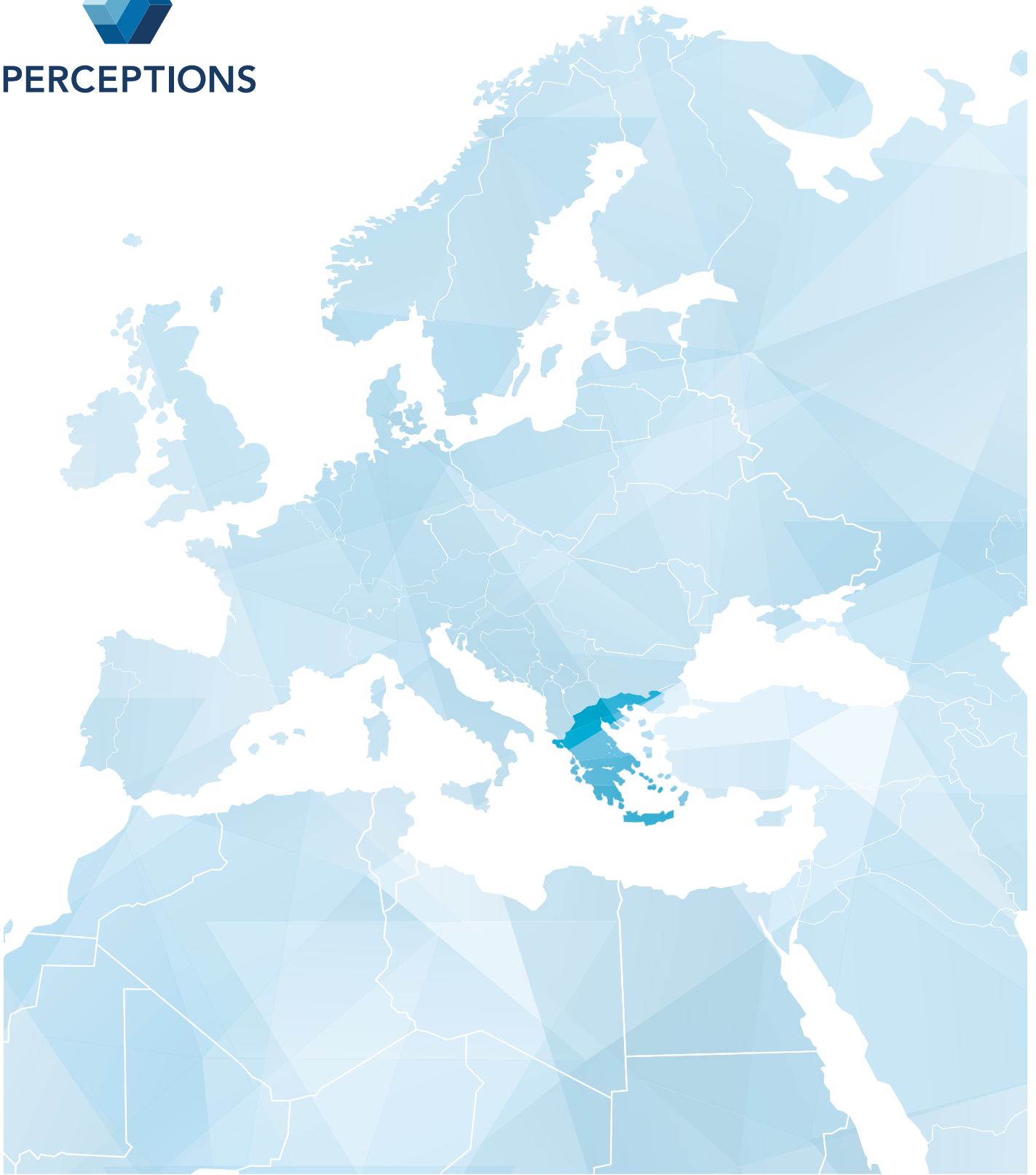




PERCEPTIONS



Greece

PERCEPTIONS
Country Report

PERCEPTIONS RESEARCH:

Literature, studies, projects, stakeholders, solutions, tools and practices

DISCLAIMER:

Disclaimer: This report is based on desk-research conducted between 2019 and 2022 and covers major development between the period of 2015-2019. For more updated information on the country profile, please check the additional institutional links at the end of the document.



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a) Geographical map

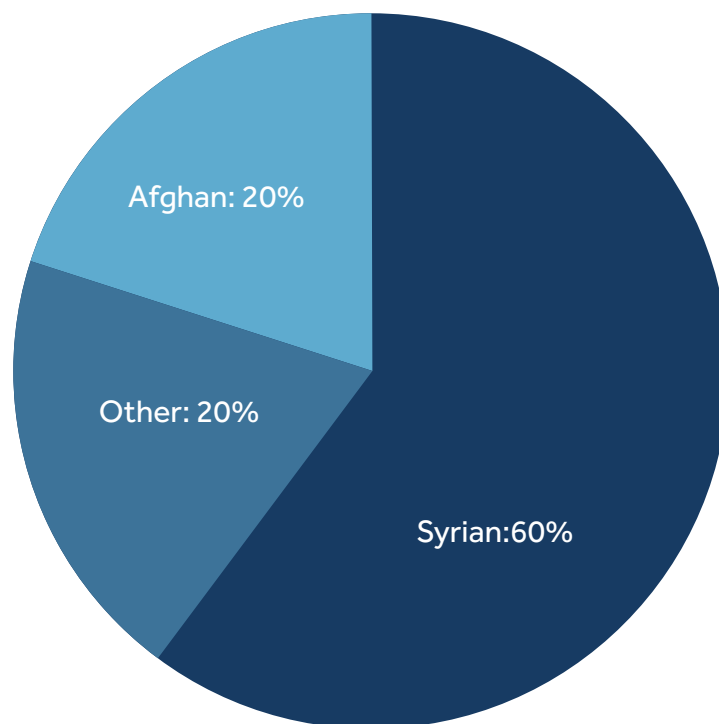


b) Short summary

Border control fall under the responsibility of the Hellenic Police, responsible for both the external and the internal land borders, and the Hellenic Coastguard, responsible for the internal and external maritime borders. On the regional level, local authorities, municipalities, and other local actors along with civil society organizations and NGOs, as well as international government agencies such as UNHCR, play a pivotal role in the reception and integration of migrants and refugees. Today, according to statistics since 2018, the immigrant population with a legal residence status consist mostly of Albanians (more than half of the total foreign population), Bulgarians, Georgians, Rumanians and Pakistanis. As far as gender is concerned, it is balanced among men and women, with the number of men to be slightly dominant. The asylum applications from 2015 to 2016 presented an increase of 287.1%. This increase of immigration and refugee flows had a substantial impact on the existing Greek Migration and Asylum Policies. Recently, the Government of Greece decided to suspend all new asylum applications for 30 days (March 1st, 2020 – April 1st 2020) due to the extraordinary circumstances and the necessity to confront what is referred to as an "asymmetric threat to the national security".

c) Facts & figures

Migration influx by nationality through the Greek maritime border in 2015



c) Full document

Institutional setting

Greece or Hellas (officially called "Hellenic Republic") is a unitary parliamentary republic situated in the Balkan Peninsula (South-East Europe) and shares land borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Greece is also surrounded by three seas, i.e. the Ionian Sea to the West, the Aegean Sea to the East and the Sea of Crete to the south, featuring many islands, of which 227 are inhabited. With 13,676 km of coastline, Greece has the longest coastline on the Mediterranean Basin (The World Factbook, 2020).

Border control fall under the responsibility of the Hellenic Police, responsible for both the external and the internal land borders, and the Hellenic Coastguard, responsible for the internal and external maritime borders. Other actors involved in border control include the European Border and Coastguard Agency - FRONTEX and the European Asylum Support Office, which was deployed in 2016 initially at Idomeni and later in the 'hotspots' to assist with asylum processing, as well as the Greek Asylum Service. The implementation of the 'hotspot' approach informed by the European Agenda on Migration, began in late 2015, with the closure of the Western Balkan route in early 2016 and the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016. This initiated a legal reform in Greece, a different asylum process on the islands and in the mainland and a broader division between the five islands of the north Aegean and the rest of the country as regards reception, asylum processing and services offered to asylum seekers (Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2019).

This Asylum Service is an autonomous body in charge of the examination of international protection claims and reports directly to the Minister of Citizen Protection. It is composed of the Central Administration and 24 Regional Asylum Offices and units where asylum seekers can submit their asylum claims. Registration with the Hellenic Police on arrival is a necessary step to submit an asylum application. Issues related to migration policy, residence permits, asylum and social integration are the responsibility of the Ministry of Migration & Asylum. The effective

management of third country nationals who cross the Hellenic borders without legal documents and/or procedures is the task of the Reception and Identification Service, an independent agency under the General Secretariat of Migration Policy, Reception and Asylum, and Special Secretariat of Reception of Ministry of Migration and Asylum. On the regional level, local authorities, municipalities, and other local actors along with civil society organisations and NGOs, as well as international government agencies such as UNHCR, play a pivotal role in the reception and integration of migrants and refugees, providing a large array of social services in the area of health, education and social and childcare. They are also responsible for maintaining the social infrastructure of cities where many ethnic and migrant communities live.

Short migration overview

Historically, Greece has been a country of both emigration and immigration. As far as emigration is concerned, Greece has observed two important waves of mass emigration: one from the late 19th to the early 20th century and another following World War II. The first wave was incited by the economic crisis of 1893 and resulted in one sixth of the Greek population emigrating mostly to the United States, Australia and Egypt creating a large Greek diaspora. After World War II, more than one million Greeks along with other populations from Southern Europe migrated to the industrialized nations of Northern Europe (primarily Germany), as well as to North America and Australia, for economic and political reasons both connected with the consequences of a 1946-1949 civil war and the 1967-1974 period of military junta rule that followed. The majority of these emigrants came from rural areas and supplied both the national and international labour markets of the destination country. However, the economic blooming of Greece after 1974 and the restoration of democracy led almost half of the emigrants of the post-war period to return to Greece between 1974 and 1985. (Korma, 2017; Labrianidis & Pratsinakis, 2016; Tziolas, 2009).

The Greek government-debt crisis that started in late 2009 led to a loss of confidence in the Greek economy and resulted in severe austerity measures. During the economic crisis, and a new wave of emigration emerged. Between 2010 and 2013 more than 350,000 - mostly high-educated - citizens left Greece. According to statistics, the vast majority of them head to European countries (Germany and UK in particular closely followed by the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland) as well as to the United States and Australia. (Korma, 2017; Labrianidis & Pratsinakis, 2016; Tziovas, 2009).

After the geopolitical changes of 1989 and the collapse of Central-Eastern European communist regimes, Greece also turned into a country of destination with a huge and unexpected influx of immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, as well as from several Asian, African or even South American countries. Furthermore, the numbers of incoming migrant populations till the 2000s have also been increased by the arrival of co-ethnic returnees, notably the Pontic Greeks that came from the former Soviet Republics (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Armenia), immigrants of Greek descent, notably ethnic Greek Albanian citizens (Vorioepiotes) and a smaller number of returning Greek migrants from northern Europe, United States, Canada and Australia. The geographic position of the country, as well as its economic growth during the 1980s and its accession to the European Economic Communities (EEC) in 1981 coincided with other factors, such as a rise in the educational level and living standards of many Greeks. However, many immigrants ended up working in conditions of informality, while in parallel xenophobia and racism increased from the mid-1990s onwards, also marking immigration as an increasingly important political issue. (Dimitriadi & Sarantaki, 2019; Korma, 2017; Anagnostou, et.al., 2016; IDEA Policy Briefs, 2009; Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2005; Kasimis & Kassimi, 2004).

Today, according to statistics since 2018, the immigrant population with a legal residence status consist mostly of Albanians (more than half of the total foreign population), Bulgarians, Georgians, Rumanians and Pakistanis. As far as gender is concerned, it is balanced among men

and women, with the number of men to be slightly dominant. The stay permits mostly refer to family reunification and other reasons, while statistics from 2013 show that migrants are mainly occupied in the tertiary sector, with a large representation of Albanians, in all three sectors (Greece Immigration Statistics 1960-2020, 2020).

Key development since 2015

Traditionally, Greece (along with Italy and Spain) is a major entry point for (irregular) migration, mostly through its border with Turkey at via the Evros River and the islands of the eastern Aegean across from Turkey (mainly Lesbos, Chios, Kos, and Samos). Since 2015, due to different geopolitical evolutions, Greece has seen an increase in migrant populations (primarily from Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Albania) that used these routes. UNHCR estimates show that after 2015 until the end of February 2020 118,000 refugees and migrants remained in the country, 76,000 of them on the mainland and 42,000 on the islands. In 2015, the number of migrants arriving via the sea was 5 times higher than in 2014. According to UNHCR, in 2015 alone, 856,723 people entered through the Greek maritime border, of which Syrians constituted almost 60%, followed by Afghans (20%). They included more families, women with children and unaccompanied minors than had previously been the case. Since then, the arrivals fluctuate and the nationalities are mainly Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, Turkish and Pakistanis (UNCHR, 2020b; UNCHR 2020c).

The asylum applications from 2015 to 2016 presented an increase of 287.1%, while after 2018 there was a slight decrease of 3.3%. Overall, this situation has led to the overcrowding of the existing camps and the Reception and Identification Centres on the Aegean islands (also known as "hotspots"). In Moria camp, for example, more than 9000 people had to live in a space designed to host for maximum 3100. (UNCHR, 2020a; UNCHR 2020b). International organizations such as the Human Rights Watch have made severe criticism on the conditions of the camps. This increasingly unstable situation in which Greece receives more people than it has the capacity and infrastructure

to accommodate, has ignited contradictory sentiments among the Greek citizens: on the one hand they strive and do their best to welcome refugees, on the other hand racism, xenophobia and discrimination has increased, especially during the harsh economic crisis and the austerity measures that have increased unemployment and poverty among Greek citizens.

This unexpected increase of immigration and refugee flows had a substantial impact on the existing Greek Migration and Asylum Policies. Recently, the Government of Greece decided to suspend all new asylum applications for 30 days (March 1st, 2020 – April 1st 2020) due to the extraordinary circumstances and the necessity to confront what is referred to as an "asymmetric threat to the national security"(Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 2020). The announcement also referred to a lack of capacity to process asylum applications that would be submitted during the "illegal mass entry into the country" within a reasonable period of time. This measure, however, was heavily criticized by UNHCR and human rights organisations who stated that the temporary suspension was in breach with international and European legislation (ECRE, 2020).

For more information, see:

IOM Greece:

<https://greece.iom.int/>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Greece:

<https://www.mfa.gr/en/index.html>

Ministry of Interior Affairs Greece:

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



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