

LEROS

What is happening today in the refugee structures on the Aegean islands



Photo: Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Leros CCAC

The Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) in Leros is located on an area of about 60 acres in a remote area on a mountainside, about 6 kilometres away from Agia Marina, the capital of the island. The structure was inaugurated in November 2021 despite strong [reactions](#) to its construction from local authorities. For its operation, it is [designed](#) to provide office infrastructure for approximately 300 jobs.

Aside from the direct arrivals, there are also transfers from other islands (Rhodes and Syri), exclusively to Leros.

Leros CCAC	
Distance from the island's urban center (km)	6
Transport ticket cost per person per route (euro)	2€
Taxi transport cost (euro)	13€



According to the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors of the Ministry for Migration and Asylum^[1], on March 9, 19 unaccompanied minors were in the Leros CCAC, 18 of whom lived within the "safe area", which has a nominal capacity of 100 children.

LEROS CCAC

Arrivals January 1 to April 2	162
Nominal capacity	1780
Residents on March 31, 2023	258
Men (%)	59%
Women (%)	19%
Children (%)	22%
Palestine	52%

Democratic Republic of Congo	9%
Cameroon	9%
Somalia	7%
Syria	6%
other	18%

"Safe area" for children - nominal capacity	100
Unaccompanied minors	20
Children residing in the "safe area"	18

UNHCR (7weekly snapshot 2/4/2023), Ministry of Migration and Asylum, March 2023, Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors in Greece, March 2023 • Demographic data for the Dodecanese are undivided



• A Flourish table

According to the UNHCR³¹, there is no alternative accommodation other than self-housing in an urban environment on the island. Employees in organisations report that those who are granted asylum are called upon by the authorities within a few days to leave the CCAC without an alternative or support mechanism, with the result that, at times, there are even cases of homeless families on the streets of the island.

Within the CCAC, non-formal education courses for adults are provided by METAdrasi and educational activities for children and parents by ARSIS. ARSIS also runs the Educational Intervention Mobile Unit in Platanos area, LEDU, which provides courses, creative activities and school support to refugee and migrant children of 4-17 years old³¹. In addition, social skills workshops, external activities and psychosocial support are provided to both pupils and parents/guardians. At the beginning of March, 48 children residing in the Leros CCAC were attending courses in LEDU.

According to the UNHCR³¹, at the end of March, two children attended DYEP classes (Reception Facilities for Refugee Education) in Leros, as the local Refugee Education Coordinator has only recently taken office.

Shortages of basic goods

In Leros there are also serious shortages of basic necessities and delays in the payment of monthly allowances. In the mixed sector, the public laundry and communal kitchens operate, but the shops don't, as employees report. The food is also of poor quality and small quantity, while the catering company provides all three meals of the day once a day. There is a general lack of recreational activities, while unaccompanied minors remain restricted within the safe area without any recreational activities and with substandard psychological support. Food is not allowed to be consumed in the containers and is consumed only in public areas, while there are not enough shading areas for residents. The Citizens' Collectivity still provides clothes, shoes and children's items (nappies, clothes).

According to the UNHCR, at the end of March there were two doctors and a psychologist inside the CCAC. At the local hospital, staff shortages, which make the medical care of all patients problematic, have been repeatedly denounced. The hospital does not have an interpreter. Where necessary, the hospital cooperates with the CCAC to find an interpreter who will perform the interpretation either remotely or in person.

Body checks out of legality

The control and surveillance systems are the same as those in the CCAC of Samos and Leros. In early April, the Union of Employees in the National Public Health Organisation reported in a statement that employees are being asked to work in different environments than those for which they were hired, and called on them not to accept these conditions either for themselves or for the refugees. The Panhellenic Association of Employees in the Reception and Identification Service also issued a statement in early April, reporting, inter alia, that the security company's guards carry out a body check on the employees because they refuse to undergo daily radiation fearing the effects on their health; a body check that crosses the line. As employees complain, there is a check even under the underwear, thus violating the dignity of women and men. In their statement, they refer to grotesque situations, as they say that employees are forced to pass through the X-ray control system even food items such as yoghourts, water, etc.; they are then told that they can consume them after an hour, in order to avoid a risk to their health.

Even children are forced to undergo strict controls mainly on entry, such as checks in their school backpacks, while inappropriate behaviour is observed by certain people of the staff in the structure towards the residents.



Photo: Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Shortcomings in legal assistance

In recent months in Leros, legal assistance is insufficient, as the number of available lawyers is not enough to serve the needs. At the same time, according to information from employees, in some cases there is not even sufficient information about the provision of legal support. According to the UNHCR³¹, METAdrasi started providing legal assistance within the CCAC with one lawyer in February 2023. A UNHCR team from Kos visits Leros three days a week, for providing information to newcomers and residents and on issues related to integration.

Notes

1. Written response to RSA on March 16, 2023. The discrepancy between all unaccompanied minors and those living in a safe area refers to minors separated by a temporary custody act. [↑](#)
2. Information from the UNHCR written response to RSA on March 16, 2023. [↑](#)
3. Written answer from ARSIS to RSA on March 9, 2023. The programme "All Children in Education" is co-funded by the European Union, with the support of UNICEF and is implemented in Leros by the Educational Intervention Mobile Unit of ARSIS – Association for the Social support of Youth. [↑](#)
4. Written answer to RSA on March 23, 2023. [↑](#)
5. Ibid. 2. [↑](#)

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