



## **Legal Centre Lesvos 2021 Annual Report**

In 2021, Legal Centre Lesvos provided individualised legal information and assistance to 460 cases of individuals and families in their asylum procedure, relating to: support for asylum interviews - on both admissibility and eligibility of the claims; understanding of the content and appealing international protection rejection decisions; submission of subsequent applications for international protection; applications for reunification with family members in other European Union (EU) Member States under the Dublin III Regulation; referrals for safe housing, healthcare, psychological and psychosocial support; legal representation and defence in criminal proceedings and legal representation in civil, administrative or other proceedings in front of authorities. In addition, the Legal Centre Lesvos has continued to monitor and document human rights violations: publishing numerous reports; participating in advocacy initiatives; and bringing cases for litigation before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

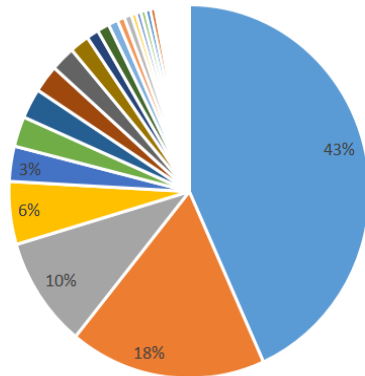
Of the people using Legal Centre Lesvos' services in 2021, approximately 43% were nationals from Afghanistan, 18% were from Syria, 10% were from the Democratic Republic of Congo and 5% were from Somalia. The rest of the people accessing Legal Centre Lesvos' services in this period were from Cameroon, Iran, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Congo, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Palestine, Togo, Morocco, Ghana, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Kuwait, Jordan, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Angola, Djibouti, Tajikistan or were stateless.

90% of these individuals were accommodated in Karatepe Temporary Reception and Identification Centre ("Mavrovouni" RIC); 4% in accommodation by the organisation "Iliaktida"; 3% in private or other accommodation; 2% were accommodated in Karatepe Municipality-run family camp; 1% were detained and 1% were housed in an unaccompanied minor accommodation.

Individuals and families assisted by the Legal Centre Lesvos included pregnant women, women who recently gave birth, unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities, people suffering from serious illness, survivors of torture and sexual assault, single parents with minor children, elderly, people suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and survivors of other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation.

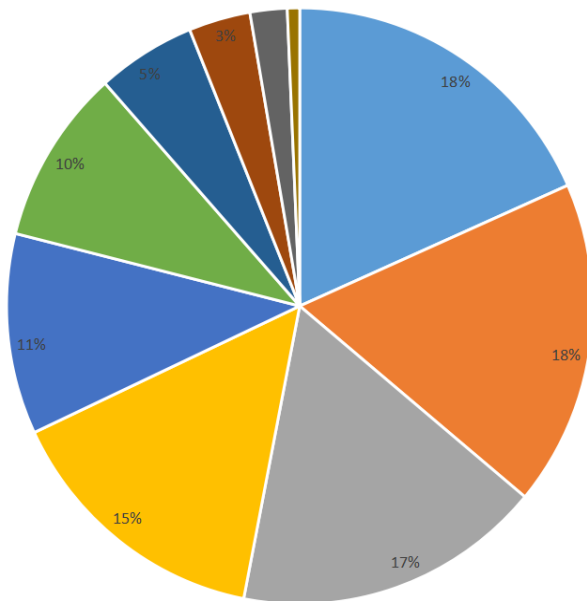
The management of people's cases involved the work of interpreters, volunteer legally trained caseworkers, lawyers, and people working in advocacy, communication, and coordination.

### Cases by Nationality Breakdown 2021



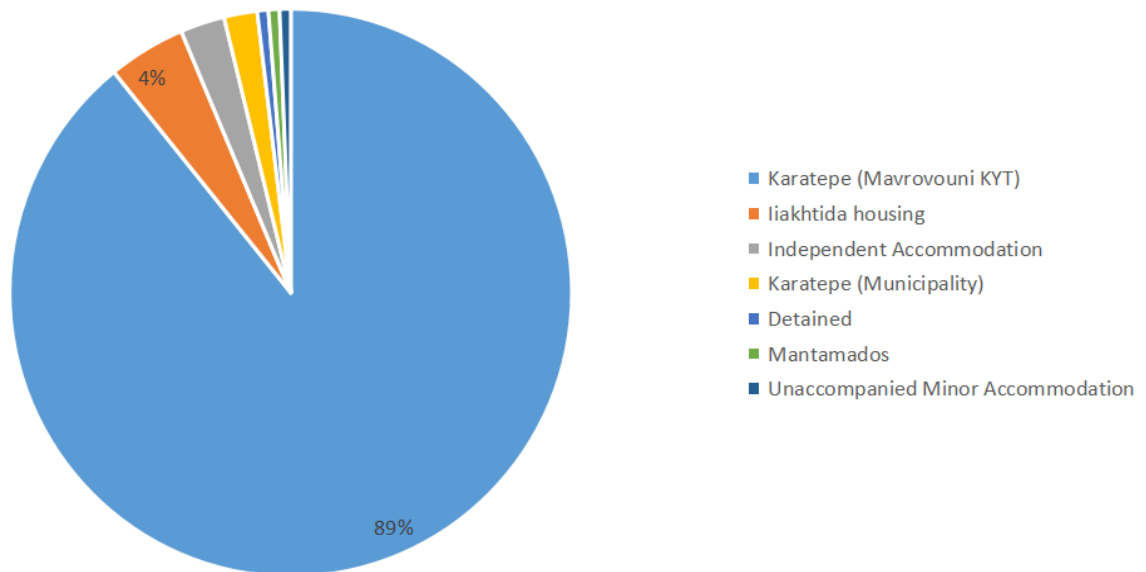
- Afghanistan
  - Somalia
  - Iraq
  - Nigeria
  - Palestine
  - Ghana
  - Kuwait
  - Uganda
  - Angola
  - Iran/Tajikistan
  - Ivory Coast
  - Ethiopia
- Syria
  - Cameroon
  - Sierra Leone
  - Guinea
  - Togo
  - Gambia
  - Stateless
  - Zimbabwe
  - Djibouti
  - Egypt
  - Mauritania
- Democratic Republic of Congo
  - Iran
  - Congo
  - Mali
  - Morocco
  - Burkina Faso
  - Jordan
  - South Sudan
  - Senegal
  - Eritrea/ Sudan
  - Sudan

### Vulnerabilities breakdown 2021, of individuals who reported/demonstrated vulnerabilities



- Pregnant or recently given birth
- Unaccompanied minor
- Disability/incurable or serious illness
- Victim of torture
- Single parents with minor children
- Victim of rape
- Victim of serious form of psych, physical or sex violence or exploitation
- Elderly
- Post traumatic stress disorder, particularly survivors and relatives of victims of ship-wrecks
- Victims of trafficking

*Accommodation breakdown 2021*



## **1. Case Management and Legal Assistance**

- In 2021, Legal Centre Lesvos provided individualised legal information and assistance in 460 cases including 135 families through its legally trained volunteer caseworkers and lawyers respectively;
- Legal Centre Lesvos lawyers represented, on average, 49 individuals per month in the asylum procedure by accompanying them to their asylum interviews and submitting legal memos;
- Legal Centre Lesvos represented 24 families in applying for family reunification under the Dublin III Regulation. [At least 10 of the families represented](#) had their applications approved after the intervention of Legal Centre Lesvos, leading to families being able to reunite in the UK and different EU Member States, such as Germany, Italy, Austria or Switzerland;
- Legal Centre Lesvos represented 66 cases on appeal in 2021, with this assistance ranging from preparation of legal documents, assisting in collecting country of origin information and other relevant evidence to represent them in front of the Appeal Committees. Some of the positive decisions after intervention of the LCL include a family that fled Afghanistan due to land dispute and were granted subsidiary protection after appealing their first negative decision. Another case represented was a Sierra Leone woman with an LGBTQI+ claim, who was recognized as a refugee after the appeal against her first negative decision. One family from Syria, represented by the LCL, who had been found inadmissible in the first instance on the ground that Turkey was a Safe Third Country for them, was granted refugee status after their asylum claims were found admissible on appeal.

- COVID-19 restrictions permitted in late 2021, for the Legal Centre Lesvos to hold regular group information sessions which reached over 76 individuals. These information sessions were provided predominantly to new arrivals on Lesvos, enabling people to receive basic information about their rights in the asylum procedure prior to their asylum interviews;
- In 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos provided legal assistance in the asylum procedure to approximately 20 individuals who were detained. They were predominantly held in Mytilene police station and other detention centres on the Greek mainland. In a number of cases Greek lawyers filed objections to detention;
- Legal Centre Lesvos referred hundreds of people who use its services to alternative accommodation in Mytilene and on the mainland, as well as to medical, psycho-social, or other support services.

## **2. Advocacy and Strategic Litigation**

- In 2021, Legal Centre Lesvos continued documenting and denouncing human rights violations at the Aegean sea border:
  - In 2021, Legal Centre Lesvos published [a report](#) on collective expulsion as Crime Against Humanity in the Aegean Sea;
  - Legal Centre Lesvos also [filled two petitions](#) for interim measures to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to ensure access to urgently needed medical care, and prevent the arbitrary refoulement of people landing on Lesvos and to ensure their right to access to the asylum procedure and to claim for asylum. One case was partially granted, and in both cases, the Applicants represented by the Legal Centre were registered in Greece as asylum seekers;
  - Legal Centre Lesvos submitted 2 separate applications, on behalf of 16 individuals, to the European Court of Human Rights, both of which were [communicated to the Greek government in late 2021](#). Both cases concern survivors of collective expulsions claiming violations of Article 2, 3, 5, and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Legal Centre Lesvos took on ad hoc representation on a variety of issues including:
  - Representation in pretrial criminal procedure, together with the organisation HIAS Greece, of an Afghan woman facing criminal charges in response to her attendance to self-immolate. She is now in Germany where she applied for asylum;
  - Representation of migrants in contesting fines issued for alleged violations of COVID-19 restrictions;
  - Advocacy and representation of asylum seekers in front of ECtHR in order to hold the Greek state accountable to its obligations to protect the rights of migrants in Lesvos. In 2021, 19 emergency petitions for interim measures filed with the ECtHR regarding access to adequate medical care for people forced to live in the hotspot camps were granted. These decisions ensured the timely relocation and provision of needed medical treatment for those named in the cases and

those in analogous situations. Where the authorities have failed to implement the judgements, the Legal Centre Lesvos published reports and engaged in advocacy to highlight systemic failures to respect migrants' rights.

- Representation of individuals, who themselves were subject to smuggling operations, and faced smuggling charges upon entry to Greece.
  
- Throughout 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos: took part in joint advocacy actions, including those initiated by other legal actors and NGOs; participated in numerous panel discussions; and gave regular input to the press on a range of issues related to migrants' rights and the situation in Lesvos. For example:
  - On the 15th of February 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos and Frontex, in a pre-litigation letter, [called](#) upon Frontex to suspend/terminate its activities in the Aegean Sea, due to accumulation of evidence showing Frontex and its Executive Director have failed to act, in infringement of European Treaties, in relation to fundamental rights and international protection obligations in the Aegean Sea region;
  - In June 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos participated in various public initiatives to raise awareness about the amount of evidences of pushbacks in the Aegean Sea by joining the [End pushbacks partnership](#), the [Abolish Frontex](#) communication campaigns, but also by contributing to the fact-finding mission of the [Frontex Scrutiny Working Group](#) and by participating in the Frontex consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights;
  - On the 8th of October 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos participated in Expert Hearing on the EU's new Pact on Migration, arranged by member of the European Parliament Cornelia Ernst;
  - In October 2021, the Legal Centre Lesvos visited the town of La Garriga in Catalonia and presented in the seminar "Abramos puertas construyamos puentes" which gathered several of the migrant solidarity group networks active in the Mediterranean region.

- The Legal Centre Lesvos continues to regularly publish statements, reports and updates on [its website](#) , such as the two ["Know your rights" information sheets](#) providing information about people rights during their Asylum interview and when interacting with the police in Greece and the report on ["Family Reunification from Greece: a few hard wins among many bureaucratic and systemic obstacles"](#).

Conclusion: Our actions in this operational period demonstrate that Legal Centre Lesvos AMKE continues to work in a manner that is true to its statutory purposes. Further details of the Legal Centre Lesvos' work can be found in our Quarterly Reports.

- [January - March 2021 Quarterly Report](#)
- [April - June 2021 Quarterly Report](#)
- [July - September 2021 Quarterly Report](#)
- [October - December 2021 Quarterly Report](#)