European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Greece

Introduction

While close to 857 000 people transited through Greece in 2015, in 2016 more than 173 000 people arrived to the country by sea alone. With the closure of the so-called ‘Balkan migration route’ in March 2016, tens of thousands of refugees were left stranded in the country. Under the EU Emergency Support Instrument, the European Union has allocated more than €643 million for the response to the refugee situation in Greece.

What are the needs?

From the period from 2015 to 2016, Greece experienced an unprecedented influx of migrants and refugees fleeing war and deprivation in their home countries in the Middle East and south Asia, or in search of a better and safer life in the EU. The closure of the border between North Macedonia and Greece in early March 2016 left thousands of refugees and migrants stranded in Greece – often without adequate accommodation, healthcare, and access to education.

The overall humanitarian situation of refugees and migrants on the mainland has substantially improved over months. The situation on the islands is challenging as migrants and refugees arriving on the islands after 20 March 2016 have to stay there until a decision on their asylum application has been taken.
How are we helping?

Under the EU Emergency Support Instrument, the EU has allocated more than €643 million for the response to the refugee situation in Greece. This sum has been contracted to the EU’s humanitarian aid partners in Greece such as United Nations bodies, the Red Cross/Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The EU’s flagship initiative under the EU Emergency Support Instrument is the ‘Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation’ (ESTIA) programme that helps refugees and their families rent urban accommodation, and provides them with cash assistance. The total of emergency support to Greece through the ESTIA programme since its announcement in 2017 amounts to €304 million.

The rental accommodation component of the programme with UNHCR improved the living conditions of refugees by providing up to 27,000 urban accommodation places in apartments. Up to 1,600 of these places are located on the Greek islands, with the rest (up to 25,400) rented in cities and towns on mainland Greece. A number of municipalities in Greece are also formally part of this project.

The programme’s cash assistance component with UNHCR establishes a basic social safety net for all asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, by providing them with pre-defined monthly cash allocations through a dedicated card. The initiative currently helps 63,000 refugees and asylum seekers meet their basic needs in a dignified manner. The allocations are consistent across the country, pegged to the Greek emergency social safety net, and based on the refugees’ family size. At the same time, this assistance is re-injected into the local economy, family shops, and service providers.

In addition to ESTIA funding, the EU Emergency Support Instrument has provided almost €340 million through 18 humanitarian partners, in order to address further humanitarian needs in Greece, including shelter, primary health care, psycho-social support, improved hygiene conditions and education.

Back in 2015, the European Union helped coordinate the arrival of in-kind assistance to Greece through the European Civil Protection Mechanism. In total, twenty participating states to the Mechanism offered more than 200,000 items to Greece in response to the immediate needs created by the crisis with items such as tents, beds, sleeping bags, blankets, hygiene kits, power generators, water pumps, firefighting equipment and other specialised equipment.

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations - B-1049 Brussels, Belgium - E-mail: echo-info@ec.europa.eu
Website: http://ec.europa.eu/echo - Facebook: @ec.humanitarian.aid - Twitter: @eu_echo - Instagram: @eu_echo