



MIGRATION

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

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Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	5
Introduction	7
1. The Migrant Population in Greece.....	8
2. Asylum Seekers and Refugee Status	18
3. Irregular Migration Flows, Return and Readmissions.....	30
4. Ukrainian Refugees	34
5. Reception System, Accommodation, Integration	35
6. Political and Institutional Developments.....	40
7. Concluding Remarks.....	43

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024**Figures**

Figure 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece (TCN and EU citizens), 2015-2024 (as of September).....	9
Figure 2: Stay permits by purpose (September 2023 - September 2024)	12
Figure 3: Top 10 ethnicities with Golden Visas, September 2024	14
Figure 4: Rate of participation in labour market (%), 3rd Quarters of 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.	14
Figure 5: Lodged Asylum Applications, 2016 – September 2024	24
Figure 6: TCNs resident in RICs, January 2023 - September 2024	36

Tables

Table 1: Resident population by sex, age, and citizenship, 2021	8
Table 2: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2024 (as of September 2024).....	10
Table 3: Valid resident permits for third-country nationals by gender, 2015-2024	11
Table 4: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 10 nationalities)	12
Table 5: Permanent residence permits for investment 2022-2024.....	13
Table 6: Arrival Flows, January 2023 - September 2024.....	19
Table 7: Residents on the Islands (September 2023 – September 2024).....	20
Table 8: Transfers from the Islands to the mainland September 2023 – September 2024	21
Table 9: Recognition of refugee status 1st and 2nd Instances, 2016-2024 (as of September)	21
Table 10: Recognition of Subsidiary Protection Status, 2016-2024 (as of September).....	22
Table 11: Pending decisions 1st and 2nd Instances, January 2023 – September 2024.....	23
Table 12: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2023 & 2024 (as of September)	25
Table 13: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2023 & 2024 (as of September)	26
Table 14: Pending asylum decisions from January 2023 to September 2024	27
Table 15: TCNs apprehended for irregular stays and employment, 2023	30
Table 16: Returns by Category, January 2023 & 2024 (as of September)	31
Table 17: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, January-December 2023.....	34
Table 18: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, January-September 2024.....	34
Table 19: Migrants and Asylum Seekers accommodated in RICs, 2023 & 2024 (as of September)	36
Table 20: Distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, September 2023 – September 2024 ..	37
Table 21: Registration at Helios Programme	38
Table 22: Acquisition of Greek Citizenship by category (2020-2023).....	41

Executive Summary

This Working Paper provides an in-depth analysis of migration trends, asylum processes, integration policies, and legislative developments in Greece, covering data from 2023 and the first nine months of 2024. It examines key demographic changes, policy shifts, and challenges shaping Greece's migration governance.

One of the most pressing issues remains Greece's population decline, driven by low birth rates, increased mortality, and emigration. Between 2011 and 2021, the country's permanent population decreased by 383,805, with net emigration (-156,339) and natural decline (-227,466) as primary drivers. At the same time, the migration population decreased by 16.1% compared to 2011 census, while the employed migration work force dropped by 55% between 2011-2023 (from 375,000 to 170,000). It is estimated that approximately 250,000 people of migrant origin have left the country in mid-2010'. As of September 2024, 816,790 legally residing immigrants accounted for 7.79% of the total population, with Albanians (57.5%) remaining the dominant group, followed by Chinese nationals (6.1%).

Meanwhile, migration pressures have intensified. In 2023, 46,095 arrivals were recorded, a 169.22% increase from 2022. This upward trend persisted into 2024, with 37,049 new arrivals by September, represented a 25% increase from the same period in 2023. Specifically, arrivals on the Aegean Island surged by 94% between January and August 2024 (compared to 2023), though they declined by 33.81% in September 2024. The majority of new arrivals originated from Syria (10,930), Afghanistan (7,071), and Egypt (3,530), with women and children comprising 42%. Additionally, UAMs accounted for 17% of arrivals, with mostly of them from Somalia, Afghanistan, and Syria. Overall, the number of unaccompanied and separated children has seen a dramatic increase, from 1,490 in 2023 to around 3,000 in 2024.

However, despite rising arrivals, returns remained significantly lower, continuing the negative balance trend of the previous year. In 2024, only 5,280 deportations were carried out, compared to 37,049 new arrivals, mirroring the pattern from 2023 (5,140 returns vs. 29,714 arrivals). At the same time, the number of in-camp residents on the Greek islands dropped 35%, with Lesbos (-71.41%) and Kos (-30.44%) seeing the largest decreases. Consequently, the asylum system has faced mounting pressure, with applications rising by 40.03% (50,039 cases) between January and September 2024. Syrians (28.7%) and Afghans (20.3%) led these applications while transfers from the islands to the mainland increased by 121.16% compared to 2023. Simultaneously, irregular arrivals rose by 24.69%, yet returns remained persistently low (5,280 vs. 37,049 arrivals).

Greece has continued to provide support for displaced Ukrainians, issuing 26,848 temporary protection permits by December 2023, which increased to 31,781 by September 2024. Importantly, temporary protection was extended until March 2025, ensuring legal residency, employment access, and essential rights for beneficiaries.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has found Greece guilty of carrying out systematic pushbacks of asylum seekers, marking a significant ruling in the context of the country's migration policy. It was the

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

first time that Greece has been publicly condemned for carrying out a policy it has long denied, and the first time the human rights court has examined a complaint of pushback by authorities in the country. As a response to these allegations, Greece introduced a new Complaints Mechanism aimed at enhancing protection for TCNs and strengthening oversight of human rights violations.

Regarding naturalization trends, 13,875 foreign nationals acquired Greek citizenship in 2023, an increase from 13,259 in 2022. Notably, second-generation applicants accounted for 50.84% of these naturalizations, reflecting a slight decline from 51.79% in 2022.

On the legislative front, the Immigration Code (Law 5038/2023) introduced electronic applications for issuing and renewing resident permits, flexible permit types, and investment-based permits. Furthermore, a new regularization program granted three-year residence, and work permits to undocumented migrants, addressing labor shortages in agriculture, construction, and tourism. This permit allows access to employment, family reunification, and potential naturalization. Applications opened on February 9, 2024, and close on December 31, 2024. By year-end, 43,625 applications had been submitted, with 9,314 receiving temporary permits, 27,351 under review, and 6,298 rejected. Despite initial estimates, the total number of regularized migrants falls far below the projected 300,000.

Despite Greece's long-held slogan that it pursues a "strict but fair" migration policy, the country struggles to balance border security with its humanitarian obligations amid growing irregular migration pressures. While regularization remains an important tool, bilateral agreements with third countries can help address labor market needs and strengthen migration diplomacy. To ensure long-term success, Greece needs to improve these agreements by improving administrative procedures, strengthening worker protection, and recognizing skills. In terms of integration, Greece's efforts have been rated "Equality on Paper" (MIPEX), highlighting significant gaps in the integration of refugees and migrants. Although progress has been made in access to the labour market and education, fragmented implementation and the absence of a comprehensive inclusion strategy continue to hinder effectiveness.

Introduction

This Working Paper provides an overview of the latest trends and developments in international migration flows and policies in Greece. It presents comprehensive data and policy insights covering the entirety of 2023 and the first nine months of 2024, offering valuable context for identifying emerging migration patterns.

The analysis explores the composition and socio-demographic characteristics of the immigrant population in Greece, examining its size, distribution, and labour market participation. Special attention is given to the flows and stock of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, particularly those entering through Greek-Turkish sea and land borders.

Additionally, the report highlights key policy developments in migration and asylum policy during 2023-2024, addressing the challenges and priorities Greece faces in managing migration and integration policies.

The report is structured into six chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a broad overview of recent migration trends, drawing on the statistical data to analyze the size, composition, and main characteristics of the migrant population, including their participation in the labour market.

Chapter 2 examines the presence of asylum seekers and refugees, assessing their size, demographic profile, and legal status. It also covers asylum applications, Dublin cases, relocation efforts, the decongestion of the Aegean Islands, and transfers to the mainland, with a particular focus on unaccompanied minors (UAMs).

Chapter 3 addresses irregular migration flows, returns, and readmissions, providing insights into deportation procedures, detention policies, fast-track asylum processes, and push-back allegations.

Chapter 4 focuses on the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Greece, outlining specific policies and measures implemented to support this group.

Chapter 5 examines the reception system, accommodation schemes, and broader integration policies for asylum seekers and refugees. Special emphasis is placed on the housing and protection of unaccompanied minors.

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

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

1. The Migrant Population in Greece

The 2021 Census underscores a notable decline in Greece's population, primarily driven by lower birth rates among Greek women, increased mortality, and emigration of Greek citizens.¹ While emigration remained below 100,000 (Table 1), its impact was still significant. Specifically, the Greek population saw a decrease of 422,007, largely due to a natural decline of 326,658 and emigration totaling 95,349. In contrast, the foreign population expanded by 38,202, as a natural increase of 99,192 that surpassed emigration figures of 60,990. Looking at the broader picture, between 2011 and 2021, Greece's permanent population shrank by 383,805, a result of both natural decline (-227,466) and net emigration (-156,339).

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](#)

¹ See the Census Results of Population and Housing 2021 here: [Booklet Αποτελέσματα Πληθυσμου2023 II EN FINAL2 WEB.pdf \(statistics.gr\)](#)

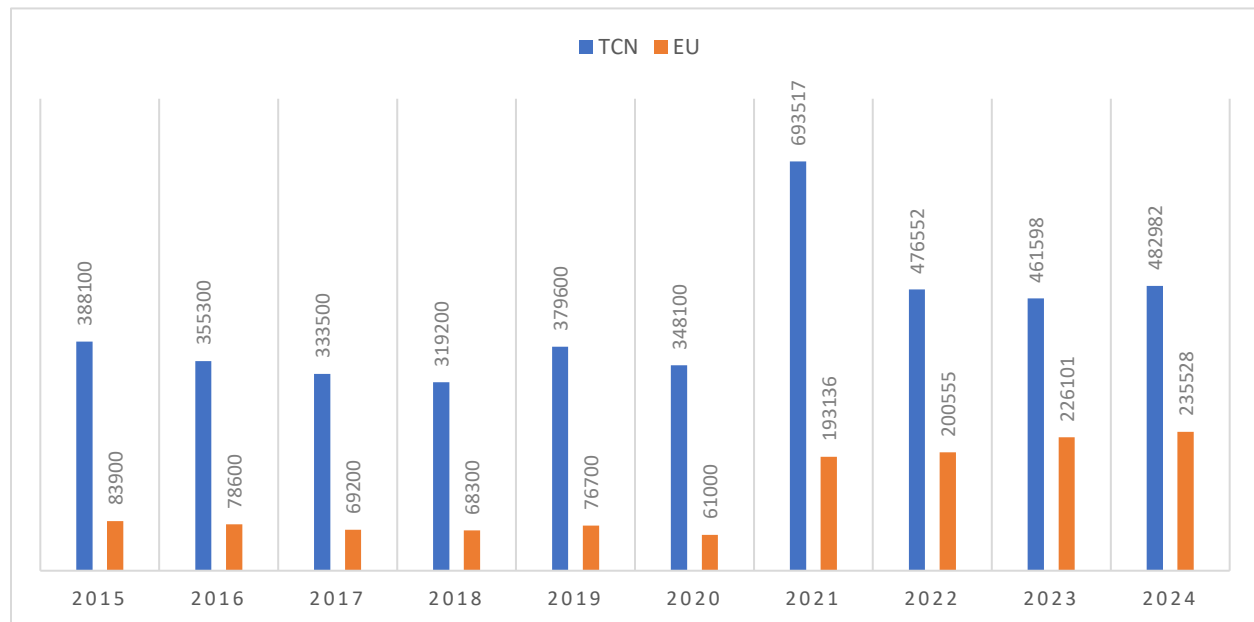
Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Migration flow data from the 2021 National Census, published in August 2023, reveal that Greece is home to 765,598 individuals with foreign citizenship, representing a portion of the country's total population of 10,482,487, according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT).²

As of January 1, 2023, Greece's net migration was estimated at 16,355 individuals, reflecting the difference between 96,662 immigrants and 80,307 emigrants. Looking ahead, the net migration rate for 2024 is projected at -0.543 per 1,000 population, marking a 30.21% improvement compared to 2023. In contrast, the 2023 net migration rate stood at -0.778 per 1,000 population, already showing a 15.98% improvement from 2022.³

According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum's monthly and yearly reports, the number of third-country nationals residing in Greece as of September 2024 was 482,982, reflecting a slight increase of 4.63% compared to September 2023 (461,598) (Figure 1).⁴ When factoring in 77,750 beneficiaries of international protection, 235,528 EU citizens, and 20,530 co-ethnics, the total number of legally residing immigrants in the country is estimated at 816,790, which represents 7.79% of the country's total population. Additionally, between January and September 2024, 50,039 asylum applications were submitted,⁵ marking a substantial 29% increase from the 35,735 applications filed during the same period in 2023.⁶

Figure 1: Stock of foreign population in Greece (TCN and EU citizens), 2015-2024 (as of September)



Source: [Information Note on Migration September 2024, Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#)

² Census Results of Population and Housing 2021, Hellenic Statistical Authority, August 2023.

³ See: <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/GRC/greece/net-migration#:~:text=The%20current%20net%20migration%20rate,a%2013.78%25%20decline%20from%202021.>

⁴ Information Note on Legal Migration September 2024, Section B, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁵ Information Note on Asylum September 2024, page 5, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

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

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

According to migration and migrant population statistics published by Eurostat in March 2024, the non-national population residing in Greece as of January 2023 totaled 764,800, representing 7.3% of the country's total population.⁷ Of this group, 649,900 individuals (6.2%) were citizens of non-EU countries, while 114,900 individuals (1.1%) were citizens of EU member states, underscoring the diverse composition of Greece's non-Greek population.

Data from the 2024 Labour Force Survey (2nd Quarter) reveals a 10.69% decrease in the total foreign population (aged 15 and over), with 264,900 foreign citizens residing in the country in 2024 (2nd Quarter), compared to 296,600 in 2023 (3rd Quarter).⁸ However, despite this decrease, the foreign population, which includes both third-country nationals (TCNs) and EU-27 citizens, accounted for 8.10% (848,571) of Greece's total resident population in September 2024 (Table 2). This marks 1.9% increase compared to September 2023, when the foreign population represented 7.2% (758,016) of the total.

Table 2: Stock of foreign population in Greece, 2024 (as of September 2024)

	Size of immigrant stock	% of total resident population
Total TCN population	592,513	5.65
Total EU27 countries' citizens (non-Greek)	235,528	2.25
Total recognized refugees	77,750	0,74
Total expatriates	20,530	0.20
Total Residence Permits of Temporary Protection	31,781	0.30
Total immigrant stock	848,571	8.10
Total population in Greece	10,482,487*	100.00

Sources: [Monthly Information Note September 2024 – Ministry of Migration and Asylum](#) / *2021 Population Census Data published in August 2023

A closer look at the valid residence permits for TCNs, as detailed in the September 2024 report from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 3), reveals a steady rise of 3.19% in the number of TCNs, increasing from 468,038 in December 2023 to 482,982. This upward trend is further underscored by a 4.63% increase in the total number of valid residence permits in September 2023,⁹ compared to the same period in the previous year.

⁷ Migration and migrant population statistics, March 2024.

⁸ Labour Force Quarterly Data, 3rd Quarter 2023, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

⁹ There is no gender-based statistics available after April 2020.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024**Table 3: Valid resident permits for third-country nationals by gender, 2015-2024**

Valid resident permits TCNs	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Men	298.800	303.289	291.785	286.774	286.886	282.426	n/a	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	n/a
Total	572.369	579.736	556.586	544,43	546.931	537.892	693.517	476.552	468,038	482.982

Sources: 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 2024 refer to 30 September 2024.

Composition and Features of the Immigrant Population

In terms of the composition of the migration population, Albanians make up the largest group, comprising and estimated 57.5% of Greece's foreign population. Chinese nationals follow as the second-largest group, accounting for 6.1% of the foreign population (Table 4). Over recent years, the number of Chinese citizens in Greece has steadily risen, with China moving from third place in 2021 (3.9%) to second place in 2022 (4.9%) and 2023 (5.7%), marking a 0.8% increase from the previous year. This positive trend has continued into the first nine months of 2024, with a further 0.4% increase. Following closely are the Pakistani, Georgian, and Bangladeshi communities, which rank as the third, fourth, and fifth largest immigrant groups, representing 4.6%, 4.1%, and 3.1% of the foreign population, respectively. These trends, as outlined in a September 2024 report by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, paint a clear picture of the evolving diversity within Greece's immigrant population.¹⁰

¹⁰ [Information Note on Legal Migration September 2024](#) – Ministry of Migration and Asylum (p.2, table no. 3).

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

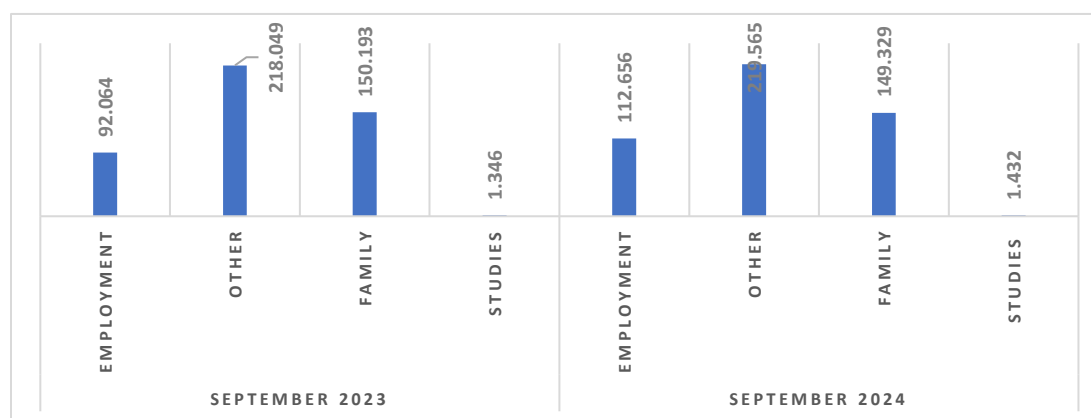
Table 4: National Composition of the Migrant Population (top 10 nationalities)

Country of Origin	Population		TCN valid permits 2022 -2023			
	Census 2011 Number	Census 2021 Number	on 31.12.2023		on 31.09.2024	
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	480,851	374,296	278,745	59.6	277,478	57.5
China	n/a	n/a	28,358	6.1	29,651	6.1
Pakistan	34,178	35,309	19,157	4.1	21,995	4.6
Georgia	27,407	26,083	19,456	4.2	19,849	4.1
Bangladesh	11,333	17,189	10,566	2.3	15,119	3.1
Russia	13,809	13,415	14,854	3.2	14,550	3.0
Ukraine	17,008	16,408	13,613	2.9	13,781	2.9
Egypt	10,455	n/a	9,906	2.1	10,710	2.2
India	11,333	n/a	9,129	2.0	9,621	2.0
Philippines	9,807	n/a	7,022	1.5	8,226	1.7

Sources: [Information Note December 2023](#), [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum, & [National Census 2021](#), data published in August 2023.

As of September 2024, the total number of valid residence permits in Greece has reached 482,982, reflecting a 4.63% increase from September 2023 (461,598). When breaking down the permits by purpose, as detailed by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the largest category is "other," with 219,565 permits. Following this, "family reunification" comes in second, with 149,329 permits, while "employment" ranks third, with 112,656 permits (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Stay permits by purpose (September 2023 - September 2024)



Source: [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

A comparison of the 2024 data with 2023 reveals a slight decline in residence permits issued for "family reunification," with a reduction of 864 permits (-0.58%). In contrast, permits issued for "other" purposes saw a modest increase of 1,516 (+0.70%), while those granted for "employment" experienced a significant rise of 20,596 (+22.39%), signaling an upward trend in these categories (Figure 2).

Over the past three years, the strategic investor permit scheme has attracted approximately 97,375 individual permanent investors and their family members (Table 5). As of September 30, 2024, a total of 46,350 beneficiaries, including their family members, held this type of permit, comprising 10,257 renewals and 36,093 first issuances. This represents an 11.2% increase compared to the residence permits issued in 2023 and a 31.5% rise compared to 2022.

Table 5: Permanent residence permits for investment 2022-2024

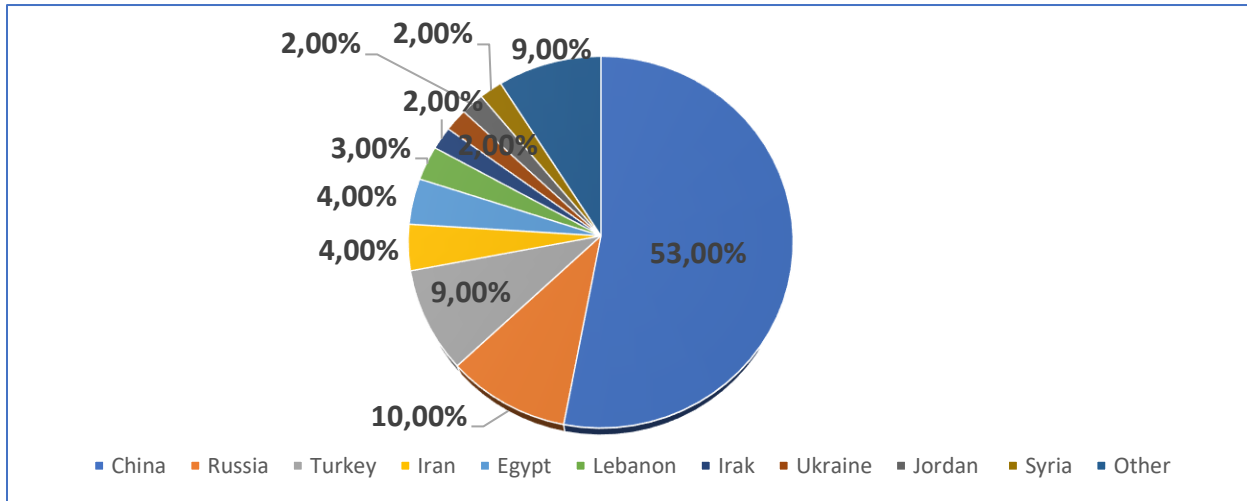
Type of resident permit	2022			2023			2024 (as of September)		
	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL	Permanent Investor	Family Member	TOTAL
Permanent residence permits for investment (Golden Visa) – FIRST ISSUANCE	9,802	17,834	27,636	12,126	21,520	33,646	12,742	23,297	36,093
Permanent residence permits for investment (Golden Visa) – RENEWAL	1,630	2,481	4,111	3,035	4,461	7,496	4,172	6,085	10,257

Sources: [Information Note December 2022](#), [Information Note December 2023](#) & [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In terms of nationalities, the majority of beneficiaries of the Golden Visa scheme in September 2024 were from China, with 6,820 beneficiaries - a slight decrease of 1.54% compared to September 2023 (6,927). China was followed by Turkey with 1,067 beneficiaries and Lebanon with 708 beneficiaries. As shown in Figure 3, Chinese nationals accounted for nearly 53% of the total investors under the Golden Visa scheme in Greece as of September 2024.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Figure 3: Top 10 ethnicities with Golden Visas, September 2024

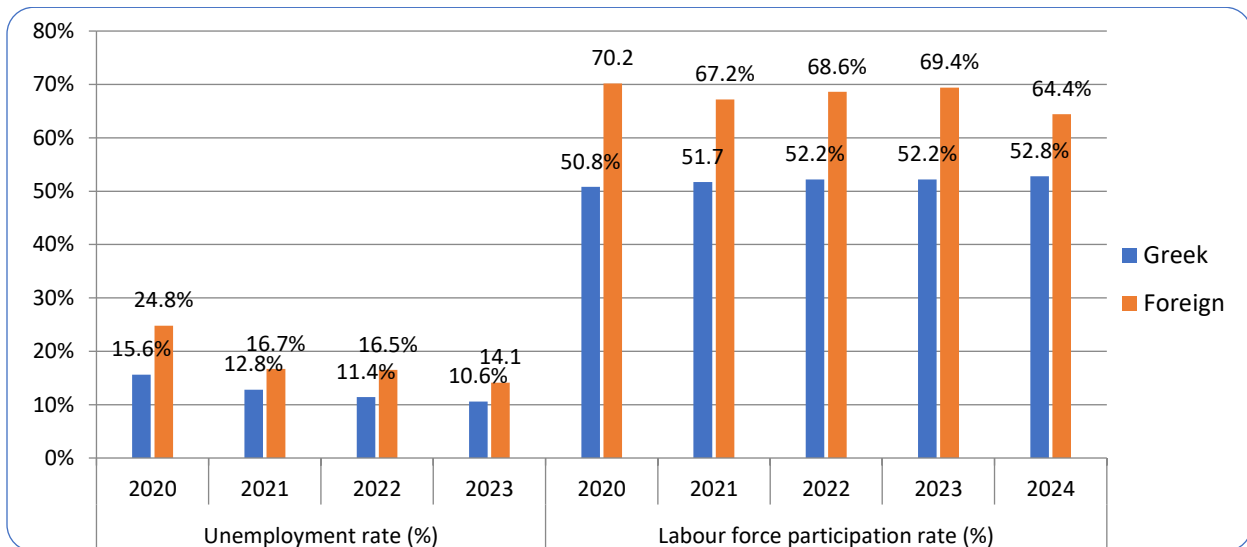


Source: [Information Note B September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Immigrant Labour Market Participation

In Greece in 2023, the labour force participation rate among the foreign population was 69.4%, compared to 52.2% for the Greek population.¹¹ By the second quarter of 2024, the labour force participation rate for foreigners had decreased to 64.4%, a decline of 5.0%. This reduction narrowed the gap between the Greek and foreign labour force rates by 11.6% (Figure 4).¹²

Figure 4: Rate of participation in labour market (%), 3rd Quarters of 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024



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 & 2nd Quarter of 2024

¹¹ Labour Force Survey, 3rd Quarter 2023, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

¹² Labour Force Survey, 2nd Quarter 2024, Hellenic Statistical Authority published in September 2024.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

According to the Labour Force Survey, in the second quarter of 2024, the highest labour force participation rate was observed among men, aged 30-44 years of foreign citizenship.¹³ During the same period, the majority of employed individuals were working as employees (69.3%), while a significant share of the labour force has self-employed (19.5%). Part-time employment accounted for 6.5% of the labour force, and individuals in temporary jobs comprised 11% of the total active labour force. Additionally, part-time employment decreased by 0.1% compared to the 3rd quarter of 2023 and by 0.7% compared to the 3rd quarter of 2022.¹⁴

Regarding unemployment, Greece had an unemployment rate of 10% in September 2023, the second highest in Europe after Spain's 12%. By June 2024, Greece's unemployment rate decreased to 9.6%, remaining second after Spain, which recorded 11.5%.¹⁵ Additionally, in Greece the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate showed a slight improvement, dropping from 10% in September 2023 to 9.3% in September 2024. This remains notably higher than the euro area's average, which stood 6.3% in September 2024, down from 6.5% in September 2023.¹⁶ In Greece, the seasonally-adjusted youth unemployment (under 25s) reached its lowest point in September 2024 at 16.3%, a significant decrease of 3.1% compared to 19.4% in September 2023. Despite this improvement, Greece's youth unemployment remained higher than the EU average, which stood at 14.3% in September 2024.¹⁷ As for the migrant unemployment rate, it reached 14.9% in the first nine months of 2024, 0.8% points higher than in September 2023.¹⁸

Legal Developments in Greece's Immigration and Labour Framework

The new Immigration Code (Law 5038/2023) introduces several key changes to the entry and residence for non-EU nationals in Greece,¹⁹ aimed at streamlining administrative procedures and aligning with EU directives, such as Directive 2021/1883/EK. Though originally scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2024, some provisions were delayed allowing for administrative adjustments. The Code introduces several notable updates, particularly regarding residence permits for work and investment purposes:

1. Electronic submission of applications: the Code validates the process of electronically submitting applications for granting and renewing residence permits via the Ministry of Immigration's platform. Upon submission, applicants receive a digital certificate, which remains valid until a decision is issued regarding the residence permit.

¹³ Labour Force Survey: 2nd Quarter 2024, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

¹⁴ Labour Force Survey: 3rd Quarter 2022, Hellenic Statistical Authority.

¹⁵ Unemployment rate in EU member states in June 2024, Statista.com, available at:

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1115276/unemployment-in-europe-by-country/>

¹⁶ See the data for 2023 published by Eurostat here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/17791746/3-03112023-AP-EN.pdf/7de0add9-2fd1-b656-b90d-63aaa97f72ff> & data for 2024 published here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-euro-indicators/w/3-31102024-bp>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Labour Force Survey: 2nd Quarter 2024.

¹⁹ See: <https://migration.gov.gr/nomothesia-1-2/kodikas-metanasteysis/>.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

2. Flexibility in residence permit types: TCNs already residing legally in Greece with a residence permit or national visa can now request a change in the type of residence permit they hold provided under the new Code.

3. Abolition of the residence permit for executives: the residence permits for executives under Law 4251/2014 have been replaced by a new permit under the investment purposes category. This applied to shareholders of companies with a paid-in capital of at least €500,000, and board members of companies or branches with assets or turnover exceeding €4,000,000.

4. Residence permits for investment purposes: the Code revises requirements for investment-related residence permits, though the Golden Visa scheme for real estate investment remains largely unchanged. Key updates include maintaining a minimum investment of €250,000 for real estate in select areas, as long as 10% of the purchase price was paid by July 31, 2023, and extending the deadline for completing property purchase until December 31, 2023.

5. Second-generation immigrants: the Code introduces enhanced rights for second-generation immigrants born and raised in Greece. These include a 10-year residence permits, double the previous five-year validity, and eligibility for young adults who have lived in Greece and completed three years of schooling by age 23 to apply for a residence permit if they pursue vocational training or university studies.

6. Financially independent persons: the residence permit for this category has been redefined as the “residence permit for TCNs with sufficient resources.” Effective on April 1, 2024, this permit is valid for three-year and can be renewed for an equal period.

To ensure a smooth transition to the new regulations, the following deadlines were set:

- The Migration Information System was updated by March 31, 2024.
- The payment deadline for Golden Visa applications based on real estate purchases was extended to April 30, 2024, for those who paid at least 10% of the purchase price by July 31, 2023.

Additionally, the Code addresses Greece’s domestic labour shortages, particularly in sectors reliant on seasonal workers.²⁰ Key provisions for seasonal workers, introduced in 2023 and include:

- A streamlined process for seasonal workers to enter and reside in Greece.
- Seasonal workers are permitted to stay for up to nine months within a twelve-month period, an extension from previous regulations.
- Employers must ensure adequate living conditions for seasonal workers and provide proof of employment.

²⁰ See: https://ypergasias.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FEK-2023-Tefxos-B-02189-downloaded-04_04_2023.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1eWlHv6q5cVj_Jzm7jpFDCxir3X9YdiJ13cr4OkT3lbEGLYRFNkccV85o.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

In April 2023, the Ministry of Labor set the maximum number of seasonal workers for the 2023-2024 period.²¹ Of the 167,925 positions available:

- 20,000 were allocated through bilateral agreements with Egypt and Bangladesh.
- 147,925 were allocated to various sectors, with the majority (113,467 or 76.7%) designated for the primary sector.

Within the primary sector:

- 91,630 positions were allocated to seasonal work lasting 3 to 9 months.
- 16,572 positions were for dependent work lasting 12 months.
- 5,265 positions were for Egyptian fishermen, under a bilateral agreement, for a maximum duration of 11 months.

In December 2023, Law 5078/2023 authorized residence permits for TCNs for employment purposes under Article 103.²² The residence permit is valid for three years and can be extended or converted into a different category upon expiration. This provision is designed to address labor shortages by formalizing employment opportunities for individuals who have already established residency in the country.²³

On March 20, 2024, Joint Ministerial Decision No. 95391/20-03-2024 introduced specific provisions for digital nomads, requiring applicants to provide evidence of remote work and sufficient financial resources.²⁴

At the 88th Thessaloniki International Fair in September 2024, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced Golden Visa updates²⁵ designed to attract foreign investment. These updates include:

- Investments in Greek startups can ensure a five-year residence permit by investing a minimum of €250,000 in a qualifying Greek startup.
- Real estate investment now requires a minimum of €800,000 in high-demand areas.

²¹ See: <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/sto-epipedo-tis-proigoumenis-dietias-oi-metakliseis-ergazomenon-apo-trites-chores-gia-tin-periodo-2023-2024/?fbclid=IwAR2zi0oVYiMizl1iOPOCdWNiJPnd7koULD3Kz0WDWImQ6Axfj-W8VrxysXE>.

²² See: <https://migration.gov.gr/me-eyreia-pleiopsifia-262-psifon-enekrine-i-voyli-tropologia-gia-tin-y-po-oroy-s-apascholisipoliton-triton-choron-stin-ellada-dilosi-toy-y-poyrgoy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-k-dimitri-kairidi/>.

²³ Ministerial Decision No. 133692/20.05.2024 establishes detailed health insurance requirements for third-country nationals applying for or renewing residence permits in Greece. The decision specifies the range of health risks that must be covered by private insurance policies. Applicants must provide proof of insurance from a recognized private insurance provider that meets the specified coverage criteria. This requirement applies to both new residence permit applications and renewals. For more information see: https://ypergasias.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/FEK_2024-05-10_B_2724_%CE%9A%CE%A5%CE%91-%CE%9A%CE%AC%CE%BB%CF%85%CF%88%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%83%CF%86%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8E%CE%BD-%CE%BA%CE%B9%CE%BD%CE%B4%CF%8D%CE%BD%CF%89%CE%BD.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.hg.org/legal-articles/national-entry-visa-and-residence-permit-for-digital-nomads-in-greece-%C2%A0the-documents-required-66901>

²⁵ See: <https://www.grekodom.com/news/2024-09-10/new-investment-option-golden-visa-greece>

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

- Properties purchased through the scheme can no longer be leased as short-term rentals.

Regarding employment rights, Law 5053/2023,²⁶ preserves employees' rights during business transfer, ensuring their employment contracts remain intact.²⁷ This law also introduces key changes including:²⁸

- A maximum probationary period of six months.
- On-demand contracts, guaranteeing a minimum number of paid working hours to ensure job security for employees.

To address labor shortages, particularly agriculture, bilateral agreements have been prioritized.²⁹ As for the agreement between Greece and Egypt,³⁰ an electronic platform has been launched on June 10, 2024, and hosted on the website of Greece's Migration and Asylum Ministry that enables employers in Greece to submit applications for hiring Egyptian seasonal workers.

2. Asylum Seekers and Refugee Status

In 2023, 46,095 people arrived in Greece, 28,973 more than in 2022 (17,122) or a 169.22% increase in registered arrival flows in 2023. The total number of arrivals in the first nine months of 2024 is 37,049 recording an increase of 25% comparing to the same period in 2023 (29,714).³¹ Furthermore, the flows of arrivals to the Aegean islands for September 2024 show to have decreased by -33.81% compared to the corresponding one in 2023(11,470) (Table 9).³²

²⁶ Which amended Presidential Decree 80/2022.

²⁷ This legislation aligns with the EU's Transfers of Undertakings Directive (2001/23/EC).

²⁸ See: <https://www.zeya.com/newsletters/recent-changes-greek-labour-law-eu-directive-transparent-and-predictable-working>.

²⁹ Law 5009/2023 ratifies the agreement between Greece and Egypt for the recruitment of seasonal agricultural workers. For more information see: <https://www.forin.gr/laws/law/4228/n-5009-2023>

³⁰ See: https://ypergasias.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EG_2024-06-18_%CE%95%CF%86%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%BC%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%85%CE%BC%CF%86%CF%89%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%95%CE%9B%CE%9B%CE%91%CE%94%CE%91%CE%A3-%CE%91%CE%99%CE%93%CE%A5%CE%A0%CE%A4%CE%9F%CE%A5.pdf

³¹ Information Note A September 2024, Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics.

³² Information Note A September 2024, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Table 6: Arrival Flows, January 2023 - September 2024

Month & Year	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	FYLAKIO EVROS	TOTAL
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
October 2023	1,361	1,013	1,192	284	0	2,567	877	6,863
November 2023	960	1,268	151	248	50	1,394	513	4,584
December 2023	1,129	1,522	800	190	0	754	539	4,934
Total 2023	5,639	13,045	7,468	2,053	401	10,410	7,079	46,095
January 2024	311	1,403	527	342	116	262	322	3,283
February 2024	477	1,816	369	545	38	222	361	3,828
March 2024	522	348	396	224	18	317	406	2,231
April 2024	174	362	368	255	97	641	596	2,493
May 2024	208	323	678	299	67	1,627	544	3,746
June 2024	138	410	317	164	36	1,305	557	2,927
July 2024	266	390	433	205	161	2,420	821	4,696
August 2024	529	478	565	518	210	3,086	867	6,253
September 2024	200	801	978	488	264	3,790	1,071	7,592
Total 2024 (as per September)	2,825	6,331	4,451	3,040	1,007	13,670	5,545	37,049

Sources: [Information Note December 2023](#) and [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum statistics.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

According to UNHCR statistics, in August 2024, there was an increase in arrivals on the islands with 6,037 people arriving, in contrast to July when 4,319 individuals had arrived. The number of arrivals between January and August 2024 has increased by 94% compared to the same period in 2023.³³ The majority of new arrivals were received by the Dodecanese islands, accounting for 39% of the total, followed Lesvos at 20%, Samos at 14%, Chios at 10%, and other Islands at 17%.³⁴ Most of new arrivals in 2024 are from Syria (10,93), Afghanistan (7,071), and Egypt (3,530). As in the previous year, the majority of arrivals from Afghanistan come in family groups. Almost half of the population were women (16%) and children (26%), while 58% of the arrivals were men.³⁵ 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 2023 (5,140 departures compared with 29,714 arrivals)³⁶, this trend continued during the first nine months of 2024, when there was a negative balance with 37,049 arrivals compared with 5,280 departures.³⁷

Compared to September 2023, the number of in-camps residents on the islands decreased in September 2024 by 35%, compared to the corresponding month of 2023, with Lesvos and Kos experiencing the highest decrease, at 71.41% and 30.44%, respectively (Table 7).³⁸

Table 7: Residents on the Islands (September 2023 – September 2024)

TOTAL RESIDENTS	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	TOTAL + OTHER ISLANDS
September-23	2,385	5,075	4,264	986	2,355	15,143
October-23	3,900	4,253	3,915	1,029	2,713	15,824
November-23	3,882	4,958	3,503	1,040	2,612	16,056
December-23	3,387	5,545	3,905	1,094	2,192	16,139
January-24	3,041	6,072	4,003	1,031	1,840	15,997
February-24	1,965	4,532	2,921	1,116	950	11,488
March-24	1,570	3,317	2,559	1,085	1,001	9,571
April-24	1,191	2,755	2,380	1,138	854	8,348

³³ [UNHCR Sea Arrivals Dashboard](#), August 2024.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ [UNHCR Sea Arrivals Dashboard](#), August 2024.

³⁶ [Information Note A September 2023](#).

³⁷ [Information Note A September 2024](#).

³⁸ Ibid.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

May-24	1,083	1,848	2,361	628	1,128	7,051
June-24	1,288	1,409	2,269	567	1,004	6,577
July-24	1,670	991	1,743	499	1,129	6,066
August-24	1,690	1,190	2,258	1,010	1,949	8,154
September-24	1,659	1,451	3,258	1,010	1,949	8,154
Difference from 30/09/2022	-30.44%	-71.41%	-23.59%	2.43%	-17.24%	-45.15%

Source: [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

As for the transfers of asylum seekers from the islands to the mainland, they decreased by 5% in September 2024 compared to the corresponding month of 2023 (Table 8).³⁹

Table 8: Transfers from the Islands to the mainland September 2023 – September 2024

	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	OTHER ISLANDS	TOTAL
September 2023	606	1,741	687	292	246	399	3,971
September 2024	910	81	475	395	737	1,162	3,760

Source: [Information Note September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum Statistics

The number of asylum applications accepted in 2023 was 24,975 (24,323 in 1st instance and 665 as of 2nd instance). In the first nine months of 2024 the number of asylum applications accepted was 30,138 (29,731 as of 1st instance and 407 as of second instance), thus 20.67% bigger compared to 2023 (Table 9).

Table 9: Recognition of refugee status 1st and 2nd Instances, 2016-2024 (as of September)

TOTAL DECISIONS ON REFUGEE STATUS ISSUED IN THE LAST FIVE 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	13.522	312
2020	26.333	480
2021	13,040	730

³⁹ [Information Note A September 2024](#).

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

2022	18,718	665
2023	24,323	652
2024	29,731	407
TOTAL	150,019	3,512
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	153,531	

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Meanwhile, the total number of asylum applications from January to September 2024 were 40.03% (50,039) higher than the application for refugee status lodged from January to September 2023 (35,735).⁴⁰ The 92.52% of the overall applications (86,846) in the period September 2023 – September 2024 were first-time applications while 7.48% second-time applications.⁴¹

As of September 2023, a total of 629 decisions of subsidiary protection status were issued, including 448 at the 1st instance and 181 at the 2nd instance. In the first nine months of 2024, only 330 subsidiary protection status decisions were issued, making a significant decrease of 47.54% compared to the same period in 2023 (629) (Table 10).⁴²

Table 10: Recognition of Subsidiary Protection Status, 2016-2024 (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	590	221
2024 (as of September)	244	86

⁴⁰ [Information Note September 2023](#).

⁴¹ [Information Note September 2024, Annex A](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁴² [Information Note September 2023, Annex A](#) & [Information Note September 2023, Annex A](#).

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

TOTAL	20,533	23,381
TOTAL FOR BOTH INSTANCES	23,381	

Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

On the other hand, the number of pending decisions decreased by 13.65%, from 25,043 in September 2023 to 21,625 in September 2024 (Table 11).⁴³

Table 11: Pending decisions 1st and 2nd Instances, January 2023 – September 2024

MONTH	PENDING WILLS	PENDING DECISIONS, A' INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS B' INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS TOTAL	- DIFFERENCE (%)	DECISIONS A' INSTANCE	DECISIONS B' INSTANCE
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
July-23	0	17,067	1,937	19,004	6.60%	2,687	975
Aug-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
Oct-23	0	25,363	1,916	27,279	8.93%	8,350	1,029
Nov-23	0	28,594	1,896	30,490	11.77%	7,810	875
Dec-23	0	29,885	2,845	32,730	7.35%	5,454	589
Jan-24	0	29,066	2,960	32,026	-2.15%	7,386	1,008
Feb-24	0	28,915	2,633	31,548	-1.49%	6,203	1,461
March-24	0	27,362	2,731	30,093	-4.61%	5,777	1,076
April-24	0	22,645	2,906	25,551	-15.09%	9,110	1,153
May-24	0	19,431	4,476	21,907	-14.26%	6,735	1,050
June-24	0	18,265	2,643	20,908	-4.56%	6,346	1,019

⁴³ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

July-24	0	17,885	3,160	21,045	0.66%	6,845	1,098
Aug-24	0	18,208	3,622	21,830	3.73%	6,555	857
Sep-24	0	18,441	3,184	21,625	-0.94%	6,966	1,468

Source: *Information Note on Asylum September 2024*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

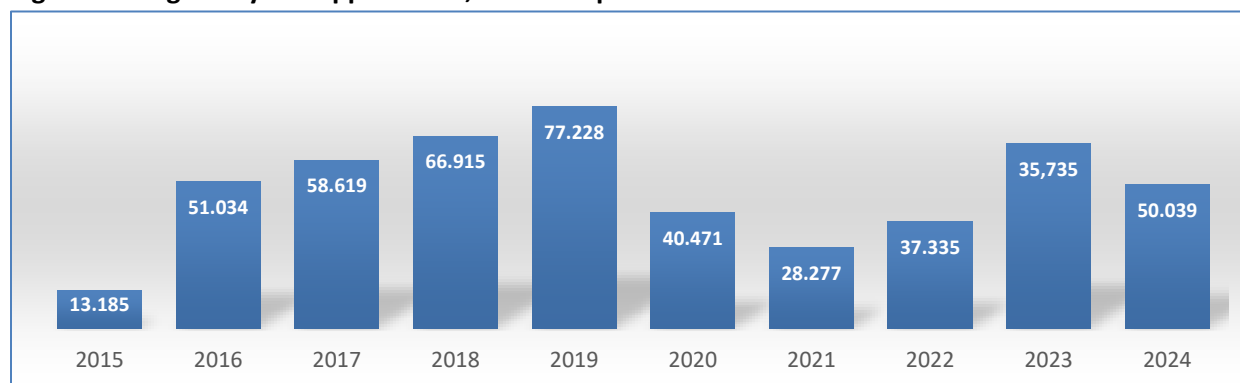
Overall, asylum applications from January to September 2024 were up 40.03% (50,039) compared to January-September 2023 (35,735).⁴⁴ A total of 86,846 asylum applications (80,352 of 1st instance and 6,494 of 2nd instance) were accepted in the first nine months of 2024, which marked 63.76% increase compared to the same period in 2023 (33,813 in total). The Asylum Service issued positive decisions for 48.4% of the total applications at the 1st instance and 5% at 2nd instance, respectively, while in September 2023 the respective positive decisions stood at 40% (1st instance).

In addition, a comparison of data from September 2023 and September 2024 shows a significant overall decrease of 13.65% in pending cases, dropping from 25,043 in September 2023 to 21,625 in September 2024. Notably, pending 1st-instance decisions fell by 19.86%, while pending 2nd-instance decisions increased by 56.69%. Finally, during the first nine months of 2024, refugee status and subsidiary protection were granted to a total of 838 UAMs.⁴⁵

Asylum Applications

The developments discussed briefly above have had a visible impact on Greece's asylum system in the form of an increase of 40.03% in asylum applications in September 2024 (50,039) compared with the same period of 2023 (35,735) (Figure 5).⁴⁶

Figure 5: Lodged Asylum Applications, 2016 – September 2024



Source: *Information Note on Asylum, September 2024*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum

⁴⁴ *Information Note on Asylum September 2023* & *Information Note on Asylum September 2024*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁴⁵ *Information Note on Asylum September 2024*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 11e).

⁴⁶ *Information Note on Asylum September 2023* & *Information Note on Asylum September 2024*, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Of 50,039 applications been lodged as of September, 58% of them on the islands and 42% on the mainland.⁴⁷

In relation to the applicants' nationalities in 2023, the most applications were lodged by Syrians (21.8%), followed by Afghans (14.8) and Palestinians (10.5) (Table 12). As of September 2024, the Syrian along with Afghans headed the list by 28.7% and 20.3% respectively, while Egyptians, Turkish and Palestinians follow with 10.1%, 6.5% and 3.7%, respectively. Apparently, the situation regarding the applications by country of origin has changed slightly in 2024 comparing with 2023 since new countries such as Nepal and Yemen are entering the list of top ten nationalities. At the same time, the application from Egyptian and Turkish nationals have seen an increase compared to 2023.⁴⁸

Table 12: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2023 & 2024 (as of September)

Country of origin	2023	Country of Origin	2024 (as of September)
syria	14,015	Syria	14,360
afghanistan	9,488	Afghanistan	10,073
Palestine	6,736	EGYPT	5,073
iraq	6,455	TURKEY	3,245
pakistan	4,077	PALESTINE	1,872
Somalia	2,935	PAKISTAN	1,798
tyrkey	2,714	IRAQ	1,693
Egypt	2,498	Eritrea	1,475
ERITREA	1,826	NEPAL	1,149
congo (DRC)	1,528	YEMEN	1,119
Other	11,940	Other	8,091
Total	64,212	Total	50,093

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum Dec.2023](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#)

It is interesting to highlight the shift in the nationalities of asylum seekers. 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. This can be interpreted in the light of the developments in Syria that period, as well as the likelihood of asylum seekers being returned to Turkey based on the “safe third country” concept. In 2023 and 2024 Syrian are dominating again the list.

⁴⁷ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁴⁸ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 7d)

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

In 2023, 52,314 first-instance decisions were issued, while a total of 61.923 decisions were issued in the first nine months of 2024.⁴⁹ In September 2023, the number of positive decisions stood at 17.358 (11,906 recognitions of refugee status plus 448 subsidiary protections), which represented 62.2% of the overall asylum applications lodged for the seven first months of 2023.⁵⁰ For the same month in 2024, the number of positive decisions stood at 39,513 (29,731 recognitions of refugee status plus 244 subsidiary protections), which represented 48.8% of the overall asylum applications lodged in the nine first months of 2024 (Table 13).⁵¹ A year-on-date comparison for 2023 and 2024 reveals that first-instance asylum decisions in 2023 shows there were 24,975 decisions, 5,599 more compared to 2022. The upward trend continued in the first nine months of 2024. In September 2024, there were 30,138 decisions, 5,163 more compared to 2023.

Table 13: Asylum applications by country of origin, 2023 & 2024 (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	13,520	312
2020	16,333	480
2021	13,036	730
2022	18,711	665
2023	24,323	652
2024 (as of September)	29,731	407
TOTAL	150,019	3,512
TOTAL FOR BOTH DEGREES	153,531	

Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 11a)

Regarding pending asylum decisions (first- and second instance), in September 2023 there were 25,043 pending decisions, 510 higher compared to the 24,993 decisions in September 2022 (Table 14). In September 2024, there were 21.625 pending decisions, 3,418 less compared to September 2023.

⁴⁹ [Information Note on Asylum December 2023 \(Table 9a\)](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2024 \(Table 8a\)](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁵⁰ [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 9a).

⁵¹ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Table 8a).

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Table 14: Pending asylum decisions from January 2023 to September 2024

MONTH	PENDING DECISIONS 1st INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS 2nd INSTANCE	PENDING DECISIONS TOTAL	DIFFERENCE (%)
Jan-23	17,658	4,932	22,776	
Feb-23	17,007	4,434	21,506	-5.58%
March-23	15,673	3,910	19,619	-8.77%
April-23	16,054	3,372	19,450	-0.86%
May-23	16,154	3,157	19,311	-0.71%
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%
Oct-23	25,363	1,916	27,279	8.93%
Nov-23	28,594	1,896	30,490	11.77%
Dec-23	29,885	2,845	32,730	7.35%
Jan-24	29,066	2,960	32,026	-2.15%
Feb-24	28,915	2,633	31,548	-1.49%
March-24	27,362	2,731	30,093	-4.61%
April-24	22,645	2,906	25,551	-15.09%
May-24	19,431	2,476	21,907	-14.26%
June-24	18,265	2,643	20,908	-4.56%
July-24	17,885	3,160	21,045	0.66%
Aug-24	18,208	3,622	21,830	3.73%
Sep-24	18,441	3,184	21,625	-0.94%

Source: [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024***Unaccompanied Minors***

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, there were 1,987 UAMs in Greece in December 2023, of whom 84% were boys and just 16% girls.⁵² Ten months later, in October 2024, 1,973 were UAMs in Greece.⁵³ Disaggregated by nationality, the estimated UAM population on 1st October 2024 breaks down as follows: 45% Egyptians, 18 % Syrians, 12% Afghans, 11% Somalia, 4% Pakistani and 11 % other nationalities. Comparing these figures to those from 1st October 2023, the number of UAMs from Afghanistan and Pakistan in October 2024 has fallen by 11% (from 23% in October 2023), and 7% (from 11%), while those from Syria and other countries have been risen by 34% (from 11%).⁵⁴

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.⁵⁵

Dublin Cases & Relocation

In 2023, 121 Dublin transfers to other EU member states took place in the framework of Dublin Regulation, marking a significant decrease compared to 2022. This trend continued in the first nine months of 2024, when only 103 Dublin transfer cases took place. Similarly, there were only 103 Dublin transfers recorded in the first nine months of 2024. Additional obstacles to family reunification under Dublin continued to occur in 2023 and 2024 due to restrictive practices⁵⁶ adopted not only in Greece but by several receiving Member States, which may undermine the right to family life.⁵⁷

As per the relocation program, their numbers stand at 690, in 2023, among them 55 UAMs. During the first nine months of 2024, 970 individuals were relocated to other EU Member States. None of them belonged to the category of UAM. This corroborates a clear downward trend comparing to 2021 and 2022 when 3,571 individuals were relocated to other EU member states under the same scheme.

Transfers to the Mainland

A total of 3,760 asylum seekers were transferred to the Greek mainland in September 2024, marking a small downward trend comparing to 3,971 transfers in September 2023,⁵⁸ while over the whole 2023, the

⁵² Data published by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, December 2023, available at: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/SGVP_Statistics_2023_12_01.pdf

⁵³ Data published by the Ministry of migration and Asylum, October 2024, available at: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SGVP_Statistics-Oktober_EN.pdf

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Press 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.](#)

⁵⁶ Such 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.

⁵⁷ Asylum Report 2023, available here: https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/2023_Asylum_Report_EN_0.pdf.

⁵⁸ [Information Note September 2024](#), Annex A, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

total number of transports stood at 25,736. All in all, the transfers of asylum seekers from the Aegean islands to the Greek mainland have marked an exponential increase of 121.16% comparing with the same period in 2023 (11,354).

Legal Developments in Greece's Asylum Policies & Protection of UAMs

The 2023–2024 developments in Greek asylum policies mark significant strides towards a more streamlined approach to migration management. A key development is the introduction of three-year residence permits for foreign nationals who, as of November 30, 2023, have resided continuously in Greece for at least three years without holding a valid permit. Furthermore, the waiting period for asylum-seekers to gain the right to work has been reduced, from six months to 60 days following the submission of their asylum applications.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the Code (Law 5038/2023) introduced specific provisions for UAMs, including the ten-year residence permit provided they meet two key conditions: completing at least three years of Greek schooling by the age of 23 and gaining admission to vocational training, apprenticeship, or university-level institutions.⁶⁰ Despite the progress made, human rights groups such as the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) have criticized the Code, arguing that many UAM might struggle to meet the schooling criteria.

The Presidential Decision 77/2023 (Government Gazette A' 130/27-06-2023) represents a critical advancement in Greece's commitment to safeguarding UAMs and other vulnerable groups through the establishment of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection.⁶¹ This newly formed body holds the mandate of planning, implementing, and supervising the National Strategy for the protection of UAMs, alongside other at-risk individuals, including TCNs and stateless persons. Beyond its administrative role, the General Secretariat assumes responsibility for the accommodation and relocation of UAMs through coordinating referrals, facilitating their transition to appropriate housing. Finally, Joint Ministerial Decision No. 137051/May 2, 2024, set rules for the operation and licensing of centers that accommodate UAM in Greece.⁶² Complementing this, the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 111204/April 7, 2024, introduces a framework of standard operating rules for supervised apartments dedicated to the semi-autonomous living of UAM.

⁵⁹ Complementing these measures, the Joint Ministerial Decision No. 527235, published in the Government Gazette (ΦΕΚ Β' 6844) on December 5, 2023, introduced the National List of Safe Countries of Origin. This aimed to enhance the efficiency of asylum procedures by identifying countries deemed safe for return based on criteria such as political stability, human rights practices, and general safety conditions. Included on this list are nations such as Egypt, Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Georgia, Gambia, Ghana, India, Morocco, Bangladesh, Benin, Nepal, Pakistan, Senegal, Togo, and Tunisia.

⁶⁰ This marks a departure from the earlier framework, where migrants from non-EU countries had to complete six years of schooling in Greece by the age of 23 to qualify for a residence permit.

⁶¹ <https://migration.gov.gr/en/grammateies/geniki-grammateia-evaloton-politon-kai-thesmikis-prostasias/>

⁶² See: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/3_2%CE%B7-%CE%A4%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%AF%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%A0%CE%9A%CE%9B%CE%91_FEK-2024-Tefxos-B-02667-2-5-24.pdf

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

3. Irregular Migration Flows, Return and Readmissions

According to Hellenic Police statistics, the total number of apprehended TCNs for irregular stay and employment in Greece, in 2023, was 16,606 of whose 16,561 were apprehended for irregular stay and 45 for irregular employment (Table 15).

Table 15: TCNs apprehended for irregular stays and employment, 2023

Month	Irregular Stay	Irregular Employment	TOTAL
January	1,190	0	1,190
February	1,333	5	1,338
March	1,182	6	1,188
April	1,198	5	1,203
May	1,380	0	1,380
June	1,778	0	1,778
July	1,963	2	1,965
August	1,848	1	1,849
September	1,573	15	1,588
October	1,424	1	1,425
November	985	8	993
December	707	2	709
TOTAL	16,561	45	16,606

Source: Greek Police Database, December 2023⁶³

The total is smaller than in 2022, when 22,739 individuals were apprehended (22,572 for irregular stays and 167 for irregular employment).⁶⁴ Meanwhile, there are no available data for the nationalities of the TCNs apprehended by the Greek Police in 2023.

⁶³ Yearly Report for 2023 published by the Greek Police, Table 43, available at: <https://www.astynomia.gr/file/2024/04/epetirida2023.pdf>

⁶⁴ Yearly Report for 2022 published by the Greek Police, Table 43, available at: <https://www.astynomia.gr/file/2023/04/epetirida2022.pdf>

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024**Returns and Deportations**

Regarding the inflows, their numbers in the first nine months of 2024 appear to have been 24.69% (37,049) higher than in the first nine months of 2023 (29,714).⁶⁵ 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 2024 there were 5,280 departures compared with 37,049 arrivals as of September 2024, whereas in September 2023 there were 5,140 departures compared with 29,714 arrivals.⁶⁶

In the first nine months of 2024, 1,654 IOM returns were recorded compared to 1,486 in the first nine months of 2023; voluntary departures stood at 582 in September 2024, compared with 410 in the corresponding period in 2023. This marks an increase of 11.31% (returns) and 41.95% (voluntary departures).⁶⁷

According to the statistics on returns made available by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in December 2023, Greece recorded 6,340 returns of irregularly staying persons, including TCNs and EU citizens (Table 16). Of those, 2,892 were forced returns carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; 742 were voluntary departures following the issuance of a return decision, and 2,706 were assisted voluntary returns organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Table 16: Returns by Category, January 2023 & 2024 (as of September)

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
October	227	78	360	665
November	244	56	271	571
December	205	73	209	487

⁶⁵ Information Note A September 2024, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Supra.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Total for 2023	2,892	742	2,706	6,340
Month 2024/Category	Forced Return	Voluntary Return	ASR/IOM	Total
January	199	44	198	441
February	227	70	155	452
March	205	59	172	436
April	298	61	150	509
May	230	64	180	474
June	194	79	124	397
July	199	54	249	502
August	237	79	213	529
September	182	72	213	467
Total for 2024 (as of September)	1,971	582	1,654	4,207

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum December 2023](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

In the first nine months of 2024, Greece recorded 4,207 returns of irregularly staying persons. Of those, 1,971 were forced returns carried out via bilateral or EU readmission agreements; 582 were voluntary departures following the issuance of a return decision, and 1,654 were assisted voluntary returns organized by IOM.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ 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.

Legal and Institutional Development 2023 – 2024

In March 2023, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) Executive Director alongside the then Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum and the Minister of Citizens’ Protection, reached an agreement to expand the agency’s role in assisting Greece with migrant to returns.⁷⁰ However, this effort comes amid serious allegations regarding pushback practices. In April 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants reported that “pushbacks at both land and sea borders have

⁶⁸ [Information Note September 2023, Annex A](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁶⁹ See: https://greece.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration-migrants-situations-vulnerability?fbclid=IwAR38TOZQYNqzz8byW7c8jOCEJgmWFmPUP-39kBVT_GvZDSmlVGzZXfZLIHo and here: <https://migration.gov.gr/gas/d-o-m/>.

⁷⁰ See: <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-executive-director-and-greek-officials-agree-on-cooperation-on-returns-iNUJcF>.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

become de facto general policy”.⁷¹ The European Court of Human Rights further escalated the issue, issuing a landmark ruling on July 7, 2022, condemning Greece’s practice of forcibly pushing boats carrying asylum seekers back to Turkey.⁷² The Court ruled that the Greek authorities failed to act in accordance with their duty to protect lives, highlighting a lack of thorough investigation into the boat sinking incident, which led to the loss of lives.⁷³ This ruling marked a significant step in the legal accountability of Greece’s migration practices.⁷⁴

Tragedy struck again on June 15, 2023, when a migrant boat sank off the coast of Greece, claiming at least 78 lives. Survivors of the incident, numbering 40, filed a criminal complaint demanding a thorough investigation into the causes of the sinking and the authorities’ response.⁷⁵

One of the most tragic incidents occurred on June 14, 2023, when a shipwreck near Pylos resulted in the deaths of more than 600 people, with only 104 survivors.⁷⁶ Investigations into the actions and omissions of the Hellenic Coast Guard, which allegedly contributed to the disaster, have not yet led to significant accountability. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have highlighted the need for a thorough investigation and prosecution of any officials found responsible.⁷⁷

As part of broader efforts to address these issues, Greece’s Commission for Human Rights launched the Recording Mechanism of Informal and Forced Returns in early 2022. According to the Interim Report published in January 2023,⁷⁸ at least 50 incidents were recorded between April 2020 and October 2022, involving over 2,000 individuals, including asylum seekers and recognised refugees.⁷⁹

The Second Annual Report, published in June 2024,⁸⁰ offers a detailed examination of informal forced returns from January to December 2023. The report highlights 45 incidents that affected 1,438 victims, including women, children, and individuals with special needs. These victims were subjected to forced returns under coordinated operations involving uniformed and plainclothes individuals, as well as the use of heavy vehicles and watercraft. The report underscores the systematic nature of these operations and the broad impact on vulnerable populations. In the light of these findings, the report calls for greater accountability, transparency, and strict adherence to human rights standards.

⁷¹ AIDA Report 2022, page 19, available here: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/AIDA-GR_2022-Update.pdf.

⁷² European Court Slams Greece Over Deadly Migrant Pushback, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/08/european-court-slams-greece-over-deadly-migrant-pushback?fbclid=IwAR1Hlqcwox3tJQuiPg4sEHBwJaxE4rO64SLYptwpMrymQ-EnOpnAqEXNIGs>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ See here: [European Court of Human Rights rules against Greece in landmark migrant rights case - JURIST - News](#)

⁷⁵ See here: [Greece Launches Inquiry into Deadly Migrant Shipwreck - GreekReporter.com](#)

⁷⁶ See here: <https://greekreporter.com/2023/06/15/greece-launches-inquiry-deadly-migrant-shipwreck/>.

⁷⁷ See here: <https://www.nchr.gr/ta-nea-mas/1815-2023-10.html>.

⁷⁸ See here: https://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/RecMechanism/Annual_Report_2022_compressed_1.pdf.

⁷⁹ See here: https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/deltia_tupou/2023/Interim_Report_Mechanism_gr.pdf.

⁸⁰ See here: https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/deltia_tupou/2024/2023.pdf.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

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.⁸¹ Under this regime, Ukrainian citizens can enter Greece with their passports and immediately apply for temporary protection.⁸²

By December 2023, a total of 26,848 temporary protection permits cards had been issued to displaced Ukrainians, of whom 18,487 were to women and 8,361 to men.⁸³ In 2023, a total of 32,640 Ukrainian citizens arrived in Greece (Table 17).

Table 17: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, January-December 2023

Ukrainians arriving in Greece (Monthly)	Jan. 2023	Feb. 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	Aug. 2023	Sep. 2023	Oct. 2023	Nov. 2023	Dec. 2023	TOTAL
	188	184	172	154	157	138	129	141	122	125	132	121	1.763

Source: [Monthly Information Notes from January to December 2023](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

By September 2024, a total of 31,781 temporary protection permits cards had been issued to displaced Ukrainians of whom 22,222 were to women and 9,559 to men (Table 18).⁸⁴

Table 18: Arrival of Ukrainian citizens in Greece, January-September 2024

Ukrainians arriving in Greece (Monthly)	Jan. 2024	Feb. 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024	July 2024	Aug. 2024	Sep. 2024	TOTAL
	119	123	140	191	161	125	121	116	115	1,211

Source: [Information Notes published from January to September 2024](#), 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.⁸⁵ 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

⁸¹ In Greece, the Presidential Decree 80/2006 on the temporary protection has been activated by the recently (March 2022) issued Ministerial Decision (Protocol No. 131035).

⁸² 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. For more information see: [EMN country factsheet 2022: Greece \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁸³ [Information Note on Asylum December 2023](#), Table 20, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁸⁴ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Table 19, Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

⁸⁵ See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/energopoitai-to-kathestos-prosorinis-prostasias-ektopismenon-atomon-apo-tin-oykrania%EF%BF%BC/>.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

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, to receive temporary status protection.⁸⁶

In February 2024, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum issued a Ministerial Decision,⁸⁷ extending the temporary protection status for displaced Ukrainians until March 4, 2025. This measure ensures that Ukrainian refugees can continue to reside legally in Greece with access to work permits and essential rights. The temporary protection status, initially set to expire in March 2024, has been extended for an additional year.⁸⁸ As a result, residence permits under this status that were to expire in March 2023, September 2023, or March 2024 are automatically extended until March 2025.⁸⁹ 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 4939/2022.⁹⁰

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 an increase in the subsidy of rent 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

5. Reception System, Accommodation, Integration

In September 2024, a total of 9,768 migrants and asylum seekers were accommodated in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) across the Greek islands (Table 19), a notable decrease of -35.41% comparing to September 2023 (15,123) (Figure 6).⁹²

⁸⁶ See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/diathesimi-apo-simera-stin-istoselida-toy-yπουργειoy-metanasteysis-kai-asyloy-ston-eidiko-syndesmo-apps-migration-gov-gr-temporary-protection-i-ilektroniki-platforma-pro-katagrafis-ektopisthent/>.

⁸⁷ ΑΔΑ: 90Ι346ΜΔΨΟ-89Β.

⁸⁸ See here: <https://diavgeia.gov.gr/doc/90%CE%99346%CE%9C%CE%94%CE%A8%CE%9F-89%CE%92?inline=true>.

⁸⁹ Παράταση της προσωρινής προστασίας για τους εκτοπισθέντες από την Ουκρανία | Υπουργείο Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου (migration.gov.gr);

⁹⁰ See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/paratasi-tis-prosorinis-prostasias-gia-toys-ektopisthentes-apo-tin-oykrania/>

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

⁹² Information Note on September 2024 (p.2, table 3), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

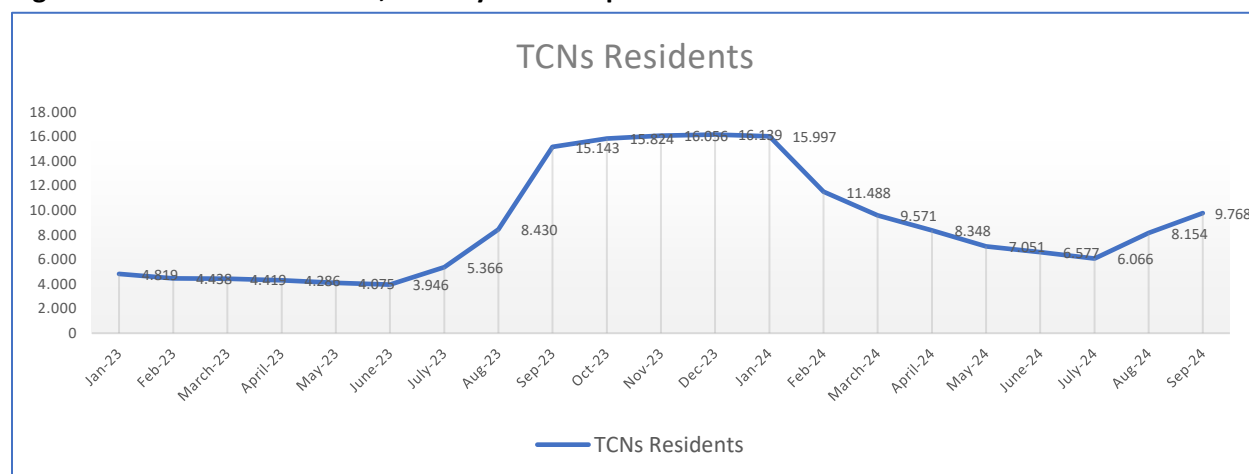
Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Table 19: Migrants and Asylum Seekers accommodated in RICs, 2023 & 2024 (as of September)

TCNs Resident	Reception and Identification Centres (RICs)					TOTAL*
	KOS	LESVOS	SAMOS	CHIOS	LEROS	
September-2023	2,385	5,075	4,264	986	2,355	15,123
October-2023	3,900	4,253	3,915	1,029	2,713	15,824
November-2023	3,882	4,958	3,503	1,040	2,612	16,056
December-2023	3,387	5,545	3,905	1,094	2,192	16,139
January-2024	3,041	6,072	4,003	1,031	1,840	15,997
February-2024	1,965	4,532	2,921	1,116	950	11,488
March-2024	1,570	3,317	2,559	1,085	1,001	9,571
April-2024	1,191	2,755	2,380	1,138	854	8,348
May-2024	1,083	1,848	2,361	628	1,128	7,051
June-2024	1,288	1,409	2,269	567	1,004	6,577
July-2024	1,670	991	1,743	499	1,129	6,066
August-2024	1,690	1,190	2,258	1,010	1,949	8,154
September-2024	1,659	1,451	3,275	1,176	2,171	9,768
Difference from September 2023	-30.44%	-71.41%	-23.19%	19.27%	-7.81%	-35.41%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum - *other islands are also included

Figure 6: TCNs resident in RICs, January 2023 - September 2024



Source: [Information Note A on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Regarding the distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, there was a significant decrease in most regions in the period September 2023 – September 2024. In September 2023, 30,535 TCNs residents were distributed across thirteen regional units of Greece, compared with 22,578 TCNs in the same month

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

of 2023.⁹³ In September 2024, there were 22,578 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 20).

Table 20: Distribution of migrants and asylum seekers by region, September 2023 – September 2024

Regional Unit	TCNs Resident 2023 (as of September)	% of total population	TCNs Resident 2024 (as of September)	% of total population
NORTH AEGEAN	10,170	5.24%	5,726	2.95%
SOUTH AEGEAN	4,707	1.45%	3,802	1.17%
EPIRUS	1,771	0.55%	1,156	0.36%
MAINLAND GREECE	2,515	0.50%	2,216	0.44%
CENTRAL MACEDONIA	5,322	0.30%	4,013	0.22%
EAST MACEDONIA AND THRACE	1,408	0.25%	1,343	0.24%
PELOPONNESE	712	0.13%	507	0.09%
ATTICA	3,245	0.09%	3,269	0.09%
WEST GREECE	545	0.08%	310	0.05%
THESSALY	143	0.02%	236	0.03%
WEST MACEDONIA	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
IOANIAN ISLANDS	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
CRETE	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
TOTAL	30,535	0.29%	22,578	0.22%

Sources: [Information Note on Asylum September 2023](#) & [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#), Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Under the Helios Programme, 43,962 and 44,624 TCNs were had registered in the program during, respectively, the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2023; between the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2023, a higher number of TCNs were registered, with 45,220 in the third, and 45,250 in the fourth quarters of 2022. (Table 21). This trend continued in 2024 with a total of numbers of registration standing at 141,287 in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd quarters of 2024.

⁹³ [Information Note on Asylum September 2024](#) (p. 2, table 4), Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Table 21: Registration at Helios Programme

REGISTRATIONS AT HELIOS	
1 st quarter of 2022	35,001
2 nd quarter of 2022	35,896
3 rd quarter of 2022	40,020
4 th quarter of 2022	42,728
1 st quarter of 2023	43,962
2 nd quarter of 2023	44,624
3 rd quarter of 2023	45,220
4 th quarter of 2023	45,250
1 st quarter of 2024	46,276
2 nd quarter of 2024	47,258
3 rd quarter of 2024 (until 31 August 2024)	47,753

Source: *Information Note on Asylum September 2024*, of Migration and Asylum.

As per nationality, 26.2% of those registered on the Helios Programme are from Syria, 25.9% from Afghanistan, 14.8% from Ukraine, and 10.1% from Iraq.⁹⁴ Another category under the accommodation scheme includes the beneficiaries of the rent housing programme whose numbers reached 2,013 in November 2023⁹⁵, while in the first 3 quarters of 2024 (till 30/09/2023) their numbers was decreased by 62.44% (756 in total).⁹⁶ Finally, the category of TCNs beneficiaries of the rent subsidising programme reached 23,327 in the first three quarters of 2023 (till 30 September 2023), while in the same period of 2024 their numbers were higher by 5.07% with 24,510 TCNs benefiting from this accommodation programme.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Information Note on the Helios Program, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, September 2024, available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/helios-enimerotiko-fyllo-septemvrios-2024/>.

⁹⁵ Information Note on the Helios Program, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, November 2023, available at: https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HELIOS-Factsheet-November-2023-BW2_Greek.pdf.

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

⁹⁷ Information Note on the beneficiaries of the rent housing programme, September 2024.

Accommodation and Protection of UAMs

On 1 October 2024, there were 60 operational UAM Accommodation Facilities with a total capacity of 1,537 places, 58 semi-Independent living apartments with a total capacity of 230 places, and 4 emergency accommodation facilities of a total capacity of 155 places.⁹⁸ In the same period, out of a total of 1,973 UAMs (91 % boys, 9 % girls and 16 % below 14 years old), 1,242 were in long-term or temporary accommodation facilities, 166 in semi-autonomous accommodation apartments, 154 in emergency accommodation facilities, 334 in RICs, and 77 in controlled accommodation facilities for asylum seekers.⁹⁹

According to a data provided by the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors during 2023, the Special Secretariat handled 5,051 requests for accommodation for unaccompanied minors, ensuring a maximum occupancy of 4,009 accommodation places. Furthermore, in the context of the voluntary relocation scheme more than 1,368 children were transferred in 12 countries across Europe.¹⁰⁰

In terms of protection, 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.¹⁰¹ 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"¹⁰² program has been implemented since November 2022, in collaboration with the UNHCR and the European Union Agency for Asylum.

⁹⁸ Updated Data on Unaccompanied Minors October 2024, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, available at:

https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SGVP_Statistics-Oktober_EN.pdf.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ [Report of Actions 2023](#) General Secretariat of Vulnerable Citizens and Institutional Protection | Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

¹⁰¹ [Εκκίνηση 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 \(migration.gov.gr\)](#)

¹⁰² See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ekkinisi-pilotikis-efarmogis-tis-neas-ergaleiothikis-diadikasion-veltistoy-symferontos-poy-dimioygrithike-apo-ti-geniki-grammateia-eyaloton-politon-kai-thesmikis-prostasias-toy-yπουργειου-metanasteysi/>.

6. Political and Institutional Developments

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum in Greece underwent several leadership changes during 2023 and 2024, reflecting ongoing adjustments to address evolving migration and asylum policies. During this period, the Ministry focused on several priority areas, including:

- Regional distribution mechanism by developing a system for the equitable distribution of migrants and refugees across Greece.
- Integration programs by implementing programs to support the social and economic integration of migrants and refugees.
- Continued digitization by expanding digital services to improve efficiency in migration and asylum procedures.
- Strengthening institutional frameworks by enhancing the legal and administrative structures supporting vulnerable populations.

An important development in December 2023 was the introduction of new legislation for undocumented migrants. Greece's Parliament approved a law granting three-year residence and work permits to undocumented migrants who had resided in Greece for at least three years as of November 30, 2023. The application deadline for these permits is December 31, 2024.

Concluding, between 2023 and 2024, the Greek government has implemented policy reforms in the areas of migration, asylum, and investment-based residence permits. These changes reflect Greece's strategic efforts to:

- Regularize undocumented migrants by addressing labour shortages and enhancing employment rights, ensuring a more structured and legally compliant workforce.
- Strengthen institutional support for vulnerable populations, particularly UAM's, refugees, and second-generation immigrants, through improved legal frameworks and social integration measures.
- Adapt the Golden Visa program to encourage sustainable investment, while implementing measures to prevent speculative real estate purchases, ensuring long-term economic stability.

As part of the administrative restructuring of immigration program management in Greece, Presidential Decree No. 20, issued on February 24, 2023, abolished the Directorate General for Coordination and Management of Immigration Programs and Internal Affairs. Its responsibilities were redistributed to other relevant departments and agencies with the objective of enhancing coordination and management by integrating these functions into existing structures with better resources and capabilities. However, the decision faced strong criticism from the opposition, which argued: *"The abolition of a key Directorate responsible for managing the €2 billion European financial fund for refugees during the 2021–2027 period and the concentration of its responsibilities directly under one individual raises significant concerns."*

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024***Citizenship Acquisitions***

In 2023, a total of 13,875 foreign citizens acquired Greek citizenship through naturalization, up from 13,259 in 2022. The second-generation category – comprising individuals granted citizenship due to birth or study in Greece - accounted for 50.84% of the total, reflecting a slight decrease from 51.79% in 2022 (-0.95%). This category had a significantly higher share in 2020 (66%), compared to both 2021 and 2022 (Table 22).

Regarding country of origin, Albanian nationals represented the largest group of successful applicants, totaling 10,181 (73.38%). In 2023, Albanian constituted 29.67% of Greek co-ethnics, 25.01% of foreigners, and 78.87% of second-generation applicants granted citizenship. This trend has been consistent across 2020, 2021, and 2022.¹⁰³

Table 22: Acquisition of Greek Citizenship by category (2020-2023)

Category	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Naturalizations of co-ethnics	15,791	8,563	7,476	3,726	2,937	1,117	1,463	1,198	1,158	1,433
Naturalizations of other nationalities	2,019	1,487	3,624	3,486	2,530	1,882	1,817	2,843	3,150	3,515
Birth or study in Greece	0,000	0,305	19,367	25,528	21,559	12,868	9,099	5,154	6,867	7,054
Other provisions	2,029	1,529	1,183	0,978	0,883	0,382	876	623	723	674
Under-age children of naturalized adults (parents)	1,990	2,294	1,837	1,096	0,501	0,585	547	777	1,136	1,199
Co-ethnics from countries of the former Soviet Union	-	-	-	13	190	100	71	9	225	-
Total	21,829	14,178	33,487	34,814	28,410	16,834	13,873	10,604	13,259	13,875

Source: [Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, Statistics 2023](#)¹⁰⁴

The Greek government has introduced several decisions regulating the naturalization process for foreign nationals, defining requirement, examination procedures, and institutional adjustments. A key development is Decision No. 192/18.09.2023, which defines the examination process for obtaining the Certificate of Adequacy of Knowledge for Naturalization (PEGP). This certificate serves as a prerequisite for naturalization, assessing applicants on criteria such as lawful residence in Greece, proficiency in the Greek language, and demonstrated integration into Greek society.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ 2022 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/20240801-StatistikaStoixeia2023.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ 2012-2023 Statistics, Ministry of Interior, Special Secretariat for Citizenship, available at: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/20240801-Stats-Category-2014-2023.pdf>

¹⁰⁵ See here: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/apof192-20230918.pdf>.

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

Building on this framework, Decision No. 4555/B/5-8-2024, issued by the Secretary General for Citizenship, provides a detailed structure for the naturalization process, with a particular focus on the PEGP examination for TCNs applying for Greek citizenship.¹⁰⁶ It specifies the examination topics, format, location, registration procedures, and logistic guidelines.¹⁰⁷

To further strengthen the administration of these examinations, Decision No. 978/11-9-2024 revises the composition of the Committee responsible for organizing and conducting the PEGP exams, by modifying its membership and oversight responsibilities.

Racism and Xenophobia

In April 2024, the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) in Greece released its 12th annual report, offering a comprehensive analysis of racist violence and bias-motivated harassment across the country in 2023.¹⁰⁸ The report documented 158 incidents of racist violence, with migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers being the most affected group, accounting for 89 cases primarily based on national origin, religion, or skin colour.

The report highlights the geographical distribution of racist violence, with particularly high concentrations along Greece's borders, where refugees and migrants remain highly vulnerable. Beyond physical violence, the findings underscore pattern of systemic racism, especially involving state representatives, as well as incidents occurring within schools and family environments, pointing to deeply ingrained discriminatory attitudes in Greece society.

A critical issue highlighted in the report is the barriers victims face in reporting racist crimes. Many individuals refrain from lodging formal complaints due to fear of retaliation, psychological trauma, and mistrust of authorities. This reluctance not only limits victims' access to justice but also contributes to the underreporting of hate crimes, obscuring the full scope of the issue.

To address these challenges, the report presents policy recommendations for the Greek government. Key proposals include strengthening legal frameworks to combat racist violence, enhancing victim protection mechanisms, and the improving institutional responses by law enforcement and the judiciary. Additionally, it underscores the need for education and awareness-raising initiatives to foster inclusivity, particularly within schools and public institutions.

Recognizing the need for stronger institutional safeguards, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum has recently introduced a new Complaints Mechanism¹⁰⁹ aimed at addressing fundamental rights violations affecting TCNs.¹¹⁰ Overseen by the Fundamental Rights Officer, this mechanism provides a formal channel for individuals to report alleged abuses encountered during entry, reception, and asylum procedures.

¹⁰⁶ See here: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/eggr398-05092024.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ See here: <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/apof384-20240726.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ See here: <https://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/RVRN-2023-report-fnl.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/fro-complaints/>.

¹¹⁰ See here: <https://migration.gov.gr/enarxi-leitoyrgias-toy-michanismoy-kataggelion/>.

7. Concluding Remarks

Between, 2023 and 2024, Greece's migration landscape was significantly shaped by increasing migration flows, evolving policy reforms, and ongoing human rights concerns. While Greece's foreign population grew, partially offsetting some of population loss, the country still faced considerable challenges in managing labour migration and regularization programs, outward migration, irregular migration and asylum pressures.

One of the central issues was the increase in asylum applications, which more than doubled in 2023 compared to the previous year. Many of these applications were from first-time arrivals into the EU, indicating a rising number of individuals seeking protection. Alongside this, there was a notable increase in arrivals of minors, particularly UAMs, whose number doubled in 2024. This created additional strain on Greece's already stretched reception system. Relations with Turkey remained strained, particularly in light of ineffective readmission procedures for asylum seekers. Turkey's refusal to accept rejected asylum seekers has stranded many people in Greece, exacerbating the difficulties of managing migration. Despite a rise in asylum applications, return rates remain disproportionately low compared to arrivals.

On the human rights front, Greece faced condemnation from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for systematic refoulement, a practice the government had long denied. This ruling underscored ongoing concerns about Greece's border enforcement practices. In parallel, search and rescue (SAR) operations conducted by Frontex were also criticized, particularly after the tragedy in Pylos. Lack of coordination and unclear protocols for responding to maritime emergencies revealed significant gaps in ensuring the safety of migrants at sea. In addition, racist violence and systemic discrimination persist, with reports highlighting barriers to justice for victims. However, new accountability mechanisms, such as the Complaints Mechanism for Third-Country Nationals (TCNs), mark steps toward improved oversight and institutional transparency. Moreover, continued scrutiny of Greece's border enforcement practices, including pushbacks and migrant rights violations, remains a priority for domestic and international stakeholders.

Greece also faced labor market shortages, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and construction. The legalization of undocumented migrants was intended to address the labor shortage, but return rates remained low, complicating efforts to effectively manage the influx, with the mismatch between migration policies and labor market needs has hampered efforts to effectively address these shortages. Public skepticism toward immigration, combined with gaps in integration, education, and opportunities, further complicated the country's approach to managing immigration. Finally, bilateral agreements with third countries aimed at addressing labor shortages have had mixed results. While these agreements have the potential to help, their success depends on improving administrative procedures, worker protection, and skills recognition for the effective integration of migrant workers into the Greek labor market.

In terms of policy, Greece modernized its immigration framework, implementing electronic permit applications and making residence status more flexible. The introduction of investment migration policies and the regularization of undocumented migrants were aimed at addressing labour shortages in

Migration Trends in Greece: Key Development and Challenges in 2023 – 2024

key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and construction. Despite these efforts, however, return rates remained disproportionately low compared to the number of arrivals complicating efforts to manage migration effectively.

In conclusion, these challenges highlight the complex interplay of political, humanitarian and economic factors that Greece faces in its efforts to manage irregular migration, while balancing the needs of the domestic labour market with its obligations under EU and international law.