

Timeline of return policies in Greece

1990s	Early 2000s	Post-2008 debt crisis	Post-2015 ‘refugee crisis’
<p>Law 1975/1991 is adopted to regulate entry and residence of migrants in Greece and to organise deportation procedures.</p> <p>Large-scale deportations of irregular Albanian migrants without legal process, widely known as ‘sweeping operations’. Fewer deportations of citizens of other countries.</p>	<p>Deportations decrease (but never cease) after successive regularisation programs, in the context of high rates of economic development supported by cheap migrant labour.</p> <p>A Bilateral Readmission Protocol between Turkey and Greece is signed in 2001.</p> <p>EU readmission agreements between various third countries (incl. Albania, Russia, Ukraine and other Balkan and Eastern European countries).</p> <p>Dublin 2 implementation.</p>	<p>Large numbers of migrants leave Greece voluntarily due to high unemployment, either seeking for opportunities in other countries or returning to their countries of origin – sometimes adopting circular migration routes.</p> <p>RABIT operation Frontex (2010-2011) and operation Shield (2012-2013).</p> <p>Construction of the fence in the Greek-Turkish borders (Region of Evros) starts in 2012.</p> <p>Law 3907/2011 is adopted to transpose the Directive 2008/115/EC on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.</p> <p>Massive arrests aiming at identifying and subsequently deporting irregular migrants are held under the ‘Xenios Zeus’ operation (2012-2013).</p> <p>The Greek Ombudsman launches the Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns in 2014.</p> <p>A system of pre-removal detention centres is established with a Ministerial Decision in 2015, regulating already existing detention facilities.</p> <p>IOM launches Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program in Greece.</p> <p>The Greek Asylum Service (GAS) was established in 2011, and started its operation in 2013.</p>	<p>Push-back operations in the Aegean Sea and Evros region are increasingly reported.</p> <p>In 2015 Greece becomes one of the main entry points to Europe for more than 1 million refugees and migrants. Five hotspots are established in the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos.</p> <p>The EU Turkey statement reached in 2016 creates ground for returns to Turkey. The following years extensive and substantial amendments of the Greek asylum law took place.</p> <p>Closing of the Balkan Route (2016).</p> <p>In 2016, a distinct Ministry of Migration Policy is established for the first time in Greece.</p> <p>In 2020 thousands of migrants gather at the Greek-Turkish border. After that the patrols are reinforced on the Greek side.</p> <p>Seven successive reforms of the Greek asylum legislation follow the launching of the EU-Turkey Statement (18.3.2016).</p> <p>IOM Greece continues AVRR with repeated programs.</p> <p>Frontex gets deeply engaged in border surveillance.</p> <p>The National Commission for Human Rights (HCHR), launches the Recording Mechanism of Informal Forced Returns in 2023.</p> <p>In the end of 2023, the position of the National Coordinator for Returns is established in the MMA (Law 5078/2023).</p>

Source: Hatziprokopiou, P., Kandyliis, G., Komita, K., Koutrolidou, P., Papatzi, E., & Tramountanis, A. (2024). Legal and Policy Infrastructures of Returns in Greece - Country Dossier (WP2) (v1.). GAPS: De-centring the Study of Migrant Returns and Readmission Policies in Europe and Beyond.
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