

Info Sheet: Relocation

(Latest update: 28th of March 2016)



What is relocation?

Relocation is the legal transfer of persons who are considered to require international protection (asylum and subsidiary protection) from one member state of the European Union to another member state after having been found eligible by the authorities of Greece.

Until today, relocation has been completed for very few persons although the European Union had announced high numbers back in 2015. Out of 66,400 refugees that the EU had planned to relocate from Greece to other European countries within the next two years, only 581 refugees were relocated from November 2015 until the 20th of March 2016¹.

As of today approximately 50,000 refugees are stuck in Greece and the number of applications is beginning to rise in the last weeks. Thus it may take several months in order to be relocated.

Who can apply for relocation?

The Relocation Program concerns citizens of countries for which the rate of granting international protection is over 75%, based on the European average recognition rates. At the moment, the Relocation Program concerns **Syrians, Iraqis, Eritreans**, nationals of the **Central African Republic, Yemen, Swaziland, Bahrain** and stateless persons whose former habitual residence was one of these countries. The large majority of beneficiaries until now are Syrians.

Attention! In order to benefit from relocation ...

- you have to first apply for international protection;
- you must go through the identification, registration and fingerprinting procedure carried out by the Greek authorities;
- you must prove that you are an asylum seeker and have arrived in Greece after the 16th of September 2015.

What do I need to know about relocation before I apply?

- You will not be able to choose the country of destination; this can be problematic as some of the receiving countries are not first choice if you want to build a future.
- In the case of families of asylum seekers, all family members will be relocated to the same member state in order to preserve family unity.
- After being relocated to another EU country you are obliged to stay and live there – which can in some cases be quite problematic concerning your chances in that country.
- If you leave the country you were relocated to and try to move to another European country, you will face problems concerning your legal status there.

¹ According to the Greek Ministry of interior, 20th of March 2016. (http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Relocation-procedures-up-to-20.3.16_en.pdf)

- The relocation is free of charge.
- If you do not want to go to the country that you are assigned to or your claim was rejected, you can always resign from the program and your case will be analyzed in Greece.

Another possibility to legally reach another European country is via the Dublin III family reunification. This is only possible if you have relatives of your close family who are legally residing in another European country.

Are people with special needs prioritized?

Yes, vulnerable persons are prioritized. This includes in particular: minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation.

Where could I be sent to in case I am accepted for relocation?

The following countries have accepted relocations from Greece: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

How long does the procedure take?

It is unclear how long this procedure will take, especially as it can be expected that more people than before will apply for relocation now and not many countries are willing to receive refugees via the relocation procedure yet.

Only one fact is clear: your relocation procedure will be completed within two months from the moment a country accepts you as an applicant. On an average, a relocation procedure should be completed within three months – but this is so far mainly a declaration on paper – up to now only few people have been relocated.

For the period you wait for your application in Greece you can apply for housing before the Greek Asylum Service. Unaccompanied minors will be hosted in a reception center. Please be aware that until now this is just a declaration on paper and we lack practical experience.

Can I influence the choice of the country which I will be sent to?

You cannot choose the country you will be sent to. The only choice is to leave the program in case you do not want to get transferred to the country that was chosen for you. In order to decide the member state to which you will be relocated to, four criteria will be taken into account:

- your vulnerability (see criteria above),
- the existence of relatives in a particular member state,
- your language skills.

What factors might be important for my decision if I really want to be relocated to a certain country or not?

It can help,

- if you have family or friends in the country that was chosen for you and
- if there are existing migrant communities.

It is very difficult,

- if the economic situation of the country is bad, a social welfare system is inexistent and the unemployment rate is high and/or
- if the country is ruled by a right wing government.

Attention! Countries described often as very difficult to live in for refugees are for example: Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Malta and the Czech Republic.

Until what moment can I withdraw my application without any further consequences (e. g. being sent to the country that accepted me)?

It might be decided to relocate you to a country where you do not want to go for various reasons. One important question is therefore what consequences it has if you withdraw your relocation-application.

In some leaflets the authorities state that you can be returned to Greece in case you go to another country than the one decided for you based on the Dublin III regulation; either during your relocation procedure or after a decision for a certain country has been taken. Almost all European countries have decided not to return any people to Greece, even if they were first fingerprinted in Greece including asylum seekers. So far it is unclear how they would be able to find out if you have lodged a relocation application or not.

However, if you move to a third EU-country and apply for asylum there after you have been relocated to another EU-country there will for sure be an attempt to return you to the country you were relocated to originally.

Which organization is responsible for relocation?

The Greek Asylum Service is responsible for the application and the procedure in Greece. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducts your relocation.

How does the procedure work?

How to apply

1. Skype call

As a very first step, you have to arrange an appointment with the Greek Asylum Service via Skype. The only way to arrange this appointment is via Skype. In this call you will be given an appointment in one of the regional asylum offices listed below in order to submit your relocation application.

The costs of the transport to your appointment will not be covered by the Greek Asylum Service. You will have to pay it by yourself. Do not miss this appointment!

For refugees staying in the camps in Idomeni, Neo Kavala and the gas station at Polykastro the nearest asylum office is in Thessaloniki.

Please be aware that you will be given an appointment in the regional asylum office you call via Skype. If you call the asylum office in Athens, you will also have to go to Athens to submit your application.

Skype call times for applications at the asylum office in Athens:

Monday and Wednesday, 09⁰⁰ - 10⁰⁰, 14⁰⁰ - 15⁰⁰, 16⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰; Tuesday, 09⁰⁰ - 10⁰⁰, 16⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰;
Sorani: Friday, 09⁰⁰ - 10⁰⁰; **Kurmanji:** Friday, 10⁰⁰ - 11⁰⁰; user ID: asylum.service.relocation

Skype call times for applications at the asylum offices in Thessaloniki and the rest of Greece:

Monday to Thursday, 15⁰⁰ - 16⁰⁰; Friday, 12⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰; **Sorani:** Thursday, 16⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰; **Kurmanji:** Friday, 11⁰⁰ - 12⁰⁰; user ID: asylum.service.relocation

UNHCR and EASO can provide you support and information about the relocation procedure, but you cannot register to the program with them anymore.

VERY IMPORTANT! At the moment it is very difficult to reach the asylum office via Skype due to a lack of capacity to answer all calls. Keep trying to call them as it is a crucial step to begin the process.

2. Submission of your relocation application

On the appointment with the regional asylum office you should mention whether you have family or relatives in other European countries. Also the languages you speak, your ethnic background and your past working experience or studies are taken into account. If you have documents that prove this, bring them with you.

After the personal interview at the regional asylum office, you will have to wait until your claim is either accepted or rejected.

After a positive decision

Once you receive a positive relocation decision, you will be provided with information about the transfer to the country that was chosen for you. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is responsible for pre-departure assistance and travel of the beneficiaries once they have been accepted by a member state of the program.

In the case of relocation, the application will be examined by the responsible authorities of the member state which you will be relocated to. Consequently, in the event of international protection status being granted, you will receive your residence permit from the member state where you have been relocated to.

After a negative decision

If your relocation application is rejected, your asylum application will be examined by Greece.

Asylum Services in Greece

Regional Asylum Office of Athens

P. Kanellopoulou 2, Athens 10177

Tel.: (0030) 210 698 8500

Help line with recorded information for asylum seekers
in ten languages: (0030) 210 69 88 660

E-Mail: asylo@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Thessaloniki

Building of former «B KTEO»

Pontou Street, Kalochori Thessaloniki 54001

Tel.: (0030) 2310-751775

E-Mail: pga.thessalonikis@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Lesbos

Nationality Identification Center

Moria, Lesbos 81100

Tel.: (0030) 22510 32323

E-Mail: pga.lesvou@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Northern Evros

Special Detention Center for Foreigners

Fylakio. Orestiada 68006

Tel.: (0030) 2552095180

E-Mail: pga.evrou@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Southern Evros

Makris Avenue 1-B, Nea Chili, Alexandroupolis 68100

Tel: (0030) 25510 35170

E-Mail: pga.alexandroupolis@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Rhodes

Rhodes Traffic Police Building

Eleftherias Square 1, Rhodes 85100

Tel.: (0030) 22410 30278

E-Mail: pga.rodou@asylo.gov.gr

Regional Asylum Office of Samos

Themistokli Sofouli Street, Samos 83100

Tel.: (0030) 22730-81540

E-Mail: pga.samou@asylo.gov.gr

NGOs supporting refugees with legal aid

AITIMA

Legal and material assistance to asylum seekers and refugees

Tripou 4-6, Koukaki, Athens 11741

Tel.: (0030) 2109241677 / (0030) 6989764598

European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

Asylum Support Team Thessaloniki

Tel.: (0030) 6989764598

E-Mail: cos.thessaloniki@easo.europe.eu

Ecumenical Refugee Program

Legal assistance to asylum seekers and refugees

Mondays, 11⁰⁰ - 16⁰⁰; Wednesdays - Fridays, 10⁰⁰ - 14⁰⁰

Iridanou Str. 4A, Athens 11528

Tel.: (0030) 210-7295926

E-Mail: ecrp@acn.gr

Greek Council for Refugees

Legal counselling and social assistance free of charge
Solomou Str. 25, Athens 10682
Kassandrou 37A, Thessaloniki 54633
Tel.: (0030) 2103800990

Group of Lawyers for the rights of refugees and migrants

Wednesdays, 17⁰⁰ - 19⁰⁰
Ioulianou 11 & Rethymnou Str., Exarheia, Athens 10682
<http://omadadikigorwnenglish.blogspot.com/>

Contacts to other organisations involved in the relocation procedure

You can contact UNHCR and IOM to indicate interest in the Relocation Program and they will provide further information on the application procedure.

UNHCR

Tagiapiera Street 12, Athens 11525
Tel.: (0030) 210-6726462
E-Mail: great@unhcr.org

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Dodekanisou 6, Alimos, Athens 17456
Tel.: (0030) 210-9919040
E-Mail: iomathens@iom.int

Independent Information / News

News That Moves

Updates for migrants in Farsi, Arabic, Greek and English
<http://newsthatmoves.org>

W2EU

Information on asylum rights and the legal supporting network
<http://live.w2eu.info>

BorderMonitoring Eidomeni

Live ticker on current events in Idomeni
<http://livetickereidomeni.bordermonitoring.eu>

Sources and other links

Where can I find official information by the Greek Asylum Service?
<http://asylo.gov.gr/en/> (in English)

Where can I find case numbers that have received an answer?
http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=1031

Where can I find statistics on relocation?
http://asylo.gov.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Relocation-procedures-up-to-6.3.16_en.pdf

To have access to this information online please scan this QR code
or visit: <http://informationflyers.wix.com/stayrebell>



