

2022

MIT ANNUAL REPORT



MOBILE
INFO TEAM

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INTRODUCTION

Mobile Info Team is a non-profit organisation based in Thessaloniki, northern Greece, providing people on the move - refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented people - with vital information and assistance throughout the asylum process. We offer general and individualised information through our WhatsApp and Facebook hotlines, as well as in-depth, longer-term case assistance which is provided by our Greek lawyer and senior caseworkers. By giving people a thorough understanding of their rights, obligations and options, we strive to empower them to act with dignity and autonomy, whilst avoiding unnecessary risk. We also raise awareness and advocate for changes to the asylum system in Greece and Europe, publishing reports about asylum conditions and working to end pushbacks as part of the Border Violence Monitoring Network.

2022 brought many challenges for the people we support. The war in Ukraine, an increase in the number of people in immigration detention centres, the intensification of police operations targeting undocumented people, continuous reports of violence and pushbacks at the land and sea borders, and frequent changes to already complex asylum procedures only exacerbated existing problems. In the context of an increasingly hostile environment for people on the move, as well as civil society to support, accurate information and legal assistance remain vital.



According to UNHCR, at least 18,756 migrants arrived in Greece in 2022 by its sea and land borders – more than double the 9,200 arrivals recorded in 2021.



MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM

One of the key milestones in 2022 for us at Mobile Info Team was the further extension of our in-depth case support by working with a Greek lawyer, a goal that we have been pursuing for a long time. The situation of asylum seekers and people without papers in Greece is constantly worsening: from the difficulties in accessing asylum, the deficient reception conditions, and the fast-track procedures and prolonged administrative detention, asylum seekers and people without papers have to deal with a hostile, unfair system that poses obstacles to the fulfillment of their fundamental rights.

“Faced with this situation, most third country nationals remain completely helpless due to the insurmountable inadequacies of Greece’s available system of free legal aid, combined with the difficulties involved in accessing a private lawyer.

In response to the existing gap in legal support, we provide legal advice, assistance, administrative and judicial representation throughout the asylum process, regardless of gender, age, or place of residence.

To date, we have taken on a significant number of cases from all over Greece, making a huge impact on people’s lives. This makes us fight harder for their rights, in the hope that at some point we will not be needed in societies fair and equal for all humans...”

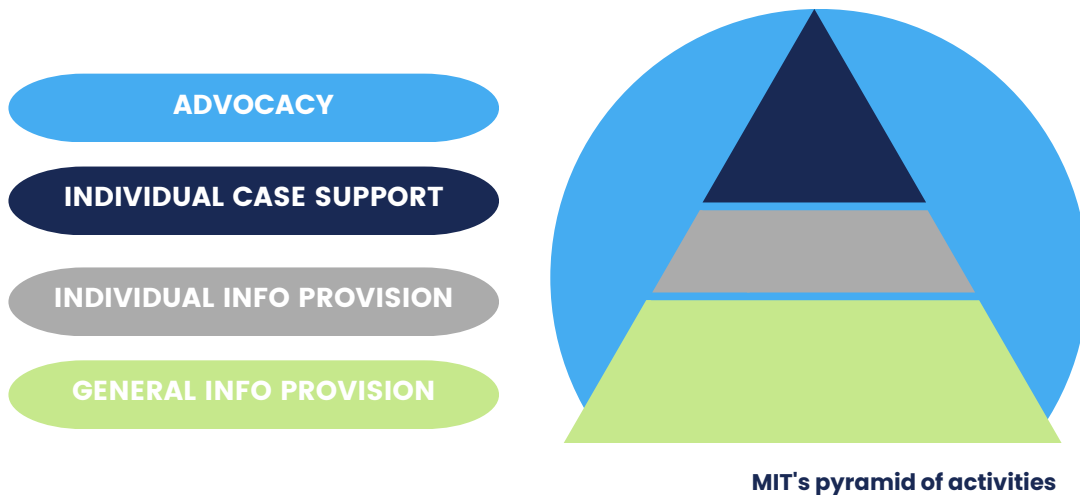


“This makes us fight harder for their rights, in the hope that at some point we will not be needed in societies fair and equal for all humans...”

Anna Maria – Lawyer at Mobile Info Team

WHAT WE DO

Our work continues to be based on a three-tier pyramid of support which has been tried, tested and adapted over the seven years in which we've been operating. Our advocacy efforts encompass our three core activities - addressing exactly those topics that the people we support need addressing.



General information provision

By sharing **general information** on our website and Facebook page, people on the move are kept accurately informed about new developments and changes to the Greek asylum system, integration measures, family reunification procedures and more. This provision continues to be a vital service and our reach is huge, providing people with clear, practical and actionable information. **At the end of 2022, we had 66,000 followers on our Facebook page, and our posts reached 1.7 million people, receiving 530,000 interactions.**

We covered subjects such as:

- What to do when encountering the police
- Renewing residence permits and travel documents
- The consequences of using fake documents
- Pushbacks at Greek borders
- Online asylum application procedures



I AM A MINOR IN GREECE WITHOUT PARENTS.
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

JE SUIS UN MINEUR EN GRÈCE SANS PARENTS.
QUE DOIS-JE SAVOIR ?
Faites défiler vers le bas pour le français

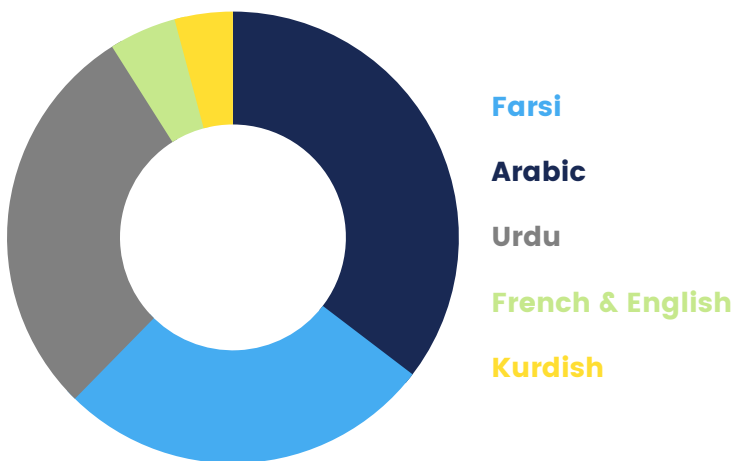
Minors who are arriving in Greece without their parents are considered vulnerable by law. Because of that the Ministry for Migration and Asylum has started the so-called "National Emergency Response Mechanism". This is a hotline for minors who are in Greece without their parents and are in need of support, ... See more

Example Facebook post

Individual information provision

As well as this general information, people are also able to message us directly through our Facebook and WhatsApp hotlines to request **individual information** regarding their specific situation. Our team of caseworkers and translators respond to any questions or queries they may have, communicating through Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, email and our twice-weekly in-person information sessions. Support is offered in **6 languages - Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Kurdish, English and French**.

Demand for this service remains high. In 2022, **we responded to 8,000 enquiries – an average of 665 individuals each month**. The information provided gives people the facts they require to make informed decisions when navigating the Greek asylum system. We also continued our in-person information sessions at a local food distribution site twice per week and at several community centres across Northern Greece, **holding 102 info sessions during the year, supporting 486 people**. By offering both online and in-person services, we ensure that our reach remains as large as possible, limiting the risk that people who are experiencing homelessness or lack access to the internet will fall through the gaps.



Interactions by language on Facebook posts in 2022 (%)

- ▶ **49 Facebook information posts**
- ▶ **66k followers on Facebook**
- ▶ **1.7m people reached with Facebook posts**
- ▶ **530k interactions on Facebook posts**

Individual case support

Our caseworker team also provides **individual in-depth case support** to people whose legal issues are particularly complex, necessitating special attention and the allocation of further resources. This team was greatly expanded in 2022 with the addition of **two senior caseworker** positions and the cooperation of a **full-time Greek lawyer**, allowing us to take on increasingly complex legal cases.

As our lawyer, Anna Maria, outlined in this report's introduction, inadequate access to legal aid and the financial difficulties inherent in acquiring a private lawyer means that this service remains an invaluable and critical component in our attempts to improve the situation for asylum seekers and refugees. Together with our director, they have successfully resolved 74 cases across the year, including family reunifications, subsequent applications and appeals, the acquittal of a client from smuggling charges, accommodation transfers, protection and detention cases. In cases involving cross-border cooperation, such as family reunification, we litigate with the help of lawyers in other EU countries.

"Hello. Thank you so much for the help you are giving to all of us, it's very good to know there are some people who actually care about us when in everyday life no one does."

- **Man from Iran** receiving support with his subsequent application

"I wanted to inform you that my asylum decision was issued by accepting thanks to god. Thank you for your cooperation with me with everything. And thank you for providing me with information which helps me a lot specially that no one else helped me"

- **Family from Iraq** we provided information to for more than 18 months, guiding them through the process

"This progress that we have made is thanks to God first and secondly, thanks to your efforts and your great interest. Of course, I mean the entire work team, from the director to the translator to you dear sir." - **Father from Syria** who the team was assisting with his family reunification case to his wife in the Netherlands

" Pass my thanks to the team and tell them that I will remain owing them until the end of my life. They have done a lot to me and I feel so grateful."

Single mother from Afghanistan

received support from MIT for a long time and is now in a safe and secure place



Advocacy



Our advocacy is informed by our information provision and casework. We focus on the topics most frequently cited as issues by the people we support. Therefore, our efforts remain relevant and timely.

As well as providing in-the-moment advice and support, we also advocate for the rights of people on the move. We collect testimonies, publish reports, and engage with other actors, such as media outlets, Greek and European members of parliament and UN representatives, in order to put the protection and promotion of human rights on the European political agenda and tackle key obstacles faced by asylum seekers and refugees in Greece.

The focus of our advocacy team throughout 2022 continued to be the **lack of access to the asylum system**. We published 2 reports:



Report: Control and Containment

Changes in Access to asylum on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes



Report: Blocked from the system

Voices from people excluded from the asylum procedure on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes

We also drafted and cosigned petitions, statements and briefings, were featured in publications such as Deutsche Welle, Efsyn and The New Humanitarian, and shared our expertise on the regional context with academics and journalists.

We commenced a long-term research project focused on the conditions of pre-removal detention centres (PRDCs) in Greece and access to asylum for those detained, in collaboration with Border Criminologies at Oxford University. As part of this work, we collected and analysed the testimonies of people held in detention on the Greek mainland, highlighting severe problems such as arbitrary detention practices and deplorable living conditions.

The full report, **Prison for Papers: Last Resort Measures as Standard Procedure**, was published in February 2023 and [can be accessed here](#).

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

According to UNHCR, **at least 18,756 migrants arrived in Greece in 2022** by its sea and land borders – more than double the 9,200 arrivals recorded in 2021. Due to the clandestine routes people on the move are forced to take in order to enter the EU, the real number of people who arrived irregularly in 2022 is likely to be far higher. The Missing Migrants Project reported that 326 people died or went missing at the ‘gateway to Greece’ during the same period, but this figure is likely to be higher as many bodies are never found or go unregistered by official authorities. According to Frontex, **2022 saw the highest number of irregular border crossings into the EU since 2016**, with 330,000 recorded entries – a 64% increase on 2021 – despite reports of continued practices of illegal pushbacks at Greece’s land and sea borders. The Eastern Mediterranean route, which includes Greece, saw an increase of 108%. Both IOM and UNHCR reiterated the need for safe pathways. This plea was repeated by the **UN migration agency chief** in December, when he said that **‘migration has to be managed, not by closing borders, but by opening legal channels’** ([InfoMigrants, 2022](#)). UNHCR also expressed concerns over what they referred to as ‘recurrent and consistent’ reports of violence and pushbacks which have been consistently documented by humanitarian support groups and human rights monitoring bodies, as well as the lack of willingness by coastguards to assist in the Aegean sea. The Greek government continues to refer to reports of pushbacks as Turkish-driven propaganda and fake news, despite the extensive evidence demonstrating that the practice has become routine and systematic in recent years.

Despite border fences, irregular migrant arrivals to EU rise again

By **INFO MIGRANTS** Marion MacGregor | Published on : 2022/12/16

Media headline 2022



There were many events in 2022 that impacted our work. Undoubtedly, the dominant political event of the year was Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February, which sparked the biggest movement of people in Europe since World War II. Over the year, other European countries took in more than 8 million Ukrainians seeking safety, quickly providing temporary protection status and residence permits, the right to work and free language classes, as well as immediate school placements for their children. **The solidarity and speed of this continent-wide response is an example of what governments and the general public are capable of achieving.** At the same time, Europe was widely criticised by human rights and aid organisations for displaying ‘double standards’ and a ‘two-tier system’ in its treatment of those fleeing war and persecution. Working in Greece, hearing frequent testimonies regarding the poor conditions, police brutality and violence those from the Middle East, Asia and Africa often face, **we stand with these organisations in their applause of the response to Ukraine and their concurrent highlighting of the racism and hypocrisy that has become apparent in it.**

Elections in EU countries including Italy and Hungary reinforced and continued the anti-migration trend within the bloc, with the ascension and consolidation of power of right-wing parties. In Greece, the laws introduced by the current government - Nea Demokratia - since they were elected in 2019, saw rapid restrictions to NGOs and particularly search and rescue operations, leading to the criminalisation of NGO workers remaining an ever-present threat.

Smear campaigns, the use of surveillance technology to monitor civil society as well as intense scrutiny of human rights organisations have resulted in a reduction of resources, finances and public support for our work. **After a four-year ordeal for the 24 people accused in the high profile ‘Mardini case’, misdemeanor charges including espionage and forgery were finally dropped at the start of 2023.** Although ultimately thrown out of court, the time and resources invested by the Greek authorities – despite zero evidence of the counts on which they were charged – highlight the lengths they will go to in order to ‘control’ their borders. These intimidation tactics have made humanitarian organisations understandably nervous of operating, discouraging aid and assistance, and allowing the government to continue denying people their right to claim asylum, with increasingly fewer witnesses.

“
In July 2022, it was confirmed that 60% of the Greek prison population is of migrant origin (Statista, 2022)
 ”

Criminal cases brought against people on the move themselves also increased in 2022: two teenagers were each handed a four-year sentence for their part in starting the fire which destroyed Moria camp on Lesbos in 2020; a Somalian man was given a 146-year sentence for steering a boat to shore; a Syrian man was handed a 52-year sentence and a 242,000 EUR fine for ‘facilitating illegal entry’; and another man was charged with endangerment after his son died on the journey to Greece – although he was later acquitted after fierce protests by lawyers and human rights activists. Additionally, a heavily pregnant woman who tried to end her life by purposefully setting herself on fire on Lesbos in 2021 appeared in court in June 2022 charged with arson and the destruction of public property. She faces 10 years in prison. In July 2022, it was confirmed that 60% of the Greek prison population is of migrant origin ([Statista, 2022](#)).

Conditions also worsened for refugees and asylum seekers in reception facilities. Funded entirely by the EU, at a cost of 276 million euros, the Greek government continued the process of turning Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the islands into Closed Control Access Centers (CCACs), where people’s movements are monitored, private security is present 24-hours-a-day and 9pm curfews are implemented for residents. These centres are now operational on Samos, Leros and Kos, with a fourth planned to be opened on Lesbos in 2023, 40km away from the capital in the middle of a forest, making integration all but impossible and leaving residents vulnerable to the potentially devastating impacts of wildfires. Camps on both the islands and the mainland continue to lack adequate provision for the populations, including legal, medical, psychosocial and protection services. At the same time, access has been restricted for NGOs and other actors.

In the final quarter of the year, IOM, the UN agency responsible for the day-to-day management of many of the camps, left at the request of the Greek government. The removal of key actors, as well as reduced services, limits the possibility for communities to integrate, as well as for organisations to monitor the treatment of residents and report on human rights violations.

Further accommodation changes took place in April, when the government announced the gradual wind down and closure of its ESTIA housing programme. The programme began in 2015 as a solution to overflowing camps in the country. It was officially closed at the end of 2022, after the government cited that immigration was 'under control'.



INFO MIGRANTS - ENGLISH

NEWS

From the Evacuation of migrants at the closed camp for asylum seekers on Samos island, Greece, during the exercise 'Promachos 2022' organized by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum, 22 October 2021 | Photo: ARCHIVE EPA / MICHAEL SWARINKAS

MIGRANT CAMPS | REFUGEES IN GREECE | HOUSING | ACCOMMODATION

Greek government winds down migrant accommodation program ESTIA

RSA
REFUGEE SUPPORT AEGEAN

Χαρής Κατρυπιά 3 April 2023

Immigration detention in 2022
Sharp rise in detention orders, no access to remedies and legal aid in Greece

Media and NGO reporting in 2022

However, many vulnerable individuals have now been moved into camps which are not sufficiently equipped to host them. In addition, police operations intensified, particularly in Athens and Thessaloniki, resulting in mass arrests of people staying in Greece without the necessary documents. This contributed to more than 30,000 detention orders being issued, compared to 21,000 in 2021 (RSA, 2023). Pre-removal detention centres are increasingly used to control and contain people on the move, restricting their access to rights, information and the asylum system. As mentioned previously, in February 2023 we released our detention report, "Prison for Papers": Last Resort Measures Used as Standard Procedure, which [can be accessed here](#).

After 8 months, during which time it had been impossible to apply for asylum on the Greek mainland after the closure of the Skype registration system in November 2021, the new online platform was finally opened on 1st September 2022. All those seeking asylum were now required to go to the newly established RICs at Diavata, close to Thessaloniki, or Malakasa, near Athens. The extent of the failure of this situation is elaborated on in the advocacy section of this report. However, in short, within six weeks of being open there were 14-month delays in appointments, a lack of availability due to translation issues, 25-day de facto detention periods, exploitation by private lawyers due to the lack of clarity, no vulnerability screening and issues accessing the remotely located RICs.

Greek-Turkish relations remained hostile throughout the year, with both parties making accusations of human rights violations at the land and sea borders. In October, reports were shared of **92 people who were found naked and bruised on the Evros river**. In the same month, Turkish authorities reported that they rescued 67 people in the Aegean Sea who claimed to have been pushed back by Greece. In the summer, the land border between Greece and Turkey attracted extensive international media attention when **38 people became stranded on an islet in the Evros river**. Greek and Turkish authorities both refused to launch a rescue effort, and the group was stuck for several weeks. It is reported that a child died on the islet during the ordeal, after being denied rescue and medical support by Greek authorities. Deaths at the land border doubled in January to February 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. In February, **19 people froze to death close to the border**. While Turkey blamed Greece for the deaths, Greece attempted to absolve itself of responsibility by claiming that the group were not located on Greek territory.

The continued use of accusatory and threatening narratives is evidence that both governments are willing to carry on using people on the move as pawns in their political games. Greece accused Turkey of brutal and immoral weaponization of migrants, while Turkey continued to refuse the return of asylum seekers whose claims have been rejected in Greece all the while Greece continues to declare Turkey a safe third country. Many people are therefore left in a state of limbo, often trapped in detention. In response to these deteriorating relations, the Greek government announced the deployment of more border guards in the Evros region and the extension of the border fence, with the eventual aim of expanding it across the entire border.

Turkey-Greece migrants: 38 people found stranded on tiny, unnamed island

© 16 August 2022

Europe migrant crisis



The group, who identify themselves as Syrians, have now been taken from the islet to Greece

By Megan Fisher
BBC News

Frontex admits wrongdoing, vows to make changes

By ANSA | Published on : 2022/10/18

EU border agency Frontex has responded to an investigation indicating it covered up pushbacks of migrants in Greece. While the agency acknowledged a number of wrongdoings and shortcomings, it also said they are "practices of the past."

Media headlines 2022

The sea border also received extensive media attention in 2022. **A report by the EU's anti-fraud watchdog accused its border agency, Frontex, of violating 'fundamental rights' by ignoring, participating in and covering up illegal pushbacks in the Aegean Sea**, stripping people of their right to claim asylum. The Executive Director at the time, Fabrice Leggeri, resigned in April 2022, and the agency claimed that the accusations are 'practices of the past' (Info Migrants, 2022). However, as we move into 2023, all trends seem to be pointing to a worsening of the situation for people on the move, both in Greece and across Europe as a whole. At Mobile Info Team, we remain committed to helping people navigate increasingly complex systems whilst advocating for change.

CASE STUDY: VOLUNTARY SEPARATION

One of the focus areas for our in-depth casework is support with family reunification cases, due to the incredible impact these can have on people's lives.

Referred to as 'voluntary separation' by European governments, it is incredibly difficult for a family to reunite if they divide and end up in separate countries after they've lodged an asylum application together in Greece, unless the case involves an unaccompanied minor. However, this policy entirely dismisses the extreme hardship many asylum seekers face in Greece. Poor reception conditions, long delays in processing applications and a lack of access to medical and psychological support often force particularly at-risk families to split up, in the hope that at least the most vulnerable family members will escape the deficiencies of the Greek asylum system and receive the care they need in another country.



"You've helped me a lot, and I keep asking again and again for your help, because I don't know anywhere else to seek help other than you, and also whenever I ask for help you show me the best way."

Anonymous hotline enquiry

A case of ours in 2022 involved one such family. An Afghan husband and father decided that his young wife and their newborn child needed to leave the terrible reception conditions in Greece, where they weren't receiving the help they so urgently needed. The family didn't have enough money to pay the smuggler for the whole family, so the husband was forced to stay in Greece and send his wife and child alone. The restrictive policy described above meant that family reunification in this instance seemed almost impossible. An initial family reunification request was rejected by the German authorities, despite extensive documentation provided by us to prove that the wife and child were in urgent need of the presence of their husband and father.

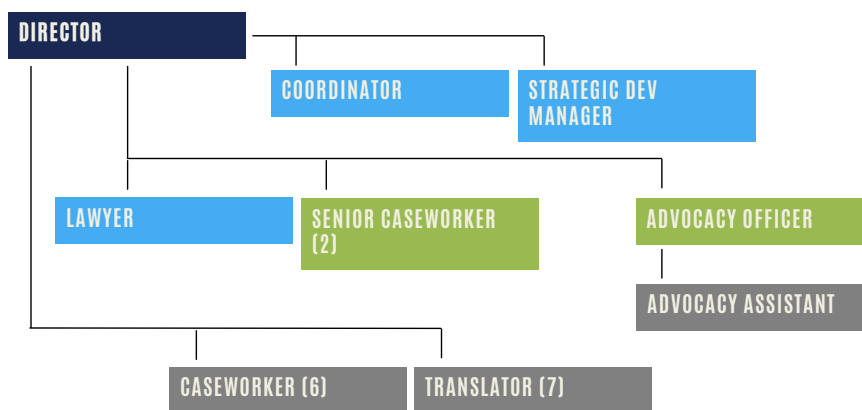
We submitted a request to re-examine the rejection and provided further proof of the rapidly increasing hardships faced by the mother and child. With an incredible amount of persistence and continued advocacy for the case, the nearly unachievable was accomplished: the German authorities agreed to reunite the family, allowing the father to be with his wife and child. To our knowledge, this is one of the only cases of its kind. After requesting a prioritized transfer for the father, the family is now reunited in Germany, where the mother and child can benefit from the comfort and support of their husband and father.

ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

2022 was a year of professionalisation and expansion for Mobile Info Team and we made significant changes to the structure of the organisation. By doing so, we aim to grow and develop sustainably, ensuring that we are able to continue supporting people for as long as we're required. By developing our recruitment policy, embedding wellbeing focused practices into our work routines, expanding our onboarding and induction processes and increasing volunteer compensations, we are determined to attract and retain a team of highly motivated and talented individuals, regardless of whether they are in voluntary or paid positions.



Tangible results observed so far include a decrease in turnover, ability to attract local (Greek) volunteers, an improvement in overall feedback collected from volunteers throughout their time at MIT and an increase in capacity on enquiries, cases and overall project management.



MIT 2022 organigram

Wellbeing support

In 2021, an initiative to embed wellbeing practices into the work routines of Mobile Info Team and its members was kicked off with support of the Human Rights and Social Responsibility Committee of the European Association for Gestalt Therapy (EAGT). In 2022, this collaboration was further expanded by the in-person contribution of two Thessaloniki-based trainee Gestalt therapists. With the support of the two therapists we ran several group sessions to establish the goals and structure for the **weekly team 'sharing session'**, whilst at the same time training and supporting the long term members of the team to run such sessions independently. At the same time, **up to five sessions of 1-to-1 online counselling were available free of charge for all members of the team through the committee.**

Training and personal development

In order to support the capacity building of the long-term team, which in turn enables the strengthening of our internal processes, a number of external training courses were followed by one or more team members. **Training completed in 2022 included courses on psychological first aid, risk assessment, safe recruitment, safeguarding, information and digital security, and human trafficking.**

Risk assessment

The development of MIT from a volunteer-only to a more established organisation called for an increased and renewed focus on mitigating the risks that inevitably come with running an NGO. This need was further highlighted by the risk of criminalisation on an organisational level, as well as on a personal level for those active in humanitarian aid, being at an all time high. MIT actively sought collaboration with other NGOs in the Thessaloniki area and was able to obtain the support of Front Line Defenders (FLD) on this important topic. FLD organised a three-day workshop, attended by the coordinator and advocacy officer of MIT, focused on identifying risks, assessing their potential impact and likelihood, and setting mitigating actions as needed. A key outcome of the exercise was the need to improve digital and information security at MIT. Operating our programmes nearly solely online in the constantly changing technological landscape, in combination with the increasing scrutiny on both NGOs as well as the people we support, creates a complex and unique challenge. In order to gain knowledge, assess the risks and set an effective mitigation strategy, MIT was again able to benefit from the expertise of FLD. In a two-day session FLD helped MIT understand the digital security space, review its work processes and identify and prioritise mitigation actions. The sessions were joined by the coordinator, senior caseworker, advocacy officer and director. A working group was established which kicked off an elaborate digital security improvement plan at the beginning of 2023, with the aim of fully embedding digital security into the everyday operations and ensuring its representation in future decision making across the organisation.



Senior caseworker

In 2022, we created our senior caseworker position. As well as paying a higher compensation to enable longer-term stays, **the senior caseworker is able to take on more complex cases and provide support to more junior caseworkers.** By acting as a point of reference for other members of the team, we can support more people who need tailored assistance. The addition of the role greatly aided our capacity to provide one-on-one support to people in need, whilst also improving the quality of our information provision through improved guidance and training for caseworkers. Therefore, in August, we established a second senior caseworker role. The additional support has meant that we've been able to develop and implement a more stringent legal induction process for caseworkers, conduct regular 1-to-1s with team members, research frequently-mentioned topics and take part in capacity building for other organisations by providing training on Greek asylum procedures. We now have two full-time senior caseworkers, one of whom has been with us for almost 18 months.

Greek lawyer

The benefits to our clients of working with a full-time Greek lawyer have already been mentioned above and evidenced by numerous success stories throughout the year. However, internally we have also seen a huge impact as a result of this decision. It has greatly improved our internal coordination regarding the choice and scope of the cases we take on, providing constant legal advice and support for our senior caseworkers who are working on complex cases. It has also increased the quality of our general information provision, as we are now able to offer regular in-house training to our team of caseworkers on topics from detention to appeals.

Strategic development manager

In May 2022, MIT took on a strategic development manager. This allowed us to increase our professional capacity and managerial support, as well as systematise our financial bookkeeping and develop and monitor reporting practices, thereby implementing and streamlining internal processes. Besides taking a burden off other team members in the above-mentioned areas, the strategic development manager carried out a thorough needs assessment of the organisation, identifying where MIT can grow as an organisation and prioritising solutions. This will ensure that we continue to grow in a sustainable way, meaning that we will be able to continue providing our vital services to those in need of them.



COLLABORATIONS

◆ Increasing information provision

Partnership with Refugee.info (IRC)

In April 2022, we partnered with **Refugee.Info**, a project of the **International Rescue Committee**, and the Greek Forum for Refugees to increase our reach and support more people. The partnership aimed to serve the informational needs of people on the move in a more holistic way, expanding the breadth of information provided. The project was facilitated by our team of caseworkers through Refugee.Info's Facebook page. Therefore, as well as our usual WhatsApp and Facebook hotlines, we also responded to questions raised by users of Refugee.Info's Facebook page. We also supported them with the maintenance and creation of articles regarding the situation in Greece and the availability of additional services on their website. The partnership will continue solely with Refugee.Info in 2023.

◆ Participation in research

Project led by University College London (UCL) & Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zurich (ETHZ)

In November and December 2022, we took part in a research project carried out by UCL and ETH Zürich, which aimed to assess whether there was a difference in the impact of static and two-way information provision on people on the move in Greece. The study participants assigned to the two-way information group were able to reach out to us via our WhatsApp hotlines asking any questions they had, receiving the same support offered to those contacting us via Facebook and WhatsApp independently of the study. The data will be gathered and studied to draw conclusions in 2023.

◆ Erasmus+ project completion

Partner in Moveurope! project - Promotion of mobility for refugees in the European Context

In 2022, we concluded the two-year Erasmus+ KA2 project **moveurope!**, led by Migration_miteinander e.V. (MigMIT). In collaboration with seven partner organisations, we disseminated the programme that had been developed in the preceding year and a half, with the goal of promoting legal migration opportunities for young refugees and providing access to educational and work opportunities across Europe. As a multiplier event to support the project, MIT organised and hosted a webinar aimed at civil society and education actors across Greece, outlining the project, its legal framework, and the opportunities available for young refugees. The development of **moveurope!** was concluded in the late summer of 2022, after which MigMIT will continue to run and improve the programme.

ADVOCACY

One of the main issues for people on the move in Greece is the ongoing and severe challenges faced when attempting to access the asylum system. The consequences for individuals of not getting access to the procedure for months, sometimes even years, can be devastating and often include homelessness, destitution, and vulnerability to exploitation and even trafficking. For this reason, access to asylum in Greece remained our core advocacy focus in 2022.

Report - January

Control and Containment: Changes in Access to Asylum on Mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes

In November 2021, the Skype pre-registration process for asylum claims was terminated overnight, without a suitable alternative in place. In January 2022, we released a report regarding the potential consequences of this move. At the time of writing, there were no details available on how and when individuals could enter the asylum system. This situation remained until September 2022, meaning that for 10 months access to the asylum procedure was extremely restricted, violating national and international laws.



The report details how, by essentially blocking access to asylum, the Greek government left people who were in need of protection undocumented and at risk of destitution.

Furthermore, the proposed changes, when they finally came, would force people into de facto detention, where they were (and continue to be) held under prison-like conditions in reception centres.

Policies of exclusion and detention are detrimental to both people seeking asylum and to Greece. For people seeking asylum, they impede their ability to rebuild their lives, negatively impact mental health and take away autonomy and liberty. De facto detention also limits access to essential services, such as healthcare and education. For Greece these policies are also detrimental. By keeping people stuck with unnecessarily drawn-out processes and banning employment, they force people seeking asylum to stay reliant on the state for extended periods and prevent people from integrating and giving back to their new societies.



[MOBILEINFOTEAM.ORG/CONTROL](https://mobileinfoteam.org/control)

Report – May

Blocked from the System: Voices of People Excluded from the Asylum Procedure on Mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes

Blocked from the System followed on from Control and Containment, focused on the experiences of people seeking asylum on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes in the months following the termination of the Skype pre-registration system outlined above. The government’s initial intention was that all arrivals go through formal procedures at two new reception and identification centres (RICs) on the mainland. However, six months later, at the time of this report’s release, only one was operational, leaving just three narrow avenues into the asylum procedure: through Fylakio RIC in northern Greece, by evidencing a vulnerability, or by registering a police note.

The research in the report highlights the significant barriers that people had faced in attempting to register their asylum claims, forcing them to remain undocumented for extended periods of time, depriving them of support from social services, cash assistance, the labour market, healthcare and accommodation. **Our conversations with people excluded from asylum procedures revealed that undocumented people in Greece faced increased exploitation, ill-health and a debilitating fear of being illegally pushed back.** As part of our advocacy efforts from the report, we contributed data for a project run by [Stop The Traffik](#), a collaboration which facilitates the sharing of information to disrupt human trafficking and exploitation, resulting in a commendation award for participation.

Without documents, people have no choice but to live on the fringes of society. With a fundamental lack of information, access or uniformity, this procedure is not compatible with the requirements of a fair and efficient system. People seeking protection in Europe must have access to a safe and dignified asylum process that enables them to rebuild their lives.

“As the temporary protection recently offered to thousands of Ukrainians shows, the Greek authorities are very much capable of implementing a system which enables safe access to asylum, shelter and basic services. They must apply this protection on an equal and non-discriminatory basis.”

Manon Louis – Advocacy officer at Mobile Info Team

The reports were shared widely on social media, as well as receiving mention in news outlets including Efsyn ([read here](#)) and Al Jazeera ([read here](#)). They were also shared with Members of the European Parliament leading to follow up meetings to discuss recommendations, as well as being used as part of the [Border Violence Monitoring Network](#)’s reports and press releases, exploring a possible link between a lack of access to the asylum procedures and the increase in pushbacks from Greece.



MOBILEINFOTEAM.ORG/BLOCKEDFROMTHESYSTEM

Statement – September

Statement on New Registration Procedure

The new online registration platform was finally announced in July and eventually opened in September, with people now required to go to the newly established RICs at Diavata, close to Thessaloniki, or Malakasa, near Athens. This marked the first accessible way of applying for asylum since the closure of the Skype line 10 months prior. In September, after the implementation of the new system, we released a statement after becoming aware of delays in the availability of appointments. Some were being offered 14 months into the future; some people were simply unable to book, with the platform citing a 'lack of availability'. This left people forced to remain undocumented, at risk of pushbacks and without access to cash assistance or essential services. Further problems with the new platform have come to light:

Although the platform is available in 9 languages, there is **no provision for French speakers**.

- This has impacted many people, including some of our clients from countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon.

The appointment procedure mandates a **detention period of up to 25 days**. This procedure violates the EU Reception Conditions Directive, which states that member states “shall not hold a person in detention for the sole purpose that he or she is an applicant for international protection”.

- The **process has been poorly communicated** to applicants by the government. As a result, we have been contacted by many people seeking our support after paying up to 150 EUR to private lawyers for ‘help’ filling in the form that takes 5-10 minutes to complete.

The platform offers **no possibility to prioritize vulnerable asylum seekers**. With appointment delays of up to 14 months, this risks the deterioration of the physical and mental health of vulnerable individuals who have additional needs.

- **The cost of transport** to Diavata or Malakasa is the applicant’s responsibility. Therefore, many people with limited financial means risk missing their appointments.

This statement was sent out to approximately 40 selected MEPs, five of whom arranged follow-ups resulting in meetings to discuss policy recommendations.

 [MOBILEINFOTEAM.ORG/NEW-REGISTRATION](https://mobileinfoteam.org/new-registration)

Information request – April

Information to the Dutch government

In April our team was asked for information regarding the situation of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, having been asked to make an assessment as to whether it was fair to return people to Greece having subsequently applied for asylum in the Netherlands. We submitted a document detailing the situation. In a [report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) published in June 2022, MIT is quoted multiple times. It now forms the basis on which decisions are made by the Dutch administration regarding the returns of beneficiaries of International Protection to Greece. In light of all the difficulties these people face in Greece, we hope that the Dutch state will agree with our assessment that sending beneficiaries of international protection back to Greece would be a violation of international law, due to the poor living conditions in the country.

Visits and conferences

Over the course of 2022, MIT worked on increasing attendance and representation in discussions with external actors, civil society and human rights institutions. This included attendance to conferences, roundtable discussions and workshops as well as receiving special visits to share information and our perspective on the ever changing context.

In May 2022, our Advocacy Officer spoke at a roundtable discussion in Thessaloniki organised by Heinrich Boell Stiftung on the topic of "The EU refugee policy and the Eastern Mediterranean".

In June 2022, we received a visit at the MIT office in Thessaloniki from the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and provided her with vital information which contributed to her [press conference statement](#) and [report](#) following her visit to Greece.

In October 2022, we attended a conference in Thessaloniki organised by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, which facilitated a discussion on the criminalisation of human rights defenders and legal action against border violence.

In November 2022, we attended a conference organised by BVMN on the topic of litigation potentials in the Network in Zagreb.

In December 2022, we attended a workshop in Malta hosted by the EUAA with the purpose of civil society and researchers providing input to the Asylum Report.

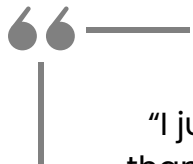
Other activities

As well as releasing reports and statements, we drafted and cosigned petitions and briefings, and were interviewed by academics and journalists regarding the political context for people on the move in Greece. We continue to work collaboratively with organisations across Greece and Europe, maintaining and strengthening existing relationships and sharing expertise in research and information. We invest in new connections and frequently join forces to call for political change to improve the situation of people on the move.



Border Violence Monitoring Network

We also remain an active member of the [Border Violence Monitoring Network](#), collecting testimonies of pushbacks and internal violence which are uploaded to a public, [online database](#). This serves as a basis for our transnational advocacy efforts, which aim to bring evidence of human rights violations at the external borders of Europe to lobby those in positions of power to end the practice of pushbacks and associated human rights violations against people on the move. Furthermore, we contribute to submissions, [policy briefings](#), press releases, [monthly reports](#) and [special reports](#) with the network. With the support of the Border Violence Monitoring Network we bring evidence of violations occurring in Greece to the EU and the UN to advocate for systemic change.



"I just want to inform you that today I receive my residence permit and I'm so thankful to you and the team and to all guys who works with you. 1000 thanks to you all!"

- **Mother of 7 children from Syria** supported with family reunification and asylum application to Germany

"Hello thank you. The flight was fine and now we are in Stockholm [...] Thank you all for your efforts with me and thank you to everyone who helped me reach my daughter. I thank you all from my heart. Your team did a great thing for me and my daughter. I will never forget it"

- **Mother from Syria** supported in reunification with her daughter

"God bless you. You are the only one who responded to my message in the last five years!"

- **Anonymous Facebook enquiry**



CASE STUDY: FAMILY REUNIFICATION

War and persecution tears families apart, often separating close relatives for many years. In this case, the war in Syria had caused two sons to be separated from their mother for more than 4 years. The woman had made it to Germany, but her mental health was very much affected by the serious issues her two boys were facing back home. By this time, the ongoing conflict in Syria had also forced the separation of the two brothers, and both were living in harsh conditions that no children should have to endure.

We assisted the woman and her two sons with the complex family reunification case and made sure that the situation the two minors were facing was taken into account. After a difficult legal struggle, the younger son was issued with a family reunification visa. Eventually the older son was also able to travel to Germany. The family was overwhelmed with joy to finally be together again after 4 years apart. They are now able to restart their lives in Germany in safety.



"I thank you with all my heart for the support you have given me. You also support me morally. Whenever I communicate with you, I feel that I have the strength and confidence that I have lost in myself. I thank God for your presence."

Mother of two minor sons from Syria

"Thanks from the bottom of my heart all the volunteers, you are angels"
- **Single man from Algeria** supported during food distribution info sessions

"Hello thank you and thanks to your organization. God bless you all. They gave me the positive decision with ID reply and passport reply for me and my little son"
- **Family with 3 children from Syria** supported with subsequent application

SUPPORT MIT

We couldn't do the work that we do without the support of both our individual and organisational donors, from regular monthly donations, one-off contributions, and grants from foundations and other humanitarian organisations. Thank you to everyone who enabled us to provide information and assistance to thousands of people on the move in 2022.



2022 Organisational Donors of Mobile Info Team

DONATE

With your support we can help even more people on the move in Greece, providing vital information and legal assistance. **Every donation is appreciated** and any amount, big or small, can make a huge difference to someone's life. Go to mobileinfoteam.org/donate

Stay up to date



To stay informed of the activities of MIT you can **follow us on social media**. On [Facebook](#), we provide frequent information updates aimed at people on the move, whilst on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) we engage with news, advocacy and humanitarian support, as well as providing project updates. On [LinkedIn](#), you can connect with us if you're looking to join the team.

On [our website](#) you'll find a general overview of our activities as well as the latest vacancies, reports and contact details for organisational questions, and our digital hotlines available to people on the move.

www.mobileinfoteam.org

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Hotlines for people on the move

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