PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС



Greece

General Information

Population

10 413 962 (World Bank 2025)

10 400 720 (STAT GR 2024)

Immigration

1 423 964 (UN Immigration Stock 2024)

118 816 (STAT GR 2023)

Emigration

780 112 (UN Emigration Stock 2024)

76 158 (STAT GR 2023)

Working-age population

6 534 624 (World Bank 2025)

6 633 706 (STAT GR 2023)

Unemployment rate

8.8 % (World Bank 2025)

9.8 % (STAT GR 2024)

GDP

280 635 521 324.4 current prices USD (World Bank 2025)

201 500 000 000 current prices EUR (STAT GR 2024)

Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

134 563 (UNHCR 2025)

Asylum Seekers

31 928 (UNHCR 2025)

26 328 (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2025)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)

291 000 (IDMC 2024)

Citizenship

By Birth

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT 2024)

By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Years of Residency

7 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Territory

131 957 km^2 (CIA World Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Line Ministries

Ministry of Interior

Ministry of Citizen Protection

Agencies

General Secretariat for Migration Policy

Directorate of Residence Permits

General Secretariat of Reception of Asylum Seekers

Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

Special Secretariat for the Coordination of Stakeholders (operating under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum)

Greek Asylum Service

Reception and Identification Service

Appeals Authority

General Secretariat for Citizenship (Ministry of Interior)

National Coordination Center for Border Control, Immigration and Asylum (Ministry of Citizen Protection)

Key Policy Documents

Law 5038/2023 New Migration Code

Code of Reception, international protection of third-country nationals and stateless persons and of temporary protection in cases of mass influx of displaced migrants as ratified by L. 4939/2022

2022 National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors

2021 National strategy for the social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection

2021 National action plan for children's rights

4825/2021 on Reform of procedures for deportations and returns of citizens of third countries etc.

4686/2020 on Improvement of immigration legislation etc.

4636/2019 on international protection and other provisions

4375/2016 on Organisation and functioning of the Asylum Service, Appeals Authority, Reception and Identification Service etc.

Code of Immigration and Social Inclusion as ratified by L. 4251/2014

3907/2011 on the establishment of an Asylum Service and a First Reception Service etc.

3386/2005 on Entry, Residence and Social Integration of third country nationals on the Greek territory

Greek Citizenship Code as ratified by Law 3284/2004

Relevant Publications

Exploring the Potential of Digitalisation in Migration Management in the Prague Process Region

Digitalisation and labour migration: the use of modern technology, challenges and opportunities

How will migration to Europe look in the Future?

Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs): The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost

ENIGMMA 2 Case Study: Georgian Diaspora in Greece, Italy and Spain

Georgian Diaspora and Migrant Communities in Germany, Greece and Turkey

ICMPD, Pathways and policy evolution: Comparing national laws and policies addressing irregular migrants (Working Paper, 2024)

Greece is both a country of immigration and emigration. Positive net migration notwithstanding, the population of Greece is declining. It stood at 10,400,720 in 2024, down from 10,718,565 in 2020 and 11,119,289 in 2010, due to the natural population decrease.

Greece saw a major emigration wave after the economic crisis of 2009, consisting mainly of labour migrants. Between 2011 and 2019, over 100,000 persons left the country each year, peaking at 124,194 in 2012. Roughly half were Greek nationals and half foreigners, both groups affected by the economic crisis. Since 2019, the outflow has declined, with 76,158 emigrants recorded in 2023 (both Greek and foreign nationals). Germany remains the main destination for Greek emigrants (36% in 2022), followed by the Netherlands (19%) and Switzerland (6%). Many emigrants are highly skilled Greeks working in technology, finance, construction and healthcare, while lower skilled find jobs in hospitality, transport and caregiving.

Due to decades of emigration, the Greek diaspora numbers between 5 million and 7 million people worldwide, including both Greek citizens abroad and people of Greek descent holding other nationalities. The largest communities are in the US (three million), Australia (700,000), Germany (450,000) and Canada (350,000). According to UNDESA, 1,423,964 Greek emigrants were living abroad in 2024.

In 2023, a total of 118,816 immigrants entered Greece, reflecting the continued significance of immigration flows despite fluctuations in recent years. An analysis of the previous residence reveals that over 40,000 were Greek nationals, 10,627 were EU citizens, 19,990 were from the EU candidate countries (Western Balkans, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Türkiye), and 15,118 were from low developed non-EU countries (a group of African and Asian low-developed countries, along with Haiti in the Caribbean). The number of immigrants in 2023 almost reached the pre-pandemic levels (129,459 in 2019), after a significant drop to 57,120 in 2021. The number of first residence permits issued to non-EU nationals in 2023 was 87,932, 24% higher than the year before (70,921 permits) and 108% higher than before the pandemic (42,348 permits in 2019). Of these, 25% were issued for employment reasons, 18.3% for family reasons, 1% for education reasons and almost 55% for other reasons.

As of December 2024, approximately 1,147,800 foreign-born individuals lived in Greece, down from a peak of 1,361,720 in December 2021. They represented around 11.3% of Greece's population in 2023. Nearly 80% (over 900,000) of all foreign-born individuals living in Greece in 2024 were non-EU nationals, and over 555,000 were nationals of nine EU candidate counties (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and Ukraine). At the end of 2024, 656,018 non-EU nationals had valid residence permits in Greece, 7.8% higher than the year before. Of these, over 264,000 were issued for other reasons, close to 177,000 for family reasons, 146,763 for employment, and more than 82,000 on the basis of refugee status, and the remainder issued for education and subsidiary protection. Over the past decade, the most pronounced growth has been in employment permits, which have doubled since 2015.

Greece also offers an Investor Permanent Residence Permit (commonly called a Golden Visa). This grants five-year renewable residence rights to third-country nationals who invest in real estate, providing a pathway to Greek citizenship. Chinese citizens made up the majority in 2024 (6,457), followed by nationals of Türkiye (1,268), Lebanon (765) and the UK (544).

Greece has long been an entry point for asylum seekers into Europe. In 2015, over 850,000 people arrived by sea to Greece seeking safety. Numbers, however, sharply decreased after the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, the closure of the Balkan Route, and the 2019 asylum law, which expanded detention measures and drew criticism from NGOs, UNHCR, and the Greek National Commission for Human Rights. In 2024, the number of sea arrivals exceeded 50,000, and by the end of August 2025 they have reached over 26,000. In 2025, most applications for international protection were from Afghanistan (31%), followed by Egypt (16.4%), Syria (6.2%) and Pakistan (5.2%). Furthermore, the total backlog of pending applications and decisions increased by 39% in May 2025 compared to the corresponding month in 2024. Applications for international protection in Greece reached 73,684 in 2024, up from 28,276 in 2021, as reported by the Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum. As of August 2025, Greece hosted over 37,000 beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine, the highest number since March 2022, and nearly 18% more than in August 2025.

In July 2025, the Greek Parliament passed a law pausing asylum application processing for three months for those arriving by sea from North Africa (notably Libya). This allows Greek authorities to demand immediate repatriation without identification (limited to a minimum of three months). In July 2025, the Greek authorities also introduced stiffer criminal penalties - up to 2 years' imprisonment - for those remaining in the country illegally post-rejection.

Irregular migration is a reoccurring problem in Greece. In 2024, 56,066 individuals arrived irregularly via the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Aegean islands and Evros), marking a 10,000-person increase from 2023. An additional 5,987 arrivals were recorded via the Central Mediterranean Route. In 2024, 77,095 non-EU nationals have been found as being illegally present in Greece, the highest number since 2020. That same year, 31,565 non-EU nationals were ordered to leave Greece, with only 5,420 persons returned following an order to leave, the lowest number of executed returns since 2015.

In recent years, living conditions in Greece's mainland reception centers have improved, with upgraded facilities, less overcrowding, and better access to services. By 2025, the country was operating 22 mainland reception centres – officially known as Closed Controlled Access Centres – with a total capacity of 21,400 places, of which less than 60% were occupied.

In 2014, the Immigration and Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014) introduced reforms concerning residence permits for third-country nationals and organisational arrangements for their social integration. The Greek Immigration Code has been amended several times since its introduction. In 2022, the Code of Reception and international protection replaced the previously criticised 2019 asylum law. In 2021, Greece launched a new National strategy for the social integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, a National Strategy for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors and a National action plan for children's rights, part of which is dedicated to children in refugee and migration context. Greece's new Migration Code entered into force in

January 2024. It introduced new procedures and requirements for non-EU nationals seeking to enter and reside in the country. This new code aims to streamline and speed up granting residence permits, aligning migration policies with the needs of Greek society and its economy. In December 2023, Greece amended its Asylum Code, facilitating access to labour market for migrants and asylum seekers. Undocumented migrants who lived in Greece for at least three years by November 2023 and have a job offer, can now receive a three-year residence permits, while asylum seekers can access labour market within sixty days (previously six months) of the lodging of their application and the receipt of the relevant legal documents.

Since June 2021, Greece has applied the 'safe country of origin' concept, using both the EU common list and its own national list when examining asylum claims. Türkiye is deemed safe for nationals of Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Somalia. To align with the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, Greece is implementing its National Implementation Plan, with major operational changes expected by June 2026. The efforts include upgrading IT systems for asylum and reception, expanding support for unaccompanied minors, and launching job fairs and one-stop shops to connect beneficiaries with services and employers.

Greece has signed over 15 bilateral readmission agreements. In 2022, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bangladesh allowing seasonal work for Bangladeshis already residing in Greece, though without the right to permanent settlement. Similar discussions are ongoing with Pakistan. Greece is a party to several Migration Dialogues, including the Prague Process, the Budapest Process, the Rabat Process and the Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM). The country adopted the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

latest update: 1 October 2025