

3.3.2 Efficiency

Many policy and practice initiatives focused on improving the efficiency of national asylum systems. EU+ countries made significant changes to optimise the available resources. For example, more and more countries seem to re-organise their asylum procedures and corresponding reception systems around the establishment of arrival centres, but relevant initiatives go much beyond. The overview below includes policies and practices that improve efficiency through digitalisation and the use of new technologies in the framework of asylum, through prioritising or fast-tracking applications, through the re-organisation of the procedure itself or through major changes in the number of staff employed.

Country	Area(s) concerned	Policy & practice
Austria	Return	The BFA launched a new bonus programme to encourage (former) applicants' assisted voluntary return. The programme focused on nationalities from the six most common countries of origin: Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic.
Belgium	Access to procedure, Reception of applicants for international protection	The reception centre Petit-Château / Klein Kasteeltje was transformed into a temporary arrival centre
	Procedures at first instance	The Immigration Office and the CGRS have increased its staff and plans to further increase the number of employees throughout 2019, in order to decrease backlog and processing times.
	Procedures at first instance	InSite, the platform for communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing of the CGRS, was further expanded and it is reported to occupy an increasingly prominent position as a central source for relevant information.
Bulgaria	Vulnerable applicants - UAMs	The State Agency for Child Protection, in cooperation with all responsible institutions and organisations, developed a coordination mechanism for interaction among the various stakeholders working with UAMs.
Cyprus	Access to procedure, Reception of applicants for international protection	Establishment of a first reception centre Pournara in Kokkinotrimithia, in the area of Nicosia, with co-funding from the European Commission through the Emergency Fund.
	Procedures at first instance	The Asylum Service increased the number of its experts supporting the assessment of asylum applications (co-financed through AMIF) in order to decrease its backlog.
Czech Republic	Country of origin information	The initial version of the new COI database was further developed throughout 2018.
Denmark	Procedures at first instance	The Danish Immigration Service is preparing to change its practice concerning applicants from Syria following a statement from the Danish Refugee Board. Based on changes in the general situation in Syria, a residence permit cannot be granted anymore by merely referencing to the general circumstances in the country. The Danish Immigration Service will select trial cases and is now initially refusing to grant residence permit for applicants from the Damascus Governorate.
Finland	Return	The Finnish Immigration Service launched the VAPA 2 project, testing how individual guidance on the grounds for negative decisions influences applicants' willingness to return voluntarily to their home country. The project also included trainings on voluntary return for all stakeholders working with applicants in reception centres.

France	Access to procedure, Procedures at first instance	To strengthen foreign services, including the asylum services of prefectures in 2018, new contractors were recruited for a period of 12 months (<i>plan</i> 1200 mois vacataires). The number of permanent staff in GUDA was also increased in 2018: in 2018, 42 permanent staff strengthened the GUDA most exposed to flows of asylum seekers.
	Procedures at first instance	<p>OFPPA changed its internal practice and sends the invitation to the personal interview immediately when the application is lodged. The invitation can also be sent electronically since 1 January 2019.</p> <p>The OFPPA has seen regular staff increases since 2015 as a result of increases in its job ceiling (+55 FTEs in 2015, +140 FTEs in 2016, +115 FTEs in 2017 and +15 FTEs in 2018). The draft Finance Law of 2019 brings the job ceiling for the Office to 805 FTEs (+10 FTEs as part of the pilot in French Guiana).</p>
	Procedures at second instance	<p>The CNDA saw significant budgetary and human resources increases in 2018, to enable it to cope with the very sharp increase in the number of appeals. In addition to the 51 jobs created by the original Finance Act, 51 additional jobs were created during the year, bringing the Court's total number of permanent staff to 491. With the arrival of four new magistrates, the additional staff have made it possible to create four additional chambers.</p> <p>67 new rapporteurs were trained in legal, geopolitical and drafting aspects necessary for their work, while 40 asylum judges also received training adapted to their functions.</p>
Germany	Access to procedure, Procedures at first instance, Procedures at second instance, Reception of applicants for international protection, Return	Establishment of the AnKER Centres in Bavaria, Saxony and Saarland, aiming to bring together all authorities involved in the asylum process.
	Procedures at first instance	The BAMF was allocated additional 1 632 posts.
	Procedures at first instance	The BAMF has conducted a pilot for a new search engine finding more rapidly the applicants' files - planned to integrate this engine in MARiS (BAMF asylum information system) in 2019.
Greece	Procedures at first instance	The Asylum Service launched working groups – based on Law 4540/2018 – in order to increase its capacity.
Ireland	Procedures at first instance, Return	The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and the International Protection Office decided in May 2018 to expand the Case Processing Panel of Legal Graduates, in order to continue to carry out functions effectively and to reduce caseloads.
Malta	Procedures at second instance	Based on a new agreement, Legal Aid Malta (unit within the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government) has started assigning legal aid lawyers from the government pool for applicants who lodged an appeal with the Refugee Appeals Board for negative asylum decisions and Dublin transfers or with the Immigration Appeals Board for detention orders.
Netherlands	Procedures at first instance	The State Secretary for Justice and Security amended the asylum policy on Afghanistan, China, Iraq and Somalia and issued a decision clarifying the policy when Article 1F of the Refugee Convention applies.

Netherlands	Procedures at first instance	The IND significantly increased the number of its staff members.
Norway	Access to procedure	The Norwegian National Police Immigration Service now creates automated analytical reports during asylum seekers' arrival phase in order to expose human smuggling and human trade related crime.
Slovenia	Reception of applicants for international protection	The government adopted the contingency plan for providing accommodation and care in case of increasing number of asylum applicants.
Spain	Procedures at first instance, Special procedures - Accelerated procedure	The Government approved the creation of 231 new positions for the Office of Asylum and Refuge (OAR) by means of Royal Decree 6/2018. There has been a special increase in human resources to deal with accelerated procedures, for example at the border, to cover 24 hours/7 days a week.
	Access to procedure	The access to procedure has become more decentralised: the police may now assist the OAR with registrations of applications.
Sweden	Procedures at first instance	All new applications are handled electronically since 1 February 2018.
	Procedures at first instance	The Swedish Migration Agency launched the pilot project Asyl 360 aiming to speed up and increase the efficiency of the asylum procedure, and to combine the accommodation of asylum seekers and the examination of their applications into one comprehensive process. The ambition is that 50 % of the total asylum case-load should be managed within 30 days
	Procedures at second instance	In cooperation with the Swedish National Courts Administration, the Swedish Migration Agency started a pilot project to enable the digital transfer of appeals between the Agency and the courts.
	Procedures at first instance	As a consequence of a lower number of people coming to Sweden to apply for asylum, and related budget cuts, the Swedish Migration Agency significantly downsized its operations and reduced the number of branch offices as well as the number of employees.
Switzerland	Special procedures - Accelerated procedure	In preparation for the entry into force of the provisions concerning the new accelerated asylum procedures on 1 March 2019, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) carried out pilot projects in two phases in Zurich, Boudry (Canton of Neuchâtel) and Chevrilles (Canton of Fribourg).