



GREECE, AN IMPORTANT COUNTRY FOR IMMIGRATION TO EUROPE



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How Greece is managing the migration crisis?

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History of Greece

Greece has been known since ancient times and reached its climax in the 5th century BC. In the field of art, politics, literature, philosophy, and science, the heritage of ancient Greece still influences our world. Greek civilization has invented almost everything, starting with democracy. The Greeks were united by a common culture, religion, and language.

Agriculture in ancient Greece was very complicated, in the Mediterranean environment, natural constraints exist, the most important constraint is the existence of a dry season during summer. The second constraint is to find economic utility in the mountains. They first developed Mediterranean agriculture, with a system based on 3 fundamental crops: cereals, vines, and olive trees. The two main cereals are barley and wheat.

Then the big trade appeared, the goods exchanged were luxury goods, and each city had a specialty that it exported (Athens oil, Thasos wine, Milet wool). The slave trade was developed in Minor Asia and Syria. The Greeks imported slaves from surrounding regions.

Currency was invented around 600 BC. It was a revolutionary novelty. It was also a policy instrument allowing the implementation of the first fines. Within the country, it was used to pay compensation to citizens for their participation in political life.

Outside the country, it was used to pay mercenaries and allies and was used to contribute to pay-dominated cities. Each city had its currency type, in Athens on one side there is the head of Athena and on the other an owl. The Drachma was the name of this currency, these coins were made of several precious metals: the most common was silver found in mines, the second metal was a mixture of silver and gold (electrum) and the third was rather rare gold for a currency. War occupied an important place in the life of the Greeks.



Ancient Greek drachma

Historians, poets, philosophers, painters, and sculptors have devoted a considerable part of their work to themes related to war. War affects all aspects of human life: politics, economy, and religion. Some constructions dating from antiquity are still well preserved, such as the

Parthenon, which is the most emblematic monument in Greece. It was once an ancient temple dating from the VI century BC, built of white marble from Pentelic Mountain. The Parthenon was also designed as a house for the gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos, a colossal element of twelve meters high. The monument was around 70



meters long by 30 meters wide, framed by columns all around its perimeters, 8 on the main facades and 17 on the sides. It was destroyed by the Persians and then served for various activities (1458: Mosque, 1687: Reserve of ammunition for the Turks, 1801: looting by the English exhibited at the British Museum in London). Currently, conservation and reconstruction are ongoing.

Immigration in Europe

After receiving hundreds of thousands of migrants from the countries of the former Soviet block from 1988, then another wave of immigration after the opening of borders with Albania in 1992.

These immigration flows have played an essential role in the evolution of the country's population as well as in its development. Greece has been facing another influx of immigrants since 2008, but this time from Africa and the war zones in the Middle East; a phenomenon that exploded in 2015.

Immigration is a complex demographic phenomenon and immigration flows are influenced by a series of economic, social, and political criteria. These criteria are implemented either in the country of origin or in the country of destination. All countries in southern Europe are now among the host countries for immigrants. In the period 1994-1999 Greece recorded an annual increase in the number of its foreign population of 17.69%.

The 21st century started badly for immigration, and the phenomena of terrorism hurt poor people. They created feelings of xenophobia and reflexes against immigration flows. The awakening of racism in Europe has been a crucial factor.

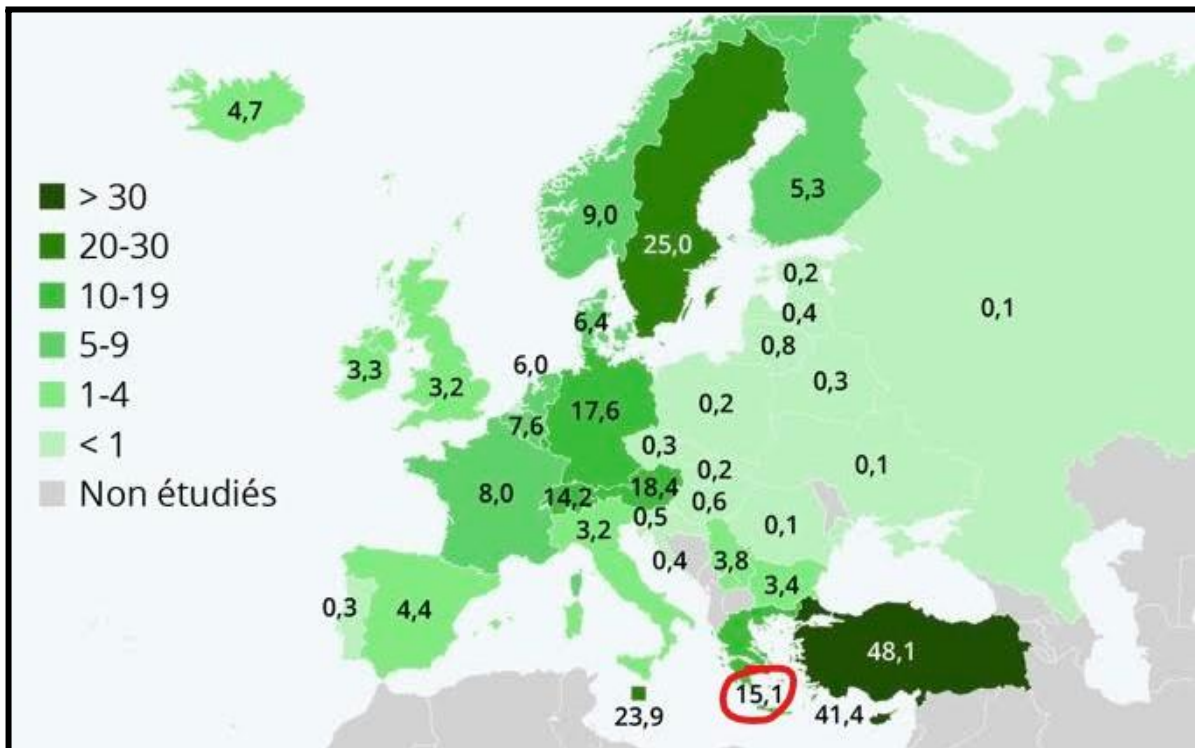
Although terrorism hit stronger the United States, Europe is currently less tolerant of foreigners and gives fewer opportunities comparing traditional immigrant host countries (America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand).

Nevertheless, it now appears to be obvious that for demographic, economic, and social reasons, these immigration flows cannot be stopped. The country that was most affected by emigration was Albania. It's estimated that 500,000 people or about 16% of the population left the country in 1990-1998, with Greece and Italy as their main countries of destination.

In 2020, a total of 3.1 million people migrated to the European Union. The number of international migrants was estimated at 281 million or 3.6% of the world's population.

Turkey, located at the gates of the continent and at the crossroads of migratory turbulence, is home to the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers: about 4 million in 2021, representing 48 per 1,000 inhabitants.

Number of refugees and asylum seekers registered per 1,000 inhabitants per country in 2021



Immigration in Greece

More than 3,000 asylum seekers arrived in Greece this year, including 1,100 in April. The number of asylum seekers living in camps on the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, Kos, and Leros reached more than 2,300 in April.

Regarding legal immigration

In Greece, 590,234 people of foreign nationality held a residence permit valid as of December 31, 2020. There were 522,752 in 2008, a difference of 67,482 people (+13%) in 12 years. With 367,987 nationals, Albania is the first country of origin of legal residents in Greece, representing 62,35% of all people with a residence card in 2020.

Foreign residents in Greece

Rank	Nationality	Peoples	%
1	Albania	367,987	62,35
2	Georgia	25,887	4,39
3	China	25,680	4,35
4	Pakistan	22,798	3,86
5	Ukraine	18,745	3,18
6	Russia	16,020	2,71
7	India	14,623	2,48
8	Egypt	13,202	2,24
9	Philippine	11,950	2,02
10	Bangladesh	10,448	1,77

Asylum Application

In 2020 28,355 applications for asylum were registered in Greece, down -12,205 people (-30%) over the previous year. In the same year, 37,285 trial decisions were rendered, including 16,570 positive (44%) and 20,715 rejected applications (56%).

With 16,33% of all asylum applications, Afghanistan is the first country of origin for asylum seekers. Together with Pakistan and Syria, they represent 45,07% of asylum seekers with the Greek authorities.

Asylum Seekers in Greece by original country in 2020

Rank	Nationality	People	%
1	Afghanistan	4,630	16,33
2	Pakistan	4,275	15,08
3	Syria	3,875	13,67
4	Bangladesh	2,735	9,65
5	Turkey	1,925	6,79
6	Iraq	1,630	5,75
7	Somalia	1,540	5,43
8	Albania	1,465	5,17
9	Egypt	900	3,17
10	Congo	820	2,89

<https://www.info-grece.com>

In Greece, most migrant arrivals are mainly by sea as well as by Turkey, which is a country with more than 4 million refugees and asylum seekers. People who arrive by boats, land mainly on the island and try to escape the Greek Coast Guard. On January 9, 2022, a boat carrying 25 migrants including 17 children arrived in Lesvos. The group was trying to hide from the police, but they were finally found the next morning. They were transported for 200km before being

placed on a raft and pushed back to Turkey. The Coast Guard showed violence: a little girl had a broken foot and other children had hematomas.

Greece is increasingly criticized for the repression practices of its coastguard. Indeed, 25,000 people reportedly disappeared after being rescued by the Greek authorities, but never landed on a Greek island. Groups in Greece accuse the Government of deliberately depriving more than 6,000 refugees of food and causing a serious hunger crisis. Indeed, the government has decided to no longer provide food to those who are no longer in the asylum procedure, leaving 40% of refugees in the camps, without food.

Greece is accused of using asylum seekers to return other migrants to Turkey, denounces the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a report published on Thursday, April 7. In the Evros region, on the land border between Greece and Turkey, the NGO interviewed 23 Afghan asylum seekers who claim to have been turned out of Greek territory, after being relieved of their property (phones and money) between September 2021 and February 2022.



Handout / Hellenic Coast Guard / AFP

The human rights organization interviewed a 28 years old former Afghan soldier, who says he was forcibly returned to Turkey last December and spoke in Pashtun to a Pakistani who was driving the canoe.

He would have explained: “We do this work for three months and then we can have our papers”. Athens has always denied the use of illegal refoulement of refugees despite the publication of several journalistic investigations on the subject.

At a time when Greece welcomed Ukrainians, on March 1, during a debate in the Greek Parliament, Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi described Ukrainians as “real refugees” because they were European. While Ukrainians are not Europeans and they too are feeling war just like Afghans, and Pakistanis.

Greece announced on Saturday 28 April, that it had prevented some 40,000 migrants from entering Greece illegally from Turkey through the Evros border in the northeast of the country since the beginning of the year. Greece also announced on Monday that it had prevented an attempt to cross the Aegean Sea to Greece from Turkey by around 600 people, the largest

attempt recorded this year. The nine boats were spotted as soon as they left, and the Greek coastguard used “visual and audible signals” to prevent them from passing into Greek waters, according to Athens. Some turned back, and others were intercepted by the Turkish coast guard.

The link between terrorism and immigration complicates the management of the migration crisis in Europe, in 2015 two of the three Stade de France bombers had been checked in October in Greece before traveling to France. Since then, the debate on the reception of refugees and the appropriateness of keeping the Schengen



agreements has returned in force. Hungarian Minister Victor Orbán goes so far as to say: “all terrorists are fundamentally migrants”. Immigration is made complicated because of stereotypes, but they are just people who flee their country because of many reasons: war, famine, poverty, inequality... They just hope for a better life.

In Greece, the inhabitants of the Aegean islands are fed up with migratory pressure. The island of Lesbos is a destination of choice for migrants from Turkey just located a few kilometers away but where accommodation centers are saturated.

Five new reception and identification centers for migrants are under construction, financed by the European Union with a budget of 276 million. They are under construction on the Greek islands: Kos, Samos, Lesbos, Chios, and Leros. These new facilities are built for reinforcing the capacity for new migrants flow because their number increase every year.

In Leros, the New Center will extend over 63 km². In total, some 3,500 asylum seekers and migrants are currently on the Greek islands of Lesbos, Chios, Kos, Leros, and Samos compared to about 40,000 in 2020. They are less and less over years because of bad living conditions of living and also because of repression.

The vast majority of that granted refugee status in Greece do not manage to build a life in the country. The lack of integration leads refugees to leave and try their luck in another EU country, where they apply for asylum again. Franck, a Congolese father, testified for InfoMigrants at the beginning of April 2021: “Hell starts when you get the status. In Greece, when an asylum seeker becomes a refugee, he or she has in theory one month to find accommodation on his or her own and leave the reception center or camp in which he is living”.

Those who manage to reach the Greek mainland have no less difficulty in integrating into society. Loïc is another Congolese man and had a bad experience with this. With his refugee status in his pocket, the young Congolese man in his twenties left the Lesbos camp in Moria last September to try to settle in the Athens area, without work and therefore no income, Loïc struggled to live.



The construction site of the Leros camp seen from the sky in March 2021. Since then, rows of containers have been installed on the site to accommodate the migrants.

In July 2019, Helios, the integration program of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was created to benefit from language courses, housing assistance, or preparation for a job. But it is not very accessible, temporary, and limited in number. Helios benefits only a minority of refugees. Currently, 8,158 refugees, including 3,159 people with families, benefit from the Helios program, according to IOM figures.

Greek migration policy has become more stringent in recent years. In particular, the authorities have further reduced support for refugees. In 2019, the government decided that refugees who had been in status for more than six months had to leave their accommodation under a European Union (EU) program for asylum seekers only. In 2020, this deadline was shortened again, to just one month. Hundreds of people were forced out of their homes and stayed in the streets.

Thousands of refugees are trying to move to other EU countries because they can give bigger help and more resources such as France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

Since October 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has no longer set up the financial assistance program established by the Greek authorities.

The Ministry of Immigration and Asylum provides financial assistance to adults seeking international protection and their family members who are housed in open reception centers located on the continent. They also provide financial assistance for Reception and Identification Centers (RIC) on the islands, ESTIA program housing, and homes cooperating with the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum, except for people in detention.

The amount of financial assistance for 1 month without meal

- 150 Euros for 1 people
- 270 Euros for a couple or parent with a child
- 320 Euros for a family of three
- 420 Euros for a family of four or more

The amount of financial assistance for 1 month with meal

- 75 Euros for 1 people
- 135 Euros for a couple or parent with a child
- 160 Euros for a family of three
- 210 Euros for a family of four or more

To have the asylum application, you must submit the application for international protection in Person, orally or in writing. You can also apply for your family members, provided they are with you in Greece and want to. They must come with you to the Asylum service.

Many humanitarian organizations such as Time To Help France, which has called for donations to help migrants in Greece. The Money raised is mainly used to buy essential food products for migrants and their families.

Conclusion

Greece is in great difficulty concerning migrants because of the lack of resources (mainly money which leads to materials, food, housing, and staff lack), the Greek authorities send back many migrants to Turkey by boat. Violence and robberies committed on migrants by Greeks authorities are frequent, they are just people who flee their country for the main reasons (Economy, war, famine, complicated political situation...), they just want to stay alive. Aid from other EU countries is provided, but not enough for the number of arrivals per month. More resources should be developed and more opportunities for migrants to reintegrate into

the country as well as into the rest of the EU countries that receive migrants. Many migrants and asylum seekers are sent back from Greece.

Immigration is a problem also for their inhabitants and especially for the inhabitants of islands like Lesbos, and Samos who are fed up with them. They say “Migrant camps spoil the landscape, these are thieves, they have nothing to do here”, and do everything to avoid them staying on the territory, while many migrants try to reach other EU countries like France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, etc.

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