

ASsIST- Newsletter No 5 June 2026

June is Pride Month

During June, ASsIST recognises Pride Month as an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to providing information and legal assistance regardless of nationality, background, religion, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other characteristic protected by law without discrimination.

ASsIST was founded on a simple principle: all people should be able to understand their rights and obligations and have a fair opportunity to exercise them in practice.

What's happening in Greece

Arrivals continue via the Aegean islands, the Evros land border, and increasingly through the longer and more dangerous Central Mediterranean route from Libya to Crete. As of 21 June 2026,

Sea arrivals 11,675
Land arrivals. 3,139
Total arrivals. 14,814

Sea Arrivals to Crete 8,082
Percentage of total sea arrivals 69,4%

Reception capacity remains under pressure in parts of Greece, with reports of overcrowding and limited access to some services. Delays affecting access to asylum procedures, including online registration systems, have contributed to uncertainty for some applicants. Concerns regarding procedural access, detention practices, and the use of accelerated procedures continue to be raised by NGOs, lawyers, and international organisations.

Legal challenges and judicial scrutiny concerning asylum procedures, detention practices, shipwreck investigations, and allegations of unlawful returns continue before both Greek and European courts and institutions.

The implementation phase of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum reached an important milestone on 12 June 2026, when many of its key provisions became applicable. However, uncertainty remains regarding how these measures will operate in practice and what impact they may have on asylum procedures, reception, detention, and return policies. Discussion has focused on issues including border procedures, Safe Countries of Origin, and proposals for return hubs outside the European Union [see our Newsletter No. 4].

In developments related to Syrian applicants and refugees, Greece continued to move from a suspension-and review approach toward the active reassessment of protection status. [See our article p.2]

Syria: Protection Reviews, Returns, and Continuing Uncertainty

EU-wide Protection Trends

During 2025 and early 2026, protection outcomes for Syrian nationals changed significantly across Europe. Following political developments in Syria, a number of states resumed decision-making on previously suspended cases and recognition rates declined substantially. By March 2026, EUAA data indicated a Syrian recognition rate of approximately 17% across the EU+ area, reflecting a marked change from previous years.

Several European states began reviewing existing protection status and considering whether changed circumstances in Syria justified withdrawal or cessation procedures in individual cases. While approaches vary between countries, the overall direction has been towards closer examination of both new and existing claims rather than an assumption of continuing protection needs.

Relations with Syria

European engagement with the authorities in Damascus has increased during this period, including renewed diplomatic contacts and the easing of some economic and financial sanctions. In a notable development, on 30 March 2026, the German Chancellor and the President of the Syrian transitional authority met in Berlin to discuss plans for joint reconstruction and a return program. Germany hosts the largest Syrian refugee population in Europe. Public discussion has also emerged in several European states regarding future return arrangements and reconstruction-linked initiatives.

While these developments reflect evolving diplomatic relations, they do not in themselves determine eligibility for international protection in Greece or other European states. As many observers continue to report that political and security arrangements remain in transition and that authority and control continue to vary across different regions within the country.

Moreover, it is important to emphasise that, under international and European law, eligibility for international protection in Greece and other European states must remain subject to an individual assessment of the circumstances of each case.

Greece

In Greece, reports during 2026 indicated that some Syrian cases were being reopened for review, including consideration of whether existing protection should continue in individual circumstances. These developments have occurred alongside broader legislative and policy measures intended to strengthen return procedures for rejected asylum applicants and increase the efficiency of return mechanisms.

Conditions in Syria and Return Assessments

International organisations continue to urge caution regarding return to Syria. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and other observers note that the transition has not ended sectarian violence, accountability mechanisms remain incomplete, and questions regarding security and the protection of human rights remain a matter of concern. Under the 1951 Refugee Convention and European asylum law, decisions concerning protection and return require an individual assessment of circumstances rather than broad assumptions regarding conditions throughout a country.

Syria: Protection Reviews, Returns, and Continuing Uncertainty [cont.]

Summary

The principal trend across Europe is a gradual shift towards greater emphasis on return, accompanied by reviews of existing protection status and renewed reassessment of protection needs for Syrian nationals. This trend is becoming increasingly visible in practice, with some states reopening previously suspended cases, reviewing existing protection status, and exploring future return mechanisms. At the same time, major international organisations continue to caution that conditions inside Syria remain highly variable and that return decisions require an individual assessment rather than broad assumptions about safety. The gap between discussions of return and the realities faced by returnees therefore remains an important consideration.

References and Sources

[European Union Agency for Asylum \(April 2026\)](#)

[The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic \[Human Rights Council 27 March 2026\]](#)

[Migration Policy Centre \(20 Mar 2026\)](#)

[Reuters - \(30 March 2026\) Germany-Syria Cooperation](#)

[The Syrian Observer \(17 March 2026\)](#)

[Al Jazeera \(01 June 2026\) Greece](#)

[Geopolitical Monitor - 08 May 2026](#)

EUROPEAN UNION RETURN-POLICY

UP-DATE ON 'RETURN HUBS'

The wider EU return-policy shift remains important.

The Return Regulation is a controversial shift in EU migration as it will allow EU countries to set up deportation centres known as return hubs, outside EU borders in third countries through bilateral agreements with EU Member states.

On 10 June 2026, Greece's parliament approved legislation to fast track the deportation of rejected asylum seekers and to permit their transfer to 'return hubs' in third countries outside the Europe Union once bilateral agreements are in place. (Reuters: 10 June 2026)

On 17 June 2026, the European Parliament approved the Return Regulation, supporting faster returns and the possibility of offshore arrangements. ([Euronews](#)). Yet key aspects of how this can be achieved remain unclear. [See ASsIST Newsletter No. 4 -May 2026].

Despite growing political support for return hubs at both EU and national level, important legal and practical questions remain unanswered. These include how agreements with third countries would operate in practice, what safeguards would apply to those transferred, and how compliance with international and European legal obligations would be ensured. Consequently, the future implementation of return hubs remains uncertain.

Greece: After Return or Recognition: The First Need Is Safe Shelter

Frontline organisations providing services in Greece are expressing growing concern for the safety and well-being of people returned to Greece from other European countries, and recognised refugees who are forced to leave Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCACs). For many, the absence of immediate shelter presents an immediate risk to their safety, health and well-being. Without viable means of support, they often find themselves without a safe place to stay from the day they arrive in Greece or leave reception facilities.

These circumstances should also be understood within the broader context of homelessness in Greece. Access to emergency shelters and temporary accommodation is often subject to documentation, language, health and other eligibility requirements, as well as the availability of places. Homelessness affects both Greek citizens and refugees, and even people with the financial means to contribute towards accommodation may be unable to access emergency shelter or secure suitable housing if they cannot meet the admission requirements or if no places are available. Understanding this wider context helps explain both the risks faced by returnees and recognised refugees and the pressures experienced by the organisations and public services working to support them.

Ensuring access to immediate, safe shelter is not simply a housing issue. It is the first practical step towards safety, stability and the opportunity to rebuild a life.



Sleeping rough is always a public health emergency, but in the intense heat of this summer in Athens lives are at imminent risk. In extremes of weather, the need to provide everyone with safe shelter is even more urgent.

TALIBAN REPRESENTATIVES MEET EU OFFICIALS IN BRUSSELS

On 23 June 2026, representatives of the Taliban met in Brussels with officials from the European Commission and representatives of 15 EU Member States to discuss migration, readmission and the return of Afghan nationals.

According to reports, EU officials described the discussions as “technical” and emphasised that the meeting did not constitute diplomatic recognition of the Taliban authorities. Nevertheless, the meeting represents a significant development in relations between the European Union and Afghanistan, particularly in the context of migration and return policies.

The meeting follows recent developments across Europe, including Germany’s resumption of deportations to Afghanistan, discussions concerning returns of rejected asylum seekers, and new protection measures adopted by the Netherlands for Afghan women and girls.

As details of the discussions and any practical outcomes become clearer, ASsIST will examine the implications for Afghans seeking protection in Europe in Newsletter No. 6.



ASsIST is raising funds to help refugee single parents secure legal custody of their children in Greece.

Without legal custody, parents face difficulties accessing services, enrolling children in school, obtaining travel documents, and making important decisions on behalf of their children.

The funds raised will help cover legal and court costs, reducing delays and enabling families to begin proceedings when they need them most.

Please share this [link](#) with your friends and networks.



15 July 2026.

Tax Declarations in Greece

All persons legally resident in Greece – including asylum seekers, recognised refugees, expatriates and Greek citizens – may be required to submit an annual tax declaration, including in cases where no income has been received.

- The deadline for submitting tax declarations is 15 July 2026.
- Failure to submit a required declaration may result in an administrative penalty of €100.00.

Tax declarations are submitted online through TAXISnet. In practice, access to the system depends on having a tax number (AFM), correct personal data, and valid login credentials. Where these are missing or inconsistent, the process may not be possible without support. The obligation to submit a declaration may arise once a person is registered with a tax number (AFM), including where no income has been received.

For detailed guidance, see information published by [RefugeeInfo - Greece](#) or contact ASsIST Helpline on +30 694 810 0477.

Please put 15-16th July in your Calendar if you would like to donate to ASsIST.

ONE DAY-ONE CHANCE TO DOUBLE THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATION

If you donate USD 100.00+ or equivalent to ASsIST between 15-16th July your donation will be matched!

Check the time period below for your country.

Greece: 15 July from 17.00 to 16 July 17.00 (GMT+2)

Switzerland: 15 July from 16.00 to 16 July 16.00 (GMT+1)

UK (BST): 15 July from 15.00 to 16 July 15.00 (GMT)

US EST 15 July from 10:00 to 16 July 10.00 (GMT- 4)

Australia (AEST): July 15 at 00.00 to 00.00 on 16 July

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DONATE NOW

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