

Narrative Annual Report 2024



www.welcomeofficelesvos.org

*financial report 2024 will follow and be
uploaded to our website



ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΤΑΞΗ
ΠΡΟΣΦΥΓΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΩΝ
ΑΜΚΕ ΛΕΣΒΟΥ

Lesvos, 15.01.2025

Introduction

Another year in Lesbos went by. During the first half we seemed to have less arrivals because of the heavy violent operations to stop boats at sea. After summer arrivals went up again. The number of shipwrecks caused by chases of the coast guard is unaccountable and life seems to no longer matter at the borders. Many documentations have come out about the topic:

<https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/63789-unhcr-regrets-rising-death-toll-in-the-aegean-sea.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0vv717yvpeo>

The Greek Government has shown this year that many of the services implemented or paid through the Greek State are only partly functional. Since May the translation services inside the camps have stopped to function all over the country, leading to a backlog in asylum interviews scheduled months later. Financial Assistance that asylum seekers should receive is not being paid. Many camps lack proper maintenance leading to containers that are broken, washing facilities only partly functioning etc.

More to read about the current conditions in the camps, lack of translation services and lack of financial assistance here:

<https://rsaegean.org/en/major-deficiencies-in-the-provision-of-interpretation-services-in-greece/>

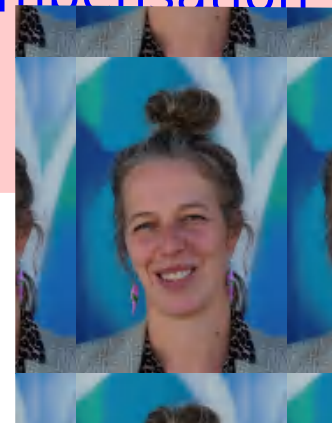
<https://rsaegean.org/en/suspension-of-financial-assistance-to-asylum-seekers-in-greece-since-may-2024/>

<https://rsaegean.org/en/refugee-facilities-on-the-aegean-islands/>

The criminalisation of migrants themselves has not stopped and outrageous testimonies are coming to the light of the day about the way the rule of law is undermined in Greek courts. Refugees that have been knowingly innocent are still being charged with high sentences. One example:

<https://legalcentresvos.org/2024/11/29/pylos-9-press-release-no-compensation-nor-apology-for-the-unjustly-imprisoned-survivors/>

Alice Kleinschmidt, legal representative welcome office lesvos

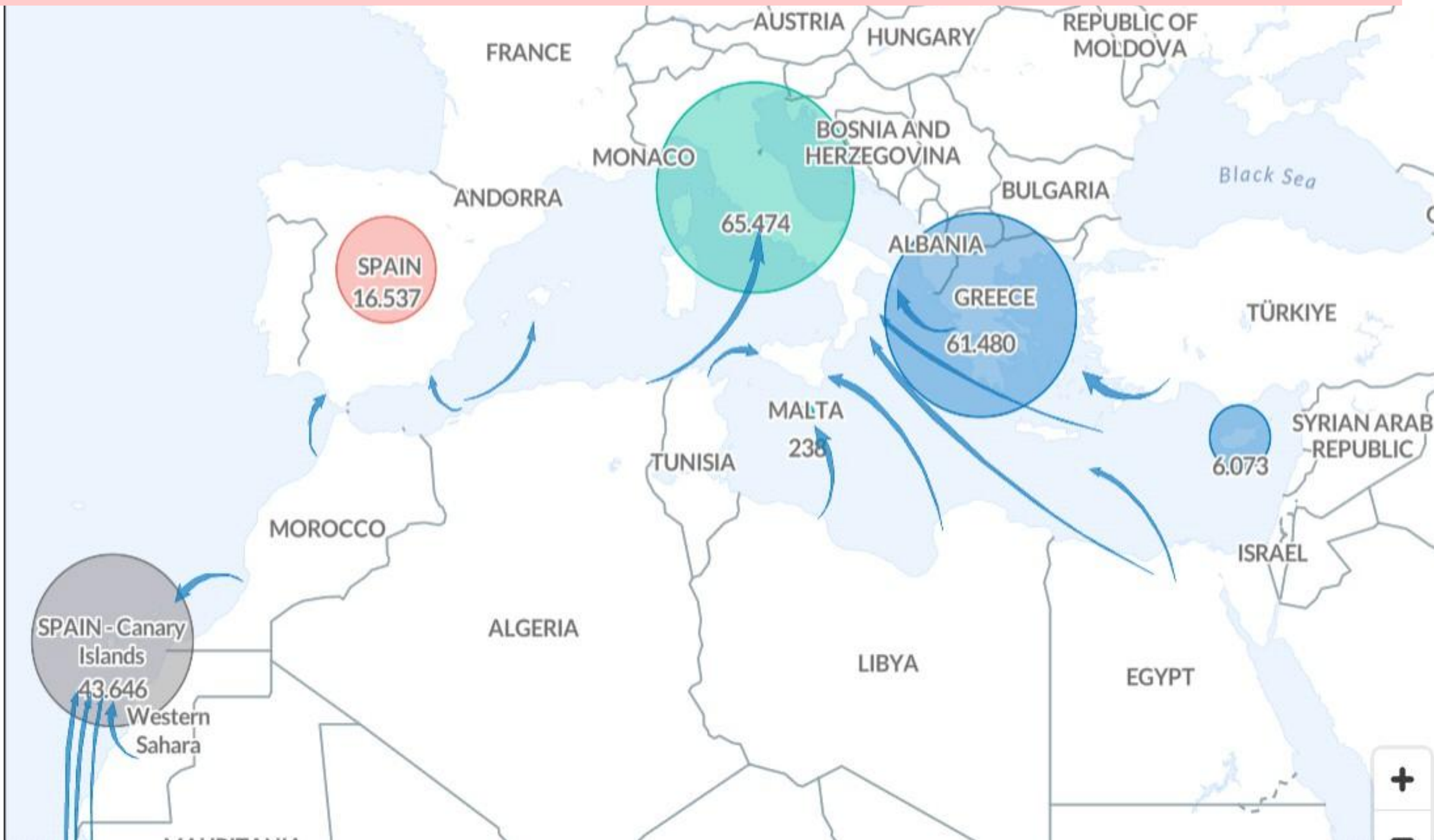


Europe Sea Arrivals / Select location

NETHERLANDS Arrivals via Western Med route

Greece receives around 1/3 of the overall sea arrivals to Europe, the other third reaches Italy and 1/3 Spain mainly to the Canary Islands

<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/europe-sea-arrivals> (29.12.2024)



Sea arrivals in 2024

183,250

Last updated 29 Dec 2024

Land arrivals in 2024

Includes individuals w part of Cyprus by air a into the government-co

10,198

Last updated 29 Dec 2024

Dead and Missing

includes dead and m and Northwest Africa m

2,368

Windows
Werkzeuge
zu aktivieren.

Selected numbers 2024

In the year 2024 11048 refugees were registered as new arrivals on Lesbos. Around 20% of the overall sea arrivals to Greece are still coming to Lesbos. Although routes have changed towards more south due to the ongoing Push-Back strategies in the Aegean. According to Turkish Coastguard information the amount of people trying to reach Greece was around two times higher: 106.000+ people tried crossing the Aegean Sea in 2024. Shipwrecks and people dying have increased due to more violent actions by the European funded Greek Coastguard in 2024.



0 €

Is the amount of money you get once you are a recognized refugee in Greece. There are no social benefits as in other countries, you have 30 days to leave the camp after you receive your residence permit

61.480

Refugees arrived to Greece in 2024 from them 53.942 via the sea (compared to 41.000 in 2023)

3800

Refugees are residing on Lesbos by end of December 2024

11.048

Refugees arrived **with boats** to Lesbos in 2024 (compared to 13.000 in 2023)

38%

Of them are children

95%

Of them come from violent crisis regions such as Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Sudan, Somalia, D.R. Congo and Eritrea

3 years

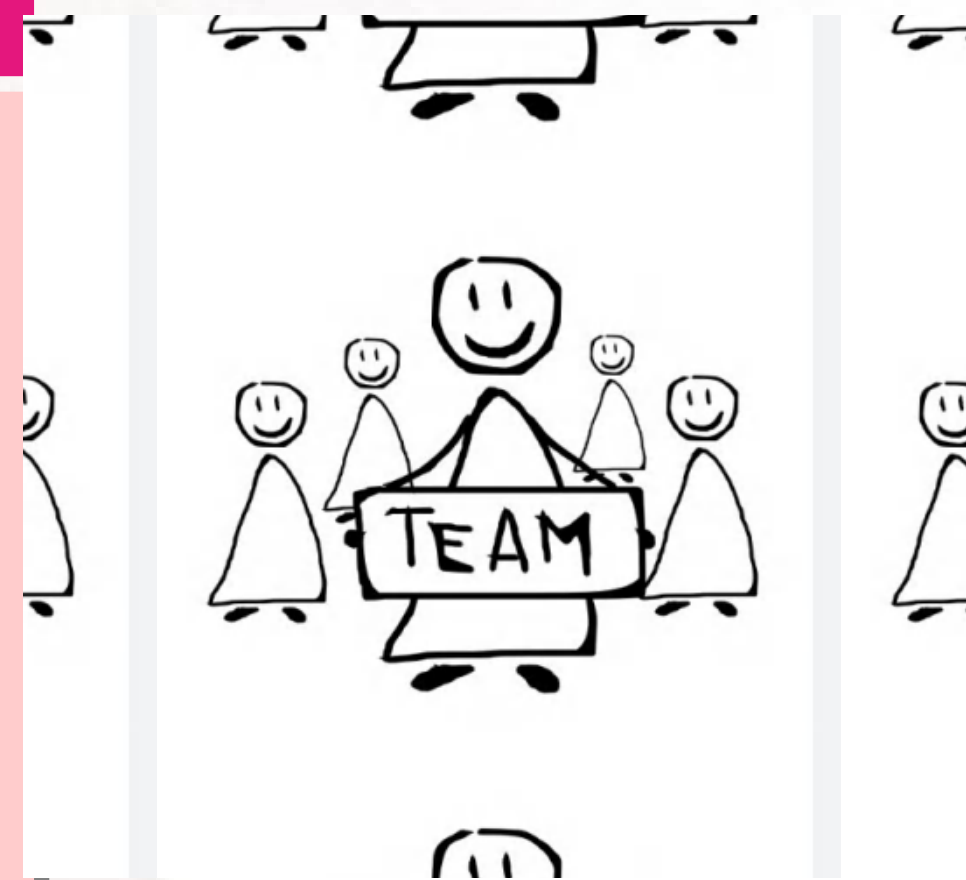
Is the max. time that at least one family we know has spent in the camps of Lesbos due to asylum procedure limbo in 2024, minimum time from arrival until receiving travel documents is 2 months.

Sources and more information:
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2024-002898_EN.html

Our team 2024

Our core team in 2024 consisted of 4 people

- Two receptionists / social consultants, Greek/English speaking. They were responsible for the Information Point at the Welcome Office – accompanying people to public services and trying to solve any issues coming up as the main reception point: Thenia and Natasa.
- One part time housing manager responsible for the housing project / and also taking part of the Info Point/ Case Work at the Office: Joana.
- One coordinator responsible for the projects, advocacy, administration, fundraising, supplies, communication and supervision: Alice.
- Additionally we cooperated with Sophie that was responsible for the Safe Shelter for Women and Tobi and Aziz for the VC Mytilini Radio Project.



Our Impact

We welcome every people on the move in Lesbos. We refer, we speak up and advocate, we stand in solidarity, we find flexible solutions, we explain about other services, accompany to public institutions, we do individual consultations and psychosocial support, but also group sessions about workers and social rights.

We offer warm and safe spaces outside of the camp in form of individual apartments and shared flats for singles, we connect with other actors and initiatives on a working level but also on journalistic and research level. We stand against the isolation of refugees and violence at the borders, we support where it is needed.

We cooperate with self organized groups and collectives. Together with our office visitors, participants of workshops and people in our housing projects we reach almost 3000 people through the year. We give orientation, support and solidarity that is not given in a camp built for not welcoming people to Europe.



Welcome Office

Our Welcome Office is situated very central in Mytilini close to the port. We offer information and counselling mainly in the areas of administrative support which means how to get tax number codes, how to register at public services, how to open a bank account, online applications for renewal of residence permits, where to find clothes for free, we help applying for a job or as unemployed, but also general information about the asylum procedures, kindergardens or how to rent an apartment. We help with translation of documents in Greek, we accompany to other offices or refer to other organizations. We try to be a smiling information point. We are also an open space for other initiatives that do not have the means to rent their own space. We are part of the integration working group on the island – and connected to many other organisation in order to combine local resources. Our office is open Mondays to Fridays 09:15 to 15:30. The space is the base where we coordinate the other projects such as housing, radio workshops, individual consultations etc. We are able there to receive donations such as food or non food items to distribute where it is most needed. We conducted school support lessons for children living in the city and going to public school, such as language support classes as well as home work support for 12 children in total.

2316

Total visits to our social counselling desks



112
cases for
integrational
support

12 children
assisted supporting
classes for school

10 groups of visiting universities, politicians, organizations from aboard we did tours and explanations for

Housing

18 apartments we rented through the year, 4 of them in cooperation with self organized groups, 13 apartments for children and mothers in need, 1 safe shelter for single women. We hosted many single mothers in a safe shared space as well as families in individual apartments. We hosted medical cases as well as protection cases. In most of the cases the reason to seek housing that was mentioned is for the well being of the children or sometimes due to serious health issues or protection issues inside the camp also homelessness after being recognised as a refugee was an issue.

225
individuals
hosted in 2024

67
Women were supported with housing

111
Children were supported through our housing program

4
gender diverse

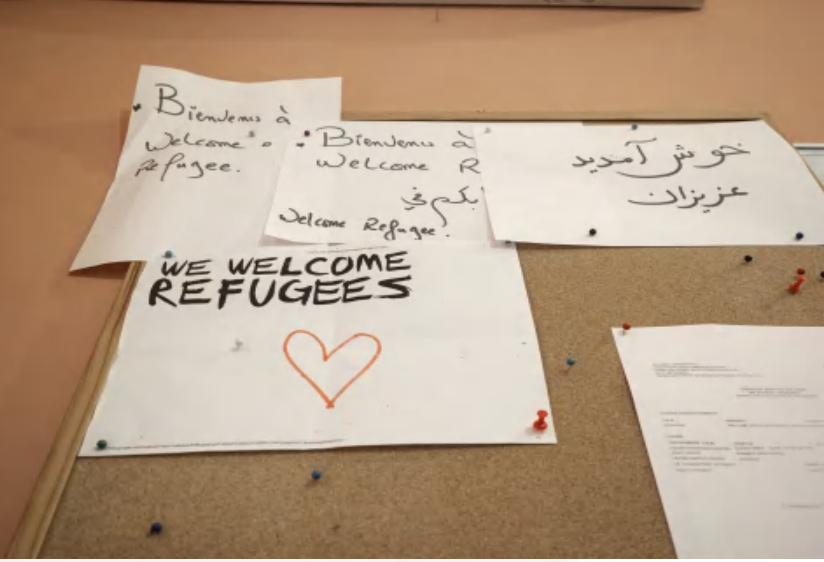
43
men

We recieved around 20% of our residents through referrals from other organisation that were flagging protection or health issues inside the camp. The rest came and asked for help themselves in our office.

We provided apartments for 30 families
And a safe space for 30 single women

The children ages ranged from new born up teenagers, The mothers ages from 18 to 40 years old. The average time of staying in our houses was 3 months, but we also had short term one month living or up to more than a year due to rejections in the asylum procedure In our waiting lists through the year were another 25 families + people that we did not even write down in the waiting list, because we did not want to give them false hopes. Our housing project ranges from short term emergency housing to integration transition to find a life on Lesvos.

Countries of origin in our housing project:
Afghanistan, Syria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, D.R. Congo, Iran, Iraq, Haiti, Kamerun, Sudan, Eritrea, Palestine and Ethiopia



Associated projects and cooperating partners 2024

- We run a radio project called VC Mytilini – doing workshops and podcasts in and about Lesbos: <https://de.cba.media/podcast/vc-mytilini>
- We cooperate with a LGBTIQ Solidarity group for refugees that aim to fill the gap in supporting queer people on the move in Lesvos:
<https://www.instagram.com/lesvos.lgbtiq.solidarity/>
- We host a women collective to fight against patriarchy and borders – a self led refugee collective of women:
<https://www.instagram.com/women.in.solidarity/>
- We partner with local food distribution initiatives in order to provide basic food provision to the most vulnerable: <https://www.instagram.com/noborderkitchenlesvos/>
- We share a space at Komninaki 20 with the Legal Centre Lesvos in order to have the very important legal aid fighting for human rights: <https://legalcentrelesvos.org/>

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG – SOLIDARITY WINS!

SUPPORTERS of our work that made all this possible:

- Freundeskreis für Kinder in Not e.V., DE
- Kerk in Actie, NL
- Ursula-Wandres-Stiftung, DE
- Doro Blancke Stiftung, AT
- Medico International, DE
- Radio Helsinki, AT
- Borderline Europe, DE
- Hammer Forum, DE
- Mission Lifeline, DE
- Mediterranean Women's Fund, FR