

# END OF YEAR REPORT 2021

ASYLUM SEEKERS INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM  
**AssIST** LEGAL AID  
& ADVICE

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# Letter from our President

Dear Board & Team members, Partners, Donors and all supporters of A.Ss.I.S.T.

2021 is over and may 2022 bring some release from the pandemic and relief of suffering for those who through A.Ss.I.S.T. we endeavour to serve.

2021 was definitely a COVID19 year and a year marked by tragedy for many and, for asylum seekers and for beneficiaries of international protection (BIPS) in Greece of increased hardships, most of which are not attributable to the pandemic.

In this Report, A.Ss.I.S.T. endeavours to provide an overview of developments in Greece, the impact of these developments on our clients – both on Chios Island and on the mainland or on other Greek Islands, whom we are serving remotely. By providing first the context within which A.Ss.I.S.T. provides information and legal aid services, and then a summary of our operations and services, of the challenges faced and of the progress made by the Team.

I hope that it is informative and retains your interest in A.Ss.i.S.T.'s work.

To name everyone that I would like to thank for their service and assistance (pun intended) throughout 2021 would take too long so I summarise – you all know who you are, right?

To the Board members, for your time, patience and your guidance. Thank you!

To every volunteer member of the Team in 2021. Your commitment of time and service were much needed and even more appreciated. Thank you!

To the two long-term volunteers, who served in Chios throughout 2021, a special thank you for the invaluable improvements that you made to A.Ss.I.S.T. operations and services. Thank you!

With special thanks to our interpreters/translators, most of whom were themselves asylum seekers and are now beneficiaries of international protection – cause for many celebrations. You come and go, but many of you continue to support A.Ss.I.S.T. Some of you also served throughout 2021. You are all gracious, generous and admirable in the dedication of your time and effort when you must also move forward to build your futures. Thank you each and all!

To our associate Greek lawyers, who never cease to impress with their dedication and commitment to A.Ss.I.S.T. clients and their willingness to support A.Ss.I.S.T. in training and many other not so easy matters – my heartfelt thanks and sincere admiration.

To our partner organisations, thank you for your cooperation, collaboration and solidarity.

Last, but definitely never least, to all our donors, every one, individuals, organisations and foundations, without you and your support and empathy with our clients, A.Ss.I.S.T. could not exist. For your generosity and solidarity, on behalf of A.Ss.I.S.T., our Board and all its Team members, thank you!

May you all stay safe and well in 2022.

With warmest wishes,

Sheila (Sandy) Cross  
President  
A.Ss.I.S.T.

# SUMMARY



In this End of Year 2021 Report, a summary is provided of the numbers of people seeking international protection arriving in Greece and more specifically on Chios Island, of their circumstances on Chios, of the challenges the asylum seekers face and of some of the main changes to the domestic law and procedures in 2021. It is important to understand the context in order to appreciate the operational needs of A.Ss.I.S.T. and the service needs of the clients.

Information and Legal Aid service delivery to people of such diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds as those arriving in Greece seeking international protection requires a team effort. It is best delivered by a combination of people with diverse skill sets: coordinators with administrative and client services skills, legal advisors and Greek lawyers with experience and expertise in EU and Greek asylum and migration law and interpreters/translators with language skills and cultural mediation skills. Together with shared understanding of their respective roles and their commitment to the mission and aims of A.Ss.I.S.T., the Team is well able to deliver professional services, to provide the information and legal assistance to which all people seeking international protection have a right.

# OVERVIEW GREECE

## NEW ARRIVALS

For the first time since 2014 the number of new arrivals arriving in Greece by land exceeded the number arriving by sea. Since 2019, the number of arrivals by sea decreased dramatically: 2019: 59,726; 2020: 9,714 and 2021: 4,331 persons. The decrease in the number of arrivals by land was not quite so dramatic: from 14,887 persons in 2019 to 4,826 persons in 2021. With the Government's claim of having effectively reduced the flows of migration on the islands by 95% .

As stated by the government, the authorities have effectively reduced the flows of migration to the Aegean Islands over the past year. It may be more accurate to say that the authorities have forcefully, synonym of effectively, reduced the flow of migration to the Islands. The evidence of pushbacks both at sea and at the land border is irrefutable and is widely reported in main stream and social media with witness accounts as well as by survivor accounts. People having already arrived on Greek islands are also being pushed back to Turkey. These are not only pushbacks at sea: pushbacks across the land border have also been widely reported. No longer can it be denied that such operations were conducted throughout 2021 and continue into 2022.

The annual statistics show that, sadly and shockingly, there has also been a significant increase in the number of people reported 'dead and missing' proportionate to the numbers arriving. UNHCR statistics show that, in 2021, for every thousand people who arrived in Greece 12 people were reported dead or missing (of 9272 persons/115 dead or missing: 1.26%).

This is the highest percentage of people lost, 'dead or missing' since 2014. It is double that of 2020 when for every thousand 6 people were reported dead or missing (of 15,798 people, 102 reported dead or missing: 0.65%) and more than tenfold that of 2019: 74,684 people, 71 reported missing: 0.1%.

## **CHIOS ISLAND**

For those who did arrive on Chios and were allowed to make a claim for international protection, the Greek authorities confiscated their mobile phones during quarantine, imposed EUR 5000/person fines for entering Greece without an authorised COVID19 vaccination certificate and charged them with illegal entry to Greece. When the laws permitting these actions were challenged by the Greek Ombudsman, the response was that, unless and until the written laws were revised stating clearly that asylum seekers are exempt from these measures then the practice would continue. These practices have only been reported on Chios Island and it is unclear if they continued into 2022.

In October 2021, UNHCR requested A.Ss.I.S.T. and other legal actors to appeal on behalf of new arrivals against COVID19 fines of EUR 5000. Based on the prior experience of our lawyers appealing COVID19 fines in 2020, A.Ss.I.S.T. declined to provide this service. By December 2021 it was clear that A.Ss.I.S.T.'s decision was well founded. All appeals by other legal actors failed and, if taken forward to the court, it was at the cost of EUR 260.00 per case for court fees. A.Ss.I.S.T. cannot justify using donor funds or lawyers' time for this purpose. It is anyway very unlikely that the authorities will be able to enforce payment of these fines or pursue in court on charges of illegal entry. For those whose applications are rejected, it will be impossible. For those whose asylum applications succeed, should the authorities endeavour to follow through, it would be at that time, that legal action could be taken on behalf of the BIPs.

## TRANSFERS AND DEPARTURES

Official figures on the number of official transfers and spontaneous departures from Chios were provided only on an irregular basis. But it is clear from the reduction of numbers in the Vial Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) (see below) overtime that these occurred in significant numbers when COVID restrictions permitted travel to the mainland.

## DEPORTATIONS

As far as can be ascertained, in 2021, there were no official deportations or legitimate forced returns to Turkey.

From mid-March 2020 to the end of 2021, the sea and land borders with Turkey remained officially closed due to the COVID pandemic. This had for consequence that, throughout 2021, many asylum seekers whose applications for international protection failed and whose legal options are exhausted were either in detention or in limbo without papers and without any form of social support: destitute and homeless.

## VIAL RECEPTION AND IDENTIFICATION CENTRE

In January 2021, there were, according to UNHCR, 2095 persons in Vial RIC. By end-March 2021, there were fewer than 1500 and no longer were there people living outside the facility. By mid-year, accommodation was less crowded and with some improvements made through the good services of “Movement on the Ground”, an NGO tasked with removal of rubbish, repairing essential hygiene infrastructure and utilities. Some living conditions did improve. Not so for the quality of food served, still often inedible.

[1][https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179#\\_ga=2.200239470.1588821783.1653979288-1445044970.1653979288](https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179#_ga=2.200239470.1588821783.1653979288-1445044970.1653979288)



Cash assistance ceased for several months of the year with the handover of the Cash Assistance Program from UNHCR to Catholic Relief Services (CRS): cash much needed to travel to town, to buy essentials e.g. prescribed medicines and to improve food supply was just not available from July to December 2021. Access to education, already minimal due to COVID19, had ceased completely by end September 2021 with no informal education available to youth or to adults.

COVID19 restrictions enforced in Vial were more severe than those for the island generally and vaccination services started but stopped, leaving many asylum seekers unvaccinated.

Access to health services remained limited, deteriorating further with the departure of some essential services also provided by NGOs: Caritas (December 2021). Caritas assured transportation to hospital and medical appointments and left Chios in December 2021, while the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that provided psychosocial support, left soon after.

Some leniency was shown by the authorities to the people remaining in the camp 'illegally' i.e. their applications for international protection having failed, they had therefore no permission to remain in the RIC. They have no papers, nowhere to go and no resources allowing them to leave the island. Even those with positive decisions found themselves without resources to leave Vial or the Island. They were able to remain in Vial, usually supported for food and water from within their respective communities. During COVID19 restrictions, they could, in any case, not travel from the island.

By end-December 2021, there were fewer than 500 people accommodated in the RIC.

## PROPOSED NEW 'CLOSED' CENTRE ON CHIOS ISLAND

The people of Chios remain united against the Government's plan to build another facility, a 'closed' facility proposed for a site on the east coast to the north of Chios township. As in early 2020, the Chios people held demonstrations against a new facility. Opposition continued into 2022. It is rumoured that the plan for the 'closed' centre has been abandoned and that the current RIC will be 'reinforced' with more fencing, electronic entry and exit only and residents, with some exceptions, will be detained. This remains a rumour and, at present, Vial RIC is not a 'closed' centre.

## CHIOS TOWNSHIP AND SURROUNDS

While throughout the COVID19 lockdowns and restrictions, there were no evictions from town accommodation; the government-sponsored housing program on Chios closed on 31 October 2021. The vulnerable people still dependent on this accommodation service had to return to the RIC, if permitted. 'Permitted' means that only those whose applications were still under examination are allowed to access accommodation and services within the RIC. Those whose applications were completed, i.e. they were already beneficiaries of international protection, had to find their own accommodation solutions. This required most to travel to the mainland, as few, if any, owners on Chios are prepared to rent to refugees.

## ASYLUM AND MIGRATION LAW & PROCEDURES

Amendments to the existing and new laws, Ministerial Decisions and a plethora of directives, public and internal to the Ministry of Migration. All of these revisions and changes bring increasingly harsh requirements and conditions for people seeking international protection: for those trying to access the process, for applicants of international protection with the outcome pending, for those whose applications have failed and for BIPs. The impact of some of the changes in law for people at different stages of the application procedure are briefly described below.

### **Ministerial Decision (MD) No. 42799 issued on 7 June 2021**

*declares Turkey as a third safe country for all Afghan, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali and Syrian nationals.*

It applies to all applicants of these nationalities wherever they have registered in Greece. First, they must attend an ‘admissibility’ interview based only on assessing whether Turkey is safe. Their case, their reasons for seeking asylum, the dangers that they may face on returning to their home country are not examined at this interview. The Greek authorities confirm that there is no possibility for accepted returns to Turkey. Nevertheless, those of these five nationalities who are deemed to be safe in Turkey, cannot be sent to Turkey and are requested to leave Greece. Without papers, they face the threat of arrest and detention. It is noteworthy, however, that, when applicants have been in Greece for over one year, they are considered to have no further ties with Turkey and therefore may be deemed ‘admissible’. If so, they go forward to the interview for eligibility.

[2]IDA / ECRE, March 2022: <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/>

Those deemed inadmissible can appeal. However, pending appeal, without appeal or on failed appeal, they no longer have papers legitimising their right to stay in Greece: they face a limbo of uncertainty: risk of arrest and detention, no access to social services, to cash assistance, to the labour market, to healthcare systems, to education or to accommodation: blocked in limbo.

### **On 4 September 2021, the new Law No. 4825**

«Reform of deportation and return procedures for 3rd-country nationals, residence permit issues and procedures for granting international protection and other provisions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum and the Ministry of Citizen Protection» was promulgated. This law makes it more difficult for asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected to challenge a deportation order, by applying a stricter definition of the term "humanitarian grounds". It also reduces the period in which they can take legal action once a negative decision has been issued.

### **On 24 November 2021, the Ministry of Migration issued a Circular**

*stating that claims for international protections would only be accepted at Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) on the five Aegean Islands with RICs and at Evros near the land border with Turkey.*

It was already difficult to submit a claim for those on the mainland, one could only register a request for international protection via a Skype service and, more often than not, this service was inaccessible. Access to the Asylum Procedure for people seeking international protection: the how and where to register their claim changed and became even more difficult.

[3] Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos are the five islands where people can register their claim to asylum. Those who arrive by sea, if not pushed back, are readily able to register.

[4] MIT report, May 22 "Block from the system: Voices of people excluded from the asylum procedure on mainland Greece, Crete and Rhodes"(p. 4).

To go to or return to the Aegean Islands requires resources (documents and money) to travel. Based on pushback reports, it is clear that people who wish to register a claim for asylum do not wish/dare to return to Evros for fear of being pushed back across the land border. People who are not able to register their claims for asylum, they too face a limbo of uncertainty: risk of arrest and detention, no access to social services, to cash assistance, to the labour market, to healthcare systems, to education or to accommodation.

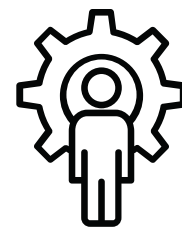
And the BIPs are permitted to remain in the Reception & Identification Centres (RICs/containment facilities or ‘camps’) or in government sponsored accommodation for one month only and thereafter they must fend for themselves. Cash assistance is also cancelled one month after receipt of protection. Unsurprisingly, many BIPs also find themselves without resources and access to services can be complicated and difficult. While they may remain in Greece as legal residents, will receive Resident IDs and travel documents unlike the others groups mentioned above, yet many are forced to depend on support from within their respective communities or on NGOs offering shelter and food. Requirements for acceptance in the much vaunted HELIOS program are difficult to meet and impossible to meet within 30 days of receiving a positive decision. On Chios, for example, HELIOS is not possible. Some Chios-based NGOs have assisted BIPs to go to the mainland. No access to shelter, food and cash assistance, the instability of homelessness and lack of resources prevent BIPs from exercising their rights to social services, education and employment. So, in reality, BIPs can also find themselves destitute and homeless unless they find support within their own communities or through non-government services. Many BIPs, once they have papers and some resources, leave Greece for other EU countries.

It is A.Ss.I.S.T.’s experience that the earlier legal actors can intervene on behalf of those seeking international protection, the better informed and better served the asylum seekers are likely to be.

[5] *Some NGOs are offering services to those ‘in limbo’ though strictly speaking it is illegal to do so.*

[6] [https://greece.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1086/files/documents/project-regulations-handbook\\_english\\_feb22.pdf](https://greece.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1086/files/documents/project-regulations-handbook_english_feb22.pdf)

# OPERATIONS AND SERVICES



## THE BOARD

At the Annual General Meeting in June 2021, elections for the Board were held.

Sheila Cross and Josephine Chan were re-elected as President and Treasurer respectively, and Zoe Anderson was elected as Secretary. The Annual General Meeting was well attended, the auditors were agreed upon and the forward budget approved.

## THE TEAM

Throughout 2021, A.Ss.I.S.T. benefited from a core Team made up of the volunteer Legal Representative, 2 associate Greek lawyers (AGLs), one volunteer Legal Advisor and a volunteer Office & Client Services Manager. This stable, long-term core Team not only enabled continuity in professional service delivery, but permitted the implementation of many sustainable improvements in service delivery, information management and in the digitisation of A.Ss.I.S.T. operations and services. This core Team was supported by a 'without which, we cannot'-'moveable feast' of volunteer interpreters/translators, themselves asylum seekers or BIPs who provided service to a linguistically and culturally diverse client base.

In 2021, when COVID restrictions allowed and on numerous occasions, A.Ss.I.S.T. celebrated the progress of many of our interpreters/translators from asylum seeking to refugee status as well as their successes as they moved into paid positions elsewhere. Many of A.Ss.I.S.T.'s 2021 volunteer interpreters/translators remain ready to provide their services remotely when needed.



*Maya Kerbellec  
Office & Client Services Manager*



*Mohamed Mohamed  
Arabic/Somali/English interpreter*

Volunteer recruitment was virtually suspended when COVID19 restrictions were in place. In the first quarter, A.Ss.I.S.T. benefited also from the continued services of two volunteer Legal Advisors (VLAs) who joined the Team in late 2020, both of whom left in February, and one VLA arriving in May for three months. In the final quarter of 2021, A.Ss.I.S.T. welcomed two new VLAs and a volunteer Information Manager.



*Florence Hallack-Wolff  
Information Manager*



*Leona Hansen  
Volunteer Legal Advisor*

All Team members contributed to increasing and improving client services. During the final quarter, the new volunteers made significant progress in the research and development of foundation documents collating all relevant legal information into one document for the islands (border procedure) and one for the mainland procedures. They drafted information materials consisting of four scripts for the islands and four for the mainland procedure with accompanying graphics and slides using the respective foundation documents as their reference. Each of the four scripts covers a different stage of the related asylum procedure. Thanks to the contribution of all volunteers, these information materials were developed. The volunteer Information Manager improved the management and content of A.Ss.I.S.T.'s social media. The Team was also able to focus on assuring the timely delivery of quality legal aid services, expanding the geographic coverage of services, developing networks, drafting grant applications and fund raising.

From June to August 2021, Team members undertook several visits to Athens to carry out a needs assessment of legal aid services in Athens to determine the potential for A.Ss.I.S.T. to support established legal actors and to act as 'safety net' for applicants that other legal aid actors may not be able to accept.

From the various contacts made in Athens, it became clear that many legal aid actors were overwhelmed with requests for assistance and that information services remained very limited.



It was therefore decided that, as all of A.Ss.I.S.T. legal services can be delivered remotely from Chios, A.Ss.I.S.T. would accept referrals from mainland organisations. In this way, A.Ss.I.S.T. services remain available to those on Chios, those who arrive on Chios (several 100 asylum seekers from July to December 2021) and, via remote communications, to those residing elsewhere in Greece.

From September 2021, A.Ss.I.S.T. client services began to support the demand for legal aid on other islands and on mainland Greece. From September 2021 to December 2021, approximately 25% of A.Ss.I.S.T. legal consultations were with clients based in Athens or on the mainland.

In late 2021, A.Ss.I.S.T. received a grant from Safe Passage – Germany to meet 70% of the costs to establish a presence and develop our services in Athens for 2022 (the 30% balance of funds to be raised by A.Ss.I.S.T.).

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

Due to some minor recent earth tremors in February, guidelines for what to do in the event of an earthquake have been re-issued to Team members.

Due to COVID19 restrictions, Team members continued to attend the office with a maximum of four people in attendance at any time. This is 2 team members present at all times (office security rule), as clients must come to pick up and deliver documents (mostly powers of attorney and decisions) from the lawyers. All appointments continued to be held via WhatsApp with interpreters at home, lawyers in their respective offices or homes, and clients in Vial. Stringent COVID19 protocols remained in place: masks worn, hands sanitised and temperatures taken on entry.

## TRAINING

On March 31st, led by our AGLs, an interpreter training workshop: ‘Do’s and Don’ts: interpreting with lawyers’ was held by zoom. Eight people attended from the A.Ss.I.S.T. interpreter team. Feedback from participants was very positive. On 15 October, the AGLs led an in-house workshop to review the draft documents to be used as reference materials for the development of scripts for the Information Sessions that A.Ss.I.S.T. anticipates delivering in 2022. In early November, two foundation documents were completed. The first outlining the full application procedure applicable on the islands and the second document with the requisite variations as applied to those arriving on the mainland. These documents serve as the legal reference documents for the script for information sessions to be delivered by video presentation.

In November-December, the VLAs and Information Manager worked together on the content and design of the new, updated materials to cover the four main stages of the asylum application procedure.

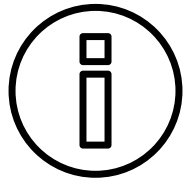
On 13 & 14 December 2022, in-house workshops on the draft scripts for the Information Session presentations were held. All Team members were present to provide feedback on draft scripts for four presentations and two draft audio-visual presentations. All four presentations will be duly translated into the languages relevant to the applicants for, and beneficiaries of, international protection. Although included briefly in the above presentations, two more presentations on subsequent applications and family reunification are proposed.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

March 2021 saw the re-design and introduction of improved systems for capturing more data with some additions and refinements over the following months. More details were added to the Client Record and a contact log introduced capturing the number of client queries received. The number of queries answered and of clients served through the office phone, together with an overview of the most frequently asked questions, were added to our monthly statistics. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have proved useful in responding to questions not requiring referral to a lawyer, are useful in preparation for Q&A sessions and as reference materials for study by incoming volunteers.

As demonstrated in the graphs below, the demand for A.Ss.I.S.T services fluctuated across the year. The increase in the final quarter can be attributed not only to an increase across the final three months of the year of the number of new arrivals on Chios, but also to the number of referrals received from partner organisations on the other Islands and on the mainland.

# INFORMATION SERVICES



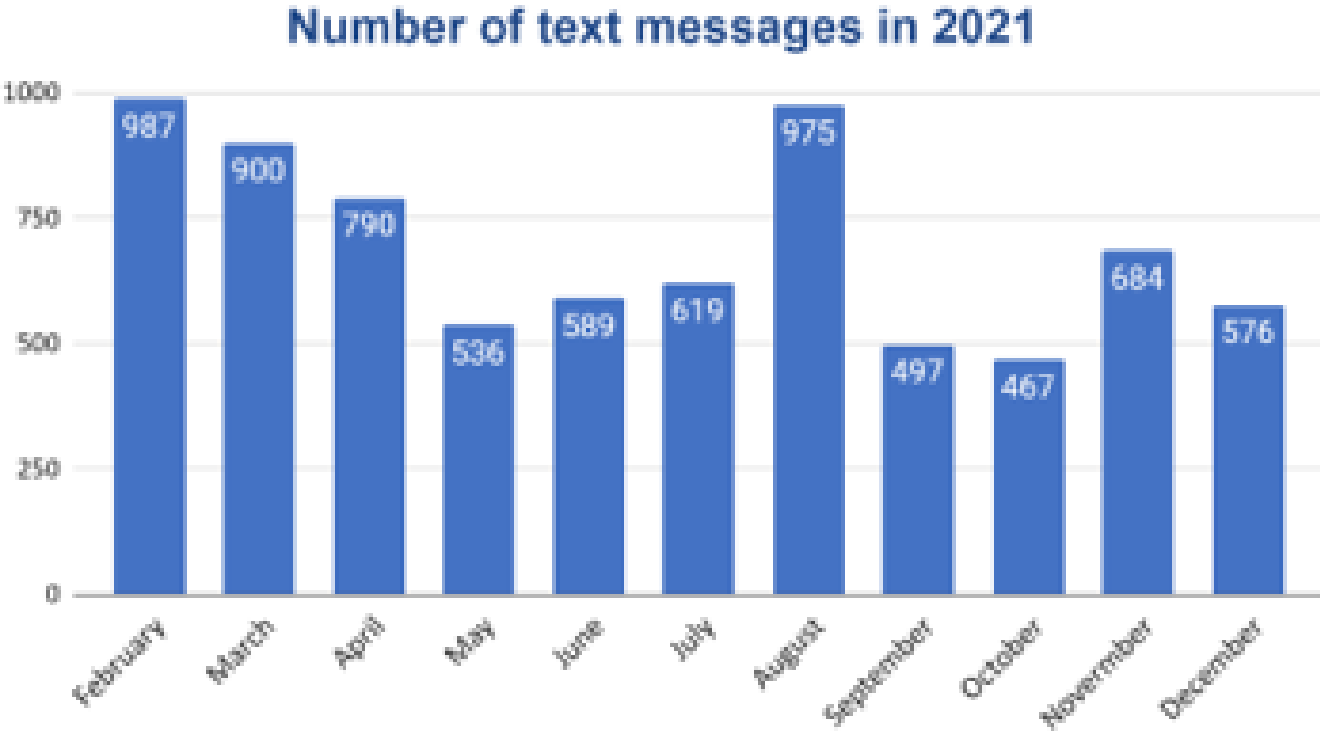
A.Ss.I.S.T.'s office help line continued to respond to queries on a daily basis (Monday to Friday), in the seven main languages: Amharic, Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Lingala and Somali. Both text and voice messages are received, and responses are given in the language of the messages received. Legal questions are referred to our AGLs and VLAs. Some questions require consultations with the lawyers. Other queries receive responses in accordance to guidance given by the Office Manager and Legal Representative or by standard accepted responses. This service requires close cooperation and team work between A.Ss.I.S.T. interpreters and the Office & Client Services Manager (OCSM). From February 2021, the number of queries received were captured in the Contact Log together with the number of approaches made by our AGLS to the authorities on behalf of A.Ss.I.S.T. clients.

In 2021 there was an average of over 692 messages per month and a total of 7620 messages.

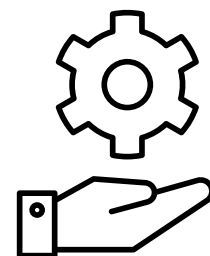
To streamline to some extent this service, the OCSM developed a spreadsheet recording FAQs and the responses already translated into the main languages. Easily corrected as and when required, this has proved a very useful tool for responding quickly to clients and for reference for all, particularly as a training tool for in-coming volunteers.

Appointments to consult with A.Ss.I.S.T lawyers, both VLAs and AGLs, are also made via the office help line.

## Graph 2: No of queries received February to December 2021



# LEGAL AID SERVICES



## REGISTRATION

This is a new service based on the issuance of a Circular in November 2021 by the Ministry of Migration stating that claims for international protections would only be accepted RICs on the five Aegean Islands and at Evros near the land border with Turkey. In December 2021, A.Ss.I.S.T. started to receive requests from people wishing to register their claim for asylum. So far, only in a few cases, our lawyers' interventions have succeeded in assuring that a claim was filed. Without the intervention of a lawyer, these clients would not have been able even to seek international protection.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS

Interview preparations are essential to fair process. Asylum seekers need information to understand the procedure and advice as to what to expect in the key interview(s) that will decide on the initial outcome of their application for international protection.

## SUBSEQUENT APPLICATIONS

A.Ss.I.S.T. AGLs provided legal assistance for 31 subsequent applications. A subsequent application can be lodged by asylum seekers who having received two negative decisions against their initial application, if the new application meets certain criteria. There must be new evidence or valid

reason for re-submitting a second application. With yet another change in Asylum Services procedures, A.Ss.I.S.T. AGLs can no longer book appointments for applicants being supported for subsequent Applications in Athens. Appointments now must be made by the applicant only and this via Skype. Skype services with the Asylum Services have been notoriously inaccessible.

The AGLs briefed some interested parties in Athens via video link responding to queries related to subsequent applications and clarifying the requirements for their submission. It was agreed that A.Ss.I.S.T. AGLs would examine cases and provide a legal opinion as to whether requirements to proceed with a subsequent application are met. This is, however, time-consuming for each case, as the lawyer needs to have full access to the file and review all documents pertaining to the case. Aware that few legal aid actors were doing subsequent applications, A.Ss.I.S.T. accepted cases in accordance with our capacity and based on client priority for those with precise and short deadlines. (subsequent applications have no time-limits).

## APPEALS

Since January 2021, our AGLs have submitted 97 appeals; of which 16 failed and 20 succeeded. The remainder of appeals are pending recording or decisions. The numbers so far confirm the competence of our AGLs that are doing an amazing job.

Through collaboration with the Port Police, our AGLs have been able to facilitate the departure to the mainland for several of those whose appeals failed and were required to leave Greece within 10 days.

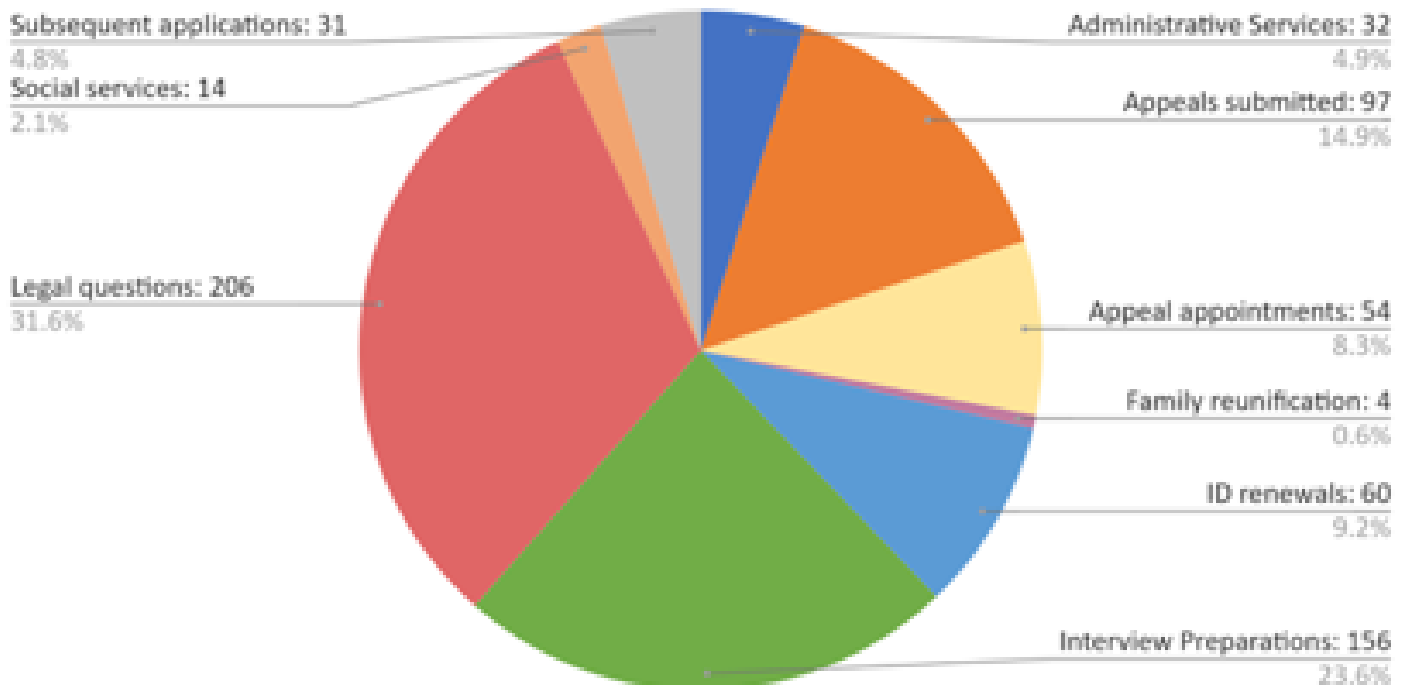
As the border with Turkey remains closed, those whose applications have failed are without papers, without access to the material benefits of asylum seekers, are not arrested (insufficient places to detain them), and hence find themselves in another kind of limbo.

## SUPPORT TO BIPs

At present, this consists of providing information on request and on the renewals of IDs, IOM HELIOS program, tax accounts and on services available on the mainland.

### Consultation Breakdown - 2021

From 652 consultations





## GUARDIANSHIP AND CUSTODY

A.Ss.I.S.T. lawyers also took on several cases of single parents seeking legal advice and aid to receive legal custody or guardianship of their children. This is a procedure required in order to receive Greek resident IDs and travel documents. The cost involved ranges from EUR 250,00 to just under EUR 1000. There are legislated costs involved in such cases: under government regulations, our AGLs are required by law to charge fees separate to their contracts and other costs are those of the notary and the court.

## AFGHANISTAN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

In late October, the International Bar Association (IBA) based in London approached A.Ss.I.S.T. and three of our partner legal aid organisations to provide legal aid to the 106 Afghan women judges, lawyers and journalists and their families who had arrived recently in Athens on 60 day visas issued at the behest of the President of Greece. The cases of these evacuees are not as straightforward as those of Afghan new arrivals on Chios as many of these clients had initiated procedures for asylum in diverse EU countries, Australia and the USA before the fall of Kabul and their evacuation.

A.Ss.I.S.T. operates on a "first come, first served" basis with appointments postponed only when the specific client's case has no firm deadline. A.Ss.I.S.T. does not discriminate by nationality or 'high profile' requests received. All cases are accepted based on our capacity to provide legal aid; the availability of our lawyers is monitored via calendar appointments. Some forms of legal assistance have firm deadlines and priority must therefore be given to clients' with immediate needs.

Interview preparations and appeal submissions have clear deadlines, while, for example, subsequent applications have no specific deadlines until accepted by the Asylum Services. A.Ss.I.S.T. lawyers were able to support asylum applications and provide legal assistance to several of the Afghan clients referred by IBA. Following developments in Afghanistan, the AGLs also reviewed case records for Afghan clients to assess whether there may be sound arguments for Afghans to counter some negative decisions and for some clients to receive international protection by subsequent applications. AGLs will now make their recommendations as to which cases may proceed with subsequent applications.

## COVID19 CONTINUED...

In November 2021, the Greek government introduced new COVID19 restrictions. These new restrictions require all persons entering all public services to show an authorised vaccination certificate or a PCR negative test from an authorised provider. Most of our clients have not had access to a vaccination program and PCR tests are not free (on Chios, they cost EUR 8,00/test and on the mainland EUR 10,00/test).

A.Ss.I.S.T. decided that it was necessary to pay for authorised COVID19 tests (EUR 8,00/test) as, without a certificate to this effect, our clients could not enter the Citizen Services Bureau to have Powers of Attorney authorised, or the police station to progress their IDs and other applications, or even the Asylum Services in order to sign an Act of Appeal. The tests are valid for 48 hours so, on some occasions, A.Ss.I.S.T. paid for two tests for one client: power of attorney followed several days later with lodging an Act of Appeal. No other solution was found to resolve this problem and allow legal requirements to go forward.

The year 2021 was a year marked by an ever changing environment - both in terms of legal framework and actual circumstances: the COVID-19 pandemic, fluctuation of migration flows, the number of arrivals and in the constant changes to our beneficiaries' needs. A.Ss.I.S.T. managed to adapt rapidly and effectively. The Team demonstrated significant flexibility in how it responded to these ever-changing circumstances. We continued to provide quality services to our clients covering a wide range of needs with quite modest resources uninterrupted throughout the year. A.Ss.I.S.T.'s synergies with other local and international actors, many of whom reached out to A.Ss.I.S.T., confirm the profile of A.Ss.I.S.T. as a small team with an important role in filling-in gaps in the provision of information services and legal assistance to asylum seekers and BIPs.

A.Ss.I.S.T. looks forward to the continued support of our donors.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

# THANK YOU!

If you would like to make a donation to A.Ss.I.S.T. please visit our website:

<https://www.assistchios.info/en/donate>  
or contact [office@assistchios.info](mailto:office@assistchios.info)

# A.Ss.I.S.T. Financial Report 2021

<b>Grants</b>	
CatchASmile	€ 12,000.00
ChooseHumanity	€ 4,500.00
ChooseLove	€ 64,100.00
Donate4Refugees	€ 7,305.21
HelpForRefugees	€ 2,190.00
Lush Retail	€ 6,749.92
SolidairTee	€ 10,599.67
Stiftungsfonds Zivile Seenotrettung	€ 70,000.00
Verein Fair	€ 2,000.00
	<b>€ 179,444.80</b>
<b>Crowdfunding</b>	
Donate4Refugees	€ 1,752.71
Global Giving	€ 16,575.90
	<b>€ 18,328.61</b>
<b>Public donations</b>	€ 638.30
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>€ 198,411.71</b>
Reimbursement from 2020	<b>€ 3,690.00</b>
Total Revenue 2021	<b>€ 202,101.71</b>
Legal aid	€ 73,159.65
volunteer support	€ 14,892.63
training	€ 400.00
office running costs	€ 7,241.62
Transport	€ 813.43
Technology	€ 671.43
Legal advice	€ 320.00
Management	€ 5,246.29
Total Expenditure 2021	<b>€ 102,745.05</b>

<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE 1 JAN 2021</b>	<b>11,907.74€</b>
<b>PLUS INCOME 2021</b>	<b>214,009.45€</b>
<b>LESS 2021 EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>111,264.40€</b>
<b>FUNDS AVAILABLE 1 JAN 2022</b>	<b>111,264.40€</b>