



MIT 2021 ANNUAL PRESENTATION




MOBILE
INFO TEAM

Mobile Info Team is a non-profit organization providing refugees and asylum seekers in Greece with vital information and assistance for the full duration of their asylum procedure. We fight for their right to know and the creation of space which allows for informed decisions to be made. We empower asylum seekers and refugees by informing them of their rights, obligations and options. This is done with a view to preventing asylum seekers and refugees from taking unnecessary risks and enabling them to act with dignity and autonomy.



MOBILE
INFO TEAM

INTRODUCTION



"The ongoing invasion of Ukraine has again made us aware of the terror of armed conflicts. Lives and livelihood are destroyed, families are ripped apart, people deeply rooted in their country and culture have to make the difficult decision to leave their homes in search of safety. Our thoughts and compassion are with the people of Ukraine. But there are also people from the Middle and Far East or from Sub-saharan Africa who have been in a similar situation for many years, fleeing war and persecution, looking for a safe haven to continue with their lives. A lot of them are currently in Greece and need, as well as the people of Ukraine, our support and empathy. Let's not forget about them."

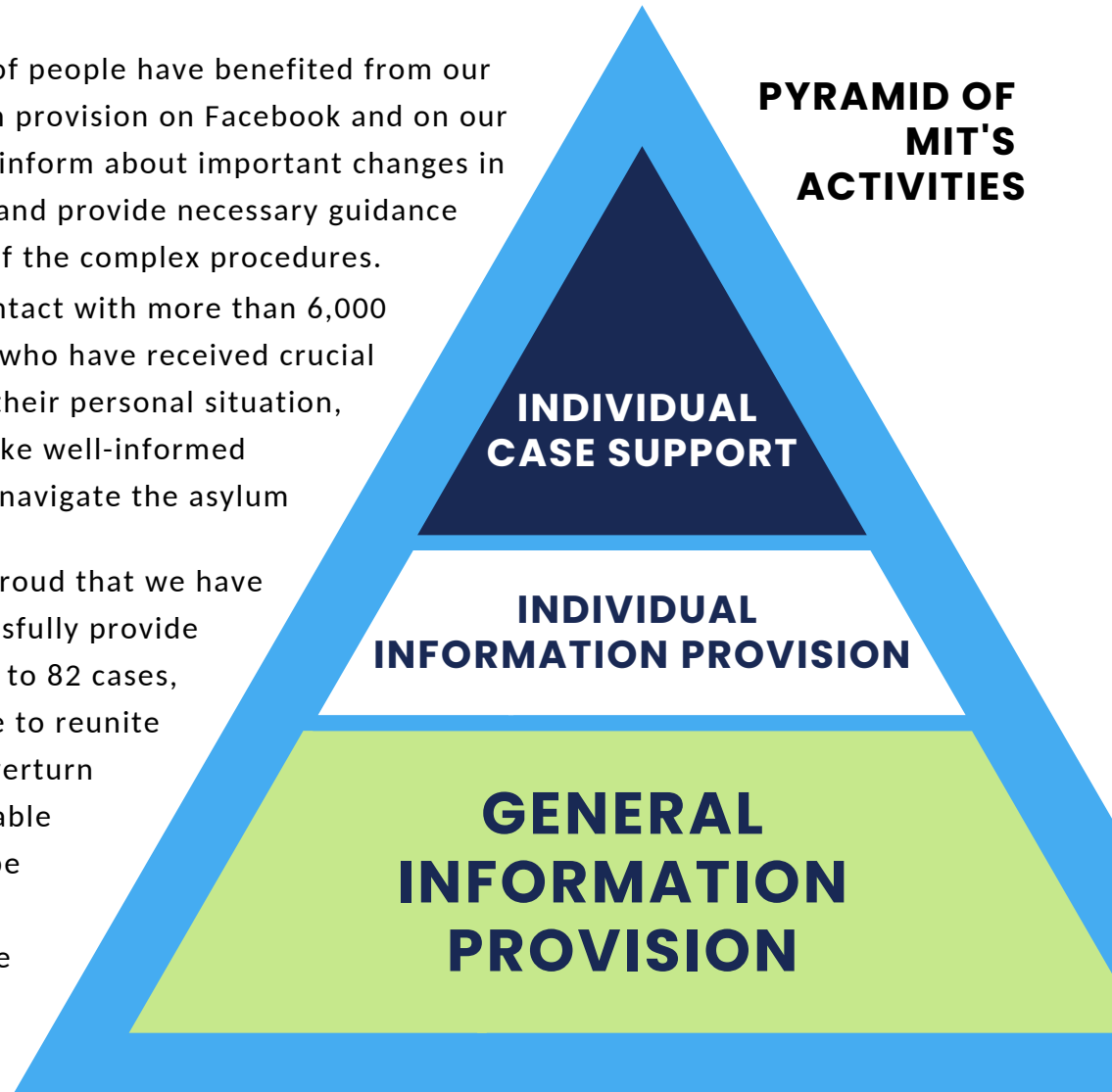
Michael Kientzle, Director and co-founder of the Mobile Info Team

Despite the government's claim that the so-called "migration crisis" in Greece is more and more under control due to "tough but fair" policies, Mobile Info Team (MIT) has observed continuous severe problems for people seeking protection in Greece throughout 2021:

- Access to the asylum procedure remains a serious issue, leaving people for months or even years homeless and destitute, while unsuccessfully trying to lodge their claims.
- Obtaining financial assistance has been limited, forcing people into official structures with walls and barbed wire. Further, at the end of 2021, due to an administrative failure, cash assistance for asylum seekers was unavailable for several months.
- In June 2021 the Greek state designated Turkey a so-called "safe third country". This designation causes major issues for those seeking protection in Greece, as they are faced with the threat of being returned to Turkey, where they face severe difficulties and potential human right violations.
- The situation for most beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece is still desperate, as no effective or coherent integration plan is in sight, forcing people that have been granted protection into worse living conditions than asylum seekers.

When caught in such situations, fighting an uphill battle against overpowering and erratic authorities, the right information and assistance can change lives! MIT has continued its unique approach in providing information and assistance in different layers to maximize our impact and to make sure as many people as possible are able to benefit from our services:

- Tens of thousands of people have benefited from our general information provision on Facebook and on our website, where we inform about important changes in the asylum system and provide necessary guidance for various stages of the complex procedures.
- MIT has been in contact with more than 6,000 individuals in 2021 who have received crucial information about their personal situation, helping them to make well-informed choices in order to navigate the asylum system.
- We are especially proud that we have been able to successfully provide in-depth assistance to 82 cases, helping for example to reunite family members, overturn decisions of vulnerable asylum seekers to be returned to Turkey and assisting people with accessing the asylum procedure.



On top of everything, MIT has extended its advocacy efforts, issuing two reports in 2021 regarding the living conditions for asylum seekers and refugees and the systematic flaws of access to the asylum system in Greece. We are very proud to share that our reports have received a lot of attention, been picked up by prominent news outlets like The Guardian or Al-Jazeera and have been quoted in important court decisions.

All of these achievements are just a starting point: in 2022 MIT will continue its efforts to support and advocate for refugees and asylum seekers. Follow our social media for live updates on our operations!

MIT'S ACTIVITIES IN 2021

2021 has seen countless changes in the asylum system. To keep up with all the changes and their implications would be challenging for anyone, but it is even more challenging for people

who have fled their home countries because of highly terrifying situations, trying to find a new home in a country where they don't know the language or culture.

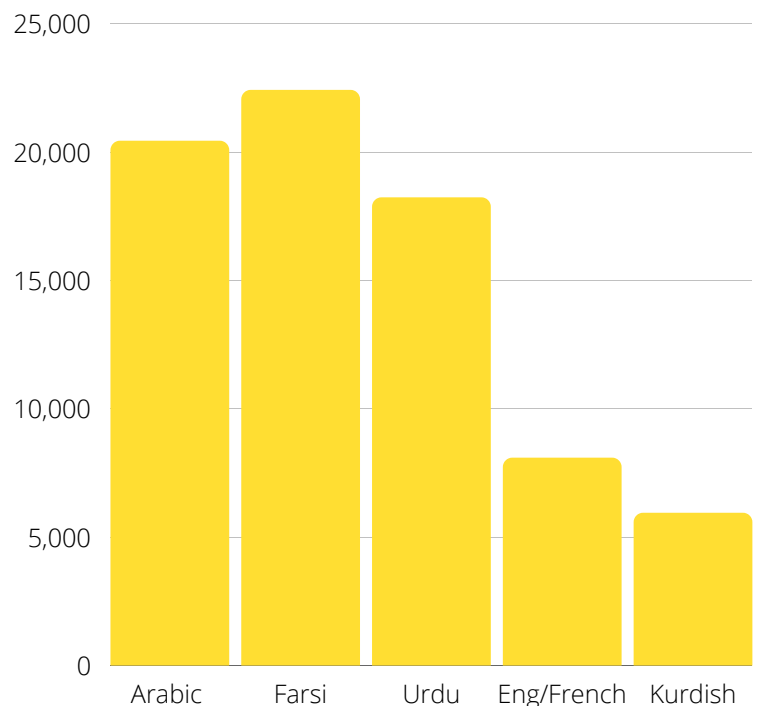
GENERAL INFO PROVISION

MIT is providing up-to-date information about all necessary developments on its Facebook page and website in the 6 most relevant languages for asylum seekers and refugees in Greece. The information posts are not only breaking down complex issues so that they are accessible to those with a lower educational background, but are also clearly stating the practical consequences for people's procedures. This aims to provide asylum seekers and refugees in Greece with the possibility to make their own informed decisions when moving forward on their way to safety.

2021 saw again an overwhelming response to this service: our 42 information posts on Facebook have been interacted with nearly 650,000 times (an interaction includes likes, comments, shares or clicks on the post). The average reach of one single Facebook post (amount of users being able to see the post) is more than 75,000 people, while the average for each language is displayed in the infographic.

In addition, by the end of 2021, our Facebook page has been followed by 62,185 people and MIT's website has been visited more than 186,000 times by nearly 87,000 individual persons.

AVERAGE REACH PER FACEBOOK POST PER LANGUAGE IN 2021



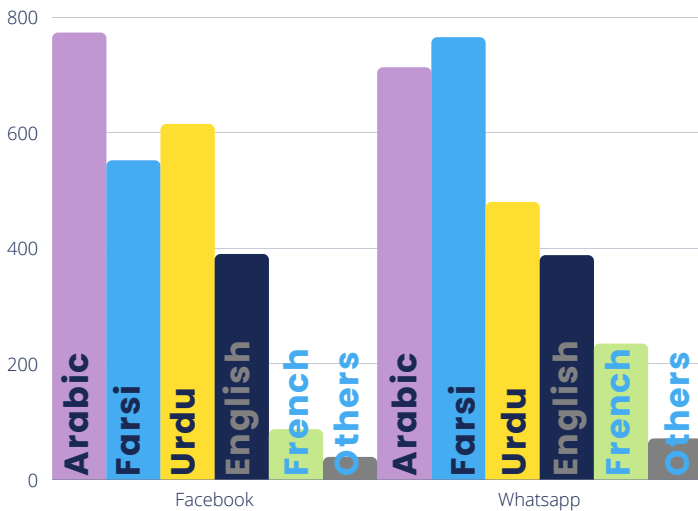
INDIVIDUAL INFO PROVISION

In 2021 we assisted 6,248 people with tailored and individual information provision.

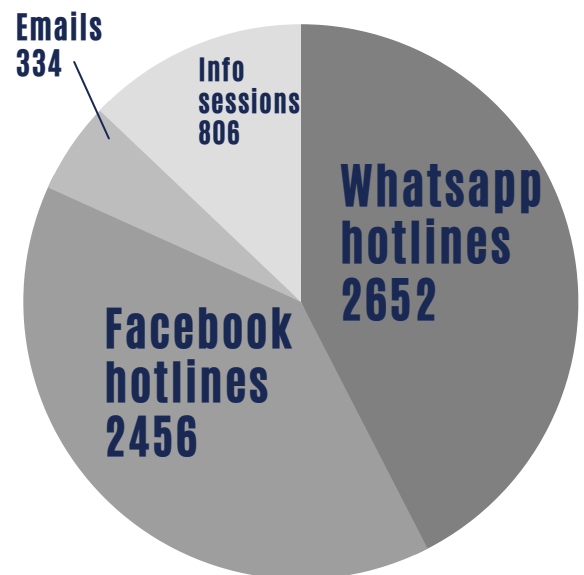
In addition to our comprehensive information posts, we offer the possibility to contact our team directly and receive individual and tailored information through our digital hotlines and in-person information sessions.

The demand for our individual information provision remains very high, with 5,442 unique individuals contacting us on our digital hotlines in 2021. Our main languages of support are still Arabic, Farsi and Urdu, which account for more than 75% of our beneficiaries. Nearly 80% were new beneficiaries while we continued to support 1,064 people that had contacted us in 2020 or in previous years, with some beneficiaries being in contact with us since 2017.

INDIVIDUAL INFO PROVISION IN 2021
via Whatsapp and Facebook hotlines



MEANS OF INDIVIDUAL INFO PROVISION



In 2021, we held 90 in-person information sessions in Thessaloniki reaching a total of 806 beneficiaries.

Through this service we are trying to reach homeless asylum seekers and refugees who often struggle to access the internet and therefore are unable to access our online services.

IN-DEPTH SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL CASES

Under certain criteria like vulnerability, need for assistance, and unavailability of other sources of support, MIT chooses to provide in-depth follow up for certain complex cases that go beyond providing information.

In our previous presentations, we have already shown how critically important legal assistance is for individual cases and can make a tremendous difference.

In 2021 we have been able to provide this assistance for 82 complex cases, all of which have been successfully resolved.

These cases range, for example, from reuniting families, freeing vulnerable families from detention, or overturning decisions of vulnerable asylum seekers to be returned to Turkey.

We are especially proud that since 2021 we also have the possibility to support cases in Greek and German courts with the help of our cooperation lawyers. This is a huge step forward in widening the scope of our support, aiming to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected at all times and asylum seekers and refugees are treated by states and authorities with dignity and respect.



FEEDBACK

"Thanks to God for the successful family reunification. Our two minor brothers reached Germany one week ago. Thank you all, we are so thankful towards you and all the team for your hard work with us."

Two minor Syrian brothers whose family reunification to their parents and siblings had been unjustifiably rejected.

"Thank you so much! Because of all your help, we reached this success. All of this is only happening because you were trying day and night for us. Thank you for everything!"

Vulnerable Afghan family that, having been separated for a long time, could finally reunite with their two young children.

"Thank you so much for everything. I have great news: today I got my positive decision, without paying any money to any lawyer. All of this is because of you and because of your assistance and thank you so much, I am so happy! Thank you very much for your hard-working team, you do your best"

A beneficiary assisted by MIT during the whole duration of their asylum procedure.

"Thank you so much! I'm so happy about this news! I really appreciate it and I hope you will have success and will be glad and well and thank you also for the translator."

Highly vulnerable and illiterate Afghan single mother, whom MIT successfully supported throughout most of her asylum procedure and who has been able to receive her travel document and leave a highly challenging situation in Greece.

"I'm so thankful and I owe you my life!"

Iraqi family who MIT assisted to obtain documentation that had been crucial to finally obtain a positive decision.

"Thank you to all of you for this great news! You gave me the hope that I can see my children again after 6 years. I'm so happy now! Today you gave me the happiest news I have ever heard!"

Syrian mother of 8 children, whose family reunification after two court cases finally got accepted.

"Thank you very much for your help! You never left me and are still helping me. We finally have been released from detention. Our soul returned to us. We stayed a ar and 3 months in detention and it was a torture. Thank you so much for everything."

Syrian family who had been detained for an unduly prolonged time frame.

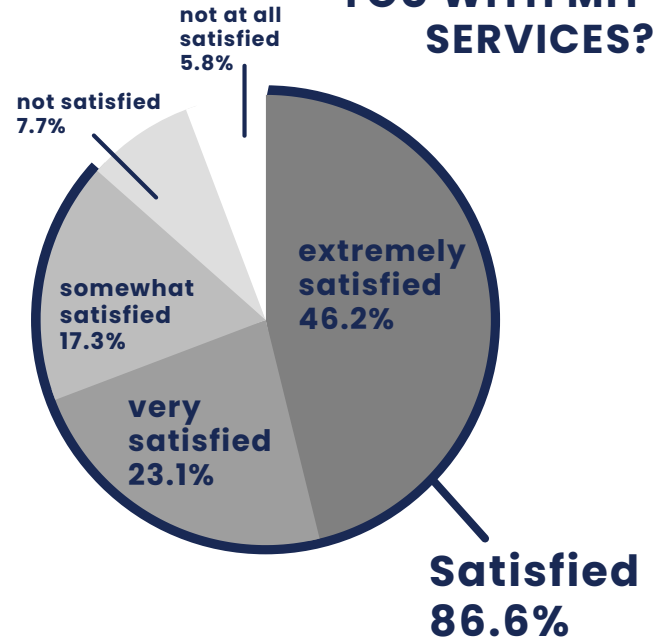
USER-SATISFACTION SURVEY

At least once a year, we submit to our beneficiaries a user satisfaction survey to ensure that we keep our services relevant and truly responsive to their needs.

At the beginning of 2022, we invited our beneficiaries on our digital hotlines to give us feedback in an online survey, after we had assisted them with enquiries regarding various topics relating to their procedures in Greece. We received a total of 56 responses (19.6% Arabic, 26.8% Farsi, 19.6% Urdu, 23.2% English, 10.7% French). Our survey includes six questions, five of them with multiple choice answers.

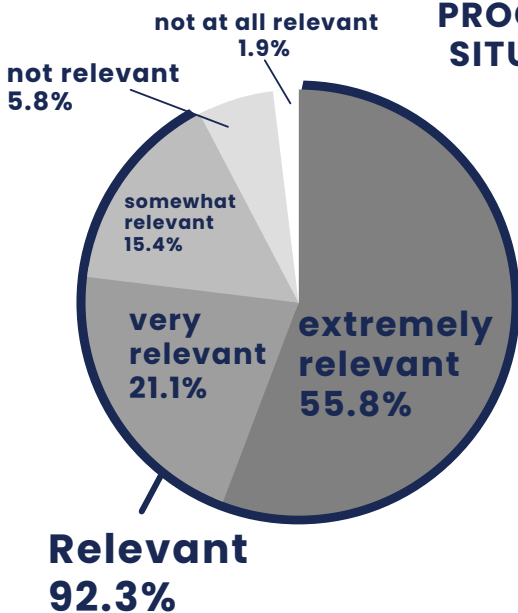
In general, responses show extremely positive feedback towards our service, its relevance and our responsiveness. 86.6% of our beneficiaries are satisfied with the

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH MIT SERVICES?



services we provided and 92.3% find the information we provide relevant. A phenomenal percentage of 55.8% rate the information we provide as extremely relevant. On average, 6 out of 7 people would recommend MIT to a friend. Also, the responsiveness of our team received high ratings, with 48 out of 52 attesting as being extremely, very or somewhat responsive.

HOW RELEVANT ARE THE INFO MIT PROVIDED TO YOUR ASYLUM PROCESS OR SITUATION?



The possibility to provide written feedback was also used by several of the people answering our survey. Similarly, the responses were positive, expressing gratitude for our work and wishing us luck and strength for the upcoming times. A few people also used the opportunity to express their wish for a quicker response on our end or for additional support on their situation.

ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS

MIT has had, from the beginning, a strong connection to the community we serve and our mission has always been very much influenced by the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece. We are in constant contact with a large number of people we support, either online or in face-to-face info sessions. Through this contact we receive excellent insight into

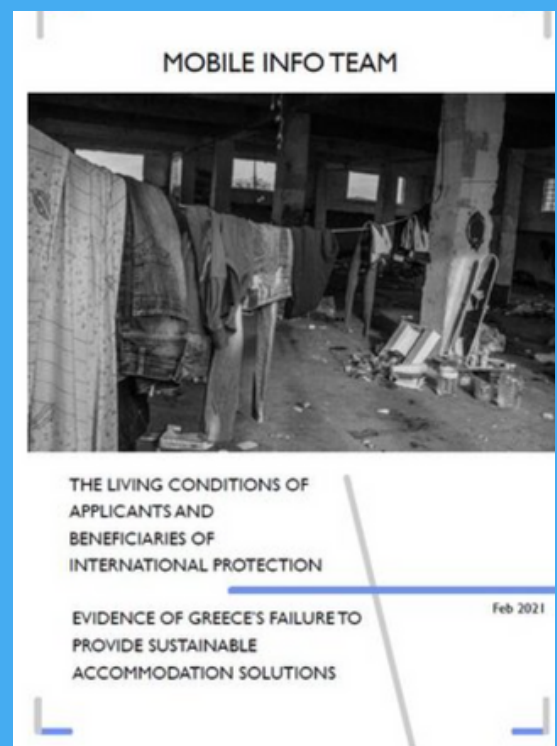
the issues and struggles of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, and are able to build our advocacy strategy based on the most urgent needs of the community. In 2021, MIT published 2 reports and was involved in the issuing of countless press releases, letters, submissions and briefings on a variety of topics, to ensure that the voice of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece is heard.

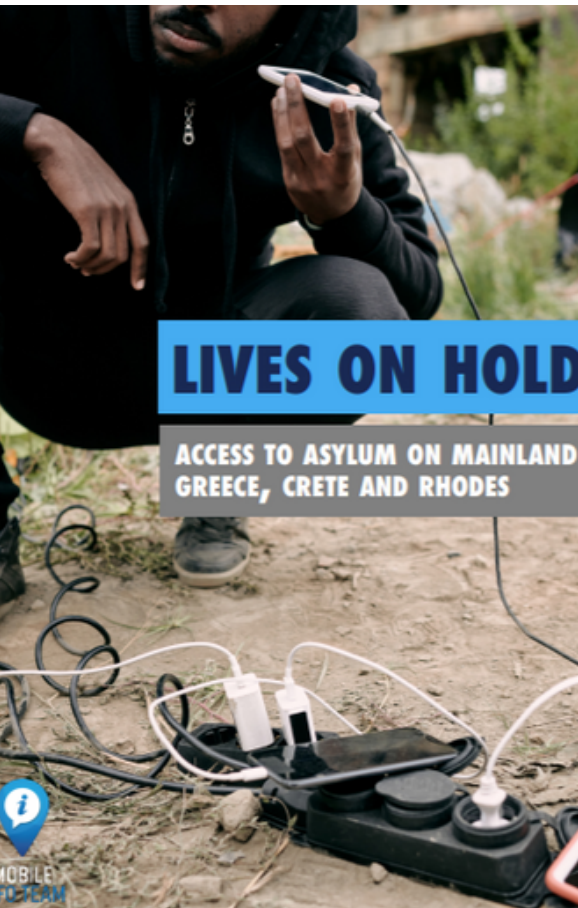
REPORTS

Accommodation report

In February 2021, MIT published the [Accommodation Report](#) regarding the living conditions of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. Building on our reporting from 2018, when MIT collected statements from homeless asylum seekers in Thessaloniki, the report highlighted the precarity people on the move are exposed to, due to inadequate reception policies. This report demonstrated the alarming living conditions of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece. While the appalling conditions on the island hotspots are already well documented, this report illustrated the challenging conditions on the mainland

and the limited housing support available to recipients of international protection. We are proud to highlight that MIT's Accommodation Report has been used as a source in an influential decision of the [High Administrative Court of Bremen](#) in November 2021, ruling that persons who have received a status in Greece, can not be returned back there, due to the challenging living conditions for Beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece. MIT's Accommodation Report has also been used as a source in a [decision of the Austrian Federal Administrative Court](#) from July 2021 and in a report about the living conditions for Beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece from August 2021 by the [Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research Documentation \(ACCORD\)](#).





Lives on Hold: Access to Asylum on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes

Access to the asylum system has always been a huge concern of many asylum seekers arriving in Greece and hence also to many beneficiaries contacting MIT for information and assistance. For this reason, MIT published the report Lives on Hold on 21 November 2021, looking at the experiences of people seeking asylum on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes, whose only route to asylum was via the application Skype. Our research showed that people experience exceedingly long delays: On average, those we spoke with for this report were still attempting to get an appointment to apply for asylum via Skype after 14 months. This has resulted 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 was disastrous.

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

MIT's Lives on hold report had great success and was picked up by national newspapers, such as Efsyn, and by international media outlets, including The Guardian, AlJazeera, and Eldiario. The report was also sent to Greek and European lawmakers, as well as being made available to our beneficiaries and audience on Facebook in 6 different languages. This was done to ensure that the reach of our report was not limited to decision makers but also made available to those who were or are directly affected by the pre-registration system.

As of 22 November 2021, the Greek government decided to cancel the Skype pre-registration system for applicants applying for asylum in Greece for the first time, without providing a clear new pathway on how to apply for asylum on the mainland. Scrapping the Skype system without an immediate alternative was not the answer. In response to this, MIT published a press release on November 29th, highlighting our serious concerns around this seemingly rushed-out and ill-defined policy change.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

In addition to more extensive reports, we worked collaboratively with organizations from all over Greece to publish policy briefs, open letters, briefings, and UN submissions to further advocate and amplify the voice of refugees and asylum seekers. By carrying out joint advocacy we are able to present a united voice from the refugee sector in Greece and push for change. Please find below more details on a number of our collaborative efforts.

In January 2021, together with other organizations, MIT published a [legal analysis](#) examining provisions to be included in the new Screening Regulation and compared it with existing Greek law. In addition, it described the practice of authorities in implementing the law and described irregularities and potential and existent human rights violations.

In June 2021 the Greek government declared Turkey a safe country for people from Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Somalia seeking international protection in Greece. In response, MIT co-signed a [press release](#), stating that in accordance with international law, “people should not be returned to a country where their lives would be in danger.”

The press statement [Are you eligible to eat?](#) and the press release [Hungry and destitute](#) both address severe issues in the provision of food and cash assistance to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece.

The [Policy brief: Walling off welcome](#) from September 2021 is directed against the

plans to dramatically restrict the movement of people in refugee camps in Greece, as with financial and technical support from the European Commission, authorities in Greece are constructing fences and concrete walls around dozens of existing camps and building closed camps in remote locations on the Aegean islands.

As a consequence of MIT’s submission to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in October 2021, MIT was quoted in the [Summary of stakeholders' information](#) of the Third Cycle of the Greek Universal Periodic Review.

Relocating vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees from Greece to other countries can ensure that the most vulnerable receive the support they need. To support these efforts MIT co-signed a [Joint NGO briefing](#) in November 2021 on the voluntary EU relocation scheme.

MIT co-published a wide variety of open letters to prominent stakeholders, including Pope Francis, on topics that range from refugees’ living conditions, reception facilities, cash assistance, and relocation.

Lastly, MIT also worked on submissions as a part of the BVMN network to the Special Rapporteur on Torture regarding the lack of accountability for Greek authorities engaged in pushbacks and other forms of border violence which amount to torture, and to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on rights violations carried out against children during pushbacks and the denial of access to alternative care.

MEDIA

In addition to the many accomplishments achieved by our Advocacy team, this year MIT was also able to enhance its voice and the voice of those we help by being quoted in many national and international media outlets. We have been focusing on protecting refugees and asylum seekers rights by advocating for the systematic change of the European asylum system. We have demonstrated

the need for this systematic change through presenting evidence on the shrinking access to asylum and human rights violations, and through raising awareness of this situation throughout Europe. Find here some of the articles in which we exposed refugees and asylum seekers's issues throughout their asylum journey: [DW](#), [Aljazeera](#), [Efsyn](#), [Ethnos](#), [The Guardian](#), [News 247](#), [Eldiario](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

During 2021, MIT has been very active on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, to further raise awareness on the difficulties faced by refugees and asylum seekers. We also highlighted the importance of our work by reporting cases that we handled that reached a positive result.

During 2021, we published 150 posts on

Instagram reaching 2,774 followers at the end of the year, reaching 5,271 accounts and engaging 664 accounts in December. In the meantime, we published 176 tweets that had more than 145,000 impressions (times a user is shown a Tweet in timeline or search results). MIT was also mentioned 143 times on Twitter in 2021 and our account now boasts 1,548 followers.

Stay up to date with our work





Many refugees and asylum seekers need our support in navigating the asylum system every day. Thousands of people are still living in dire conditions while stuck in asylum procedures.

Your support will allow us to continue providing refugees and asylum seekers with vital information, clarification and assistance during their asylum procedures during 2022 and beyond. This will help asylum seekers and refugees to achieve decent living conditions and rebuild their life.



Donate directly to our bank
account:
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IN 2021 ALL OUR WORK WAS POSSIBLE THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

