



LIVES ON HOLD

**ACCESS TO ASYLUM ON MAINLAND
GREECE, CRETE AND RHODES**



**MOBILE
INFO TEAM**

Mobile Info Team is a Greece-based organisation that provides advice and assistance throughout all stages of the asylum procedure. We raise awareness and advocate for changes to the asylum system in Greece, and work to end pushbacks as part of the Border Violence Monitoring Network.

We would like to thank all of our interview participants and survey respondents for their time and invaluable insight.

We are grateful to the MIT Caseworker Team for their assistance with this project.

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Researched by: Corinne Linnecar and Frederike van Diemen

Written by: Corinne Linnecar

Edited by: Michael Kientzle

Designed by: Kate Kennedy

www.mobileinfoteam.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report looks at the experiences of people seeking asylum on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes who are subject to a two stage registration process. It focuses on access to asylum for those trying to pre-register their claims via the application, Skype, which for most individuals is the only way to enter the asylum system.

Our research shows that people experience exceedingly long delays when trying to reach the Greek Asylum Service on Skype. On average, those we spoke with for this report were still attempting to get through after 14 months. Rather than providing an efficient way to lodge their asylum claim as soon as possible, the Skype system obstructs access to international protection in Greece. This results in people being forced to survive without legal status, and the support and protection it provides, for prolonged periods.

The immediate impact of Skype delays can be disastrous. With no avenues for support, people are often forced to sleep on the streets or go for days without eating. They are prohibited from accessing state medical services, including hospitals and psychological support and are forced to live in well-founded fear of detention, deportation and pushbacks. The inefficiency of the Skype system exposes people to increased risk of exploitation as people are forced to find ways to survive and make riskier choices in a desperate attempt to lodge their asylum claim. The longer term impact on people's physical and mental health can be devastating.

We carried out research between May and August 2021 based on an analysis of 1,132 Mobile Info Team case files, 25 interviews with people seeking asylum, and survey input from civil society organisations. Our data shows that:

- On average, people we spoke with had still not reached the Greek Asylum Service on Skype after 14 months
- 7 out of 25 people we spoke with were still trying to reach Skype after two years
- Up to 1 in 6 people in need of safety in Greece do not know how to access the asylum system
- 84% of people we spoke with found out about Skype from people within the refugee community with only 4% of people finding out about the Skype system from the state
- The homelessness rate of people trying to access asylum via Skype is 74 times the national rate of Greece

- After international protection, access to healthcare was seen as the most important reason for being registered in Greece
- 56% of people we spoke with had been forced to work illegally and most were being exploited
- People pay unscrupulous lawyers up to €500 for documents they believe will protect them from being deported but have no legal basis to do so

We recommend that Greece acts urgently to ensure fair and efficient access to the asylum procedure, by:

- Ensuring people in need of safety have fast and fair access to the asylum procedure in Greece and are granted the legal protection and material reception conditions they need and deserve
- Ensuring competent authorities, including the police and Greek Asylum Service, have the knowledge and the capacity needed to provide people seeking asylum with information on how to claim asylum in Greece
- Simplifying the Skype procedure by increasing the calling times of languages to whole days
- Increasing the number of hours per week that people can call the Skype line
- Increasing staffing capacity on the Skype line to ensure more calls can be answered
- Ensuring more languages are available on the Skype system, including Turkish
- Ensuring people can effectively pre-register their claim in person, or in writing to the Regional Asylum Offices without an appointment via Skype
- Ensuring regular publication of asylum statistics, including detailed statistics on the numbers of people calling Skype and the numbers of people successfully pre-registering through the system to ensure effective monitoring of the asylum system by civil society
- Ensuring that in accordance with national and international law, all nationalities have equal access to the pre-registration of asylum claims

We recommend that the European Commission acts urgently to ensure fair and efficient access to the asylum procedure in Greece, by:

- Working towards a common European asylum system which ensures individuals have the same practical ability to enter the asylum system as soon as possible
- Being ready to hold Greece accountable when it flouts protection standards including by considering pursuing legal action and launching an infringement procedure to ensure compliance with EU law

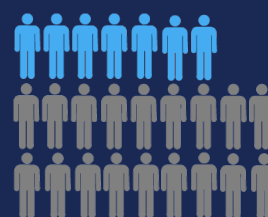
KEY FINDINGS

We carried out research between May and August 2021 based on an analysis of 1,132 Mobile Info Team case files, 25 interviews with people seeking asylum, and survey input from civil society organisations. Our data shows that:

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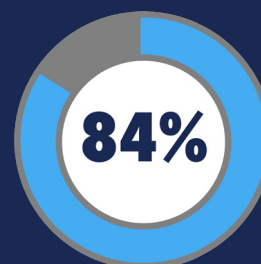


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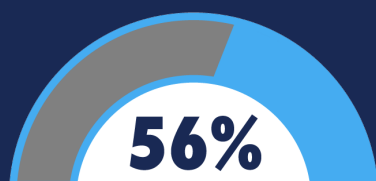


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56% of people we spoke with had been forced to work illegally and most were being exploited



People pay unscrupulous lawyers up to €500 for documents they believe will protect them from being deported but have no legal basis to do so



INTRODUCTION



When people arrive in Greece, having fled war and persecution, they want to be safe. Accessing the asylum procedure and having their cases examined ensures that those in need of protection are not forced to return home whilst they are still in danger. The asylum system affords people temporary legal status and access to essential services and prevents the risk of deportation and destitution. Yet an asylum procedure with severe delays on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes obscures unhindered access to the asylum procedure.

People are forced to remain in Greece without any legal protection for many months or years whilst they attempt to inform authorities of their wish to apply for asylum via the telecommunications app, Skype. Without access to any support or services, including medical treatment, people are simply unable to meet even their most basic and urgent needs. This exposes already vulnerable individuals to a great risk of homelessness and destitution and causes people to live in well-founded fear of detention, deportation and pushbacks.

People must call the Greek Asylum Service on Skype to pre-register themselves and receive an appointment to appear

at a Regional Asylum Office or Asylum Unit in person. Yet, use of this system entails many prerequisites that people seeking asylum simply cannot meet. Those who manage to overcome the immense obstacles of access - including finding Wi-Fi, or money to buy data, access to a suitable device,¹ and the technological understanding needed to use the app - are confronted with extreme waiting times.

Prolonged delays in access to asylum via the Skype system have been of serious concern since its implementation.² With very few calls answered per week, the Skype system leaves people seeking safety distressed and desperate. Without the ability to enter the Asylum Office, people are stuck spending many months or even years repeatedly calling Skype with no result. Whilst people are trying to call Skype they have no opportunity to meet their basic needs, never mind enter work or education or contribute to their new societies and rebuild their lives.

In this report, we look at the legal framework for asylum in Greece, outline the history of the Skype system, and evidence the disastrous impact that long delays in the Skype system have on people in desperate need of safety.



METHODOLOGY

This report is based on research conducted between May 2021 and August 2021. It includes first-hand interviews with people seeking asylum and civil society organisations, in depth analysis of our own case files, and a survey of organisations operational on mainland Greece.

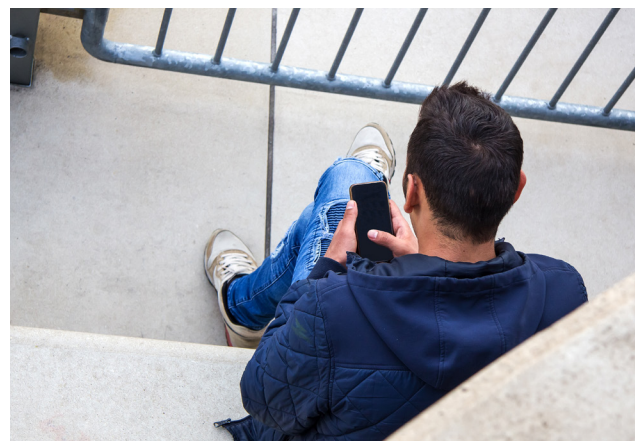
Twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone in five languages with interpreters from the refugee community. We spoke with 22 men, two women and one minor who experienced, or continue to experience, delays and issues in their attempt to express their will to apply for asylum via Skype. Interviewees were located across mainland Greece or on the islands of Crete or Rhodes. To protect the identity of the interviewees, all names have been changed and the displayed pictures are not of the interviewees themselves.

A total of 1,132 Mobile Info Team case files were analysed with cases spanning a period from the end of November 2018 to mid-July 2021. The case files were selected due to mentions of Skype or registration appointments within the case notes. The case files were anonymised with all personal and identifying information being omitted before analysis. Mobile Info Team received information and perspectives from a wide range of civil society actors whose input has informed the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report. Mobile Info Team

received input from Action for Women, Arsis, Danish Refugee Council, Forge for Humanity, Greek Council for Refugees, HumanRights 360, Irida Women's Centre, Refugee Legal Support and Terre des Hommes Hellas.

Mobile Info Team also examined reports, complaints and submissions by national and international organisations and the Greek Ombudsperson.

Mobile Info Team is incredibly grateful to all interviewees and survey respondents.



BACKGROUND, LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

An individual can seek international protection at any point or place within a state, including its waters and borders. In theory an individual simply needs to indicate their need for protection, yet in practise the registration of an asylum application is enveloped by complicated administrative processes throughout Europe. A range of legal concepts are provided by European Union legislation, related to the registration process, with Article 6 of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive referring to “making”, “registering” and “lodging” of claims.³ However, this legislation fails to detail what these terms denote in practise which has led to diverging practise throughout Europe.⁴

There is no consistent practise for ensuring timely access to the asylum procedure across Europe. This means that people seeking asylum in different European states experience a range of waiting times and processes before they are afforded the protection they seek. Some European states have a single procedural step to register an individual’s claim, which automatically leads to the claim’s examination.⁵ Whereas other states recognise “registration” and “lodging” as discrete stages.⁶ Access to asylum is simply not uniform across Europe.

Greece is a state wherein discrete stages of registration and lodging exist. Currently, people seeking asylum on mainland Greece and the islands of Crete and Rhodes must let the Greek Asylum Service know they want to apply for asylum before they can actually apply for asylum. People within this geographical area are subject to a two-stage registration process with immense delays. The initial stage, which is known as pre-registration, is the first time that someone’s need for international protection is known to and formally recorded by the Greek state. For the vast majority of people whose national languages are available, the only way to inform the Greek authorities of their will to apply for asylum is by calling via the telecommunications application, Skype. They then must lodge the application, by appearing in person for full registration.

Until a person’s asylum application is made (or pre-registered), they have no legal basis for their stay in

Greece. This leaves already vulnerable individuals without any support, in dangerous and inhumane situations. People are forced to remain in Greece without the essential paperwork needed to prove their legal basis to be in the state. Whilst people are undocumented, despite their best efforts to enter the asylum system, they are at immense risk of detention, deportation and pushbacks by the Greek authorities.

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum’s own guidance is ambiguous and fails to provide guidance on the process of Skype, instead focusing on in person registration.⁷ Yet, in practise people speaking one of the 18 languages available on Skype are normally prohibited from entering Asylum Offices and Asylum Units without an appointment and so unable to lodge their claims in a different way than Skype.

2021 marks the first time that there are more arrivals of people to Greece by land than sea.⁸ This year 63% of people arrived by land compared to 38% in 2020, and just 1% in 2015.⁹ The majority of those who arrive by land will go on to access asylum via the Skype pre-registration process. Asylum numbers have continued to drop since the peak in 2015. In 2020, there were 40,559 applications for asylum in Greece, a decrease of 48% compared to 2019. In both 2019 and 2020 the majority of people seeking protection came from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan.

LEGAL BASIS

The right to asylum is enshrined in law. The International Protection Act (IPA) provides the right of any foreigner or stateless person to make an application for international protection in Greece.¹⁰ European law outlines Member States’ responsibility to ensure people have an “effective opportunity” to lodge an application for international protection “as soon as possible”.¹¹ Yet the Skype system, with its immense delays, stands in stark contrast to these principles, effectively prohibiting access to asylum in Greece.



In Greece, despite the IPA foreseeing the need to instil a time limit between the two stages of registration, pre-registration and full registration (15 days), there is no time limit outlined in law for a person to make their asylum application.¹² This is in keeping with most European states, who also do not specify a time frame for an individual to make an application. The law in Greece simply states that this should happen “without delay”¹³ on the part of the applicant. Legislation dictates that applications must be lodged in person, except under situations of force majeure,¹⁴ a legal term denoting unforeseen circumstances which may include instances such as serious illness or severe physical disability.

However, in practise for most people, it is only after an applicant has successfully connected with the Greek Asylum Service on Skype that they then receive an appointment allowing them to appear in person before the Asylum Service. There is a lack of statistical data available on this initial stage of the registration process yet we have spoken with many people who have not successfully reached the Asylum Service via Skype after many months or even years of trying.

People seeking safety have no entitlements until they speak with the Asylum Service. Despite the IPA entitling people who have pre-registered to an Asylum Seeker Card, in practise this currently only happens after the in person stage of registration.¹⁵ The Asylum Seeker Card gives people documentation to prove their legal basis for their stay in Greece. People will also be granted a PAAYPE (provisional insurance and health case number) giving them access to the healthcare system¹⁶ after in person registration. Six months after the lodging of the asylum claim, individuals are also allowed to work.¹⁷

People seeking asylum are entitled by European and national law to receive support that allows them to live in dignity and that guarantees their physical and mental health.¹⁸ In Greece, people are able to apply to live in government overseen accommodation or camps and can apply for cash assistance. This so called “material reception condition” should, by law, be available to applicants as soon as they have expressed their willingness to apply for asylum.¹⁹

THE SKYPE SYSTEM

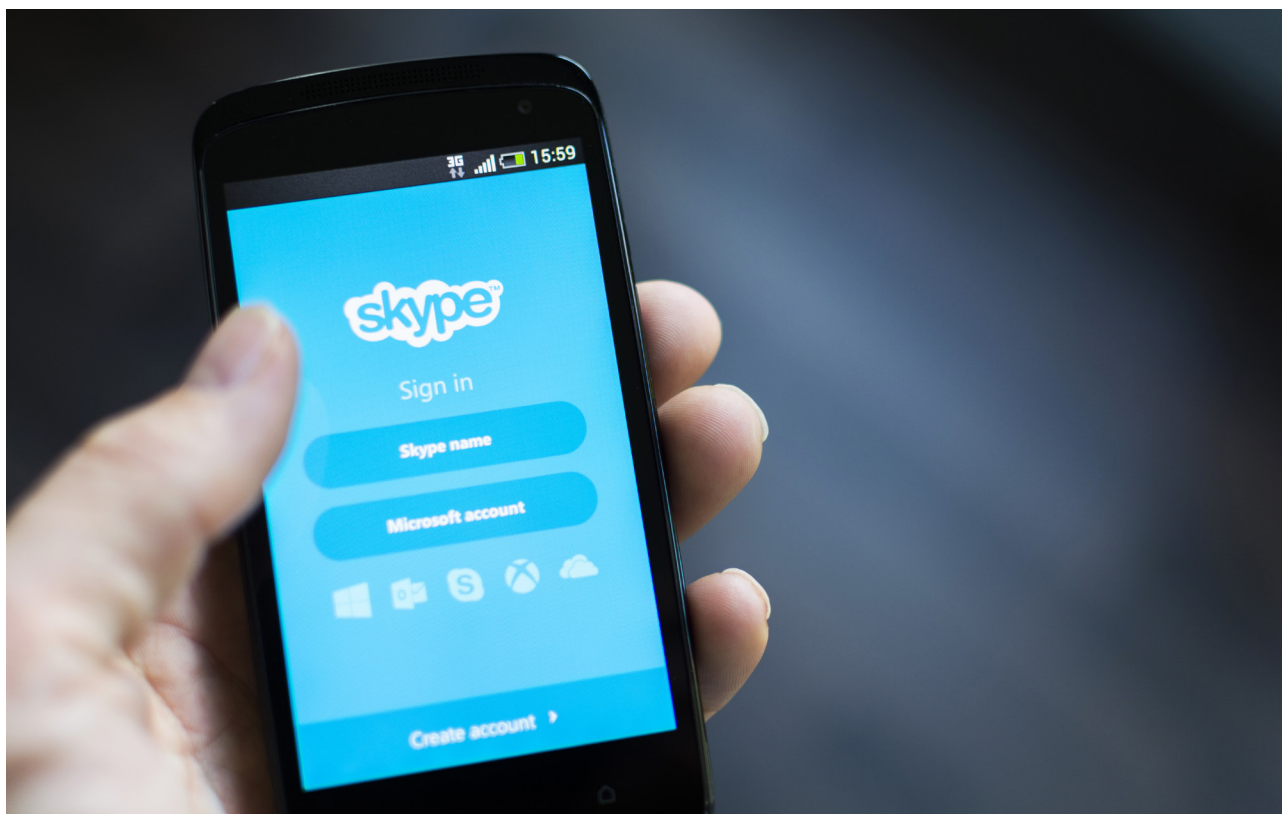
Currently, the possibility to pre-register an asylum claim via Skype is available in 18 languages across 15 different Skype IDs.²⁰ People must use their personal Skype account to call the correct Skype ID matching their mother tongue. The Asylum Service publishes a timetable, which often changes, that allocates the time slots at which people must call. Most people have just one hour per week to try and reach the Asylum Service on Skype. Sometimes, despite calling at the correct times, individuals are simply told to call back.

People who speak a language other than the 18 available on Skype, must turn up in person at the nearest Regional Asylum Office and attempt to register their claim in person. However, throughout the last year access to Regional Asylum Offices has been limited, due in part to Covid-19 restrictions. In practise, very few people are admitted to Regional Asylum Offices without an appointment. They are forced to repeatedly turn up in hopes there will be a free registration slot day after day after day. Individuals are also able to send an email requesting an in person appointment, yet unless the applicant is considered

vulnerable by law and can evidence this, or the email is sent from a lawyer, these emails largely go unanswered.

Regional Asylum Offices inform the Central Asylum Service of how many pre-registrations via Skype their capacity allows for. For this calculation, referrals of vulnerable people, unaccompanied minors and those released from detention are prioritised, with the leftover spaces denoting the number of registration places for people coming via the Skype system. Anecdotal evidence suggests that once these places are full, Asylum Service staff operating the Skype system simply do not answer calls.

During the call with the Greek Asylum Service, people must switch to a video call for identification purposes. Access to this pre-registration system presupposes access to a smartphone with a working camera, access to Wi-Fi or money for data, strong signal and the technical knowledge to download, install and use the app.



TIMELINE

Complaints

Announcements

The Greek Council for Refugees reports complaints of persons unsuccessfully trying to use Skype ²³

AIDA reports access to the Regional Asylum Office in Athens remains problematic due to a lack of appointments given via Skype ²⁴

Protests against delays in registration due to the Skype system and having to queue outside the RAO ²⁵

RAO of Attica announced that it is, until further notice, only possible to register applications via Skype ²⁶

A new schedule for Skype was introduced as well as lines for Urdu/Punjabi and Bengali and a separate schedule for fast-track Syrian ²⁷

The Greek Ombudsperson reports the Skype system “seems to contradict with the principle of constant and without obstacle access to the asylum system” ²⁸

AIDA reports ongoing restrictive access to the asylum procedure due to Skype ³⁵

The Greek Council for Refugees reports on issue of people being detained due to a lack of documentation despite proof they have been trying to pre-register via Skype ³⁶

The Director of the Asylum Service states that access to the asylum procedure through Skype remains the “Achilles’ heel” of the procedure ³⁷

The Greek Council for Refugees reports on people being detained despite trying to access the asylum procedure ⁴⁰

Asylum Service staff go on strike twice

Greek National Commission for Human Rights confirm observations by the UN Committee Against Torture from September 2019 ⁴¹

2014

Skype system set up introduced with lines for French and English speakers ²¹

Arabic, Farsi and Dari lines introduced ²²

2015

2016

The Greek Council for Refugees reports 900 individual complaints regarding restrictive access to asylum through Skype in a 1 month period ²⁹

The Asylum Service admits a lack of capacity to handle large numbers of applicants ³⁰

UNHCR reports complaints by camp residents who do not have access to Skype to pre-register their asylum claims ³¹

Skype lines added for Sorani and Kumanji languages ³²

2017

Skype line added for Georgian ³³

Generation 2.0 reports that only one computer in the Asylum Service is used to answer calls for Skype ³⁴

2018

2019

The Greek Council for Refugees reports limited access to the asylum procedure due to Skype ³⁸

The UN Committee Against Torture highlights access to asylum is largely affected due to the inefficiency of Skype in September ³⁹

2020

2021

There are now 18 languages available on Skype ⁴²



STAFFING

A lack of capacity within the Asylum Service is an often stated reason for long delays with the Skype system.⁴³ A large number of fixed-term contracts, poor working conditions and limited interpretation are also of concern. The working conditions and standards for staff in the Asylum Service not only impact the capabilities of staff, they also impede the Service's ability to fulfil its duty to guarantee unhindered access to asylum in Greece.⁴⁴

In 2017 and 2018, employees with fixed-term contracts went on strike and discontinued their services due to payment delays and the termination of fixed-term contracts.⁴⁵ In March 2020, employees again went on strike in response to the targeted dismissal of colleagues⁴⁶ and in April in response to changes in the asylum procedure which they perceived to be institutionally racist.⁴⁷ There were also reports of poor working conditions including buildings without air conditioning, or broken air conditioners in the height of summer.⁴⁸

In 2019, 61.1% of staff were employed on unstable, fixed-term contracts.⁴⁹ Just two Asylum Service employees worked six hours a day alongside an interpreter to operate the Skype system.⁵⁰ More recent information on employee numbers is not available, despite several requests to the Asylum Service.⁵¹

BENEFITS OF SKYPE

Despite rectifiable problems, the Skype system has benefits and could add value to the asylum system in Greece. Most notably, Skype provides a remote medium through which to pre-register a claim. Feedback from civil society saw this as the key advantage of the Skype system, with 89% of people in agreement. As there are just Asylum Offices and Units in Thessaloniki, Alexandroupoli, Ioannina, Patras and Athens on mainland Greece as well as one each on Crete and Rhodes, people seeking asylum often live considerable distances from these offices. Prior to the implementation of the Skype system, people's only option to register their asylum claim was to spend many hours on multiple days queuing outside of these offices in hopes of being admitted, at the discretion of Asylum Service staff. The Skype system takes away the need for people to make long and often costly journeys to and from these offices.

As people who are unregistered are at risk of deportation, detention and pushbacks many are unwilling to enter into public spaces unless absolutely necessary. The Skype system offers a degree of safety and protection, allowing people to pre-register remotely and avoid authorities. Digitalisation of the registration process could also allow faster access to asylum in Greece.

SKYPE DELAYS

“We have seen people being just lucky, because it is a matter of luck.”

- Legal and Advocacy Officer, Greek Council for Refugees

People seeking asylum in Greece are forced to call Skype for many months, and often years. Findings from our conversations with people revealed that the average time trying to call Skype was 14 months. 7 of the 25 people we spoke with (28%) were still trying to reach Skype after two years.

The consequences of these delays are disastrous. People are needlessly forced to survive without any support or security, in destitution, with no opportunity to rebuild their lives. The Skype system remains the most persistent, yet hidden obstacle to accessing asylum in Greece.



SAYYID'S STORY

Sayyid came to Greece in 2018 after fleeing his home country of Afghanistan. For almost three years he tried to contact the Asylum Service via Skype.



“It’s been three years that I have been in Greece and I try to call Skype a lot, but nobody answers.”

Sayyid believes that the system comes down to luck.

“I tried a lot, but the system is luck for chance. The people are lucky to access the Skype number.”

Sayyid became tired and depressed with his situation. He tried everything to find safety in Greece yet has been prohibited from accessing the asylum system.

“I tried once, twice, more than a hundred times, but nobody answered. Then I deleted the Skype number from my phone.”

Sayyid became so frustrated with his situation he decided to stop trying to call Skype. He remains unregistered and at risk in Greece, yet unable to return home where the Taliban have taken control.

ABDULMALIK'S STORY

Abdulmalik arrived in Greece in June 2020 with his family. After fleeing the war in Syria, he now wants safety for himself, his wife and their two young children. It has been over a year since the family has been trying to pre-register their asylum claim.



"I call from different phones at the same time, many times. I have four accounts, every Wednesday I call from all the phones."

Abdulmalik feels he has taken his family from one bad situation to another.

"We came from Syria from all this complicated situation and now we are living and experiencing the same thing here."

Worried for the wellbeing of his children, Abdulmalik is desperate to start a new life in Greece.

"It is a very big problem with the situation with children. They do not give us milk, the small one needs milk but I could not buy milk yet. It is a big problem for the big one he has not been to school, not in Syria and also not here. He is missing a lot... my child is sick, I don't know where to go with him and to find food."

Without any other avenues to access the asylum system, Abdulmalik continues to call Skype each week, to no avail.

Our case analysis of 1,132 files revealed that 27% of people contacting us about Skype were reporting Skype delays. The 25 people we spoke to had been persistently calling Skype from between 2 and 38 months, with only 3 people having successfully pre-registered their asylum claims at the time of writing. Respondents from civil society organisations reported frequent questions from beneficiaries around Skype delays and how long the process takes.

"I tried a lot, but the system is luck for chance. The people are lucky to access the Skype number. And the people that don't have luck, they always try."

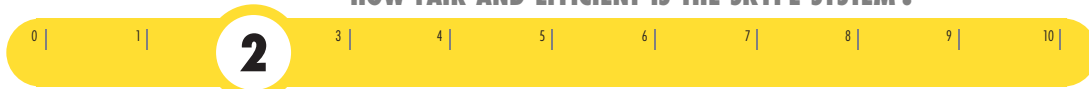
- Sayyid, 22, Afghanistan

"That system totally failed. Because I tried and nobody answered. If they would answer our call, like you speak with us, it is very good. If they would give us some more information, it would be really good. But the system has totally failed."

- Manzoor, 36, Pakistan

Both civil society organisations and people seeking asylum in Greece perceived the opportunity to pre-registration through Skype as nothing more than luck. Organisations operational throughout Greece perceived the Skype system to be unfair and inefficient with people scoring it an average of 2 out of 10 when asked this question.

HOW FAIR AND EFFICIENT IS THE SKYPE SYSTEM?



“It creates an extra unnecessary stage in the registration procedure.”
- Coordinator, Refugee Legal Support

Our findings revealed that people spent many months looking for information on how to access asylum in Greece. Reliant on information from other people seeking asylum, Ferhad only found out about the Skype procedure when he met people from Iran at a food distribution, after having been in Greece for two months. We also encountered people who had taken months to find out about the Skype process as the police or Asylum Service had failed to provide adequate information. Many people also initially tried to find shelter and food and only then went on to seek information on the asylum procedure. Of the asylum applications lodged on the mainland that

received a decision in 2020, the average processing time was 67 days.⁵² Yet our findings reveal that the true length of the asylum procedure for many people who use Skype could stand at 14 months, due to lengthy delays in the pre-registration system.

A key concern of the Skype system is the discrepancies between languages. Certain languages experience far longer waiting times. This may be due to a higher level of calls on certain lines, yet regardless of the reason it creates a system where a level of discrimination is inbuilt.

“We have one problem - that nobody answers our calls on Skype.”
- Shahid, 28, Pakistan



CASE STUDY: SKYPE ASSISTANCE

An organisation in Athens which assists men who are alone in Greece, ran sessions where individuals could try and reach the Asylum Service on Skype for nearly three years. The organisation collected data from April 2018 to March 2020 on the numbers of people attending the sessions and the numbers of people who successfully pre-registered.

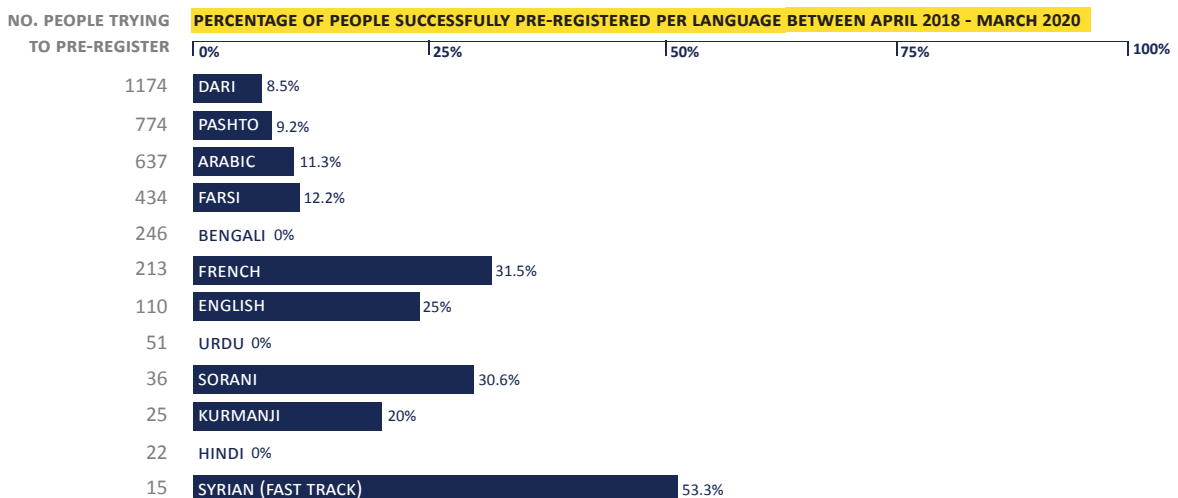


SKYPE DELAYS

Individuals who attended the sessions had access to optimal conditions for reaching the Greek Asylum Service via Skype - up to date information on the correct calling times, electricity, good laptops and Wi-Fi speeds of 50 megabytes per second, more than double the average speed of mobile data in Greece.⁵³ Anecdotal evidence has also highlighted that the Asylum Service working on Skype is more likely to accept calls from Skype IDs which look more professional, such as those belonging to NGOs. The men who attended the Skype sessions used the organisation's Skype IDs, which had the organisation's logo as the profile picture. This may again increase an individual's chances of reaching the Asylum Service. Yet their data reveals that even when people have access to

these optimal conditions, substantial delays with Skype still occur with on average just 11% of callers managing to pre-register.

Data showed no correlation between volume of callers and success in getting through to the Asylum Service. This suggests that an individual's chance of reaching the Asylum Service on Skype does not increase when calling a quieter line. The exception to this was the Syrian Fast-Track Skype line, where more than 50% of individuals calling Skype between April 2018 and March 2020 were able to pre-register, yet this is a small sample size of just 15 people. Success in pre-registering through Skype once again appears to come down to little more than luck.



LANGUAGE DISCREPANCIES

Data reveals severe discrepancies between different languages with people from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan excluded from accessing asylum. In December 2019, a Joint Ministerial Decision, deeming India among 12 safe countries of origin was issued.⁵⁴ In January 2021, Bangladesh and Pakistan were added to this list.⁵⁵ Individuals from safe countries of origin are subject to accelerated procedures, meaning their asylum claims will be dealt with quickly. However, data reveals that alongside this strategy to quickly clear those presumed to be ineligible for protection from the asylum system, the Greek state also appears to be blocking certain nationalities from entering the asylum system in the first place.

In 2018 and 2019 none of the 319 individuals from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan managed to pre-register their claims via Skype. By 2020, after more than a year of trying to pre-register their asylum claims, none of the individuals from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan attempted to pre-register their asylum claims. When considered in combination with our finding (discussed later on page 20), that the Urdu Skype ID was a complicated series of letters and numbers for more than a year, yet still advertised as being asylum. service.urdu - this presents an asylum system which is riddled with discrimination.

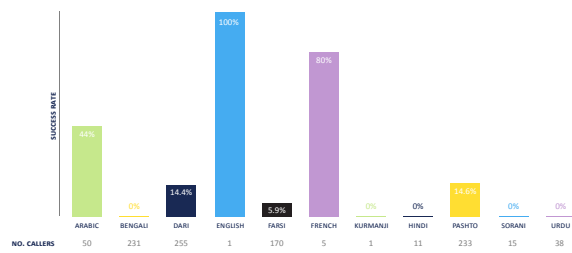
In 2018 and 2020 there also appears to be an exclusion of Kurdish people from the asylum system with none of the 29 individuals attempting to pre-register being successful. This suggests that the Skype system has the ability to block asylum for certain nationalities with ease and speed.

A NEW AGENDA

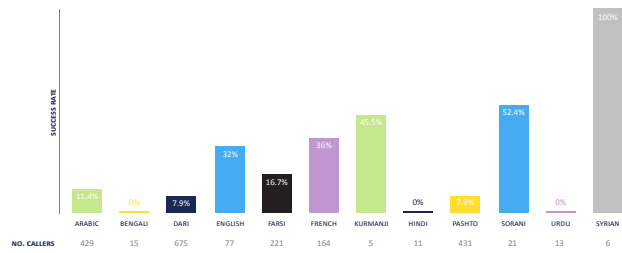
On July 7th 2019, the New Democracy party won Greece's national election and took power. The Liberal-Conservative Government's migration agenda included aims to substantially reduce the number of people entering Greece. The data supplied from the Skype sessions shows huge decreases in the number of people successfully pre-registering via Skype just 4 months after the new government took power.

Data reveals that an individual's chance of successfully pre-registering was more than three times lower from November 2019 when compared with data from April 2018 to October 2019. On average, before November

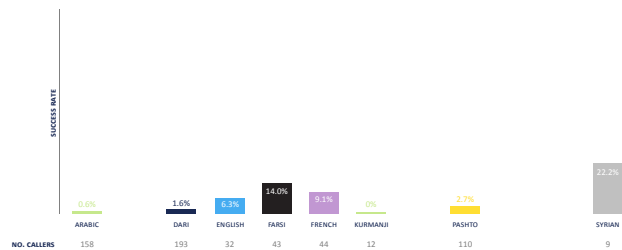
2018



2019



2020



To hinder or prevent access to the asylum procedure for a certain ethnic group or nationals of a certain country would not only be in stark contrast to the principles of the Geneva Convention⁵⁶, but also violate national legislation, which states that any third-country national shall be entitled to apply for asylum.⁵⁷

2019 individuals had an already low, 13.7% chance of getting through to the Asylum Service on Skype, and this dropped to a mere 4.4% chance from November 2019.

People who speak Arabic, Dari and Pashto account for 69% of the total dataset. Similar decreases in the numbers of people getting through to the Asylum Service via Skype are seen across these three languages. Prior to November 2019 19.6% of Arabic speakers managed to pre-register via Skype, yet from November 2019 this dropped to 2.3%. 11.4% of Pashto speakers managed to pre-register before November 2019, yet this dropped to just 3.3% from November 2019. Similarly, 11.0% of Dari speakers managed to pre-register prior to November 2019, yet from November 2019 this dropped to just 1.0%.

“Our goal at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum is, first, the substantial reduction of migration flows.”- Notis Mitarakis, Minister of Migration and Asylum ⁵⁸

“ It’s really difficult you just keep calling, calling, calling and they don’t respond on you at all... To be honest I have a bad chance, I don’t have any chance. I’m not lucky.”
- Femi, 20 Egypt

“ It takes many, many months. 9-10 months before Covid. My friend has been trying for two or three years.”
- Muzhir, 29, Pakistan

“ I keep calling them but they do not respond.”
- Akil, 36, Egypt

“ I try to call the Skype number a lot. But, right now, I don’t want to call the Skype number, because it’s not good. Nobody answers, why should I do that?”
- Hamza, 28, Pakistan

“ I have three mobiles and I always try. But nobody answers.”
- Fazal, 23, Pakistan

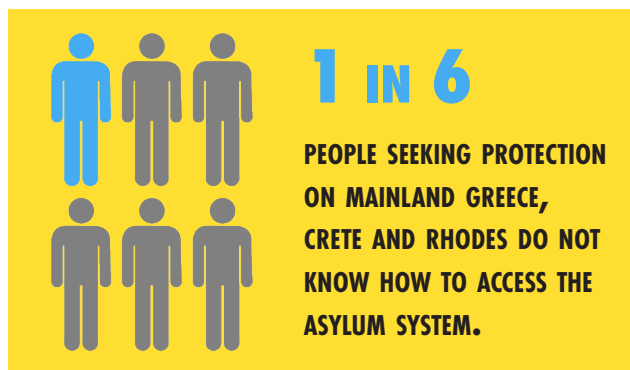
ACCESS TO INFORMATION

“ I tried a lot to contact them but they don't answer me. It's awful for me and ... I feel bad and I send an email to them many times but they didn't respond to me, I don't know what to do.”

- Basel, 22, Afghanistan

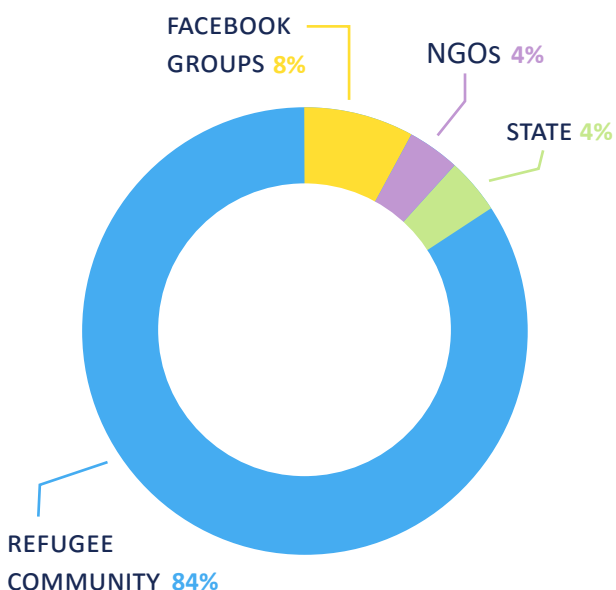
Access to asylum is dependent upon correct and comprehensive information in a language people can understand. Yet, our findings revealed that up to one in six people in need of international protection in Greece do not know how to access the asylum procedure.⁵⁹ People seeking asylum experience prolonged delays in lodging their asylum claim due to the inefficiency of the Skype procedure. Yet, a lack of information, misinformation and an ever-changing system cause further unnecessary delays for many people.

Incomplete information provided by the State causes people to look elsewhere for a thorough understanding of the asylum process and how to lodge their claim. Prerequisites of the Skype system, which include an understanding of technology, literacy and the ability to find the correct Skype ID and timeslot, require further information and understanding that many people struggle to obtain. Sources of information that are not verified or may be outdated, add further delays and confusion to people's asylum journeys.



Our research revealed that the majority of people find out about the asylum process from other people seeking asylum. 22 of the 25 people we spoke to found out about the Skype procedure from the refugee community. Those who researched online, relied on information given in Facebook groups by people in the refugee community. Just 8% of people we spoke with got information that was likely to be up to date or verified as it came from state actors or NGOs operating in Greece.

WAYS PEOPLE FIND OUT ABOUT SKYPE



INFORMATION FROM THE STATE

The Greek authorities provide information about asylum on the Ministry of Migration and Asylum's website.⁶⁰ The majority of the website is only available in Greek and English and includes substantive information gaps. An information document⁶¹ on the asylum process has recently become available in 18 languages, however the information it contains is misleading and makes no reference to the Skype system. Yet, in practise, if a person speaks one of the 18 languages available on the Skype program, they must normally first pre-register on Skype and receive an appointment to enter the Asylum Service. None of the people we spoke with, nor any of the cases we analysed stood contrary to this. The only people that were admitted to Regional Asylum Offices were those who had an appointment or whose languages were not available on Skype.

The only information on the Ministry's website regarding Skype is in the form of announcements, primarily with updated Skype schedules. Continuous changes to the Skype schedule and past changes to Skype IDs have

“The police didn’t have anything, no guidance, they just hold [detained me] then let me go.”

- Yusef, 21, Afghanistan

caused additional delays for many. We found many instances within our case files of people calling at an incorrect time slot as the Skype schedule had been updated since when they first discovered it. From July 2018 to September 2019, the Skype ID for the Urdu line was “live:68dfbd8c11b07edc”. This had been confirmed by the Asylum Service in emails to Mobile Info Team. The official website of the Asylum Service however still stated during all this time that the Skype ID for Urdu speaker was “asylum.service.urdu”. This hindered countless Urdu speakers from accessing asylum for a period of over a year.

Not only does the website lack comprehensive information in a range of languages, it also fails to provide useful information on how the asylum system in Greece works in practise. We did not find a single instance within our case analysis nor our interviews wherein a person obtained comprehensive information on the asylum system from the Ministry’s website.

The recast Asylum Procedures Directive outlines state actors responsibilities to ensure people seeking international protection have access to the information they need to enter the asylum system, this includes not only the Greek Asylum Service but also the police.⁶² In particular it notes that officials who first come into contact with people seeking asylum should be able to supply them with “relevant information as to where and how applications for international protection may be lodged”.⁶³ Despite official’s obligation to provide people with relevant information, conversations with people seeking asylum revealed that the information given was insufficient or withheld entirely.

Only one person we spoke with received information on how to access asylum from state officials. Those we spoke with who sought information from the police were often detained for anywhere between a few hours to multiple months. They were released with a police decision to voluntarily leave the country in a time frame between 7 – 30 days, or in case of a strong vulnerability with a certificate of non-removal which stops any deportation procedures for a time frame of 6 months. However, people had no information about what this document was or any information as to how to enter the asylum system. We discovered many instances of people asking what their documentation was, or contacting to ask when their interview would be as they believed the police had registered them.

“The police officer said to me, ‘go to Allodapon [Foreigner’s police] and tell him your problem.’ I went to Allodapon and they said to me, ‘for 18 months you will be locked up, 18 months. 18 months later we will give you a police paper.’ You live in lock up in a police station for 18 months first.”

- Muzhir, 29, Pakistan

There were also instances of police signposting people to seemingly random services such as passport offices, telling people to ask the Asylum Service or simply refusing to give any information. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention was similarly informed in 2019 that police give no information to detainees on their right to apply for asylum or the asylum procedure.⁶⁴



Those who sought assistance from the Asylum Service were routinely denied entry to the building and simply told to use Skype - without any details on what the system is, what it is for or how to use it. Basel, a 22 year old from Afghanistan took nearly a year to find out about the Skype procedure. He tried to get information from the Ioannina Asylum Unit, yet was simply told to move to Athens and try there, yet due to his work and accommodation was unable to. These findings were backed up by our analysis of case files, wherein we found frequent mentions of people who had been in direct contact with the Asylum Service yet had no clarity on how to access the asylum system. A lack of information provided by the state denies people the meaningful opportunity to enter the asylum system, causing them to remain at unnecessary risk.

Our research found that not only did state actors frequently deny people information they were entitled to, they also treated people in ways that made them feel demeaned and dehumanised. We heard reports of officials simply ignoring people, shutting doors in people's faces and shouting at people who had gone to them for help. Ill-treatment by the state fosters a strong sense of hopelessness and abandonment within the refugee community. Many of those we spoke with believed they were unwelcome in Greece, yet had no other option than to remain here and attempt to find safety.

INFORMATION FROM ORGANISATIONS

NGOs operational throughout Greece attempt to fill in the information gap from the state by providing complete and comprehensive information in a range of languages. Yet their ability to provide assistance and information on the asylum system is limited due to inadequate resources and capacity compared to the high levels of need. Many of those we spoke with spent months going from organisation to organisation in search of information. Despite a range of NGOs providing essential information to people seeking asylum across Greece, just 4% of those we spoke with found out about the Skype procedure from organisations.

Additional problems with information from organisations was apparent. Many people were confused about the level of support they had received and often believed they had progressed their asylum application when they had only received information on how to do so independently. Case analysis also revealed frequent confusion between who was the Asylum Service and who was an NGO. 27% of the cases we analysed involved people asking for additional information on the Skype procedure including how it worked, which ID to call and at what time to call.

SORAYA'S STORY

Soraya arrived in Greece from Iran with her husband and two children. Without any knowledge of the asylum system, the family followed advice from a person they had just met.



“There was another refugee person, they told us you should go to police station to claim asylum. When we went to the police station, they kept us [for] several hours and then they took our fingerprints and said ‘now you are free to go’... they didn’t say something about asylum.”

Soraya and her family left the police station without any information on how to claim asylum. They felt let down and badly treated by the police.

“First we feel like we were criminals because the police don’t do good things with us ... We escaped from Iran and came here but the people didn’t do good things with us... They always shout at us ... and they always told us why did you come here from your country?”

“ I understand the difficulty [with Skype], my friends told me that the only way you can apply for asylum in Greece is the Skype line. They gave me the code of Skype and I tried a lot but nobody has answered me.” - Yusef, 21, Afghanistan

“ My friend explained everything about the timetable and when I should call the number.” - Sayyid, 22, Afghanistan

“ I just cried, cried, cried and went from organisation to organisation, you go here, you go there.”
- Gemima, Democratic Republic of the Congo

“ I tried a lot to contact them [Skype] but they don't answer me. Its awful for me and it's really, I feel bad and I sent an email to them many times but they didn't respond to me, I don't know what to do.”
- Basel, 22, Afghanistan

“ I have a friend and my friend told me about Skype”. - Zafar, 30, Pakistan

“ Every Monday and every Thursday at 10 - 11 I try to call the Skype, but I don't know what is the difference between Monday and Thursday I just know that I must call at these two times.”
- Yusef, 21, Afghanistan

“ It was one of our Congolese brothers who told me that there was Skype. I didn't know how to do it. I went to an organisation, X, they said they can help me with the Skype application so they installed the application on my phone.”
- Gemima, Democratic Republic of the Congo

“ I went to so many NGOs but they only tell me to go through Skype. They said if you are a minor we can help you but otherwise no.” - Muzhir, 29, Pakistan

INFORMATION FROM THE REFUGEE COMMUNITY

84% of people we spoke with found out about the Skype system through word of mouth - from other people within the refugee community. All those we spoke with had been reliant on others within the refugee community for essential access to information. Yet it was evident that even those passing on this information were not always clear about the procedure and often could not explain beyond basic instructions. Primarily, people received information on what Skype ID to call for their language, how Skype as an application works, and at what time people should call the Asylum Service on Skype. Many of those we spoke with did not understand why they were only allowed to call at certain times and most had never seen the Ministry's Skype schedule. The complicated set up of the Skype procedure and the Skype timetable opens unnecessary room for misinformation and confusion.

“ And I can speak in six languages and I was trying all of these languages but until now cannot be successful.”
- Aalem, 17, Afghanistan

70% of civil society respondents reported that their most frequent questions around Skype from beneficiaries revolved around why the Asylum Service did not answer calls and how long it would take for them to answer. Severe delays in the Skype system fosters desperation and distrust in the official procedure. When information is passed from person to person there is an increased risk of miscommunication, rumours and the circulation of outdated information.

“ Sometimes my friends told me that there was a police holiday.” - Yao, 39, Ghana

Our research found that the longer people are forced to wait to enter the asylum system, the more likely they were to have been misinformed or to have believed rumours. This misinformation was always damaging as it either caused people further delays, put people at risk of exploitation or gave people false hope.

“ I didn't call the Skype number, because the Skype number is closed for Afghan people.”
- Imad, 37, Afghanistan

Our case analysis revealed a vast array of misinformation including:

- Money can help speed up the asylum process
- There is a new card which allows people seeking asylum to relocate anywhere in Europe
- It costs money to claim asylum
- Lonely single women can be relocated to Germany and Canada
- You can buy an Asylum Seeker card
- The Asylum Service no longer considers asylum applications from certain nationalities

Analysis of our case files found a suggestion that there are discrepancies between speakers of different languages and the levels of information they obtain. Despite Urdu speakers accounting for just 31% of the total enquiries Mobile Info Team receives, they accounted for 67% of all enquiries which evidenced misinformation, 53% of all enquiries asking for additional information on Skype, and 44% of all enquiries asking how to apply for asylum.

Misinformation perpetuated uncertainty, worry and anger amongst those we interviewed. At times, a lack of clear and concrete knowledge on the official procedure and a reliance on information from the refugee community caused people to make uninformed decisions which has had profound effects on their life in Greece.



AALEM'S STORY

Aalem was just 15 years old when he arrived in Greece alone from Afghanistan. His understanding of the asylum system, which came solely from members of the refugee community, was riddled with misinformation. Aalem believed that the best way to access asylum was to be arrested and detained by the police.

“When I arrived in Thessaloniki I went to Diavata camp and all of the time I was waiting for the police so the police could arrest us and we can receive a police paper.

My sister told me that, ‘if you’re not arrested by the police, when they find you they will deport you. So being arrested is the best option for you and then you will receive a police paper and you will be able to stay in this country. This is the best choice for you.’”

Aalem tried to get arrested for eight days and was eventually successful. He spent 18 days in detention. Whilst in detention he had his biometrics taken and was asked how old he was.

“When I was in the police station, the police asked me, ‘Are you sure that you’re not a minor? Because it looks like you are a minor’. I was afraid because my friend told me that if you are a minor and you come alone to this country you will be sent to detention because minors don’t have permission for travelling alone and you must have a guardian. You must introduce yourself as an adult”.

Without any legal advice or concrete knowledge of the asylum procedure in Greece, Aalem was completely reliant on the information he received from the refugee community. Sadly, this misinformation led Aalem to lie about his age,



due to fear of being detained.

At just 15 years old, Aalem declared that he was 18.

Minors are considered as vulnerable in Greece and therefore do not need to call Skype to pre-register their claims. Instead there are referral pathways to ensure that children are registered more quickly - sadly, Aalem was not aware of this.

Due to Aalem’s false declaration of his age, he is marked as an adult in Greece. He has spent the past two years calling Skype at his allocated time slot every week, with no success.

The lack of access to concrete information on the asylum system causes people to rely on information from the refugee community. Although well intended, this information is not always correct and can lead people to make grave mistakes in their asylum journeys.

Access to clear and correct information is essential in ensuring people have fair and efficient access to the asylum system in Greece.

LIFE UNREGISTERED IN GREECE

“This population remains undocumented for prolonged periods being under the constant risk of detention and being deprived of any access to the health care system, labor market, accommodation and other social services which any asylum seeker is entitled to enjoy.”

- Legal Expert, HumanRights360

Long delays in the Skype system force people to survive in unsafe, insecure and degrading environments. People's asylum journeys in Greece too often begin with homelessness and destitution. The mandatory use of Skype, which requires a suitable device and internet, fails to account for the precarious living conditions people are forced to endure and their inability to support themselves. Without any avenues for state support and faced with an uncaring, complicated asylum procedure, people fleeing war and persecution are prohibited from accessing the urgent care and help they need and deserve.

In Greece, people are required to pre-register their asylum claim before they are eligible for basic assistance of between €2.76 and €4.93 a day (depending on household size) and accommodation. Whilst people are forced to remain undocumented, despite their continued efforts to pre-register their claims, they are deprived of all access to the health care system, labour market, accommodation and all social services - despite these being legal entitlements for people seeking asylum throughout Europe.



HOMELESSNESS AND DESTITUTION

ABDEL'S STORY

Abdel arrived in Greece in August 2020 after fleeing his home country, Morocco. Despite being a victim of torture, Abdel was unable to access any support or accommodation.

“I've been living in many different places. I spent a month here, a couple of months there. Sometimes sleeping in one of the trains. Sometimes living in an abandoned building. No electricity. No water. No stability. Always moving from place to place.”

Abdel's only option has been to sleep on the streets, constantly on the move to avoid coming into contact with police where he would be at immediate risk of detention, deportation or pushbacks.

At first, Abdel's friends and family were able to send him money to support him. Yet, prolonged delays with the Skype system has meant that Abdel is still trying to pre-register his claim more than a year after his arrival in Greece. His family simply couldn't continue to support him.

“At the start, my friends and family were sending me money. But after a while they stopped. It's a lot to keep asking them for money every day”.

Abdel has been completely reliant on NGOs for his survival. For many months, a daily food distribution was his only avenue to feed himself. Forced to seek alternative ways for his survival, Abdel now collects trash.

“Sometimes I take 10 euros. But sometimes it's only 5 euros [per day].”

Despite Abdel's urgent need to rebuild his life in safety, he is forced to live without the basic necessities in constant danger and fear.

GEMIMA'S STORY



Gemima is a victim of rape. She arrived in Greece in 2020 after fleeing her home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

When Gemima arrived in Athens she was in need of support, shelter and medical assistance.

“As I arrived, I was sick with all these rapes, I started with X [a medical NGO], that’s where they helped me with the hepatitis B vaccination and other medicines I was taking.”

Gemima was able to access medical support from an NGO but could not find anywhere to assist her with accommodation. Instead, she slept on the streets.

“I’ve lived in different places. And there are places where the police don’t go around as much. As it’s hot now, we stay in the park until the morning and in the morning we go to [abandoned] houses, we don’t have the money to have a house and with the organisations you have to have the [Asylum Seeker] card.”

She has found a community of people seeking asylum in Athens that are forced to sleep on the streets. They stay together, offering support and protection to one another.

“I’m not alone, there are many of us, we are homeless so maybe you can sleep, Kypsel park, Congolese church, we change places.”

Gemima spent 16 months trying to reach Skype. She lived in constant fear of deportation and was unable to meet her most basic needs such as feeding herself.

“I have no place to get food. But for clothes, X [NGOs] helped me with clothes, but for food it’s really difficult, it’s really difficult.”

“I know I’m trying for no reason, but I have to do what I have to do.”

The homelessness rate of people trying to access asylum via Skype is at least 74 times the national rate of Greece.⁶⁵ The actual number is likely to be much higher, as those we spoke to were physically living on the streets, whereas definitions of homelessness⁶⁶ also include not having a stable home, which arguably accounts for the vast majority of those we spoke with. Left without a safety net, people seeking asylum in Greece are forced to sleep on the streets, despite having suffered severe loss and trauma. Within our case files, we encountered many cases of minors, victims of torture, single women, and victims of rape - which included rape in Greece - who remained homeless for prolonged periods. Many of those who were homeless also had no access to food or were forced to eat from rubbish bins.

People are forced to sleep in insecure and unsafe environments, often seeking shelter in abandoned buildings, abandoned trains or parks where police are less likely to patrol. All of those we spoke to who were homeless were constantly moving from place to place to avoid detection by the authorities. Many people had been

turned away from camps or NGOs who were unable to help them due to a lack of capacity or because people had no documentation proving the legal basis for their stay in Greece. Many of those who did manage to find shelter in camps were forced to sneak in, and lived in constant fear of being discovered. For people seeking asylum, there are simply too few avenues of meaningful support.

The psychological toll that homelessness and destitution takes on people is indisputable. Some of those we spoke with had considered leaving the country and abandoning their hopes of claiming asylum as their hardship and suffering in Greece was beyond the threshold they could bear. Having made long and dangerous journeys to find safety in Europe, the harsh reality of homelessness combined with an asylum system which is exceedingly hard to access causes people to lose hope. Whilst people are forced to live in the shadows they also have no meaningful way of integrating into their new societies. People face stigma and discrimination and struggle to learn Greek due to their living situations, further ostracising this group from society in Greece.

FERHAD'S STORY

Ferhad is 49 years old. He was forced to flee Iran, leaving his wife and child behind. For more than 14 months, Ferhad was desperately trying to pre-register his asylum claim.

Without any money, and with no access to state support, Ferhad was homeless and destitute. He slept on a park bench for more than a year and was reliant on NGOs for food and basic necessities.

"I went to the line for receiving the food and there are lots of person, Afghan and Iranian person and all of the person are giving some information about which organisation you can go and which place you can receive the food or clothes or other stuff and information about the asylum procedure."

Ferhad was reliant on the kindness of strangers for money to buy data to call Skype.

"Because of the financial problem I cannot buy any sim card. Every time, a friend try to help me with buying sim cards or lending a phone or hot spotting or something else.

I was so worried ... I have a lot of thinking in my mind about what will happen and I am getting depressed because I cannot reach out to Skype."



When Ferhad finally reached the Asylum Service on Skype, he was denied the opportunity to pre-register as he does not have a housing contract.

"I am sleeping in the park and the staff said, 'do you have any contract for your accommodation if you don't have any contract for your accommodation then you cannot get the code from Skype', unfortunately on the first time I can't get the code for the Skype."

Ferhad finally managed to pre-register his asylum claim, using the address of a friend. He is now safe, in accommodation and seeking medical treatment for his leg, eyes and ears.

Those we spoke with, who were homeless and had managed to get through to Skype, were denied the opportunity to pre-register their claims and continue their asylum journeys on the basis that they could not give an address to the Asylum Service. This was also a finding backed up by our case analysis. This requirement of pre-registration fails to consider the living conditions of those it is set up to support.

“When I arrived, the only food I would get was from food distribution.”

- Abdel, 43, Morocco

People trying to access asylum via Skype are reliant on NGOs to meet their basic needs. Those not able to find employment or not willing to work illegally, were reliant on food distribution services provided by charities, whether homeless or not. We received hundreds of enquiries from people desperately needing to access food in order to meet their most basic needs. In addition, many people are able to access clothes, soap and other essential items from distribution services. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, put those without shelter at further risk as they were not able to protect themselves due to a lack of washing facilities.

MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Those seeking safety in Europe often arrive with both physical and mental wounds. In Greece, people who are unregistered are prohibited from accessing state healthcare including doctors, hospitals and psychological support. Our case analysis revealed more than 240 people attempting to call Skype, in urgent need of medical

or psychological services who were prohibited from accessing them. Additionally, people without documents are unable to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in Greece. This is of serious concern given the scale of the pandemic and living conditions of those unregistered, who often struggle to gain access to basic hygiene facilities due to their precarious living conditions. This leaves people at immense risk of contracting and spreading the virus.

When we spoke with people, access to medical services was cited as the most important benefit of being registered in Greece, after legal status. Our case files evidenced the vast array of medical needs reported by people. From longer term conditions such as diabetes and pregnancy to acute needs like broken bones and other issues that required urgent operations. Many people had tried to access medical care at general practice clinics or hospitals when they or their family members had become sick, yet all were turned away and denied assessments or medication. In a number of cases, people were desperately seeking a way to speed up the pre-registration process of Skype so they could have urgently-needed operations. Many people had also suffered injuries during their journeys to Greece and we found many cases of broken arms and legs that had gone untreated.

There were cases of heavily pregnant women in need of care and examinations who were denied access to medical experts. There were also a vast number of cases regarding children who were sick or had ongoing medical needs such as diabetes or asthma. In one case, a man was in urgent need of registration so that he could receive treatment to his leg to prevent it from being amputated.

“I was suffering for 2-3 months, and they sent me to a hospital... they did an ultrasound and they found me a cyst and fibroid... but it's really difficult as I am without AMKA [Social security number].”

- Gemima, Democratic Republic of the Congo

“I was very upset because I was having hope for a reply and to be here in Greece and finally safe but nothing going right for me really.”

-Tarek, 26, Syria

“I was sick and because of this I went to the hospital and the hospital didn't accept me.”

- Aalem, 17, Afghanistan

“I tried a lot to contact them [Skype] but they don't answer me. Its awful for me and it's really, I feel bad and I sent an email to them many times but they didn't respond to me, I don't know what to do.”

- Basel, 22, Afghanistan

FEAR OF POLICE

“It makes me feel like psychology dire, and depressed. You cannot work and you cannot go outside because of the police. So it’s really difficult.”

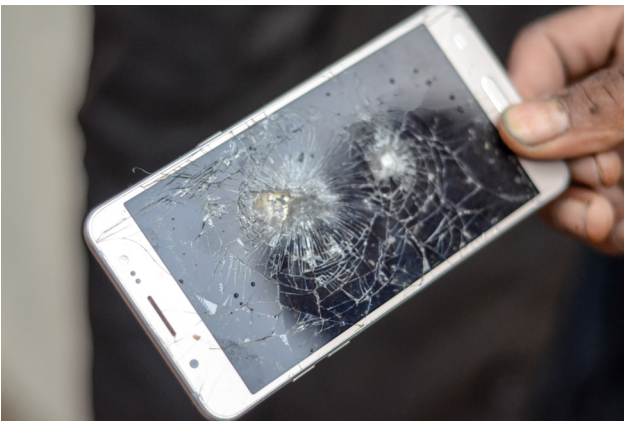
- Femi, 20, Egypt

Conversations with people seeking asylum revealed that the fear of police means many are forced to live on the fringes of society. Scared that an interaction with the police could result in being detained or deported, many people are forced to survive in the shadows, only venturing into public spaces when absolutely necessary. People’s quality of life is impeded by their inability to walk the streets freely, which in turn prevents them from integrating into their new societies and at times stops them from accessing psychological and social services provided by NGOs. Our case analysis reinforced this finding with constant concerns around encountering police, being detained or deported.

“The police check the documents and I don’t have documents. What kind of documents should I show the police? That is why I am afraid from police.”

- Madeed, 31, Kashmir

Our case files revealed people are extremely conscious of their precarious legal status. Many people reported growing increasingly worried about being deported back to their countries of origin, where they are at risk of persecution, the longer they are forced to remain in Greece without documentation.



“If they stop you then they will take you to a prison or detention for 18 months and this would destroy me from the inside.”

-Femi, 20, Egypt

This fear of the police was often borne out of rumours within the refugee community and was not always accurate. Many people we spoke with believed they would be placed in detention for the maximum 18 months should the police stop them. Additionally, many people knew of friends or relatives who had been detained, or remained in detention. In one case, a woman with two children reported that her husband went to a local shop to buy food for the family. He was stopped by the police and detained and had not been able to contact his family for three months.

“There are police everywhere. We don’t go out. We can’t go anywhere.”

- Abdel, 43, Morocco

Many people were desperate to find any way to ensure they would not be deported, as they increasingly believed that the Skype line simply did not work. We found evidence of people fearing they would be pushed back, as they had witnessed people living unregistered in camps being rounded up and removed by the police. Those who reported this believed that these people had been returned to Turkey during illegal pushbacks.

Our interviews revealed that people live in states of panic due to expiring police notes. People feared that returning to the police to get their police notes renewed would put them at great risk of detention, deportation or pushbacks. Many people attempted to prove their will to apply for asylum by showing police screen shots of their failed attempts to reach Skype to pre-register. Despite reports that at times this did satisfy police, this has no legal grounds to ensure their protection but remains people’s only way of evidencing that they are attempting to enter the asylum system.

Without the opportunity to work, enter education or even freely enter public spaces people are denied meaningful ways to integrate into society and learn new essential skills such as the Greek language.



ACCESS TO DEVICES AND INTERNET

“Some people can't deal with phones or know how to translate or download the app and the account and you have to know that.”

- Tarek, 26, Syria

People's unstable and precarious living conditions directly hinder their ability to enter the asylum system. The pre-registration system of Skype requires individuals to have access to both a device and the internet. Without any monetary support, those who enter Greece without a smartphone with a camera are unable to purchase one. Even those with a suitable device must either find money to pay for mobile data or find a Wi-Fi connection. We found that those living within camps commented on the unstable internet connection stating that the high numbers of people trying to use Skype was a key reason for the poor quality of Wi-Fi.

Many people we spoke with were using their limited funds to purchase data as the pre-registration system has caused mobile data to become a basic necessity. For many, data was as important as food and shelter as it was their only means of accessing the asylum system and ultimately finding safety.

People who had been pushed back, or detained, had often had the cameras on their phones broken. Without a working camera, it is not possible to successfully pre-register via the Skype system, as during the Skype call a picture for identification purposes needs to be taken. We also encountered many people who were reliant on organisations throughout Greece who provide computers and Wi-Fi to enable people the opportunity to call Skype. However, many of these organisations were not able to operate throughout the last year due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Access to devices and the internet was stated as a key concern by civil society. The technical skills required to use Skype was an additional issue, which effectively prohibits access to asylum, raised by civil society. Our analysis revealed many people who were not familiar with Skype, who were reliant on friends or organisations to help them understand and use the software.

The living situations of people trying to seek asylum stand in stark contradiction to any notions of protection. A lack of support and services causes people to suffer for prolonged periods despite having reached Europe. The prerequisites of the Skype system fail to account for this lack of access to housing and facilities which further prohibits people from entering the asylum system.

EXPLOITATION

“Wherever there is a need that is urgent and needs to be fulfilled - and the system does not service it - there’s going to be some room for corruption.”
- Legal and Advocacy Officer, Greek Council for Refugees

The inefficiency of the Skype system generates an environment which encourages exploitation. Long delays in the system cause people to live in destitution, with no access to state services or welfare, and no way to gain legal employment. Too many people become increasingly desperate as they are forced to continuously try the Skype line for many weeks, months or even years.

Every individual is different, some arrive in Greece with savings, others have fled their homes bringing nothing but the clothes on their backs. Yet, prolonged destitution forces people to find a way to meet their basic needs. For some, this means relying on people they have just met, for others this means seeking employment from people that are willing to do so illegally. Each of these situations creates the possibility and probability of exploitation.

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Our research revealed that people seeking asylum enter the informal economy out of a necessity to meet their basic needs or contribute to the households that are supporting them. Yet, this illegal work prohibits any kind of labour rights or bargaining power to enable people to negotiate a fair wage or working conditions.

An additional driving factor which forced people to seek illegal employment was the need to pay for phone data or a device to pre-register their asylum claim. Whilst we spoke with people who managed to survive in Greece by sleeping on the streets and receiving food from NGOs, there are no avenues for receiving money to pay for data or devices which are prerequisites of the Skype system. Additionally, many people are unwilling to travel to use Wi-Fi in public places as they live in constant fear of detention, deportation and pushbacks.

“At the start, my friends and family were sending me money. But after a while they stopped. It’s a lot to keep asking them for money every day. Now, I’m working, kind of. At most, I take 10 euros per day.”

- Abdel, 43, Morocco

56% of those we spoke with were working in the informal economy. They disclosed dismal wages, poor working conditions and sometimes no wage at all. The employment gained by people was short term, irregular and unreliable. Wages were not uniformly distributed amongst employees who carried out the same work and people had no avenues to complain or seek help. Their continuation in these exploitative and unfair roles was driven by the lack of any meaningful alternative. The threat of losing their job, shelter and their only opportunity to cover their basic needs far outweighed the need for fair pay and acceptable working conditions.

Employment was often gained through word of mouth and a willingness to be on call should a job become available. People were working in a variety of roles including tailoring, loading and unloading goods, metal collecting, shop work and farm work. Those who worked on farms generally had their accommodation tied to their jobs, further restricting their ability to leave exploitative conditions. These precarious roles exist in areas of the labour market where the breach of maximum working hours and irregular, minimal pay has become normalised.

“I was earning about, everyday, 15 euros. For my friends it was 25 but for me 15 everyday. It was every day different, some days 8 or 9 hours work some days 10 hours.”

- Yusef, 21, Afghanistan

At times, people were refused pay or had their documents withheld. Yet, fearing the police and what would happen to them should they reveal their illegal employment, people were forced to continue working.

Our case analysis and conversations revealed worrying occurrences of unpaid labour. At times, people were carrying out domestic work in homes that they were invited to live in, in exchange for shelter and food. People who found themselves in these exploitative environments were treated poorly by those they worked for, made to carry out demeaning tasks, and worked long hours. Yet they still viewed this exploitative situation as desirable in comparison to their other, limited options. In one case, a woman was raped in the home she was working in, which led to a pregnancy. She was then made to leave this home and once again forced to live on the streets, pregnant, with her four year old child.

KARIM'S STORY

Karim arrived in Greece in 2019 at the age of 18. He has been trying to call Skype every week, for more than two years, with no response from the Asylum service. His inability to access the asylum system causes him to live in constant fear.



"I have been here for 2 years... I don't have any papers. I don't have work. I have nothing....I just stay in my house, not going out, because I am afraid of the police if they catch me with no papers. It is really difficult for me.... Skype affects the people."

Since Karim is effectively prohibited from accessing his right to asylum, he is not entitled to any form of welfare or state services, he cannot legally work and he has no documentation that proves his right to be in Greece.

"Since I arrived in Greece I have no money, nothing... I was surviving by eating from the trash and collecting trash until an Arabic person saw me and let me stay in his house. I clean the dishes and clean the house and he feeds me and he gives me a place to stay but he doesn't pay me... I work a lot of hours and this family treat me badly."

Despite being free to leave, those Karim lives with exploit him due to the knowledge that he has no other option.

RELIANCE ON STRANGERS

Almost all of those we spoke with relied on the generosity of others for survival. This finding was reinforced by our case analysis. Whilst it is admirable that people are willing to offer their support, this can also lead to exploitative situations as people become indebted to those who have helped them.

People we spoke with often borrowed money, Wi-Fi or phones so that they could call Skype. Whilst this may not seem like a sizeable favour, those we spoke with were, on average, still trying to reach Skype after 14 months. These small gestures would, therefore, soon amount to a substantial commitment and cost.

“The friends I am staying with are helping me with food.”

- Enofe, 30, Nigeria

“We have also seen people having to be obliged to others in order to have access [to Skype]. That creates another kind of power dynamic that is not in accord with any kind of protection principle.”

- Legal and Advocacy Officer, Greek Council for Refugees

Four people we spoke with were living with and being fed by people they had met in Greece. Additionally, every person we spoke with who had found employment, secured work through people they had only recently met. A minor we spoke with, who was living in a camp on the mainland, spoke of wanting to support himself to ensure he did not end up in the situation that other minors in the camp were in - being coerced to sell drugs and becoming involved in criminal activity as payment for the support they had received to survive.

LACK OF OVERSIGHT AND MONITORING

LAWYERS AND AGENTS

In an attempt to accelerate the lengthy asylum process or due to disbelief that the Skype service works, many people attempt to seek legal aid. There is no assistance that can be provided by a lawyer that would enable a person to get through to the Skype system or to allow them to skip this step, except in cases where they are deemed vulnerable by law and this vulnerability can be objectively proven. Despite this, we have heard a range of stories, consistent with our case analysis, whereby people sought legal assistance and were promised everything from Skype registration to a “police note” or even a “white card” (Asylum Seeker Card).

“It is true that the system is very bad and nobody has access to their Skype number. Everyone is trying, but some hire a lawyer for themselves and told me also, today or tomorrow, I will make an appointment to get you a white card, but nothing happened.”

- Fazal, 23, Pakistan

More often than not, our research revealed that people were unsure on what exactly they were paying a lawyer for, or what promises prospective lawyers had offered. Within Greece, there appears to be a prevalence of actors who look to take advantage of the desperate situation unregistered people seeking asylum find themselves in.

“I was trying to reach a lawyer. I had talked to my friend who got his whitecard through a lawyer, but you know lawyers are taking so much money nowadays - five to six hundred euros, even one thousand euros, it's very much. If we don't get work how can we afford their service?”

- Nihar, 40, India

After analysing papers provided by lawyers to people, it became clear that these documents are written by lawyers themselves and express a person's will to apply for asylum yet, they provide no legal basis for a person's

stay in Greece, despite this being a common promise from lawyers. Our data suggests that lawyers are charging a variety of prices for these protection papers from 90 to 500 euros. It was well evidenced that people were misled into what protection these documents would afford them, as many were certain it would prevent them from being detained or deported. Whilst we spoke with one person who showed their protection paper to police on 10 different occasions and was never detained, they carry no legal weight to guarantee this.

“I see this lawyer on Facebook, I decided to give the case to the lawyer. I was thinking that, when I try and meet the lawyer, she would do everything as quickly as possible, but, yet nothing different. This lawyer charged me, in total, everything will be €434.”

-Yao, 39, Ghana

When we asked where people had found their lawyers, the response was always either from others within the refugee community or on Facebook. Whether these ‘lawyers’ are all officially certified is dubious. Our evidence showed that many people pay excessive fees to only hear from their lawyers intermittently, with no tangible progress on their case, or pay fees only to never hear from their lawyers again.

Our case analysis revealed multiple claims of people with no vulnerabilities successfully paying a lawyer to receive an asylum seeker card. If true, this may suggest corruption within the Asylum Service in Greece.

Furthermore, we discovered varying reports of local agents charging exorbitant fees for the promise of getting someone a Skype appointment. Our case analysis revealed beneficiaries paying between 500 and 600 euros to people who claimed they could get them a Skype appointment. In other instances, there were reports of people promising Asylum Seeker Cards for fees of 900 euros. The prolonged period of limbo caused by the Skype system opens up multiple opportunities for exploitation.

FAKE SKYPE IDS

The pre-registration system also creates room for exploitation due to the medium of Skype. There are 15 different Skype IDs all related to either one or two languages. For example, Bangla speakers must call asylum.service.bangla, whereas Pashto speakers must call asylum.service.pashto@gmail.com. Alongside the Asylum Service's Skype IDs, we have encountered numerous accounts which closely mimic the official ones. For example, Urdu speakers should call the Asylum Service via the ID asylum.service.urdu, yet the ID live:asylum.service.urdu also exists. We have also seen a trend in fake accounts with the profile picture of the Hellenic Republic's logo or the Greek flag. All of these accounts prey on people's vulnerabilities and the confusing nature of the Greek asylum system in an attempt to exploit people for money. A common phenomenon of these fake accounts is for people on the line to be posing as Asylum Service staff. When a person successfully gets through to these scam accounts they are often asked to pay a fee in exchange for pre-registration. We have encountered people being asked to pay up to 500 Euros and have received multiple enquiries as to whether a fee is officially required to pre-register via Skype.

“ Skype takes a long time and because of this you must provide paper of the police for yourself and I spoke with a greek woman lawyer and she provided the paper of the police but received a 150 euro for giving this paper of the police.”

- Ferhad, 49, Iran

It is unclear how many people have fallen prey to this fraudulent enterprise, yet the mere existence of these fake accounts which capitalise upon misinformation and the desperation caused by the inadequacies of the Skype system remains deeply concerning.

Effective monitoring and oversight of all aspects of the asylum system is essential to ensure the quality and integrity of the Greek Asylum Service and effective access to the asylum procedure in Greece. Without transparency from the state, civil society lacks the capability of monitoring compliance with laws and regulations or the implementation of new policy. Monitoring and oversight are vital to ensuring efficient use of public funds and the delivery of quality services. A lack of transparency around the Skype system raises concerns over its suitability to ensure unhindered access to asylum in Greece.

DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

Despite having committed to monthly and quarterly publication of detailed asylum statistics before the Plenary of Parliament⁶⁷, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum ceased its regular publication of asylum statistics at the end of February 2020 and replaced this with the publication of monthly reports. The latest detailed figures for 2021 were only supplied by the Ministry in response to parliamentary questions.⁶⁸ Within these statistics a breakdown of pre-registration per competent authority was supplied showing that out of a total 8,859 pre-registrations in the first half of 2021, 3,377 were carried out by the police, 2,942 by the Asylum Service on Skype and 2,540 by the Reception and Identification Service.⁶⁹ This breakdown has not been supplied in previous statistics from the Ministry, highlighting a significant gap in data and a lack of transparency around access to asylum in Greece.

Even whilst statistics were being regularly published, there remained significant gaps due to the lack of detailed data supplied around pre-registration. The number of people trying to reach the Skype line is not known and never published, but the Skype software has analytic capabilities that could be utilised to report on the number of individuals trying to access the Asylum Service in this way. There is also a lack of transparency around the operation of the Skype system, with current numbers of staff unknown, despite requests for this information.⁷⁰ The current and past information provided by the Ministry fails to provide a full and clear picture of the asylum system in Greece and raises concerns around the Ministry's monitoring, evaluation and oversight.

PRACTISES OF THE ASYLUM SERVICE

“ They [The Asylum Service] told me they had enough Egyptian people and try to call again.”

- Karim, 21, Egypt

Every person seeking asylum in Europe should be afforded the same opportunity to lodge their claim, regardless of where they are from.⁷¹ However, our research revealed concerning instances of people being denied the opportunity to pre-register their asylum claim based on their nationality. Four people we spoke with, who managed to get through to the Asylum Service on Skype, were only asked one question: what nationality they were. After stating they were from Egypt, Iran and Morocco, these four people were either told to call back another time, hung up on, or told that places were 'full for their nationality'. This suggests a concerning trend whereby the Asylum Service is seeming to pursue a discriminatory practise outside of any known guidance. We also encountered cases whereby people called the Skype line for a specific language and were spoken to in another language. This highlights previous concerns by NGOs regarding the availability of translators.

FEMI'S STORY

Femi came to Greece when he was just 18 in 2019. Despite hundreds of attempts to reach the Asylum Service via Skype, he managed to reach them only once.

"I have called Skype many times, once when I got through to Skype and I told them I was from Egypt they closed the phone on me and declined the call. I tried many times and they stop answering me."

Even when Femi got through to the Asylum Service, he was denied his right to claim asylum. The Asylum Service staff who answered Femi's call asked nothing but his nationality. After he said he was from Egypt, they decided to end the call.

"You are able to call every week, there is no problem. The problem is that they don't respond to you. The problem is I'm not living my life as the other young people."



ABDEL'S STORY



Abdel has been trying to reach Skype for nearly a year, calling every week on both the French and Arabic lines as he is from Morocco which has two national languages. Just once, the Asylum Service answered his call on the French line.

"I tried to speak with them in French... Someone picked up, spoke to me in English, I spoke to her in French, and she hung up."

Despite reaching the French line at the allotted time slot, Abdel was denied the opportunity to express his will to apply for asylum and rebuild his life in safety.

"I was going to leave the country. I was extremely tired psychologically and nothing was working for me... I just want to live... I just want to be settled."

Without effective monitoring of Skype people seeking safety are at risk of being denied meaningful access to the asylum system. These practises highlight an unfair and ineffective system which has room for discrimination, contrary to law.



CONCLUSION

The current Skype procedure stands in stark contradiction to any notion of protection and shows incompatibility with a fair and efficient asylum system.

The system provides a loophole from which it is possible to deny people temporary legal protection and material reception conditions despite their urgent need for safety and support. The creation of a hostile and uncaring asylum system that forces people to live in dangerous conditions is synonymous with a strategy of deterrence. Currently, the additional step of Skype obscures unhindered access to asylum in Greece, to the detriment of human rights and contrary to European values and responsibilities.

Skype remains the most substantial obstacle to asylum in Greece. With exceedingly long delays, and a lack of information, transparency and oversight, the system appears to ensure the continuation of systemic and long standing problems in access to the asylum system. The Skype procedure forces people, who are in desperate need of safety, to live in undignified and unsafe environments and pushes people to seek illegal employment which often leads to exploitation. People who have fled war and persecution need and deserve the ability to lodge their asylum claims as soon as possible.

People seeking safety in Europe must be afforded the ability to live in dignity, rebuild their lives and contribute to their new societies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that Greece acts urgently to ensure fair and efficient access to the asylum procedure, by:

- Ensuring people in need of safety have fast and fair access to the asylum procedure in Greece and are granted the legal protection and material reception conditions they need and deserve
- Ensuring competent authorities, including the police and Greek Asylum Service, have the knowledge and the capacity needed to provide people seeking asylum with information on how to claim asylum in Greece
- Simplifying the Skype procedure by increasing the calling times of languages to whole days
- Increasing the number of hours per week that people can call the Skype line
- Increasing staffing capacity on the Skype line to ensure more calls can be answered
- Ensuring more languages are available on the Skype system, including Turkish
- Ensuring people can effectively pre-register their claim in person, or in writing to the Regional Asylum Offices without an appointment via Skype
- Ensuring regular publication of asylum statistics, including detailed statistics on the numbers of people calling Skype and the numbers of people successfully pre-registering through the system to ensure effective monitoring of the asylum system by civil society
- Ensuring that in accordance with national and international law, all nationalities have equal access to the pre-registration of asylum claims

We recommend that the European Commission acts urgently to ensure fair and efficient access to the asylum procedure in Greece, by:

- Working towards a common European asylum system which ensures individuals have the same practical ability to enter the asylum system as soon as possible
- Being ready to hold Greece accountable when it flouts protection standards including by considering pursuing legal action and launching an infringement procedure to ensure compliance with EU law

ENDNOTES

- 1 People seeking asylum are often asked to break the cameras of their phones by smugglers or when in detention
- 2 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2021, p.54, available at: <https://bit.ly/3H4xAih>
- 3 See Article 6 of Directive 2013/32/EU
- 4 See Asylum Information Database report, Access to protection in Europe: The registration of asylum applications 2018, p.8, available at: <https://bit.ly/3F2b33H>
- 5 Ibid (Sweden, Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland, Portugal, Malta, Poland, Romania, Hungary)
- 6 Ibid (Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey)
- 7 See 'The Asylum (International Protection) Application' on the migration.gov.gr website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3n16joT>
- 8 See 'The Mediterranean Situation, Greece' on the data2.unhcr.org website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3HbyOrK>
- 9 These numbers have been calculated based on a 9 month average as 2021 figures stood at 9 months
- 10 See Article 65(1) of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 11 See Article 6(2) of Directive 2013/32/EU
- 12 See Asylum Information Database report, Access to protection in Europe: The registration of asylum applications 2018, p.13, available at: <https://bit.ly/3H4yuLH>
- 13 See Article 78 of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 See Article 65(2) of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 16 See Article 55 of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 17 See Article 53 of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 18 See Article 55(1) of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019 and Article 17 of Directive 2013/32/EU
- 19 According to Filzwieser and Thiem (2016) Second Edition, EU Immigration and Asylum Law, Second edition, page 1390
- 20 See 'Schedule for the registration of requests for international protection' on the migration.gov.gr website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3koARz4>
- 21 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2015, p.14, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ocDkhh>
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2015, p.20, available at: <https://bit.ly/3FgsSfp>
- 25 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2015, p.26, available at: <https://bit.ly/3FgsSfp>
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2015, p.26, available at: <https://bit.ly/3FgsSfp>
- 28 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2016, p.31, available at: <https://bit.ly/3H4F8kW>
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 See UNHCR Greece FactSheet 01-31 December 2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/3wzxoCt>
- 32 Generation 2.0 (2017) 'The Refugee Crisis in Greece (2016-2017)', available at: <https://bit.ly/3wx9o2V>
- 33 Ibid
- 34 Ibid
- 35 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2017, p.37, available at: <https://bit.ly/31SGgYZ>
- 36 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2018, p.41, available at: <https://bit.ly/3D2vHjB>
- 37 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2018, p.40, available at: <https://bit.ly/3D2vHjB>
- 38 See Submission of the Greek Council for Refugees concerning the group cases of M.S.S. v. Greece and Rahimi v. Greece, available at: <https://bit.ly/3D50tlu>
- 39 See CAT's Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Hc1wc0>
- 40 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2020, p.55, available at: <https://bit.ly/30996DK>
- 41 See National Commission for Human Rights (2020) Refugee and Immigration report, available in Greek at: <https://bit.ly/3D4NG99>
- 42 See 'Schedule for the registration of requests for international protection' on the migration.gov.gr website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3koARz4>
- 43 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2021, p.55, available at: <https://bit.ly/3D7Zrvq>
- 44 See CAT's Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece, available at: <https://bit.ly/3CeqX9v>
- 45 See '48-hour strike of the contractors of the Asylum Service' on tanea.gr, available at: <https://bit.ly/3oijHnJ>
- 46 See 'The employees of the Asylum Service-Delays are on strike for 100,000 applications' on ethnos.gr available at: <https://bit.ly/3qt5APH>
- 47 See 'Strike on Wednesday at the Asylum Service and ARSIS' on Efsyn.gr, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ofVSNT>
- 48 See 'Immigration policy with damaged air conditioning' on efsyn.gr available at: <https://bit.ly/31SHCmx>
- 49 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2021, p.31-32, available at: <https://bit.ly/30hewwn>
- 50 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2021, p.55, available at: <https://bit.ly/3D2y31H>
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2020, p.21, available at: <https://bit.ly/3F679XI>
- 53 See, 'The State of Mobile Network Experience 2020: One year into the 5G era' available at: <https://bit.ly/3bvVN2ib>
- 54 See, 'Greece publishes list of 'safe origin' countries for asylum seekers' on ekathimerini.com available at: <https://bit.ly/30kHj38>
- 55 See 'Joint decision of Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs Miltiadis Varvitsiotis and Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarachi on updating of the list of safe countries of origin – Inclusion of Bangladesh and Pakistan' on mfa.gr available at: <https://bit.ly/3qmeNc3>
- 56 See Article 3 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
- 57 See Article 65(1) of Hellenic Republic Law No. 4636/2019
- 58 See Greek Council for Refugees and Oxfam Briefing (2020), Diminished, derogated, denied, available at: <https://bit.ly/308fOKI>
- 59 Based on findings from Mobile Info Team's cases wherein one in six of 1,613 enquiries regarded how to access asylum
- 60 <https://migration.gov.gr/>
- 61 See 'Asylum Service - Information' on the migration.gov.gr website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3DeXwVK>
- 62 See Recital 26 of Directive 2013/32/EU
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 See Working Group on Arbitrary Detention: Preliminary Findings from its visit to Greece (2 - 13 December 2019), available at: <https://bit.ly/3F3JJCc>
- 65 See Feantsa Country Fiche Homelessness in Greece 2017, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qpmvIR> As of 2017, there was a homeless rate of 0.19% in Greece whilst our findings revealed that 14% of people attempting to access asylum via Skype report being homeless
- 66 See 'What is homelessness' on england.shelter.org.uk website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3cODSAW>
- 67 See Hellenic Parliament meeting XG minutes, available at: <https://bit.ly/2XVOXw3>
- 68 See Hellenic Parliamentary Questions 01/07/2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3DeYe5m>
- 69 Ibid
- 70 See Asylum Information Database country report for Greece 2020, p.55, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qpxjAg>
- 71 See Introductory note of Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951, available at: <https://bit.ly/3F0Bx5B>



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