)	Υπηρεσία Ασύλου	Asylum Service

¹⁵ Cf. aida 2025, pp. 158 ff

¹⁶ Source: aida 2025

What duties do asylum seekers have in Greece?

Asylum seekers are obliged:

- to remain in Greece until a decision on the asylum application is taken;
- to inform the Asylum Service of any changes of address or the like;
- to apply for a tax number and file a tax return each year.

What rights do asylum seekers have in Greece?

Asylum seekers are entitled:

- to free access to the public health care system;
- to information on, among other things, the procedure for applying for asylum and on their rights and duties in a language they understand;
- to free legal assistance in connection with an appeal against a negative decision on asylum.

As soon as an application for asylum is lodged, the applicant has the right:

- to remain in Greece until a decision is taken;
- to receive an Asylum Seeker's Card, which enables the holder to move freely within Greece;
- to be placed in accommodation for asylum seekers.

Lack of the following may result in infringement of rights:

- lack of information
- lack of interpreters
- poor medical care (incl. medicine)
- lack of legal assistance
- inadequate accommodation
- lack of or insufficient provision of food and/or clothes
- problems with authorities (delayed issue of residence permit, insufficient information, lack of interpreters, etc.)

In the event of any discrimination or infringement of rights, an advisory centre/NGO, etc. should be contacted; see addresses in the annex.

Return to the country of origin

Refugees who want to return to their country of origin may receive financial support on certain conditions. IOM Greece is responsible for implementing the relevant programmes in Greece (see address in the annex).

Tax number and social security number

Social security number (PAAYPA and AMKA)

The social security number is required for health, unemployment and pension insurance and when taking up work. Moreover, it is required for many other procedures, such as issue of a driving licence or monthly/yearly tickets for public transport.

Asylum seekers are given a provisional number (Alien's Temporary Social Security and Medical Care Number, PAAYPA) that is stated on their Asylum Seeker's Card. If the asylum application is granted, the asylum seeker concerned must apply (to the Social Security Institute EFKA or the Civic Centre KEP) for the permanent social security number AMKA within one month. If the asylum application is rejected, the provisional social security number becomes void.

Beneficiaries of international protection best contact the Social Security Institute (EFKA)¹⁷ to obtain a social security number. Responsibilities are currently not clear, so there may be problems. Since the beginning of 2025, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum is supposed to be responsible for issuing the social security number for beneficiaries of international protection; however, in practice, this has not been implemented yet. As a result, the offices previously responsible – the Civic Centres (KEP) or the Social Security Institute (EFKA) – often refuse to issue a social security number to them.

To apply for a social security number, beneficiaries of international protection require a valid passport or travel document, a valid residence permit including access to the labour market, proof of their place of residence and a certificate issued by their employer. Consequently, beneficiaries of protection who cannot prove employment will not be given any social security number. This particularly affects persons who are not fit for work. Returning beneficiaries of protection whose

¹⁷ Cf. Kientzle 2026, p. 11

residence permit is no longer valid do not receive any social security number, either. Without this number, they have no access to health care and social services.¹⁸

Tax number (AFM)

The tax number is required when dealing with authorities, banks, the tax authority and when entering into contracts (e.g. leases, contracts with mobile telephone providers). Moreover, it is required when the asylum seeker takes up employment or applies for social welfare benefits, also under the HELIOS+ programme. As soon as the asylum seeker has been given a tax number, he/she is obliged to file an annual tax return; this also applies if he/she does not have any income.

Asylum seekers automatically receive a tax number as soon as their asylum application has been registered.

Beneficiaries of international protection must contact the competent tax office (DOY) to update their data. If they do not have a tax number yet, they must apply to the tax office for such a number. To do so, they require a valid residence permit.¹⁹

All persons residing legally in Greece need the social security number and the tax number. However, asylum seekers and recognised refugees may encounter problems when documents are missing, e.g. documents to prove the place of residence, a certificate of homelessness or to prove the marital status.

There are also significant administrative obstacles to obtaining other necessary documents such as: insurance number AMA, unemployment card, bank account, access to the tax portal Taxisnet.

Accommodation after re-entry

Asylum seekers only have access to state accommodation if they are registered with the Greek Asylum Service; until then, they may end up being homeless.²⁰

The reception conditions are not only critical on the islands but also on the mainland, where most returnees under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR live. Many camps are temporary, overcrowded reception centres, access to basic support

¹⁸ Cf. Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, pp. 29 ff; aida 2025 pp. 266 ff; RSA 2026 from p. 33

¹⁹ Cf. Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, pp. 27 ff; RSA 2026 from p. 29

²⁰ Cf. aida 2025, pp. 198 f

services is difficult, health care is insufficient and it is not possible to take adequate care of vulnerable persons.²¹

In the event of return under the Dublin III Regulation, the Greek authorities must assure the German authorities that the returned person can be accommodated in accordance with European standards. BAMF does no longer request individual assurances for healthy, single, young men who are fit for work. (The background is a communication of the European Commission of 4 April 2025 stating that the asylum and reception system on the Greek mainland does not show any systemic weak points which would entail the risk of inhuman or degrading treatment as defined in Article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.)²²

Asylum seekers should contact local relief organisations and ask for help with the search for accommodation; however, the organisations' possibilities are limited due to restricted capacities.

Access to accommodation

Beneficiaries of international protection are equal to other third-country nationals as regards access to accommodation.

State accommodation is reserved for asylum seekers. Beneficiaries of protection must leave these facilities within 30 days of their recognition. Beneficiaries of protection returning to Greece from another EU country cannot be accommodated there any more, either.

Because accommodation is scarce and rents are increasing, especially in the towns and cities, it is very difficult to find affordable housing. Moreover, there are formal obstacles because usually a tax number and a bank account are required in order to sign a lease. In addition, landlords request proof of income.

Beneficiaries of protection may receive a rent allowance on certain conditions through the HELIOS programme; among other things, a lease for accommodation must already have been signed. Consequently, returnees need sufficient financial means to sign a lease and to pay a deposit. Recognised beneficiaries of protection returning from other EU countries usually fail to meet the requirements of the

²¹ DJS 2025, pp. 23 ff

²² Reply of the German Federal Government to a question posed by MPs and the parliamentary party "DIE LINKE", Document No. 21/1668. Additional information on asylum statistics for the first half-year of 2025 – questions on key issues of the Dublin procedure, p. 24, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/308/1930849.pdf>

HELIOS programme and do not receive any financial support. They are at risk of becoming homeless.²³

There are shelters for the homeless in the towns and cities; however, it is almost impossible to find accommodation there. There are not enough places and there are long waiting lists. Documents such as residence permit, social security number and tax number are required. Beneficiaries of international protection are often not accepted and there are no accommodation facilities for families with children or people with disabilities.²⁴

As a result, many beneficiaries of protection are homeless or live in precarious conditions in derelict houses, without electricity and running water.²⁵

The social services of relief organisations are able to provide support to persons looking for accommodation, if their capacities permit. Some organisations have a small number of accommodation facilities of their own, which are, however, incommensurate with the actual demand.

Access to health care

To gain access to the public health care system, the Greek social security number (PAAYPA or AMKA) is required.

With the provisional social security number PAAYPA, **asylum seekers** gain access to medical care via the public health care system. That means that they are entitled to medical examinations in approved clinics and institutions, to treatments in public hospitals and to medicine that is prescribed for them.

Persons with special needs such as pregnant women, victims of torture, unaccompanied minors and disabled persons are entitled to psychological support.

²³ Foundation Pro Asyl/Refugee Support Aegean RSA: *Stellungnahme: Zur aktuellen Situation von international Schutzberechtigten in Griechenland* (Statement: On the situation of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece), April 2021, <https://www.proasyl.de/material/stellungnahme-zur-aktuellen-situation-international-schutzberechtigter-in-griechenland/>

²⁴ Pro Asyl/ RSA 2025, pp. 139 ff; RSA 2026 pp. 53 ff

²⁵ Cf. RSA 2026 pp. 53 ff

However, there is a lack of therapeutic services for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection or access is not possible because of a lack of interpreters.²⁶

There are not sufficient medical personnel in the reception centres for asylum seekers to ensure basic care²⁷.

Returnees under the Dublin Regulation/AMMR do not gain access to health care without a social security number. This is the case when their access to the asylum procedure is delayed or their asylum application is not admitted.²⁸

Asylum seekers who do not have a social security number should bring the Asylum Seeker's Card when going into hospital and ask for help.

Beneficiaries of international protection have access to health care on the same terms as Greek citizens. However, they require a valid AMKA number.

Without a social security number, refugees are only entitled to medical care in case of emergency; further treatments and medication must be paid privately.

The public health care system in Greece is seriously affected by austerity measures. There are long waiting times, there are not enough personnel and medicine, and patients are requested to make co-payments. Moreover, there are not enough interpreters in hospitals and other institutions.

For beneficiaries of international protection, problems with the issue of the social security number AMKA result in delays in and exclusion from access to health care.²⁹ (As regards information about the social security number, see above under "Tax number and social security number".)

Access to social services

Asylum seekers receive financial support on certain conditions. Payment is made through a cash card the size of a cheque card that can be used at cash dispensers. The payment is supposed to cover basic needs such as food, transport, clothes,

²⁶ Foundation Pro Asyl/Refugee Support Aegean RSA: Beneficiaries of international protection in Greece. Access to documents and socio-economic rights, March 2022, https://rsaegean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-03_RSA_BIP_EN.pdf

²⁷ aida 2025, pp. 209 ff; DJS 2025, pp. 31 ff

²⁸ DJS 2025, p. 33

²⁹ Aida 2025, pp. 209 ff, pp. 266 ff; RSA 2026 pp. 56 ff

hygiene products, school material and medicine, unless these are made available as part of state provision. The amount of the payment depends on the size of the family and other benefits received.

Asylum seekers who are placed in official accommodation are entitled to this payment. Persons living in informal accommodation, e.g. people squatting in houses, are excluded from receiving this benefit in cash. Asylum seekers who are placed in private accommodation are not entitled to financial support, either.

Benefits for asylum seekers are discontinued immediately after the asylum application is granted.

Payment of cash benefits is interrupted again and again. Since April 2025, no payments to asylum seekers have been made. It is not certain when payments will resume.³⁰

Beneficiaries of international protection have access to social services under the same conditions as Greek citizens. They are not entitled to benefits intended for asylum seekers.

Some examples of individual benefits:

- Guaranteed minimum income: financial aid, support in connection with integration into the labour market
- Housing allowance (minimum duration of stay in Greece: 5 years)
- Pension for persons over the age of 67 who do not receive a pension under a pension insurance scheme (minimum duration of stay: 15 years)
- Family allowance (minimum duration of stay: 5 years)
- Social welfare benefits for disabled persons

Beneficiaries of international protection should contact the local integration centres (Κέντρα Ένταξης Μεταναστών, KEM) to apply for social welfare benefits.

Most social welfare benefits require a legal minimum stay in Greece (between one and fifteen years, depending on the benefit); the time needed for lodging the asylum application is not considered in this regard. Moreover, documents such as tax assessment notice, lease or certificate of homelessness must be submitted, which

³⁰ Joint statement of various organisations, March 2026, <https://www.rescue.org/eu/press-release/joint-statement-provision-cash-assistance-asylum-seekers-greece-must-resume>, last retrieved on 6 July 2026

most beneficiaries of protection cannot present. Therefore, in practice claims for benefits usually fail because the persons concerned do not meet the requirements.

Beneficiaries of protection can only take part in the Greek integration programme HELIOS+ on certain conditions. Services include individual advice, support in connection with integration into the labour market (careers guidance, professional training), language courses, psychosocial support, help with search for accommodation and rent allowance. You can find further information on the requirements above under "Support programmes".

As a result, beneficiaries of protection who are deported to Greece are mostly left to their own resources and do not receive any benefits.³¹ Voluntary support groups in Germany can support returnees by collecting money as an initial aid for them and transferring it to them as soon as they arrive in Greece. They should not take cash with them.

Access to the labour market

Asylum seekers may take up employment 60 days after lodging the asylum application if no decision has been taken on their application by then. They must be fully registered and have a Full Registration Asylum Seeker's Card.

Recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have unrestricted access to the labour market and do not require a work permit. Persons seeking employment may contact the Greek employment service (OAED, www.oaed.gr).

To take up employment, the tax number (AFM) and the social security number (AMKA or PAAYPA) are required. Recognised refugees must have a valid residence permit. A bank account is also required.

In practice, it is extremely difficult to find work for various reasons: high level of unemployment, lack of language skills, non-recognition of qualifications. Consequently, illicit work, insufficient social insurance or underpayment are widespread phenomena. Especially if refugees recognised in Greece are deported from Germany to Greece and they do not have a valid residence permit and social

³¹ Pro Asyl/RSA 2021, p. 10; Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, p. 5

security number any more, there may be waiting times of up to one year before they theoretically have access to the labour market.³²

Moreover, due to reductions in funding, NGOs only have restricted capacities to support beneficiaries of protection in connection with access to the labour market.³³

Access to educational institutions

Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection who are under age are entitled to access to the education system just like Greek citizens. Compulsory school attendance also applies to them. For children living in official refugee camps, there are preparatory classes in public schools. Children who do not live in refugee camps may visit a regular school in the surrounding area. In practice, for many children access to regular schools and preparatory classes is not guaranteed because of transport problems.

Adults enjoying protection have access to educational institutions on the same terms as other third-country nationals living in Greece. They are entitled to take part in educational programmes and vocational training.

Access to language courses

There are no free language courses for recognised refugees that are offered by the state. Some NGOs offer free language courses for asylum seekers and refugees.

Vulnerable persons

Among the vulnerable persons are: unaccompanied and accompanied minors, direct relatives of victims of shipwrecks, pregnant women, disabled persons, elderly people, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with cognitive or mental disabilities, victims of genital mutilation as well as persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other forms of severe psychological, physical or sexual violence.

³² Pro Asyl/RSA 2021, p. 10; Pro Asyl/RSA 2025, p. 5

³³ RSA 2026, p. 55

The needs of vulnerable persons must be taken into account when accommodation is provided as well as during the asylum procedure, especially during the interview. In practice, there are often not enough places in the accommodation facilities.

Victims of torture and victims of sexual violence can prove their special protection needs by presenting a certificate issued by a public healthcare facility. A certificate issued by an NGO is not sufficient.

According to an aida report³⁴, vulnerability is often not ascertained during the asylum procedure because mechanisms to detect it are insufficient.

If vulnerable persons are returned from Germany, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*BAMF*) notifies the competent unit of the Asylum Service in Greece. The notification gives information on special needs with regard to accommodation and medical care. This also applies, for example, to families who are transferred separately due to violence within the family and are to be placed in different accommodation facilities. The responsibility of the German authorities ends upon arrival in the country of destination and will pass to the authorities in the country of destination.

In practice, however, it becomes apparent that the special needs are not always sufficiently taken into account in the country of destination. If possible, advisers should remain in touch with the transferred persons where critical cases are concerned. If their needs are not taken into account after arrival, they can take action, if required, and arrange contact with relief organisations.

³⁴ aida 2025, p. 21 and pp. 134 ff

Annex: Where can I get advice and support?

Note: Many services offering help in Greece are short-term projects and not subsidised on a regular basis. At the time when the information provided herein was compiled (July 2026), there was only a small number of permanent support structures. We therefore do not claim that the list is exhaustive. Due to reductions in funding, the capacities of some organisations are currently very limited. Consequently, it is possible that services are not available (any more) at short notice or that there are waiting times. Please do not hesitate to send your comments and feedback to: dublin@raphaelswerk.de.

Information material on Greece for refugees in various languages:

The different steps of the asylum procedure are listed on the website of the Greek Asylum Service: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/>

An Overview of International Protection Procedures in Greece, leaflet published by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum in 18 languages:
<https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/pliories-se-18-glosses/>

Information Guide for Beneficiaries of International Protection, leaflet published by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum in 8 languages:
<https://migration.gov.gr/en/odigos-pliories-ddp/>

Refugee.info: The portal in various languages provides information on the asylum procedure and on working and living in Greece. Moreover, you can look for contact details of services offering help by category: <https://greece.refugee.info/en-us>

Help in Greece – UNHCR portal providing information for asylum seekers and refugees in Greece: <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/>

w2eu.info – welcome to europe: Independent information for migrants and refugees in Greece, compiled by a network of activists and organisations from Europe and North Africa, containing addresses of relief organisations:
<https://w2eu.info/en/countries/greece/contacts>

Rights in the Daily Life of the Refugee: Brochure by Caritas Hellas containing information and practical advice for refugees in Greece, published by Caritas Hellas (2020): <https://caritas.gr/en/publications-en/legal-guide-rights-in-the-daily-life-of/>

Authorities

Asylum Service (Υπηρεσία Ασύλου):

Tel. +30 210 69 88 500

Hotline with recorded information for asylum seekers in 10 languages:

Tel. +30 210 69 88 660

Further telephone numbers and contacts as well as addresses of regional offices:

<https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/dioikisi/>

Online portal for appointments: https://asylum.migration.gov.gr/international-protection-registration/registration_appointment?lang=en

Information on the German-Greek bridging programme

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) (German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)

Referat 91D

E-mail: Bridging-project@bamf.bund.de

Post: Frankenstraße 210, 90461 Nürnberg

Information on the integration programme HELIOS+

IOM Greece

E-mail: iom_helios_info@iom.int

Telephone and telegram:

+30 6949333553 (Arabic)

+30 6951084867 (Greek, Ukrainian)

+30 6949072575 (English, French)

+30 6957211015 (Somali)

+30 6949076750 (Farsi)

Addresses of regional HELIOS+ centres at <https://greece.iom.int/helios>

Contacts / local advisory services

Migrant Integration Centers (KEM)

Athens:	Thessaloniki:
Mezonos 45	Monastiriou 53-55
Tel. +30 2105246722	Tel. +30 231331-8646, +30 231331-8647, +30 231331-8623
E-mail: kem@athens.gr	E-mail: kem@thessaloniki.gr

Other cities: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/kentra-entaxis-metanaston/>

Local one-stop shops for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, including legal advice and social counselling

Mobile Info Team

www.mobileinfoteam.org/information-on-asylum
www.mobileinfoteam.org/contact
www.facebook.com/mobileinfoteam

Inquiries via WhatsApp message:

English: +30 694 828 5026	Urdu: +30 694 828 5104
Arabic: +30 694 222 2535	French/Kurdish: +30 694 828 5102
Farsi/Dari: +30 694 228 8922	

Information and advice on the asylum procedure, integration, family reunification and legal advice for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece

Solidarity Now

www.solidaritynow.org/en/

Athens: Solidarity Center	Thessaloniki: Solidarity Center
2 Domokou & Philadelphias str.	25D Ioanni Koletti str.
Tel. +30 210 8220883	Tel: +30 2310 555263 / +30 2310 555264
E-mail: athens@solidaritynow.org	E-mail: thebluecenter@solidaritynow.org

Social counselling, legal advice, careers guidance

MERAKI Humanitarian Support

Victoria Community Centre (VCC)

Filis 68

10434 Athens

Tel. +30 6943682254

E-mail: merakithiras35@gmail.com

www.merakihumanitariansupport.com/meraki-in-athens

Social counselling, support in connection with bureaucratic matters (e.g. application for tax number and social security number)

NAOMI – Ecumenical Workshop for Refugees

Ptolemaion 29A

54630 Thessaloniki

Tel. +30 2311 243415

E-mail: naomi.thess@gmail.com

www.naomi.gr

Social counselling

Caritas Hellas

Adama Center Social Spot

Paraskevopoulou 3

Athens

Tel. +30 6945267788 (for appointments)

E-mail: socialspot@caritas.gr

<https://caritas.gr/en/programs-en/employability-center/>

Advice in connection with job search

Action Aid

Athens: ActionAid's Community Centre

Petras 93

10444 Kolonos

Tel. +30 215 555 7345

E-mail: athens@actionaid.org

<https://athens.actionaid.gr/>

Social counselling, careers guidance

Thessaloniki: ActionAid's Youth Centre

Katholikon 4

Thessaloniki

Tel. +30 231 118 2310

E-mail: thessaloniki@actionaid.org

<https://youthcentre.actionaid.gr/>

Educational opportunities and careers guidance for people between the age of 18 and 30

Hellenic Red Cross

Refugee Support and Information Hotline

Emergency number for refugees: +30 210 5140440

www.redcross.gr/tomeas-koinonikis-pronoias/

Athens:

Multifunctional Refugee Center (MFC)

Alkiviadou 4

Tel. +30 210 5126300, +30 210 8231348

E-mail: mf@redcross.gr

Thessaloniki:

Multifunctional Refugee Center (MFC)

Konstantinou Karamanlis 67

Tel. +30 2310 270914

E-mail: mfc-thes@redcross.gr

METAdrasi

E-mail: info@metadrasi.org

<https://metadrasi.org/>

Athens:

Mitsaki 15

Tel. +30 214 100 8700

Thessaloniki:

Aisopou 2-8

Tel. +30 2314 07 04 33

Integration services, protection of vulnerable persons and minors

Legal advice

Greek Council for Refugees

Solomou 25

Tel.: +30 210 3800990-1

E-mail: gcr1@gcr.gr

<https://gcr.gr/en/>, <https://gcr.gr/en/gcr-helpline/>

Equal Rights Beyond Borders

Akadimias 84

10678 Athens

Tel. +30 698 196 5653

E-mail: athens@equal-rights.org

<https://equal-rights.org/>

Legal advice on the asylum procedure, on family reunification within the EU

European Lawyers in Lesvos ELIL

<https://www.europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu/>

Athens:
Leof. Alexandras 40
WhatsApp/Tel.: +30 6947208773
E-mail: athens@europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu

Thessaloniki:
Ioannou Farmaki 17
WhatsApp/Tel.: +30 6947612439
E-mail: thessaloniki@elil.eu

Contacts on Lesbos and Samos: www.europeanlawyersinlesvos.eu/contact
Legal advice, advice on the asylum procedure

Equal Legal Aid (ELA)

Tel. +30 697 001 7915

E-mail: contact@equallegalaid.org
www.equallegalaid.org/contact/

Legal advice on the asylum procedure for asylum seekers in northern Greece

Health care and advice

Médecins du Monde (MdM) Greece

www.mdmgreece.gr/en/

Athens:
Sapfous Street 12
Tel. +30 210 3213150
E-mail: info@mdmgreece.gr

Thessaloniki:
Ptolemeon 29A
Tel. +30 2310 566641
E-mail: thessaloniki@mdmgreece.gr

Open practices for migrants and refugees

Praksis (Programs of Development, Social Support and Medical Cooperation)

www.praksis.gr/en

Community Center Athens: Sarpidonos 24 Tel. +30 210 8213704 E-mail: info@praksis.gr	Thessaloniki Polyclinic: Arkadioupoleos 1 Tel. +30 2310 556145
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Free basic medical care

Vulnerable persons

KETHI

Headquarters:

Pindarou 2, 10671 Athens

Tel. +30 210 38 98 000

Hotline 15900

E-mail: kethi@kethi.gr

14 counselling centres in the regional capitals:

www.kethi.gr/symboyleytika-kentra, www.kethi.gr/en/counseling-centers

Public institution for women who have suffered gender-based violence

Psychosocial counselling, accommodation in women's refuges

Babel Day Care Centre

72, I. Drosopoulou st.

112 57 Athens

Tel. +30 2108616280 und +30 2108616266

E-mail: babel@syn-eirmos.gr

<https://babeldc.gr>

Mental health care irrespective of residence status

A21

Tel. + 30 2310 537 690

Hotline: 1109

E-mail: info.gr@A21.org

www.a21.org/content/greece/gr4wco

Psychosocial counselling and safe houses for victims of human trafficking

Information on assistance in returning to the country of origin:

IOM Greece

6 Dodekanisou Str.

17456 Alimos, Athens

Tel. +30 210 9919040

WhatsApp/Viber hotlines: <https://greece.iom.int/avrr-hotlines>

E-mail: iomathens@iom.int

Further information: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/gas/d-o-m/>

Other regional services in Athens and Thessaloniki

Services for migrants, refugees and vulnerable persons in Athens:

<https://www.accmr.gr/en/>

Overview of services offering help in the Athens region and in Thessaloniki:

- Athens Guide for Asylum Seekers & Refugees:
<https://help.unhcr.org/greece/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2024/01/2024-City-Guide-Athens.pdf>
- Thessaloniki Guide for Asylum Seekers & Refugees:
<https://help.unhcr.org/greece/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2024/01/2024-City-Guide-Thessaloniki.pdf>

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- Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, <https://migration.gov.gr/en/>; leaflet "An Overview of International Protection Procedures in Greece"; <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Overview-of-Asylum-Procedure-English.pdf>
- UNHCR, portal "Help in Greece", <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/>
- Info portal Refugee.Info, <https://greece.refugee.info/en-us>
- Caritas Hellas, www.caritas.gr/
- Deutscher Caritasverband e.V., Dept. Caritas international
- Greek Council for Refugees, <https://gcr.gr/>
- NAOMI – Ökumenische Werkstatt für Flüchtlinge, <https://naomi.gr/>



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