

1 August 2016

## GREECE: ACCOMMODATION FOR RELOCATION PROJECT FACTSHEET

As part of the EU-funded project:

*"Support to Greece for the development of the hotspot/relocation scheme as well as for developing asylum reception capacity"*



### CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS

**8,636** accommodation places established for relocation candidates and asylum-seekers in Greece.

**10,616** beneficiaries  
(Cumulative number of current and past occupants, persons relocated to Member States and irregular departures and/or abandons).

**7,106** places pledged by EU Member States for relocation from Greece.

**5,142** persons accepted by the EU Member States for relocation from Greece.

**2,681** persons left Greece to other EU countries under the relocation scheme.

**162** unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) currently in accommodation.

### Highlights of July

- **Achievements:** Over **10,000** persons (10,616) as of 1 August benefited from accommodation since November 2015. This number includes all the current and past occupants, persons already relocated to EU Member States and irregular departures and/or persons who decided to discontinue with the programme. The accommodation capacity in support of the relocation programme reached 8,636 spaces, representing a 43% of the 20,000 target of UNHCR and its partners by the end of 2016.
- **Pre-registration completed:** A large-scale exercise led by the Greek Asylum Service to pre-register asylum-seekers on mainland Greece that started on 8 June 2016, supported financially and logistically by the European Commission, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has been completed, and the final report will be issued in August. The exercise also helped to identify those eligible for relocation to another EU country, amongst other specific profiles.
- **New Partners:** From July, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) joined the Accommodation for Relocation Project. The partner will establish a total of 1,000 accommodation places country-wide through various modalities.
- **High Profile Visitors:** On 26 July 2016, High Profile Supporters Ms. Emma Kathleen Hepburn Ferrer (granddaughter of Audrey Hepburn) and Mr. Michael Avedon, (grandson of the photographer Richard Avedon) visited one of the relocation candidates living in an apartment managed by UNHCR's partner Municipality of Athens, through ADDMA-Athens Development and Destination Management Agency.

### Photo Gallery



Young relocation candidates accommodated in Rovies, Evia through UNHCR's partner Solidarity Now hold up their art work on pebbles during their daily art sessions. © UNHCR/ Won-Na Cha.



A signboard is erected at the entrance of Lagadikia site. © UNHCR/ Giovanni Lepri.



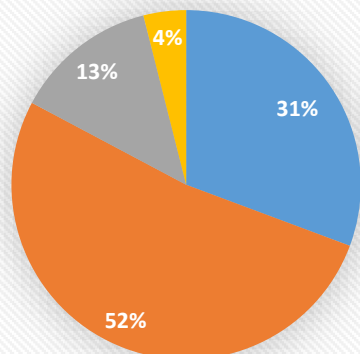
(Left) High Profile visitor Ms. Emma Kathleen Hepburn Ferrer visited the relocation candidate family, Mahmoud Benshi and Osman Randa and their children from Ratka, Syria. © UNHCR/ Won-Na Cha.

### What is Relocation?

Relocation is an EU Justice and Home Affairs Council decision to transfer a total of 160,000 asylum-seekers from Greece (66,400) and Italy (39,600) to other EU Member States where their application for asylum will be processed. If their applications are successful, they will be granted refugee status with the right to reside in the respective EU Member State, where they have been relocated. The relocations should take place over two years starting from September 2015, with the EU budget providing financial support to the participating Member States.

## What are the type of Accommodation?

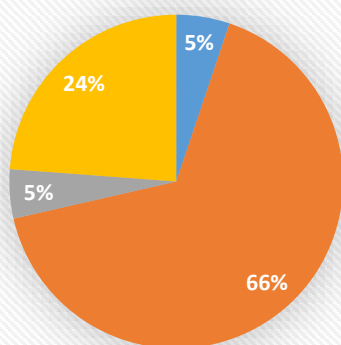
As of 1 August, 2016



- Hotels/buildings
- Apartments
- Relocation sites (Lagadikia)
- Host family programmes

## Where are they located?

As of 1 August, 2016

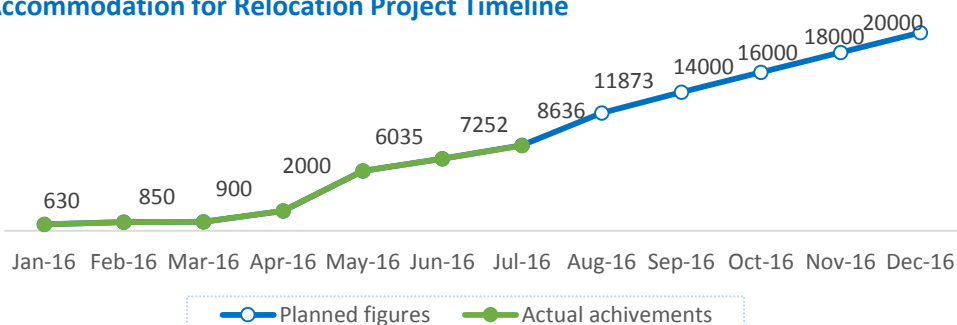


- Islands
- Attiki region
- Central Greece
- Northern Greece

## Partners and the planned accommodation places

Partner	Available and/or in use as of 01/08/2016	Places planned to be available by end of August
Praksis	4,240	6,000
Municipality of Athens through Athens Development and Destination Management Agency (ADDMA)	430	600
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	0	100
Arsis	436	600
Solidarity Now	392	450
Nostos	372	372
Iliaktida	202	269
Municipality of Thessaloniki	0	330
UNHCR through hotels/ apartments	1,428	2,000
UNHCR through relocation site (Lagadikia)	1,076	1,152
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,636</b>	<b>11,873</b>

### Accommodation for Relocation Project Timeline



## Main Challenges

- **The number of pledges by the EU Member States remain low, and the persons actually relocated even lower.** As of 30 July 2016, a total of 2,681 persons were relocated to other EU Member States and Switzerland who participates on a voluntary basis, representing only 4% of the 66,400 target of Greece that needs to be relocated since September 2015 for two years.
- **Frustration is visible among the relocation candidates** due to the low numbers of pledges from the EU Member States and even lower actual relocation, which prolongs their wait in Greece. This also increases the time of accommodation needed, which is longer than originally planned, with consequences on resources.
- **Asylum-seekers who are not eligible for relocation are now putting pressure on UNHCR** and its partners to extend the accommodation facilities to other categories than relocation candidates. In July, the progress in the implementation of a project was hindered by violent incidents against one of UNHCR's main partners.
- **UNHCR continues to advocate with the Government for allocation of relocation sites**, which could accommodate larger number of relocation candidates than through the existing scheme of private apartments, host families, hotels and other buildings.

## Highlights from the previous months

The Accommodation for Relocation project Factsheet is a monthly publication for external audiences to highlight the up-to-date achievements and current issues. The Greek version is also available on the Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response (URL: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>).

### Past Issues of the Accommodation for Relocation project Factsheet

- **June issue featured:**
  - Main points of the EU funded project and UNHCR's Accommodation for Relocation project; Challenges and UNHCR's strategy
  - *Saeed's long pursuit of a safe home* – A beneficiary's story
- **July issue featured:**
  - Towards out-of-camp assistance and sustainable livelihoods-in line with the global [Policy on Alternatives to Camps](#)
  - Clarification of the eligibility criteria of Accommodation for Relocation
  - Monthly highlights (Achievements, High-level and country-wide pre-registration process begins.
  - *"Learning from differences will make us all better people"*- A beneficiary's story.

## A beneficiary's story (I):

*"It doesn't matter where we are, as long as we stay safe"*

Athens, Greece, 17 July (UNHCR) - Abeer (34), Marvan (26) and their son Abdelmalik (1) arrived in Lesbos less than a month ago, but they are already local celebrities on the Greek island. A striking photo of their arrival was shared in the national and international [news](#) where, a man (Marvan) has a frail woman (Abeer) slung on his back while holding a baby in his arms. Soon



*The photograph of the couple's arrival caused a stir within the locals, and was featured in various local and international media. © Lesbos Photography Society /Stratis Tsoulellis.*

after arrival, the family was transferred to an accommodation place after a medical checkup for vulnerable persons, funded by the EU and run by UNHCR's partner Iliaktida.

The young couple married four years ago in Aleppo, Syria. Marvan worked on various handy jobs, while Abeer was a housewife with a penchant for literature, especially poetry. Their lives were nothing but normal, then the bombings started. Exposure to debris combined with chronic diabetes caused blindness in Abeer's eyes. Splinters were lodged on Marvan's hands and he still has trouble holding objects. By the time Abeer was pregnant, jobs were nonexistent in the ruined city.

**Constant follow-up for Abeer's eyes and the child was impossible. It was clear they had to make a decision.** 'Operations had to take place for both my eyes and the baby, but it was impossible from where I was. We left the house when I was seven months pregnant. I was carried on Marvan's back.'. The journey was stressful not only for the couple but also for the unborn child. As Abeer's upper body pressed against Marva's back, Abdelmalik was born prematurely soon after arriving in Turkey.

There they lived in a small house with 14 others. Marvan started a retail business to make ends meet for his wife and the new child. **However, there was yet another hardship waiting for them. A friend accidentally dropped Abdelmalik. He suffered a severe concussion and was rushed to the hospital, but with the limited savings they had, essential operations were missed.** Since then, Abdelmalik's growth stopped and his head started

**to swell.** He is slightly more than a year old but looks half his age. All the money that the couple had set aside for the journey was gone. They started all over again, now not only to get treatment for Abeer's eyes and but also for Abdelmalik. After close to a year, on 29 June, 2016, the family of three set foot on the Greek island of Lesbos. People reacted instantly to their picture. UNHCR's partner Iliaktida took immediate action to accommodate the family in a home.

'The kindness I have felt for the mere past week .... It made me forget about all the difficulties we encountered the last three years. They were kind, so kind.' Abeer says with tears in her eyes.

And what are you looking forward for in the future?

"It doesn't matter where we are. As long as we stay safe, the child gets treatment, and I can see again".



*After a week, the couple has settled in an accommodation provided by UNHCR's partner Iliaktida. They expressed their overwhelming gratitude and hopes for the future. © UNHCR/ Won-Na Cha.*

*What is the first thing you would like to see when you regain your eyesight?*

"My son. I have not seen him yet"

*And you, Marvan?*

"It's about time Abeer cooks for me! I've been cooking and dealing with everything and everyone for the last three years!"



*(Top) Marvan talks about his hardship during the last three years that started with the bombing of his village in Syria, fleeing to Turkey, then finally arriving to Greece.*

*(Bottom) Abeer caresses Abdelmalik. She looks forward for the day that she can see her son. All photos © UNHCR/ Won-Na Cha.*



## A beneficiary's story (II):

### *"This desire for a home has never been stronger"*

Athens, Greece, 9 July (UNHCR) –Reaching Rovies takes a two and a half hour journey, climbing up the rugged hills of Evia - the second largest island in Greece. The sleepy beach town with inhabitants far less than 1,000 people is a well-hidden gem, sandwiched between other more celebrated coasts. The local industry is focused on tourism during the summer seasons and the visitors are usually local. However, it is in this unlikely setting that 25 families from mostly Syria and a handful of Iraqis have been living since the end of May, under the EU relocation accommodation scheme, in Hotel Rovies, supported by UNHCR and its partner Solidarity Now.

#### The Wait

To be a refugee often means to go through remorseless, grueling waiting. Waiting to be registered, for the papers to be processed, for the results, interviews, then more results. Waiting for decisions, the day they leave, if they are successful enough (as of July, less than 3,000 persons have been relocated from Greece to other EU countries out of the target of 66,400 by September 2017). Waiting for answers, for acceptance. The feeling of vulnerability and powerlessness is heightened with no hints of what will happen and when. All you say and hear needs an interpreter, and much can be lost in translation. This is where they are, far away from home, while their sense of self dignity slowly erodes away. **"There was once a refugee woman in the site, provided with a better bunk bed and a table top lamp"** says Jenny, a food activist. **"The poor woman nearly got a heart attack thinking this was an indication of an even longer wait"**. Tense with worries for the future, it does not help that Greece is not, for most of them, a final destination. They have already done all they could do. The papers have been submitted and now it is up to the authorities to decide who will go to which EU country. "What if they decide one day to stop the programme altogether? We know a family who was once rejected, but we don't know why. This constant fear of rejection disturbs us all" says Haifa (44).

#### The Kids

The kids' corner is however, not so much different from any other kids' corner. They skip around between their fathers playing cards with the local men, and their mothers chatting in groups. There are constant shouts and squabbles amongst themselves. Suddenly, the wooden gate creaks and the theatre teachers arrive. Instantly, the children rush to greet them, automatically forming a queue. The teachers come for a few hours each day, to interact with the children on drama, games, crafts and swimming lessons. Translation is provided 24/7 by Sohail, a Palestinian student who has been in Greece for many years. He is the backbone of this project, tirelessly translating both ways, Arabic and Greek. He also teaches the children English and acts as a mediator when conflicts occur. "The kids were influenced by their previous experiences in the sites. Even if they were happy, they would express themselves through a fist fight. Here they are safe and cared for constantly. We are taking the waiting experience to a different level".

One of the greatest concerns for the refugees is how to spend their daily lives. Missing their usual livelihoods, their daily routine in a foreign country with limited resources is a distress. However in this small community, they are doing their utmost to recreate the lives with what they have. The men have taken charge in baking Syrian style bread, with a device the hotel owner installed just for them. The women prepares the daily meals. They constantly engage with the local community. In June, a stage was set up to commemorate the end of the Ramadan and a stall for Syrian food. Once they started dancing, the locals joined suite. They painted a mural for the local school wall. They are now in the process of competing with the local football team. 10 players have already been identified and their uniforms are on the way. There really isn't a dull moment.

The locals are welcoming. There are constant visitors dropping by to say their greetings. The children usually get a cone of ice-cream for free when they pass down the sweet parlor. Within the usual adverse media coverage on the refugees and their experience in sites, the scene here is so positive, like a dream too good. "I think it helps that the community themselves, a few generations back, were also refugees from other neighboring countries. They know and heard firsthand what it feels to leave their home and to settle elsewhere. And this relaxed environment by the sea definitely helps. We also try to constantly interact with the locals. We know what their fears and anxieties are, so we try to show them who the refugees are really like. And for the refugees, we help them feel human again", says Andreas, the hotel owner. Apparently, the other hotel owners in the region have already seen the benefits of the programme and would like to participate too.



*Children enjoy their daily swimming lessons in the sea. Some of them never swam before.*



*Half of the residents (40) in Rovies hotel are children. Every weekday, the children are occupied with various activities ranging from drama, games, crafts and swimming lessons.*



*Huda, Haifa and Monira talk about what they left behind, and wait for a better future. All photos © UNHCR/ Won-Na Cha.*

#### What They Left Behind

Despite the calm exterior, they are in the end, people who went through horrific experiences which forced them to flee. **One refugee saw his cousin explode right before his eyes. Their schools were eventually bombed after irregular classes. Hospitals had no doctors, shops had no food. There was nothing to sustain a living. They prayed that their kids will come home safe from school every day.**

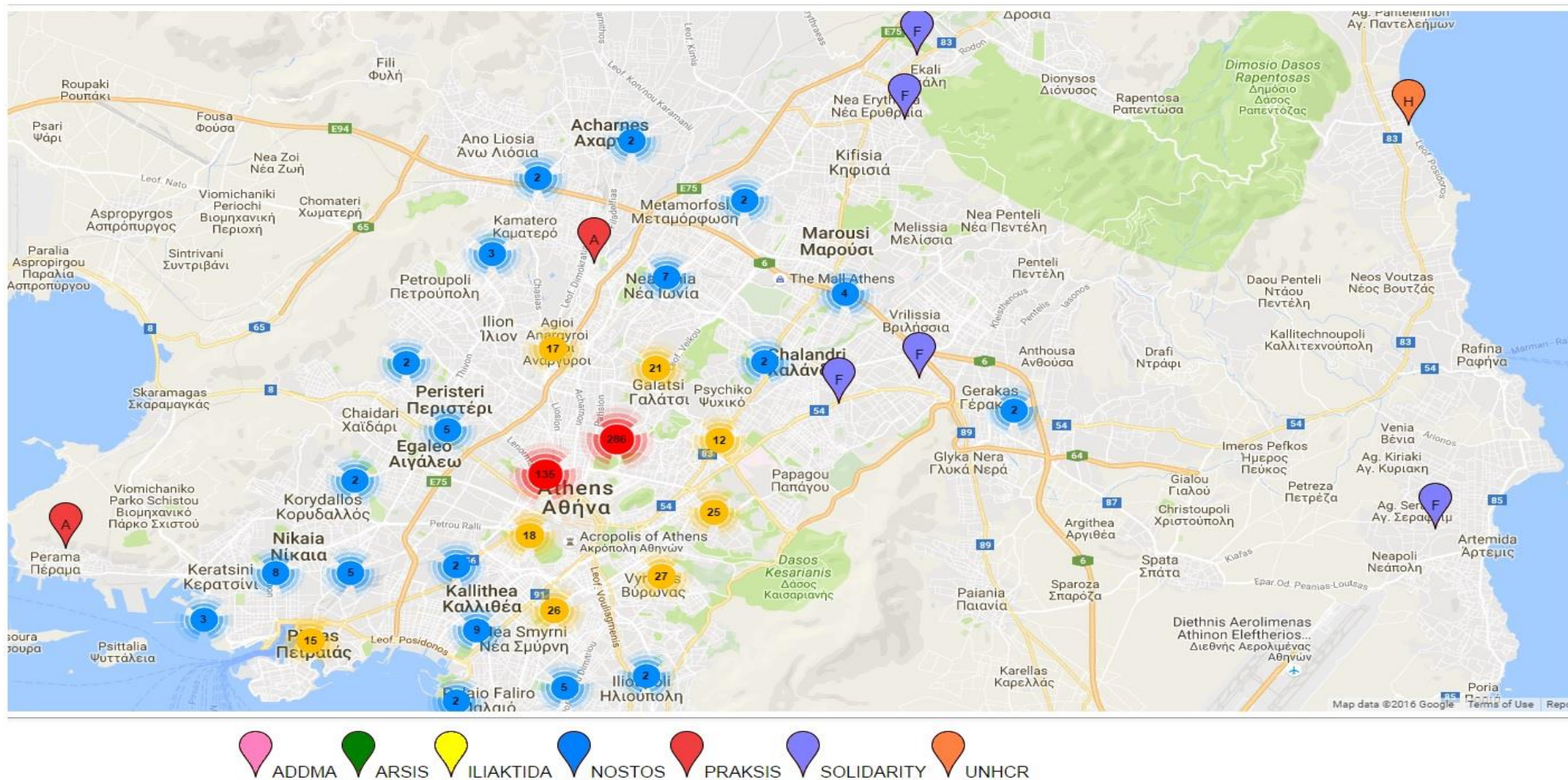
*Were you aware of the other refugees when your country was not influenced by war?* **"Years back, when I saw stories of Palestinian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, I felt bad for them because they were away from home when we were in the comfort of our houses. I never thought that one day that would be my own story"** says Haifa (44).

*"I would have happily died in Syria. At least I would have been in the place I call home. But I had children. They needed their own chance for the future. I don't mind where I am relocated in Europe as long as there is safety and education for the kids. I had to take my best shot for the future. In such circumstances, who wouldn't? I just wanted a place totally free of bombings. Europe seemed to be the place to go".*

*Has the notion of 'home' changed since you made this journey?*

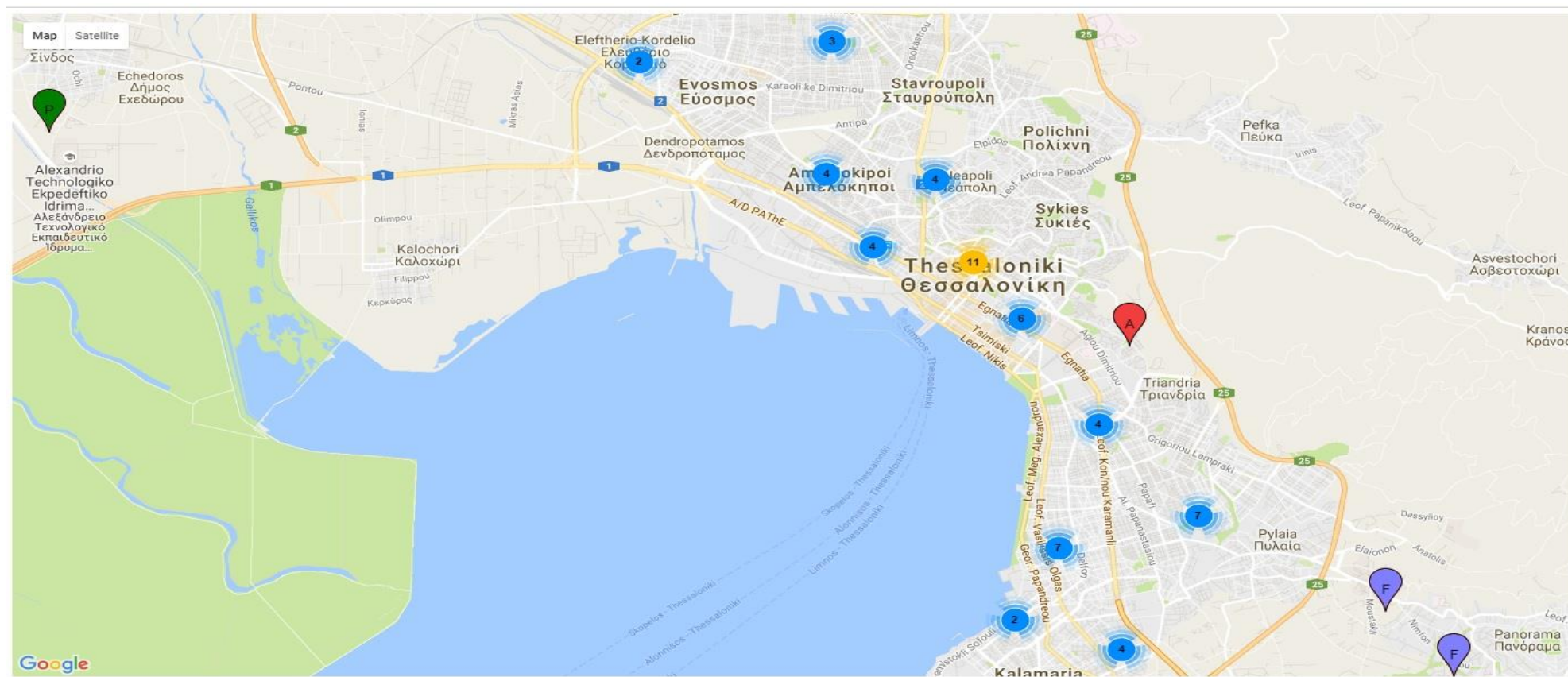
**"It was always a place of safety, the final destination, the place where you can be yourself. My little kingdom where I have the responsibility for the people inside it", Huda continues. "This desire for a home has never been stronger before".**

## MAP OF ACCOMMODATION-ATHENS (I)

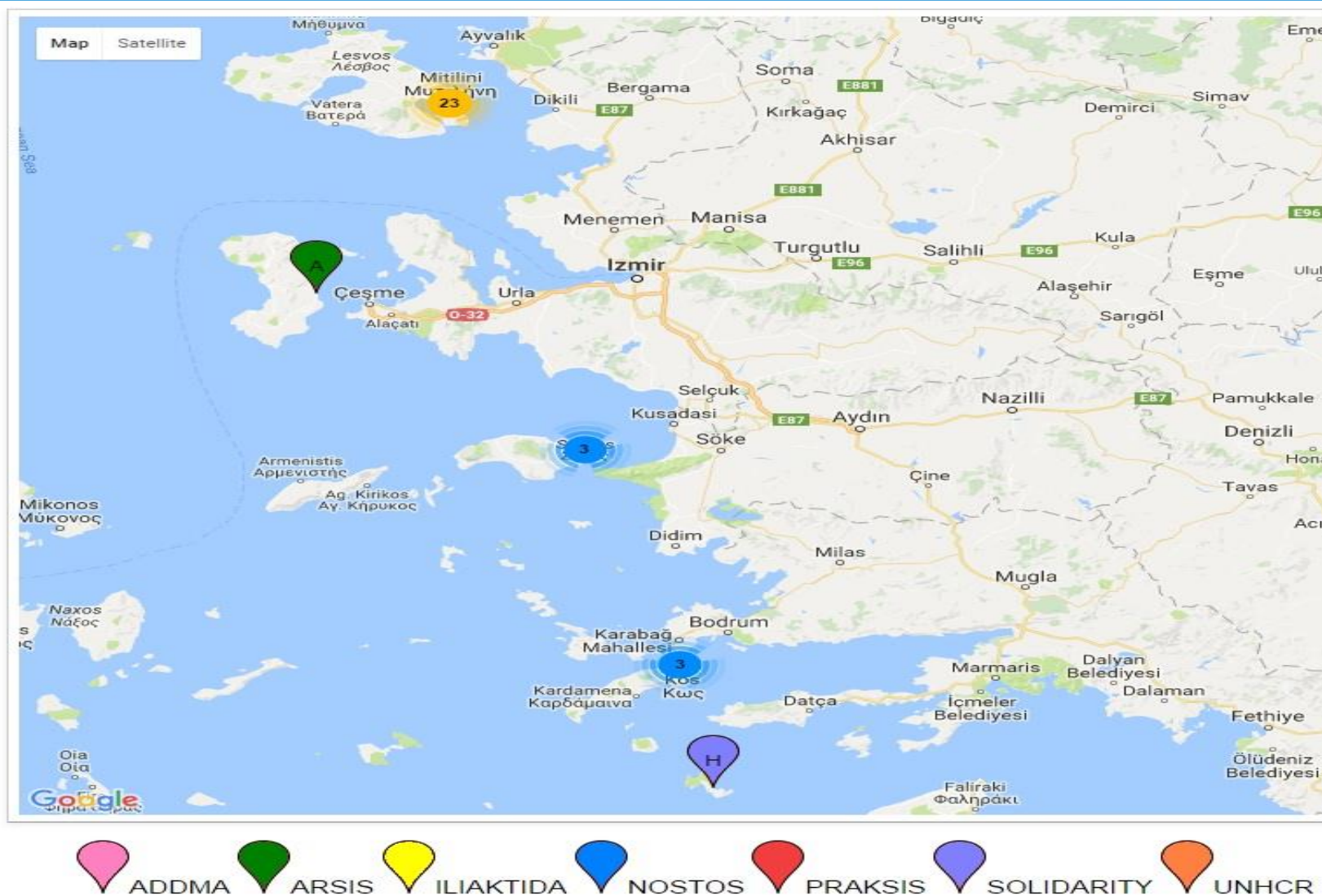




## MAP OF ACCOMMODATION -THESSALONIKI (II)

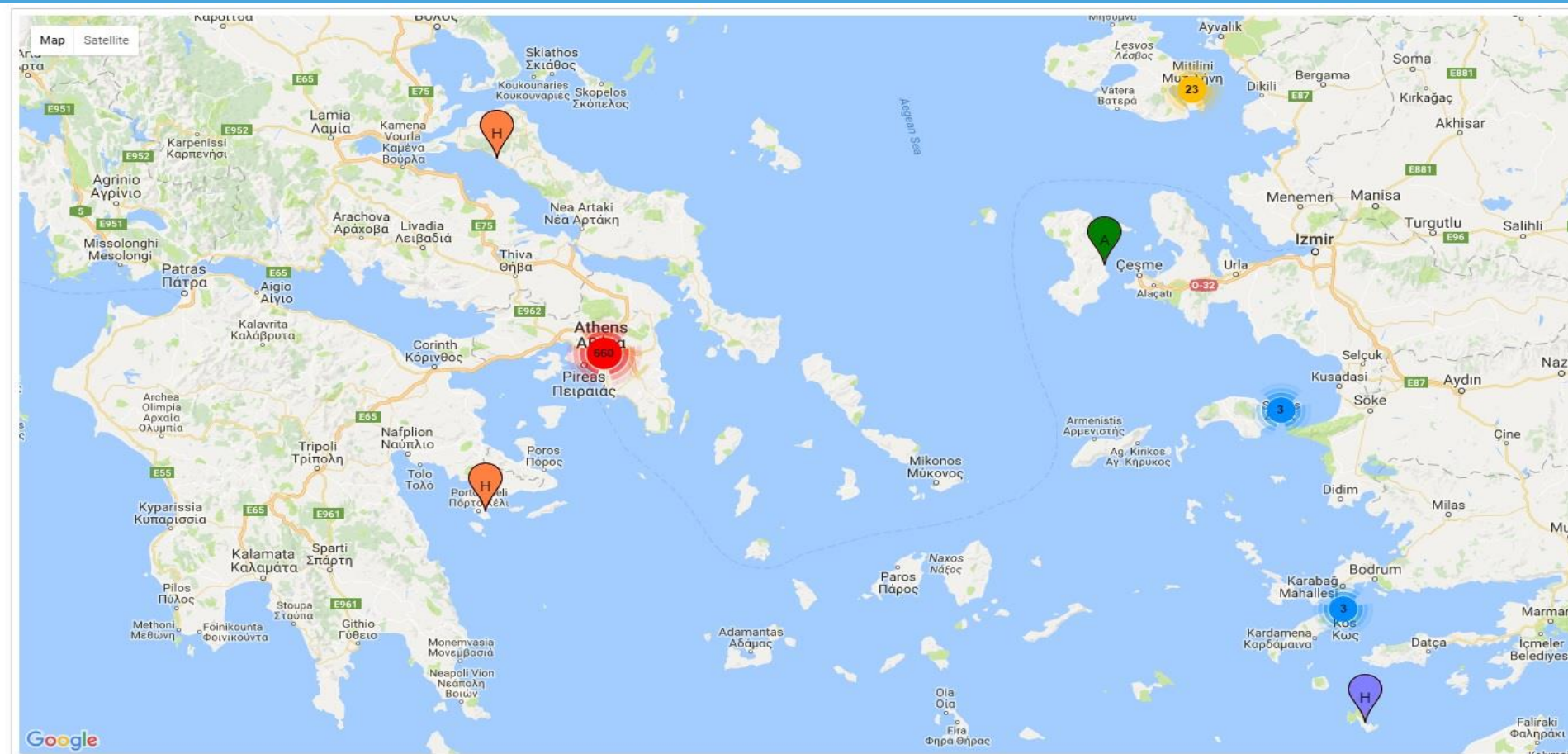


## MAPS OF ACCOMMODATION – ISLANDS OVERVIEW (III)





## MAPS OF ACCOMMODATION – COUNTRY WIDE OVERVIEW



 ADDMA
  ARSIS
  ILIAKTIDA
  NOSTOS
  PRAKSIS
  SOLIDARITY
  UNHCR