

Input by civil society organisations to the Asylum Report 2026

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Dear Colleagues,

The production of the Asylum Report 2026 is currently underway. The annual [Asylum Report](#) presents an overview of developments in the field of international protection in Europe.

The report includes information and perspectives from various stakeholders, including experts from EU+ countries, civil society organisations, researchers and UNHCR. To this end, we invite you, our partners from civil society, academia and research institutions, to share your reporting on developments in asylum law, policies or practices in 2025 by topic as presented in the online survey (**Part A of the form**).

We also invite you to share with us any publications your organisation has produced throughout 2025 on issues related to asylum in EU+ countries (**Part B of the form**). These may be reports, articles, recommendations to national authorities or EU institutions, open letters and analytical outputs. Your input can cover information for a specific EU+ country or the EU as a whole. You can complete all or only some of the sections.

Please note that the Asylum Report does not seek to describe national systems in detail but rather to present key developments of the past year, including improvements and challenges which remain.

All submissions are publicly accessible. For transparency, contributions will be published on the EUAA webpage and contributing organisations will be listed under the [Acknowledgements](#) of the report.

All contributions should be appropriately referenced. You may include links to supporting material, such as analytical studies, articles, reports, websites, press releases, position papers. Some sources of information may be in a language other than English. In this case, please cite the original language and, if possible, provide one to two sentences describing the key messages in English.

The content of the Asylum Report is subject to terms of reference and volume limitations. Contributions from civil society organisations feed into EUAA's work in multiple ways and inform reports and analyses beyond the Asylum Report.

NB: Similarly to last year, this year's edition of the Asylum Report will be leaner and more analytical, with streamlined thematic sections. The focus will be on key trends in the field of asylum rather than on individual developments. For this reason, information shared by respondents to this call may be incorporated in the Asylum Report in a format different than in the past years. It will also feature prominently as info boxes in the [country overviews](#).

Your input matters to us and will be much appreciated!

Please submit your contribution to the Asylum Report 2026 by Friday, 9 January 2026.

Contact details

* Name of organisation

Equal Legal Aid

Name and title of contact person

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I accept the provisions of the EUAA [Legal and Privacy Statements](#)

General observations

Before sharing information by thematic area, please provide your general observations on asylum developments as indicated in the following three fields:

What areas would you highlight where important developments took place in the country/countries you cover?

What are the areas, where only few or no developments took place?

Would you have any observations to share specifically about the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum in the national context of the country/ countries you cover?

PART A: Contributions by topic

Please share your reporting on developments in asylum law, policies or practices in 2025 by topic. Kindly make sure that you provide information on:

- New developments and improvements in 2025 and new or remaining challenges;
- Changes in legislation, policies or practices, or institutional changes during 2025.

1. Access to territory and access to the asylum procedure (including first arrival to territory and registration, arrival at the border, application of the non-refoulement principle, the right to first response (shelter, food, medical treatment) and issues regarding border guards)

2. Access to information and legal assistance (including counselling and representation)

3. Provision of interpretation services (e.g. introduction of innovative methods for interpretation, increase/decrease in the number of languages available, change in qualifications required for interpreters)

4. Dublin procedures (including the organisational framework, practical developments, suspension of transfers to selected countries, detention in the framework of Dublin procedures)

5. Special procedures (including border procedures, procedures in transit zones, accelerated procedures, admissibility procedures, prioritised procedures or any special procedure for selected caseloads)

6. Reception of applicants for international protection (including information on reception capacities – increase/decrease/stable, material reception conditions - housing, food, clothing and financial support, contingency planning in reception, access to the labour market and vocational training, medical care, schooling and education, residence and freedom of movement)

7. Detention of applicants for international protection (including detention capacity – increase /decrease/stable, practices regarding detention, grounds for detention, alternatives to detention, time limit for detention)

8. Procedures at first instance (including relevant changes in: the authority in charge, organisation of the process, interviews, evidence assessment, determination of international protection status, decisionmaking, timeframes, case management - including backlog management)

9. Procedures at second instance (including organisation of the process, hearings, written procedures, timeframes, case management -including backlog management)

10. Issues of statelessness in the context of asylum (including identification and registration)

11. Children and applicants with special needs (special reception facilities, identification mechanisms/referrals, procedural standards, provision of information, age assessment, legal guardianship and foster care for unaccompanied and separated children)

12. Content of protection (including access to social security, social assistance, healthcare, housing and other basic services; integration into the labour market; measures to enhance language skills; measures to improve attainment in schooling and/or the education system and/or vocational training)

13. Return of former applicants for international protection

14. Resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes (Including EU Joint Resettlement Programme, national resettlement programme (UNHCR), National Humanitarian Admission Programme, private sponsorship programmes/schemes and ad hoc special programmes)

15. National jurisprudence on international protection in 2025 (please include a link to the relevant case law and/or submit cases to the [EUAA Case Law Database](#))

Refugee Support Aegean et. al., Greek Asylum Law Report, Issue 1/2025, 17 July 2025 (11 decisions contributed by Equal Legal Aid).

To be published in January 2026: Equal Legal Aid, Jurisprudence collection 2023-2025. This collection will display 21 decisions from Greek Administrative Courts on annulment, 60 decisions from Greek Administrative Courts on interim measures, 9 decisions from the Greek Appeals Authority, 11 Greek Ombudsman letters.

16. Other important developments in 2025

PART B: Publications

1. If available online, please provide links to relevant publications produced by your organisation in 2025.

Equal Legal Aid, "Greece's asylum system fails survivors of gender-based violence: How to break the continuum of violence", Alliance Magazine, 11 December 2025

Mobile Info Team, Equal Legal Aid et al., Joint Statement: Addressing the Committee of Ministers' last examination of the Greek asylum system under the M.S.S. and H.A. and Others v. Greece groups of cases, 23 July 2025

Mobile Info Team, Equal Legal Aid et al., Joint Statement: "The Ministry of Migration and Asylum must rescind the eviction order of people on the move from camps", 4 June 2025

Equal Legal Aid, In refugee camps, notifications must be made in person Greek court rules, 22 May 2025

Equal Legal Aid, I Have Rights, Mobile Info Team, Joint Submission to the Committee of Ministers of the

Council of Europe, “14 years after M.S.S: Report on Human Rights, Access to Asylum and Detention Conditions in Greece”, 30 January 2025

Equal Legal Aid, “A survivor of multiple forms of SGBV is reunified with her adult son in France, after six years in Greece and five negative decisions on her asylum claim”, 23 January 2025

2. If not available online, please share your publications with us at: Asylum.Report@euaa.europa.eu or upload your file using the functionality below (max. file size 1MB).

Please upload your file

The maximum file size is 1 MB

**f2e33f50-d9a5-4dd5-a58e-cd4ff57cea84/ELA_-
_Briefing_on_access_to_asylum_and_asylum_procedures_in_2025.pdf**

3. For publications that due to copyright issues cannot be easily shared, please provide references using the table below.

	Title of publication	Name of author	Publisher/Organisation	Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Useful links

[EUAA Asylum Report 2025 \(https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025\)](https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025)

[Executive Summary -Asylum Report 2025 \(https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025-executive-summary\)](https://euaa.europa.eu/asylum-report-2025-executive-summary)

[Sources on Asylum 2025 \(https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/sources-asylum-2025\)](https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/sources-asylum-2025)

[National asylum developments database \(https://euaa.europa.eu/national-asylum-developments-database\)](https://euaa.europa.eu/national-asylum-developments-database)

[International Protection in Europe: a Year in Review \(https://euaa.europa.eu/international-protection-europe-year-review\)](https://euaa.europa.eu/international-protection-europe-year-review)

Background Documents

[Word template to submit input to the 2026 Asylum Report.docx](#)

Contact

[Contact Form](#)



Briefing on access to asylum, asylum procedures, legal assistance and representation in 2025

CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2026 ANNUAL EUAA REPORT

1. Access to asylum

Throughout 2025, access to the asylum procedure has been seriously hindered by policies and technical deficiencies, based on our observations. The registration of first or subsequent asylum claims remained obstructed, as reported by many asylum seekers:

- For the Diavata Reception and Identification Centre, the registration platform was not functioning properly, leading to delays and difficulties in processing asylum applications. As a result, people seeking asylum remain undocumented for extended periods of time, at risk of detention or criminalisation. This, combined with the increased police presence, hindered people's ability to move freely and seek adequate support due to the risk of detention and/or deportation;
- In Thrace, the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) was vacated around one and a half years ago. Since then, there has been no staff member working physically in Thrace RAO and there was no service line for asylum seekers to contact. Applicants did not have any direct physical access to the RAO and couldn't schedule appointments through the online platform. This prevented asylum seekers from accessing relevant information and submitting subsequent asylum applications, residence permit renewals and family reunification documentation, among other crucial procedures that should otherwise be accessible through the RAO of Thrace.
- There has been a general delay in registering subsequent asylum applications. Depending on the competent asylum office, appointments for registration have, during the previous year, been scheduled more than 12 months after a subsequent asylum application was lodged, based on our observations. In one case, these long delays have led to a remark from the Greek Ombudsman (see attachment).

Between 14 July and 14 October 2025, Greece suspended the registration of asylum applications and detained all newly arrived third-country nationals from North Africa for the purpose of return. This measure was introduced through an amendment to a bill by the Ministry of Development and was included in Article 79 of Law 5218/2025. It immediately prompted outrage from legal professionals, civil society organisations and human rights institutions. On 16 July 2025, a joint statement was issued by 108 non-profit organisations, calling on the Greek government to withdraw the unlawful suspension. On 16 October 2025, the Greek Ombudsman published his

observations on the suspension. He noted that the administration should take relevant action to provide general access to asylum. Furthermore, the Ombudsman raised serious doubts as to the proportionality and necessity of the exceptional law, which the authority deemed to derogate from the international and EU legal framework. This document is available online at <https://www.synigoros.gr>.

On 14 and 29 August 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued two interim measures decisions prohibiting the deportation of individuals who had been denied access to the asylum procedure. Despite this, around 2,000 people were still detained for prolonged and unjustified periods of time.

On 18 July 2025, the Ministry of Asylum and Migration issued a circular exempting certain categories of vulnerable persons from the scope of the law. On 15 September 2025, the same Ministry issued a second circular exempting Sudanese and Eritrean citizens from the implementation of the law. These circulars have not been published by the administration. Amidst the already criticised situation arising from the so-called '*asylum ban*', the aforementioned administrative circulars have led to an even more discriminatory and unjust practice, limiting access to asylum to certain groups and consequently detaining others. Legal aid organisations such as ELA received a large number of requests from people detained under the suspension. It has been reported that among detainees were people who should have been exempt from the law's scope, as the conditions of their detention placed them at serious risk due to their preexisting vulnerabilities.

One particularly vulnerable group detained under the suspension were unaccompanied minors. Since no systematic vulnerability assessments were carried out, it has been reported that unaccompanied children who lacked access to a lawyer, or whose claim to be a minor was dismissed by the authorities, risked remaining undetected among adult detainees in dire conditions. Legal aid organisations such as ELA have been in contact with several alleged minors who did not undergo a proper age assessment even after informing the administration of their age. It was only after intervention from non-profit organisations that some of these children were transferred to a specific shelter for minors.

Furthermore, the lack of transparent, clear legal information has caused confusion and frustration among the large number of people detained under the suspension. Individuals in the same situation and detained in the same facilities reported having received completely different treatment from the authorities. Moreover, the administration did not provide any clarity on the procedure to be followed once the ban would be lifted, nor on which competent authority in Northern Greece would be responsible.

On 9 August 2025, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum published a new migration law. Among other things, the law introduces provisions that criminalise third-country nationals solely for entering and being present in the country, imposing fines of 10,000 euros and prison sentences of two to five years. The law also increases the limits of administrative detention of third-country nationals beyond those set by EU law, and abolishes any possibility of legalisation, even for individuals who have lived in the country for many years and are presumed to have established ties to it. Concerns about potential violations of human rights due to the new law are widespread among national and international human rights institutions. The new law has led to a general fear of, and inability to access, asylum and registration, due to the increased police presence and detention powers it confers. Furthermore, legal aid organisations are unable to

provide relevant information to people due to fear of being criminalised under the new law and the even stricter migration policy that developed during the previous year.

2. Access to information and legal assistance

Throughout 2025, access to information, legal assistance and representation remained extremely problematic.

Many asylum applicants reported not having access to sufficient information about the asylum procedure, and access to information and legal assistance at first instance remained an issue country-wide. Non-profit organisations were the main, if not the only, providers of information and guidance on asylum procedures. Based on our observations, the availability of these services depends on capacity and financial resources, but their spatial distribution throughout the country displays significant regional disparities, leading to substantial gaps in 2025, particularly in northern Greece and Crete. Overall, although vital, the services provided remained extremely limited and insufficient to meet the demand. Recent cuts to international financial aid have exacerbated the situation, significantly impacting the non-profit sector in Greece, with many organisations experiencing financial difficulties. Consequently, the remaining legal aid providers have had to reduce the scope of their services. This has led to an unprecedented scarcity of legal services. Coupled with the growing complexity of procedures, frequent legislative changes, and the physical isolation of asylum seekers in camps far from city centres, the limited availability of information and counselling is an especially pressing issue. This issue was further compounded by the restrictive environment faced by organisations providing such services in Greece, and by frequent disruptions to interpretation services, as described below.

Following the lift of the asylum ban, this lack of access to legal information and representation was particularly problematic in the Sintiki camp. Throughout our interactions with asylum seekers detained there, we have observed that no legal information was available to detainees on either first-instance asylum procedures or the appeal procedure. It is our understanding that there were no Registry lawyers physically present in the facility and communication with the Asylum Authorities to request legal aid was reportedly difficult. It has been reported that some applicants managed to submit legal aid applications, only with the help of staff members. However, the applicants reported having received no information about the procedure or communication with the appointed lawyers.

In general, and despite efforts to increase the number of lawyers on the Asylum Service's registry, there were still not enough to meet the demand for legal aid after a first instance rejection decision. Each year, more than 10,000 appeals are filed with the Appeals Authority, but state-funded legal aid reaches only around 60% of applicants, leaving many without free legal representation (source: Greek Ministry of Migration, data and statistics, accessed 26/01/26). In the first half of 2025, 4,044 appeals received free legal assistance out of a total of 6,019 appeals lodged, supporting 67% of appellants through the state-funded legal scheme and leaving 33% without support. At the time of drafting this submission, data for the second half of 2025 had not yet been published.

Furthermore, ELA has observed patterns of malpractice that significantly hinder the exercise of the right to legal aid. These included applicants not being clearly informed that an application for

legal aid had been made on their behalf through the Registry and being unable to contact the lawyer appointed to their case.

Additional practical obstacles further undermined the effectiveness of this service:

- We observed that lawyers from the registry were often informed of their appointment at the last minute, leaving them with very little time to prepare the appeal. This frequently resulted in incomplete or outdated filings. The data and statistics communicated by the Greek Ministry of Asylum and Migration evidenced the notable increase in appeals rejected due to late submission in 2025: In 2022, 6% of appeals were rejected on these grounds; this figure rose to 12% in 2023 and 11% in 2024, reaching an alarming 17% in the first half of 2025 alone.
- Furthermore, the Asylum Service's practice of notifying decisions via email, introduced to expedite procedures, has raised serious concerns about compliance with legal safeguards and its effect on asylum seekers' access to legal remedies.
- Interpretation support to Registry lawyers was limited or entirely absent, making effective communication with clients almost impossible.
- Finally, long delays in payment by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum have led some lawyers to abstain from their duties, as occurred at the end of 2024 and into February 2025.

Following a second-instance rejection decision, accessing justice in Greece proved equally challenging. Through our work, we have identified several practical obstacles that prevented applicants from accessing legal aid. Firstly, asylum seekers are not automatically entitled to free legal aid. They must submit a Greek-language application for state-funded legal aid to the registry of the Administrative Court of First Instance responsible for hearing their case (i.e. the Administrative Court of First Instance in Athens or Thessaloniki), even if they are staying in a remote accommodation centre hundreds of kilometres away. Transportation to and from reception facilities was not provided, and cash assistance was not paid for most of the year. Whilst this administrative step seems relatively straightforward, it acted as a deterrent for most applicants, who were practically unable to apply for legal aid. Furthermore, there are no interpretation, social services or information desks at the court secretariat to assist people trying to complete the form.

Moreover, foreign nationals are only eligible for state-funded legal aid if they can demonstrate financial hardship by submitting supporting documents such as tax records or proof of unemployment, under the same criteria that apply to Greek citizens. However, many asylum seekers have lived in Greece for less than a year and have neither filed tax returns nor held formal employment. Even those who have worked often do so in undeclared, low-paid jobs, leaving them without the necessary documentation. In practice, this step almost always requires assistance from a lawyer or another intermediary, which further complicates access to legal remedies given the shortage of free legal aid providers that was observed throughout 2025. In other words, the social barriers that prevent asylum seekers from obtaining such documentation can result in their request for legal aid being rejected. Between 2021 and 2025, ELA submitted over a hundred applications for free legal aid before the Administrative Courts of Athens and Thessaloniki. Around 75% of these applications were successful. Rejections typically occurred because the applicant was unable to provide sufficient evidence of financial hardship.

This resulted in state-funded legal aid only covering a small proportion of annulment and interim measures cases. Although the percentage of applicants receiving support increased in recent years, this was mainly because the overall number of applications has decreased significantly. For instance, in 2020, 1,472 annulment applications were submitted, and only 209 applicants

(14%) received legal aid. By September 2025, only 317 new applications had been submitted, with 100 applicants (31%) receiving support (source: Data provided by the General Committee of the Administrative Courts in 2025).

Additionally, applicants seeking representation through state-funded legal aid often experienced long processing times and notable disparities between the two Administrative Courts of First Instance. In Thessaloniki, the average waiting time from application to decision was six days, whereas in Athens it was 18 days (source: internal ELA data extracted from 101 legal aid applications submitted to the Courts of Athens and Thessaloniki between June 2022 and February 2025). While such waiting periods may not seem excessive in general judicial contexts, they exacerbate existing risks for asylum seekers in highly precarious circumstances. During this period, applicants had no valid documents and were at constant risk of arrest, detention and eviction from accommodation facilities. They also experienced heightened anxiety and legal uncertainty.

As an organisation providing legal assistance and representation to asylum seekers, we have witnessed the consequences of the lack of access to legal information and representation throughout the year in all our interactions with asylum seekers. Since 2022, we have observed a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers reaching out to us for legal support: +190% requests for legal assistance between 2022 and 2023; +34% between 2023 and 2024; +7.5% between 2024 and 2025. Of the requests we received in 2025, 27% concerned access to general legal information on administrative procedures and formalities, while 13% concerned access to legal aid/representation after rejection decisions (source: internal data of ELA, extracted from January 2022 to December 2025). This highlights the significant need for support in this area.

Due to the disruptions observed in interpretation services across the country, information points in reception facilities have also ceased operating, negatively impacting people's ability to access basic information. This partly explains the increased demand for legal information and support we observed, as well as the withdrawal of legal professionals mandated by the Greek Ministry of Asylum and Migration, from most official reception facilities since 2023. In parallel, fewer and fewer civil society organisations are operating in Greece, as explained above. All of these factors are contributing to the increased need for legal support, including the provision of legal information, counselling, and representation.

3. Access to interpretation services

From late 2024 onwards, there has been a severe shortage of interpretation services in Greek asylum procedures and refugee camps, with hardly any available services through official state channels. This severe disruption has significantly hindered asylum seekers' access to essential rights and services.

The lack of these services stemmed from administrative issues, primarily the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum's failure to renew contracts and make timely payments to the main service provider, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) METAdrasi. In July 2025, after more than eight months of non-payment, METAdrasi announced that it would not sign another agreement unless the issue was resolved. This left a huge gap in most facilities, with almost no reliable interpretation services available afterwards and throughout the second half of 2025.

The need for interpretation in the camps and in the Asylum Service were met through emergency support provided by personnel deployed by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). But there were reportedly extremely limited numbers of interpreters in refugee camps (both on the

mainland and on the islands). This affected residents' ability to communicate with camp staff, access healthcare services and undergo vulnerability assessments. These systemic gaps led asylum seekers to use uncertified or untrained third parties as interpreters, which compromised the accuracy, confidentiality, and accountability of communication.

At asylum offices, interviews and the registration of new applications were often postponed or rescheduled due to a lack of interpreters, based on our observations. This left asylum seekers in legal limbo, unable to progress their claims or lodge appeals. Through its work, ELA has observed that interpretation in Amharic, Oromo and Krio has been particularly problematic in 2025, leading to delays and postponements.

A new law adopted in September 2025 has introduced the possibility to use AI-powered interpretation.

4. Special asylum procedures

Admissibility procedures (Safe third country concept)

In 2023, NGOs operating in Greece lodged an application for annulment against the decision designating Türkiye as a safe third country before the Greek Council of State. Subsequently, the latter submitted a preliminary question to the CJEU on the interpretation of the Asylum Procedure Directive, resulting in the annulment of the contested decision in March 2025 (CJEU, [C-134/23](#) Elliniko Symvoulío gia tous Prosfyges, Opinion, 13 June 2024). In April 2025, the Greek government (re)designated Türkiye as a “safe third country” for those same asylum applicants, without a new justification. Despite this latest development, inadmissible decisions on the grounds of “safe third country” have sharply decreased in 2025, with only 357 delivered at first instance and 66 at second instance as of June 2025 (source: Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, accessed 08/01/26). This can be attributed to the Council of State’s ruling and the volatile situation in affected countries, such as the political change in Syria.

Following the decision of the CJEU, we have observed new procedures being implemented when it comes to admissibility examination. For applicants from Afghanistan and Syria, admissibility and eligibility examinations seem to occur at the same time. However, there are no clear indications or guidelines communicated by the authorities.

ELA has also observed a surge in subsidiary protection granted to Syrian applicants in 2025.

5. Detention of applicants for international protection

Following the lifting of the asylum ban in October 2025, asylum seekers detained in the Sintiki facility (in northern Greece) have reported appalling conditions to non-profit organisations, international and Greek media, and EU and government officials. ELA itself has received a series of testimonies from detainees, spanning from October to December 2025, denouncing the horrendous detention conditions that they have been subjected to during this period. These testimonies have highlighted several issues, including:

- the inadequate and insufficient food provision;
- the absence of necessary non-food items and clothing, particularly footwear and winter clothing, which are crucial for coping with the harsh weather conditions in this mountainous region of Greece;

- the lack of access to healthcare, which has had a detrimental impact on the physical and mental well-being of detainees;
- the lack of access to legal assistance, which exacerbated the challenges detainees faced in navigating the Greek legal system;
- incidents of police violence, intimidation and retaliation, particularly towards detainees who had contact with NGOs or sought legal aid;
- widespread psychological distress and suicide attempts among detainees, highlighting the urgent need for mental health support;
- riots against the substandard detention conditions, underscoring the urgent need for improvement.

Of particular concern is the situation regarding the detentions of alleged minors in Sintiki. ELA has been contacted by several detainees who claim to be minors. These detainees have stated that their asylum claims could not be registered and/or that their minority was not recognised by the authorities, despite the existence of supporting evidence. These complaints seemed to follow unsuccessful attempts to contact the National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied minors, leading to prolonged detention in substandard conditions. Furthermore, there have been reports of other detainees attempting suicide, which suggests a potential for heightened psychological distress within this population.

6. First instance procedures

In 2025, the identification and documentation of vulnerabilities remained highly problematic in our experience. Since April 2025, the Independent Asylum Units in Athens and Thessaloniki have been responsible for conducting vulnerability assessments. These assessments are carried out if vulnerability is identified during registration and recorded in the system, in accordance with a Joint Ministerial Decision from April 2025 (Joint Ministerial Decision 62739/2024). To date, they have only examined cases involving unaccompanied minors. This means that there are now only two specialised vulnerability units for mainland Greece, making timely and accurate vulnerability assessments even more important. It is our view that this development will inevitably lead to backlogs and delays in scheduling interviews and issuing decisions.

For applicants residing in refugee camps, asylum interviews continued to be conducted with caseworkers attending remotely. However, it is common for applicants' vulnerabilities to be either not recorded or not identified properly. Consequently, the decision on whether the asylum interview should be conducted in person or remotely is not based on an assessment of the applicant's vulnerability. ELA has been involved in cases where an in-person interview has been requested and granted due to the applicant's vulnerability.

In a significant ruling, the Thessaloniki Administrative Court (Thessaloniki Administrative Court, decision No. 6/2025) has reaffirmed that notifications of decisions on applications for international protection must be made in person to applicants residing in Greek reception facilities. This decision clarifies a salient procedural point: while Greek asylum law allows electronic notification 'by default', it explicitly mandates in-person delivery for asylum seekers in reception facilities. The decision is a welcome clarification, as the widespread practice of notifying decisions by email has raised concerns about its compliance with legal safeguards and its impact on asylum seekers' access to legal remedies. Similarly, the practice of delivering decisions via email also negatively impacts self-accommodated asylum seekers (i. e. asylum seekers who do not reside in reception facilities, by choice or circumstances). Although the law

does not explicitly prescribe a method for notifying applicants who are self-accommodated, it is evident that email delivery is equally problematic in such cases. For individuals living in precarious conditions or homeless, relying on emails for notification risks excluding some of the most vulnerable from accessing their rights.

Through our work, we have observed that survivors of gender-based violence in Greece are routinely denied international protection. As Greece tightens its migration policies, survivors face prolonged detention and criminalisation instead of safety. The asylum procedure for GBV survivors is marked by superficial vulnerability assessments, degrading living conditions, inadequate recovery services, limited legal aid and ill-founded rejections.

According to Greek law (Law 4636/2019, Article 77, Paragraph 2), EUAA staff members are authorised to conduct interviews in the event of mass arrivals to the country. In these situations, the EUAA case worker conducts the interview and submits a report, after which the asylum service caseworker issues the decision. We believe this leads to problematic case file examination practices where decision-makers never interact with applicants.

Many people affected by the suspension of asylum applications and subsequent detentions have reached out to legal aid organisations such as ELA, requesting legal assistance from the Sintiki detention facility. Having been in contact with this population, ELA has experienced asylum procedures in which rejection decisions were issued less than a week after the asylum interview was conducted or the appeal submitted. This practice inevitably results in superficial and inadequate assessments and decision-making.

During the previous year, ELA has noticed that the dates for registering asylum applications and scheduling asylum interviews have been set very far ahead. In some cases, asylum interviews have been scheduled more than nine months from the date of application. This development, coupled with the new law criminalising people on the move, may result in unsafe conditions where individuals who have not yet registered an application remain undocumented and at risk of criminalisation, detention and/or deportation.

7. Second instance procedures

As of November 2025, and according to the data communicated by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the protection rate at second instance was 4.2% in 2025. The extremely high rate of second instance rejections is deeply concerning and calls into question the effectiveness of second instance examinations. It is of particular concern that a third of appeals are rejected as inadmissible (33% inadmissible rejection decisions in 2025, as of November 2025, same source). A further cause for concern is the fact that 16% of all appeals were rejected as inadmissible on formal grounds in 2025 (as of November 2025). Arguably, the quality of proceedings and decisions on appeal is, in general, substandard.

Multiple factors could explain this high rejection rate, such as the Appeal Committee's heavy caseload, time pressure in issuing decisions, and the lack of specialisation in international protection law. For instance, the Appeals Authority issued 9,830 decisions in 2025 (as of November 2025), meaning that each committee issued approximately 44 decisions per month (source: Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Data and Statistics, accessed 08/01/26). Additionally, under the guise of expediting administrative procedures, there is a very tight timeline. Decisions must be issued within 7 days or a maximum of 30 days, depending on the procedure applied for examining the asylum application - e.g. border, accelerated or regular.

Failure to meet these deadlines may result in the dismissal of the appointed judges of the Appeals Committee for non-compliance (source: Article 2 of Joint Ministerial Decision 139974/2024, Government Gazette issue B 2756/15.05.2024).

These factors, alone or in combination, may directly impact the quality of case reviews and recognition rates. For instance, we observed numerous cases tried in 2025 that referenced outdated country-of-origin information, or where second-instance decisions essentially replicated the initial ruling. In our view, these decisions were made without proper consideration of the legal arguments raised, and typically without an additional interview, even when the initial rejection was based on insufficient or inconsistent information to support a claim for international protection.

In 2025, two significant judicial developments occurred regarding the appeals procedure:

- In December 2024, the Greek Council of State ruled that the Appeals Committees should not operate under a single-member composition, as it violates article 89(2) of the Greek Constitution (Greek Council of State, Decision No. 1150/2025). This issue had remained unaddressed since the last reform of the Authority in 2019 until it was challenged in October 2022 - for six years. The ruling therefore confirms that thousands of decisions were issued in breach of the right to a meaningful and effective remedy. While the Council recognised this as a significant administrative shortcoming, it declined to apply its ruling retroactively to avoid overburdening the administration, at the expense of applicants who had undergone this procedure. Consequently, hundreds of rejected asylum seekers were denied genuine access to justice, in violation of their fundamental right to an effective remedy.
- The procedure before the Appeals Committees is primarily written, and applicants are rarely summoned for an oral hearing. However, appellants are required to appear in person before the Appeals Committee on the day their appeal is examined (Articles 102(2) and 83(3) of Law 4939/2022). Applicants residing in a RIC accommodation centre or subject to geographical restrictions can instead provide a certificate of residence or an authenticated declaration issued by site management or the police no more than three days prior to the hearing. Failure to comply with the above results in the appeal being rejected as 'manifestly unfounded', which implies that the applicant has withdrawn their request. Rejecting an appeal on the merits without examining its substance raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of the remedy and the principle of non-refoulement. On 3 July 2025, the CJEU ruled in case C-610/23 that this practice contradicts the Asylum Procedures Directive. This followed a preliminary request from the Administrative Court of First Instance of Thessaloniki (Administrative Court of First Instance of Thessaloniki, Decision No. 560/2023, 19 December 2023).

Another issue we have observed concerns appeal proceedings following an inadmissibility decision at first instance. In several cases, we have seen that, after an application was found to be admissible on appeal, the Appeals Authority rejected it on its merits, despite the applicant never having been heard on the eligibility of their claim at either the first or second instance. These cases highlight a serious legal gap in the asylum procedure and in access to legal remedies.

In general, our findings suggest that the written nature of the appeal procedure is particularly problematic, in all cases seen by ELA. But it is especially detrimental to claims involving gender-based violence. Indeed, oral hearings are permitted only in exceptional cases and are rarely seen in practice. Consequently, the initial asylum interview conducted by the Asylum Service often serves as the primary, and sometimes the only, evidence considered by the Committees when examining an appeal. In GBV-related claims, this is extremely problematic, as

incidents of GBV are rarely disclosed during the initial examination for obvious reasons that have been detailed in a wealth of reports in recent years.

8. Issues of statelessness and nationality determination

Statelessness remained an issue within the Greek asylum framework in 2025, further exacerbated by the widespread practice of incorrect nationality assessments, observed by numerous non-profit organisations and legal professionals since 2023.

Indeed, alarming field evidence collected by non-profit organisations suggests that the Greek authorities and/or Frontex have been wrongly declaring the nationalities of applicants. While EU and Greek law outline the general principles of registration and asylum procedures, they do not specify how nationality should be determined when documents are missing or claims are insufficiently substantiated. This regulatory gap enables erratic, unaccountable and deeply harmful practices.

In 2025, ELA observed this practice among stateless applicants, particularly Palestinians registered as Syrians, Bedoon ethnic group members registered as Iraqis, and Yemenis registered as Somalis. This practice particularly affected Eritrean nationals, who were misclassified as Ethiopian during their initial screening. In practice, we have found that the nationality determination procedure is applied inconsistently and poorly documented. This leads to the arbitrary assignment of a 'declared' or 'estimated' nationality, which takes precedence over the applicant's own statement. There are no transcripts of the screening interviews and the 'estimated nationality' is presented as a final designation without providing a mechanism for legal contestation at an early stage in the procedure. Applicants whose declared and estimated nationalities did not match were rejected as 'uncredible' within minutes of their asylum interview or were denied protection based on country conditions that were in fact irrelevant to their actual experiences.

Widespread and well-documented, this issue has been strongly denounced by affected applicants, law professionals, and civil society organisations. The Greek Ombudsman has addressed it on several occasions. However, the practice appears to have persisted throughout 2025.

9. Other developments in 2025

Several notable developments have occurred in 2025:

- The 3-years work residence permit that had been implemented by the Greek government was not reconducted in 2025. Asylum remained the only legal avenue available for third country nationals in Greece, as the residence permit on humanitarian grounds had already been previously reformed.
- Since the adoption of the new law on returns in September 2025, many applicants for internal protection have reported the police arresting people in reception facilities.
- Similarly, since the adoption of the new law, many civil society organisations, human rights defenders and institutions have expressed serious concerns about the potential criminalisation of humanitarian assistance. These concerns still have not been addressed by EU or government officials.