

Practical Guide on Information Provision

Access to the asylum procedure



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On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.



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About the guide

Why was this guide created? The mission of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) is to facilitate and support the activities of European Union Member States and the associated countries (EU+ countries ⁽¹⁾) in the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). According to its overall aim to promote a correct and effective implementation of the CEAS and to enable convergence, the EUAA develops common operational standards and indicators, guidelines and practical tools.

How was this guide developed? This guide is the result of a joint effort between experts from the EU+ countries, the EUAA and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). Valuable input has come from the European Commission, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles ⁽²⁾. Before its finalisation, a consultation on the guide was carried out with all EU+ countries through the EUAA Asylum Processes Network. We would like to extend our thanks to the members of the working group who prepared the drafting of this guide: Pavol Cích, Christina Kallergi, Konstantinos Koulaxidis, Ľubomíra Mieresová, Nadine Santos de Brito, Daniela Stross, and Gerfried Tschoegl.

Who should use this guide? This guide is primarily intended for first contact officials, registration officers and policymakers in the national authorities. Additionally, this guide is useful for any other person or organisation working or involved in the field of information provision in the context of access to the asylum procedure in the EU context.

How to use this guide. This guide is structured in three parts, corresponding to three chapters. Chapter 1 provides guidance on basic principles of information provision, communication techniques and channels. Chapter 2 provides guidance on the organisational set-up of information provision during access to the asylum procedure and Chapter 3 provides guidance on the information that has to be provided to the applicant for international protection during access to the asylum procedure.

This practical guide on information provision in the context of access to the asylum procedure is based on the standards of the CEAS. It should be seen as a complement to other available EUAA tools, in particular, the practical tools for access to the asylum procedure ⁽³⁾ and the *Practical Guide on Registration: Lodging of applications for international protection* ⁽⁴⁾. At the

⁽¹⁾ The 27 Member States of the European Union, complemented by Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

⁽²⁾ Note that the finalised guide does not necessarily reflect the positions of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

⁽³⁾ EASO-Frontex, *Access to the Asylum Procedure – Practical tools for first contact officials*, 2016.

⁽⁴⁾ EASO, *Practical Guide on Registration – Lodging of applications for international protection*, December 2021.





same time, its consistency with other tools has been a primary consideration, especially in relation to the EUAA training curriculum module ‘Communication and information provision to asylum seekers’ ⁽⁵⁾.

How does this guide relate to national legislation and practice? This is a soft convergence tool. It reflects the commonly agreed operational standards of EU+ countries. It is not legally binding.

Disclaimer

This guide was prepared without prejudice to the principle that only the Court of Justice of the European Union can give an authoritative interpretation of EU law.

⁽⁵⁾ See *EASO, Training Catalogue, Training and Professional Development Centre*, p. 14.





Contents

List of abbreviations	7
Introduction	8
1. Basic principles and skills for information provision	10
1.1. Legal requirements	10
1.2. How to communicate information	13
1.2.1. Basic communication techniques	13
1.2.2. Oral communication	17
1.2.3. Adapt your communication techniques to the applicant's personal circumstances	22
1.3. How to convey information	29
1.3.1. Consider the communication channels to use	30
1.3.2. Use several channels at the same time	34
1.3.3. Support information provision with different information material ...	35
2. Organisational set-up of information provision	41
2.1. When to provide information	42
2.1.1. Identify opportunities to provide information	43
2.1.2. Determine when to provide information on certain topics	46
2.2. Where to provide information	46
2.2.1. Provide information at first contact	48
2.2.2. Provide information during registration and lodging	50
2.3. Who provides the information?	51
2.3.1. Determine which organisations should provide information	51
2.3.2. Coordinate among organisations that provide information	52
3. Information provisions topics	54
3.1. Core concepts and principles of the asylum procedure	57
3.1.1. What is international protection?	57
3.1.2. What is the asylum procedure?	59
3.1.3. Confidentiality	61
3.1.4. Principle of the best interests of the child	63
3.1.5. Complaints mechanism	64
3.2. Procedures to be followed	65
3.2.1. Registration procedure	65
3.2.2. Registering dependent adults	67
3.2.3. Registering children	69
3.2.4. Age assessment	69





3.2.5. Personal interview	70
3.2.6. Time frame for the examination	72
3.2.7. Detention	74
3.2.8. Next steps if the application is channelled through a special examination procedure	76
3.3. The rights of applicants for international protection	82
3.3.1. Remain in the country pending the examination procedure	82
3.3.2. Access to an interpreter	83
3.3.3. Legal assistance and representation	84
3.3.4. Right to communicate with UNHCR and other organisations providing legal counselling	85
3.3.5. Right to material reception conditions	86
3.3.6. Withdraw an application for international protection	86
3.3.7. Rights concerning (unaccompanied) children	87
3.3.8. Rights concerning applicants with special needs	89
3.4. Obligations of an applicant for international protection	90
3.4.1. Cooperate with the authorities	90
3.4.2. Be subject to personal search for security reasons	91
3.4.3. Have biometrics taken	91
3.4.4. Communicate contact address and any changes to the address to the authorities	92
3.4.5. Submit the elements to substantiate the application	93
3.5. The possible consequences of not complying with obligations and not cooperating with the authorities	96
3.5.1. Application can be considered as implicitly withdrawn or abandoned	96
3.5.2. Assessment of relevant elements in the asylum claim may be affected	98
3.5.3. Asylum procedure may be accelerated	98
3.5.4. Material reception conditions may be reduced or withdrawn	99
3.6. Voluntary return	99



List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
APD (recast)	asylum procedures directive – Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast)
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU+ countries	EU Member States and the associated countries
FAQs	frequently asked questions
LGBTIQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer persons
Member States	EU Member States
QD (recast)	qualification directive – Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast)
RCD (recast)	reception conditions directive – Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast)
Refugee Convention	The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as ‘the Geneva Convention’)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Introduction

This practical guide has been developed in the context of the **EUAA Let's Speak Asylum** project, the aim of which is to provide a standardised set of practical tools for the implementation of information provision activities during the asylum procedures, the Dublin procedure, reception and resettlement. This practical guide targets any person involved in providing information to applicants for international protection, and policymakers who coordinate information provision activities during access to the asylum procedure.

In accordance with Directive 2013/32/EU (asylum procedures directive (APD) (recast)) ⁽⁶⁾, an applicant for international protection has the right to be informed about the asylum procedure in a timely manner. The information provision enables applicants to enjoy their rights and comply with their obligations. The right to information is one of the core guarantees provided in the APD (recast), aiming to ensure a fair and effective asylum procedure. Delivering information to the applicant is in the interest of both the applicant and the authorities.

Information provision is effective when the applicant comprehends what this information means in practice. This practical guide aims to support information providers in reaching this goal.

Chapter 1. [Basic principles and skills for information provision](#) outlines the basic principles for information provision. It presents communication techniques to deliver information and to adapt the method of communication according to the applicant, in order to ensure understanding. It also presents how information can be conveyed through oral, printed, digital and audiovisual communication channels.

Chapter 2. [Organisational set-up of information provision](#) discusses when the applicant needs to receive certain information to fully attend the procedure and how this can be adapted to the national context. It also presents how the circumstances can affect information provision activities. Furthermore, the chapter introduces how information provision can be coordinated among multiple organisations.

Chapter 3. [Information provisions topics](#) describes in detail the different information topics that need to be covered in the context of access to the procedure. The chapter provides background information on each of these topics, focusing on what the information provider needs to know about the topic and on the message that needs to be delivered to the applicant. Practical tips on how to provide this information complement the description of the information topics. The practical guide does not aim to provide specific formulations that should be directly conveyed to the applicant. Rather, it outlines the messages that need to be conveyed.

⁽⁶⁾ [Directive 2013/32/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast), (OJ L 180/60, 29.6.2013).





This practical guide is part of a toolbox on access to the asylum procedure which supports efficient information provision across the EU+ countries. Besides the practical guide, the toolbox also includes information material and templates for the direct provision of information to applicants for international protection at the early stage of the asylum procedure, during the making, registering and lodging of an asylum application. Further support and information is provided on the Let's Speak Asylum platform, which hosts all the products developed under the Let's Speak Asylum project. The platform can be accessed through the EUAA website.





1. Basic principles and skills for information provision

Information provision primarily aims to enable applicants to fully access and understand the asylum procedure. Applicants for international protection often have limited knowledge about asylum when they first access the procedure. At the same time, they are expected to absorb large amounts of new information that includes legal information on administrative procedures. Your task as an information provider is not only to give the information but also to ensure that the applicant understands what this information means in practice.

It is also in the interest of the asylum administration that the applicant fully understands the information delivered to them from the beginning of the procedure. This information enables them to understand what is expected from them at different stages of the procedure, which consequently enhances the overall quality and efficiency of the asylum procedure. It is necessary to ensure that the applicant receives correct and consistent information about the asylum procedures, as they may have received misinformation from other people, such as smugglers.

This chapter introduces the legal requirements related to information provision and the basic communication techniques that allow you to adapt your message according to the applicant's personal circumstances and to verify their understanding. It also presents how information can be conveyed to applicants orally, in printouts, on digital platforms and via broadcast media.

1.1. Legal requirements

The right to information is one of the core guarantees provided in the APD (recast) to ensure a fair and effective asylum procedure. It is also a prerequisite for effective access to the procedure: the applicant must understand what international protection and the asylum procedure are, to be able to fully participate in the procedure ⁽⁷⁾. Particular attention needs to be given to the situation of persons in detention, to ensure that they receive the necessary information ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ For more information, see ECtHR, judgment of 20 July 2021, *D. v Bulgarie*, No 29447/17, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2021:0720JUD002944717, paragraph 116 (available only in French). A summary is available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#); ECtHR, judgment of 23 February 2012, *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v Italy*, No 27765/09, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2012:0223JUD002776509, paragraph 204. A summary is available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

⁽⁸⁾ See Article 8(1) APD (recast): 'Where there are indications that third-country nationals or stateless persons held in detention facilities or present at border crossing points, including transit zones, at external borders, may wish to make an application for international protection, Member States shall provide them with information on the possibility to do so.'



The applicant has the right to be informed about the asylum procedure in a timely manner ⁽⁹⁾. As a result, the applicant needs to be continuously informed at decisive moments in the course of the procedure. In the context of access to the asylum procedure, this entails giving information about asylum at the very time of accessing the asylum procedure, and about the reception services, within 15 days after lodging the application.

The APD lays down the information that needs to be given to the applicant regarding the asylum procedure, in a language they understand, at decisive moments during the procedures.



Article 12(1)(a) APD (recast) – Guarantees for applicants

1. With respect to the procedures provided for in Chapter III, Member States shall ensure that all applicants enjoy the following guarantees:

(a) they shall be informed in a language which they understand or are reasonably supposed to understand of the procedure to be followed and of their rights and obligations during the procedure and the possible consequences of not complying with their obligations and not cooperating with the authorities. They shall be informed of the time-frame, the means at their disposal for fulfilling the obligation to submit the elements as referred to in Article 4 of Directive 2011/95/EU, as well as of the consequences of an explicit or implicit withdrawal of the application. That information shall be given in time to enable them to exercise the rights guaranteed in this Directive and to comply with the obligations described in Article 13;

It further specifies that this information should be provided free of charge and according to the particular circumstances of the applicant.



Article 19(1) APD (recast) – Provision of legal and procedural information free of charge in procedures at first instance

1. In the procedures at first instance provided for in Chapter III, Member States shall ensure that, on request, applicants are provided with legal and procedural information free of charge, including, at least, information on the procedure in the light of the applicant's particular circumstances. In the event of a negative decision on an application at first instance, Member States shall also, on request, provide applicants with information – in addition to that given in accordance with Article 11(2) and Article 12(1)(f) – in order to clarify the reasons for such decision and explain how it can be challenged.

Directive 2013/33/EU (RCD (recast)) ⁽¹⁰⁾ lays down the information that should be provided to the applicant in relation to reception within 15 days after they arrived in the country.

⁽⁹⁾ For more information, see ECtHR, judgment of 21 January 2011, *M.S.S. v Belgium and Greece*, No 30696/09, ECLI:CE:ECHR:2011:0121JUD003069609, paragraph 304. A summary is available in the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Directive 2013/33/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast), (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013).



Article 5 RCD (recast) – Information

1. Member States shall inform applicants, within a reasonable time not exceeding 15 days after they have lodged their application for international protection, of at least any established benefits and of the obligations with which they must comply relating to reception conditions.

Member States shall ensure that applicants are provided with information on organisations or groups of persons that provide specific legal assistance and organisations that might be able to help or inform them concerning the available reception conditions, including healthcare.

2. Member States shall ensure that the information referred to in paragraph 1 is in writing and in a language that the applicant understands or is reasonably supposed to understand. Where appropriate, this information may also be supplied orally.

In the context of access to the asylum procedure, this means that it is of the utmost importance that the applicant should understand what international protection is and what is expected from them during the making, registering and lodging of their application for international protection. This includes the procedure to follow, the applicant's rights and obligations, the consequences of not complying with such obligations and the consequences of withdrawing the application.

In preparation of the personal interview, applicants should also understand what is expected of them, including how to submit evidence to support their application and the applicable time frame for the next steps of the asylum procedure. The applicant should also be informed about their reception benefits and conditions, by persons working either in the context of the asylum procedure or of reception. Similarly, information should be given on the processing of fingerprints in Eurodac when fingerprints are taken from the applicant⁽¹¹⁾.

Depending on the applicant's individual situation, additional information may be needed. For example, unaccompanied children need to receive specific information on matters that relate to the procedure and to their rights, such as their right to a representative and the role of the latter during the procedure. Another example is that of applicants with special procedural needs who would additionally need to receive information on the support that is available for them.

Information should be given in a manner that ensures it is understood and considers the applicant's particular circumstances, such as their age, gender and/or level of education, in order to ensure effective access to rights and the ability to comply with obligations⁽¹²⁾. For example, child-friendly information considers the age and maturity of the child in order to communicate information in a manner that is as understandable as possible to the child.

To enable effective access to information, the latter needs to be provided free of charge and in a language that the applicant is reasonably supposed to understand.

⁽¹¹⁾ See Article 29 Eurodac regulation for more information on right to information in relation to fingerprinting.

⁽¹²⁾ See recital 22 APD (recast) on the reasons to provide information to applicants for international protection



1.2. How to communicate information

A long list of possible topics could be covered at the beginning of the asylum procedure to fully explain it. Often the applicant is not particularly receptive to this information, as they might have recently arrived and have other, more urgent, needs, such as missing family members and unfulfilled basic needs, or challenges processing new information due to traumatising. If you deliver all the information to the applicant at once, you risk overwhelming them. However, if you reduce the amount of information too much, you may not be able to supply applicants with enough information for them to effectively participate in the procedure.

You can find in this section basic communication techniques that you can use to mitigate this risk.

1.2.1. Basic communication techniques

(a) Reduce complexity

Reducing complexity refers to communicating your core message clearly by using accessible language. This means that all legal and abstract concepts should be explained in non-technical language. Information can also be made relatable to the applicant by using practical examples from the sphere of their lives, to illustrate what a certain piece of information means in practice. However, reducing complexity should not make the message incomplete or incorrect.

Practical considerations

- Write as you speak or talk about abstract concepts in plain language as you speak.
- Make the information concrete by using examples and visual aids.
- Start with what is most important; take out unimportant details.
- Use relatively short and clear sentences that include primarily only one idea.
- Use direct language and active verbs.
- Avoid acronyms.
- Explain cultural differences, when necessary.
- Summarise core information.

(b) Consider the number of information topics

By limiting the number of different topics that are covered at the same time, you allow the applicant to focus on information that is directly relevant to them at that specific point in time. For example, at the beginning of the procedure, it is necessary for the applicant to understand what international protection means and what happens during the asylum procedure. Once this is understood, further information topics can be added within this basic framework.





Practical considerations

- Firstly, provide information that is directly relevant for applicants at that moment, including information on the step of the asylum procedure they are in and how to prepare for the next step.
- Group information topics around themes that relate to each other, for example when talking about the obligations of the applicant, you can provide information on several topics at the same time.
- Let the applicant know that they will receive more information. Guide them on how to find further information on their own. Inform the applicant of when the next oral information provision session will take place.

(c) Consider the level of detail

The level of detail provided corresponds to what is necessary for the applicant to participate in the procedure meaningfully and effectively. At the beginning of the procedure, delivering only a lower level of detail on later steps in the procedure will make it easier for the applicant to absorb the information. This core information will be complemented with further details afterwards, when the applicant is familiar with the basic information.

Practical considerations

- Provide detailed information only on topics that are directly relevant to the applicant, considering their current stage in the procedure and their personal circumstances.
- Provide additional detailed information on other topics after ensuring that the applicant has already received basic information at an earlier stage.

(d) Repeat information

Repeating information during access to the procedure helps the applicant to remember the core content. Identify the central messages of each information topic and repeat them several times, for example through different information provision channels.

Practical considerations

- Use consistent terminology when providing central information.
- Expand on the central message by providing additional information at a later stage.

(e) Use a visual style for written communication

Visual communication techniques can help organise the information content, thus facilitating its understanding and retention. Formats that are visually clear allow the applicants to access and understand the key messages that are relevant to them.





Practical considerations

Break up long texts into short paragraphs.

- Use headings and subheadings.
- Use highlight formats to make central messages stand out.
- Summarise the main information in bullet points at the beginning.
- Add self-explanatory visual aids, such as pictures, drawings, pictograms and flow charts.
- Where possible, use colours and patterns such as stripes or dots in your visual aids, flowcharts and graphs.



Practical tip on visual blueprints

Use visual aids, colours and patterns consistent with the central information that is repeated to the applicant. Reuse the same visual aid in different material to refer to the same information topic. This will help the applicant to remember central content.

Avoid using letters, dates or any other temporal elements in the visual aids. By doing so, your illustrations will not need to be modified for other material and language versions.

Make sure that your visual aids are as self-explanatory as possible. This will facilitate understanding of the message.





Practical tip on easy-to-read formats ⁽¹³⁾

Use **easy-to-read** formats to ensure that information is accessible to persons who have difficulty in reading and understanding written information, including people with poor literacy, reduced eyesight, cognitive and learning difficulties, and limited knowledge of a given language.

Easy-to-read formats facilitate understanding of information by using simplified language and enable access to information by using pictures and visual layouts.

Information material can be made available in an easy-to-read format by simplifying the content and applying the appropriate visual style.

For an **easy-to-understand** text, follow these guidelines.

- Use simple words.
- Use proper nouns rather than pronouns such as 'it', 'he' or 'they'.
- Start a new sentence on a new line.
- Include only one idea per page.
- Accompany text with explanatory pictures where possible.

For an **easier-to-access** text, apply a specific visual layout.

- Align all text to the left and keep all the images to the left of the writing.
- Use plain sans-serif font, such as Arial or Calibri.
- Use large size: at least 14 pt.
- Use wide spacing: at least 1.5 between lines.
- Avoid underlining, italics, writing in colour and special writing design.
- Use wide margins.
- Use large page size: at least A4 where possible.
- Use wide white spaces by including only a limited amount of content on each page.

As easy-to-read material is often much longer than other material because of how it is formatted, it may be beneficial to shorten the text of the key messages that the applicant needs to know.

⁽¹³⁾ For more information on easy-to-read formats, see for example: Inclusion Europe, [*Information To All: European standards for making information easy to read and understand*](#), 2010 and Inclusion Europe, [*Easy-to-read Checklist: Checklist to make sure your document is easy to read*](#), 2010.



Practical tip on the translation of information material

The basic communication techniques facilitate the translation of information into different languages. For example the less complex information is presented and the more abstract terminology is explained, the easier it is to translate accurately.

When translating information material, it is recommended to provide details to the translator about how the material is meant to be used. For example it is good to inform the translator about the target audience, such as when the material is intended for children or persons with special needs, to ensure that the language is translated according to this target group. It is also good to inform the translator about the style of language that is intended for the material, such when informal style is used, to ensure that the translation reflects the same style.

Having translated material proofread by native speakers who are familiar with the asylum context help in making sure that the translations are accurate and they are understood correctly.

1.2.2. Oral communication

Oral communication is the oldest and most trusted form of information exchange among humans. This makes it also, by far, the preferred option for information provision to the applicant.

Providing information orally may be the most commonly used method, but it can nevertheless be challenging. You can find yourself providing information orally to an individual applicant or to a larger group in a dedicated information session. You may also find that oral information provision is not suited for certain groups, such as applicants with hearing impairments. In such cases other methods of communication should be prioritised.

Building trust and ensuring a confidential space for information provision facilitates effective information provision. It allows the applicant to ask questions that are relevant to them and which can sometimes be sensitive or personal. Informing the applicant about the set-up for information provision and how confidentiality is ensured also contributes to building this trust.

This section presents techniques and methods of oral communication that can be used to verify that the applicant correctly understands the information that is delivered to them.

(a) Oral communication techniques

The basic communication techniques presented above apply also to oral communication. There are, however, additional techniques that help to deliver information orally in a manner that makes the message easier to understand.





Start with an informal discussion

Starting an information provision session with an informal discussion helps build trust and makes it easier for the applicant to ask questions during the session.

Speak with a slow and steady pace

When speaking to an individual or a group, **do not speak too fast.**

You have probably shared your information many times before, but the applicant will be hearing it for the first time. Speaking at a slower pace can also help interpreters understand what you say, which in turn improves the quality of the message. Pausing while speaking also allows the applicant to ask questions.

Use an appropriate volume

It is important that the applicant can hear you properly when you speak.

This is also a ground rule: use the volume required to make yourself heard, but not louder than that. Speaking very loudly or shouting can be seen as aggressive, especially when addressing an individual. Asking the question ‘Can you hear me well?’ before you start providing information, can help you to adjust your volume.

Use prosody effectively

The tone of your voice matters. It can help you to emphasise a message or to connect with the applicant. For example, indicate a message is important by using a serious tone. A friendly tone communicates empathy and respect, which can help make the applicant feel more comfortable and safer with you.

Plan more time or take a break

The applicant might have difficulty understanding you or might find it challenging to stay focused for a long time. Set aside time for questions and to take one or more breaks. It can help the applicant process what you have said and increase understanding.

Working with interpreters

Your communication techniques should take working with interpreters into consideration. You may need to explain to the interpreter the terminology you use to ensure correct translation to another language. You may also need to allocate more time for information provision so that the interpreter can translate what is being said.

You should clearly explain your own role and the role of the interpreter to the applicant at the beginning of the information session. Your role is to provide the information and the interpreter’s role is limited to translating what you and the applicant say. It is also important



to note to the applicant that the interpreter is bound by confidentiality, impartiality, neutrality, integrity and professional conduct, in a similar manner to you.

When working with an interpreter, you are in charge of the communication context. For example, you should not allow the interpreter to interact with the applicant on their own behalf, as this would result in you losing control of what information is passed on to the applicant. If this happens, it is advisable to promptly remind the interpreter of their role.



Practical tips on working with interpreters

- Be aware of how certain terms are understood in a given language and explain clearly what you mean. For example the term 'health' should be understood as including both mental and physical health, the term 'family' should be understood as nuclear family rather than extended family and the term 'brothers and sisters' refers to siblings only.
- Verbally verify that the applicant and the interpreter understand each other.
- Be aware of signs indicating that the applicant and the interpreter do not fully understand or trust each other, for example the applicant is hesitating to answer questions or they are providing longer answers than the interpreter is translating.
- Address the applicant directly when you are speaking, by looking at them and using the second person ('you'), even when they cannot understand your language.
- Pause after every one to three sentences to allow for accurate interpretation.



Good practice on ensuring the use of appropriate terminology

It is important to make sure that the interpreter knows the correct and appropriate terminology to use during information provision. Multilingual glossaries can facilitate correct interpretation. Such glossaries should include terminology related to the asylum procedure that is commonly used during information provision sessions, or specialised terminology used when delivering information to certain applicant groups, e.g. LGBTIQ applicants.

The EUAA terminology project aims to establish a multilingual glossary of terms and definitions that are relevant in the asylum context. The glossary can be accessed here: <https://iate.europa.eu/search/collection/FC1BBC4EE1BB4CB4BA96C7146607554E>.



Related EUAA training

The EUAA offers a training module on **interpreting in the asylum context**, which explains the role of the interpreter in the asylum procedure and the principles of interpreting in the asylum context.

If you are interested in attending EUAA training courses, please contact the person responsible for training within your authority to receive additional information.

(b) Verification methods to ensure understanding

The applicant should be encouraged to ask questions during information provision. This is particularly important to clarify any doubts and to dispel any rumours or false information that the applicant may have heard or received.

To ensure that your audience has understood the information you have shared with them, you need to actively check that they understood your message correctly.

Verbal feedback from your audience

Although the applicant might truthfully respond ‘yes’ when you ask if they understood what you have explained, there are several reasons why they might answer ‘yes’ even though they did not actually understand. You can tackle this by applying different verification methods.



Summarise in your own words

After a section of information, you can summarise what you have said by highlighting the main points again and dividing the information into small units. This allows for short discussions/questions before you continue.



Have the applicant repeat in their own words

You can ask applicants to repeat in their own words what you have just said. In this way you will be able to determine if there are any misunderstandings or if the applicant has missed important information. It will also help the applicant to better remember what you have said.



Ask a test question

Without ‘quizzing’ the applicant on their knowledge, you could ask a more detailed question to see if a particular point has come across. For example, after explaining an upcoming appointment you can ask ‘Can you tell me where you need to be?’



Give room for further questions

You can proactively ask the applicant if they have any questions. This is a good way to show early on that you are interested in their feedback and questions and can also give you an idea of the applicant’s main concerns.

➤ Break information down into segments

Repeat the suggested verification methods while the information provision session is ongoing. Do not ask all the questions at the end of the information session. The applicant might be discouraged to tell you that they have not understood everything after you have given a lengthy explanation. Therefore, explain at the beginning of the session that questions can be asked at any time throughout information provision, and divide your message into segments followed by a question-and-answer session.



Practical tip on countering misconceptions

You may come across many falsehoods related to the asylum procedure. It is important that you counter these misconceptions, but it is as important that you do so tactfully.

Do not say outright that the applicant is wrong, as this might reinforce any mistrust that the applicant already feels. Instead, invite them to explain what they have heard about (an aspect of) the procedure and try to address the cause of the falsehood. Then, you can say that the information they heard is wrong and **counteract falsehoods by explaining the real situation or procedure**. You can support what you say with information material, such as a leaflet, a map or other forms of support material.

Non-verbal feedback

When you communicate with the applicant, you use a combination of verbal and non-verbal cues. You can be alert for non-verbal signs with which the applicant (unknowingly) lets you know that they did not understand what you said. Look out for the following signals:

- facial expressions like frowning or yawning;
- looking around the room or staring;
- change of mood or change in tone of voice;
- crossed arms;
- shaking head.

You can counter these reactions by using basic non-verbal communication techniques, including the following.

➤ Say hello with a smile

When greeting the applicant, have a positive and empathetic attitude.

➤ Try to keep neutral facial expressions

Use neutral, open facial expressions. This helps you to convey the message without confusion, and you leave room for the response of the applicant. You can adapt your facial expression to the response you receive but retain a professional attitude.

Give non-verbal feedback to the applicant

When listening to the applicant, you can signal that you hear and understand what they are saying by nodding.

Indicate with your body language that you are paying attention to the applicant

When communicating with the applicant, make sure that you have an open posture that is facing them directly and that you make appropriate eye contact with them. When possible, try not to have any objects (such as tables) between you and the applicant.

Use your hands

Neutral hand gestures can help explain what you mean. Due to potential cultural differences, it is recommendable to also explain verbally what is meant by hand gestures.



Practical tip on being aware of cultural differences

Non-verbal feedback from the applicant can indicate that they understood what you said, for example because they were nodding when you were speaking. However, this can also be done out of respect while the message itself was lost.

Your non-verbal signals matter as well. Your message might seem like good news to you, but it can be received as something negative by the applicant. Leave room for their emotional response by maintaining a professional and neutral attitude.

Keep in mind that smiling, keeping eye contact or handshakes have different connotations in different societies. If the applicant is not smiling back or avoids looking at you, this might be a sign of respect or modesty rather than uncooperative behaviour. Moreover, as widely known, in some cultures shaking the head means 'yes'.

1.2.3. Adapt your communication techniques to the applicant's personal circumstances

Communication techniques adapted to the applicant's personal circumstances will allow the applicant to understand the message better. Thus, tailor-made communication techniques enable the applicant to fully enjoy their rights and comply with their obligations.

When adapting your communication techniques, consider what kind of communication ensures understanding in light of the applicant's personal circumstances. In the context of the asylum procedure, the most common circumstances to consider include the following.

- [Culture](#).
- [Education and level of literacy](#).
- [Gender](#).



- [Age.](#)
- [Cognitive and learning difficulties.](#)
- [Vision and hearing impairments.](#)

(a) Culture

Culture affects the communication style of a person – the way they understand, interpret and retell information. However, one should not assume that all the persons of a certain culture behave or interact in a certain manner. Factors such as age, gender or societal status also have an influence.

Culture may affect the communication style in several ways.

- Certain concepts may have different meanings: dates, seasons, distances and the notions of close family or age can vary depending on the culture. Many abstract concepts can also be new to the applicant, such as fundamental rights or legal assistance.
- Body language and gestures may express different meanings depending on the culture.
- Notions related to appropriate behaviour, customs or involvement in public life can vary depending on the culture.
- Communication in collective cultures, such as in Africa, often puts an emphasis on common routines, social relations and interaction, while in individual cultures, such as in Europe, communication typically focuses on individual experiences, roles and emotions.

Practical considerations

- Explain concretely any abstract concepts used in information provision.
- Familiarise yourself with different communication styles in the culture of the applicant, including level of directness, manners of greeting, body language, etc.



Good practice on working with cultural mediators

Cultural mediators can facilitate the understanding of cultural contexts pertaining to both your country and the applicant's country of origin. They can help explain terminology and provide examples which the applicant can relate to. They can also advise on body language and gestures that may have differing meanings across cultures. Cultural mediators are primarily used in addition to formal interpreters in contexts where precise translation is not needed, such as during community-based activities. Cultural mediators should not be confused with interpreters who are required to certify sufficient language knowledge and are bound by professional conduct related to their role in the asylum procedure.



(b) Education and level of literacy

The level of education may affect access to information and the ability to comprehend information relating to certain aspects outside their personal sphere of life. Limited or lack of (formal) education may affect their communication style in several ways, as explained in the following points.

- Since most people learn to read and write at school, lack of formal education may lead to limited or no literacy and digital literacy. This limits the possibilities to access information provided in writing or through digital platforms.
- Formal education develops our capacity for abstract thinking in logical sequences and our understanding of concepts like size, distances, proportions, time and causality. Applicants with limited education may not be able to comprehend abstract terminology.
- Formal education supplies us with general knowledge about the world, such as historical, geographical and scientific knowledge. Limited or lack of (formal) education may affect the applicant's knowledge of matters outside the scope of their personal sphere of life, such as how administrative procedures work.

Practical considerations

- Provide explanations for any abstract terminology.
- Provide information in a manner that relates to the applicant's personal living environment or experiences instead of general knowledge.
- Use visual material to illustrate your message and ensure that the visual aids used are as self-explanatory and understandable as possible without accompanying text.
- Ensure that illiterate and low-literate applicants have access to oral information and to visual and audio information material.
- Ensure that visual and audio information material is easy to find in the digital platforms even for persons with limited digital skills. Show the applicant how they can find this material by using a computer.

(c) Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed roles of females and males. These social roles may exclude persons who are assumed to be women and girls from decision-making within their family and community. Thus, these roles also impact information provision to female applicants, as they may not proactively ask questions in front of their family or community members, particularly if these questions relate to their own personal situation.

Women and girls may have more limited access to communication channels than men and boys. Male applicants may have better access to digital information through computers or mobile phones, if they are more digitally literate and educated than women. Thus, providing oral information is particularly important when communicating with female applicants.



Women and persons whose gender (and/or sexual) identity does not conform with norms may have a particular need for safe spaces for information provision activities. Their questions and concerns relating to the asylum procedure may be particularly sensitive and personal, thus requiring confidentiality.

Practical considerations

- Provide information to female applicants directly, either individually or in an all-women group session.
- Organise information sessions and offer information material in spaces where women spend their daily lives, such as in women-only spaces at reception centres.
- Pay particular attention to ensure confidentiality during information provision, for example by explaining what confidentiality means, delivering information only in small groups, offering an opportunity for individual information provision, etc.
- Provide female interpreters for information provision sessions.

(d) Age

Child-friendly information refers to information being adapted to a child's age, maturity, gender and culture ⁽¹⁴⁾. You should adjust the complexity of the information according to the child's situation: use simple and concrete words instead of abstract concepts. You should also adjust your communication according to the attention span of the child: a series of short sessions with many breaks is preferable to one long session. Your communication should also take into consideration the child's background, including gender and culture, to make your language as understandable as possible. The younger and less mature the child, the more your communication needs to be adjusted ⁽¹⁵⁾.

The age and maturity of a child similarly affects their access to information. A child may not be able to read or not have the patience to focus on written text. For accompanied children, it is necessary to deliver information to all family members, including children who may have their own asylum claims from their family members. For unaccompanied children, it is important to note that they need to receive specific information that is relevant to them. They also need more support in accessing relevant information material, as they do not have parents (or other guardians) continuously available to them to assist them in the procedure or explain information.

In some cultures individuals are considered and see themselves as adults at a younger age than 18 years old. Moreover, following the experience of their migration journey, they may feel

⁽¹⁴⁾ See Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice*, 2010, p. 21.

⁽¹⁵⁾ For more information on principles and practical tips relating to child-friendly information provision, see European Commission, *Creating Child-friendly Versions of Written Documents: A guide*, 2021; Council of Europe, *How to convey child-friendly information to children in migration: A handbook for frontline professionals*, 2018, pp. 15–30; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Technical Guidance: Child-friendly procedures*, 2021, pp. 13–16.





more mature than their actual age. It is therefore necessary to deliver information to the child by using language that is adjusted to their maturity, while explaining the information thoroughly enough to ensure their understanding.

Practical considerations

- Simplify information and use easier terminology than you would normally do.
- Explain difficult words and give examples.
- Repeat central information, verify understanding, and allow more time and breaks more often than you would normally do.
- Use information material that keeps the child's attention and provides information in the form of a game, such as an activity book, to make the information interesting.
- Share information in formats that children normally use, including digital tools, visual aids and games.
- Create a safe space for information provision without distractions.
- Make the child feel comfortable with you, for example by starting with a topic that the child feels comfortable talking about.
- Consider individual information provision instead of a group setting.
- Allow enough time for information provision and planned breaks.

You may need to adjust your communication techniques not only when talking to children but also for elderly persons. In this case, their personal circumstances may be related to limited digital literacy, declining hearing or eyesight, or cognitive difficulties. For more information, see Section [1.2.3\(e\) 'Cognitive and learning difficulties'](#) and Section [1.2.3\(f\) 'Vision and hearing impairments'](#).

(e) Cognitive and learning difficulties

Cognitive and learning difficulties may not be visible at first glance. However, you might notice that the applicant has difficulty in giving clear and coherent statements, memorising information or focusing on information provision. Cognitive and learning difficulties may result from medical problems such as intellectual disabilities, depression, brain injuries or addiction to drugs or alcohol, or may be a side effect of strong medicines.

Depending on the severity of the cognitive and learning difficulties, it may be necessary to provide information in oral form to ensure that the message is conveyed. As providing information to persons with cognitive and learning difficulties can be challenging, support from specialised services can also be considered. Individual information provision is also recommended.

It is important to **note that exposure to traumatic events can cause post-traumatic stress** that may also affect the applicant's memory and behaviour. Traumatized applicants often have poor memory. They may be on constant alert – which decreases their ability to concentrate –





and may avoid information that relates to their trauma – which can include asylum matters. They may also feel numb, which can appear as unresponsiveness. Thus, highly traumatised applicants may need similar communication techniques to persons with cognitive and learning difficulties, depending on the behaviour and reactions of the applicant.

Practical considerations

- Focus on the central messages by using short sentences and simple language.
- Repeat information more often than you would normally do.
- Use easy-to-read formats for information material.
- Do not provide too much information at once.
- Use techniques to verify understanding.
- Listen actively and engage the applicant in the discussion to enhance their concentration.
- Use a neutral tone and non-judgemental attitude.
- Pay particular attention to providing information in segments and pause often to allow time to process information and ask questions.
- Plan more time and breaks than you would normally do.
- Allow the presence of a trusted support person, if the applicant so wishes.

(f) Vision and hearing impairments

Vision and/or hearing impairments can vary from mild deficits to blindness and deafness. Any applicant may experience such impairments, however they are more common among elderly persons. Your communication techniques should be adapted according to the severity of the impairment(s).

Information provision to applicants with impairments may require specialised skills and knowledge. Depending on the severity of the impairment, you may wish to consider specialised services, such as sign language interpreters, to support the information provision. Individual information provision may be necessary.

The applicant may not be able to access information in different formats, such as orally, in writing, and in visual and/or audio formats. Thus, it is necessary to make information available in various forms to ensure that relevant messages are made available to applicants with different types of impairments.

Speech impairments may also affect your communication if the applicant is not able to orally ask questions and express matters that are relevant for information provision. Alternative methods of communication should be based on the usual form of expression used by the applicant.



Practical considerations in communicating applicants with vision impairment

Depending on the degree of vision impairment, the following tips may be applicable.

- Consider recording the information provision session so that the applicant can access the information again.
- Make easy-to-read information material available with sufficiently large font size and visual aids.
- Use other channels besides communication in person to provide information, including audio material.

Practical considerations in communicating with applicants who have a hearing impairment

Depending on the degree of hearing impairment, the following tips may be applicable.

- Talk slowly and clearly.
- Avoid using a high-pitched voice as it is difficult to hear.
- Face the applicant directly at eye level so that they can lip-read and pick up visual cues.
- Keep your hands away from your face when you speak.
- Be aware that background noises can decrease the ability to hear.
- Use a notepad to write what you are saying. Write down important/key terms.
- Let the applicant know when you are changing topic, for example by pausing briefly.
- Use a sign language interpreter, when appropriate.
- Use written and visual material along with other channels, instead of oral communication.

Make sure to adapt your messages in addition to your communication techniques

Besides adapting your communication techniques to the applicant's personal circumstances, you also need to adapt the information content to what messages the applicant needs to receive.

When providing information on access to procedure, you need to tailor your messages for, at least, the following applicant profiles:

- unaccompanied children;
- accompanied children;
- dependent adults;
- applicants with special needs;
- applicants channelled to a particular procedure, such as Dublin procedure, accelerated procedure, admissibility procedure or border procedure;
- applicants in detention.



Practical tip on providing information to a family by adapting both the message and the communication techniques

- Make sure that all family members are individually provided with information that is specifically relevant for them.
- Adapt your communications techniques at least to the children and women. For example, information needs to be delivered to children in a child-friendly manner that considers their age and maturity to ensure that it is understood, while women may require space for information provision that ensures confidentiality, to ensure that they can ask all questions that are relevant to their application.
- Proactively observe other potential circumstances to which the communication needs to be adapted.



Practical tip on targeted information material and sessions

- Design targeted information material and sessions for unaccompanied children and other applicant profiles.

For some applicant profiles, you will need not only to adapt communication techniques according to personal circumstances, but also to provide specific information in relation to the asylum procedure. For example, unaccompanied children require specific communication techniques and also need to receive specific information about the procedures.

The content of the messages that need to be delivered to the applicants is elaborated in [Chapter 3](#).

1.3. How to convey information

Information can be conveyed to applicants through a variety of channels, including oral communication, printed information material, digital material and audiovisual material. As each communication channel reaches the applicants differently and communicates certain types of information more effectively, it is advisable to convey information through several communication channels at the same time. It is also often necessary to support the passing of information by using information material.

This section outlines different communication channels to convey information, the benefits of using several communication channels at the same time and how information material can support the delivery of information.



1.3.1. Consider the communication channels to use

Not all communication channels are the same. A certain channel can be a better fit for a certain category of applicants and, similarly, other channels can be a better fit for the specific message you are seeking to communicate at a given time. It is therefore important to choose the most appropriate communication channel(s) to deliver information.

When choosing your communication channel(s), make sure that it is **fit for your purpose** (e.g. considering how detailed or complex your message is) and that it is **fit for the applicant** (considering their personal circumstances).

(a) Oral communication

Oral communication allows you to double check that the information has been understood. For this reason, complex information should be communicated to applicants orally, accompanied by appropriate explanations.

You should adapt your communication techniques to the personal circumstances of the applicant and provide information that is directly relevant to them. You can also apply techniques to immediately verify whether the applicant has correctly understood your message. For these reasons, it is recommended to deliver information orally to each applicant at least once during access to the procedure.

For more information on oral communication techniques, see Section [1.2.2\(a\) 'Oral communication techniques'](#).

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaches all applicants• Communicates complex information• Communicates personalised information• Adapts communication techniques to the personal circumstance of the applicant• Can ensure confidential discussions• Can ensure understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time-consuming• Can address only individuals or smaller groups• May not be available to applicants at all times• Requires interpretation





Practical tip on creating groups of applicants for information provision

- Form groups of applicants for oral information provision sessions by looking into their personal circumstances.

Sometimes larger groups can be formed, for example when general information is delivered to applicants who have similar backgrounds in terms of language, nationality and culture. Other times, smaller groups or even individual information provision needs to be considered, for example when the applicants need to receive specific information and/or the information needs to be communicated to them in a specific manner to ensure their understanding, for example for children or persons with cognitive and learning difficulties.

- Consider the group's size and composition to ensure effective information provision.

The group's size should not be so large as to make it difficult for an applicant to ask questions or for you to apply the verification methods to ensure understanding. The group composition should consider what is needed for an applicant to feel safe to raise questions. For example women may not speak or ask questions that are personally relevant for them while in the presence of men.

During information provision in a group setting, it is advisable to inform the applicants explicitly that they can also ask questions privately and in a confidential manner.



Practical tip on supporting oral information with information materials

- Support oral information sessions with printed materials or links to digital sources so that the applicant can revisit the information at their own pace.

Oral information provision has many advantages, but it is fleeting by nature. For the applicant, it can be challenging to absorb and retain large amounts of new content in the given time span. This is why you need to support your oral information sessions with written material.

(b) Printed materials

Printouts primarily include written information, including leaflets, brochures or booklets that can be supported by visual aids, such as infographics, cartoons or flowcharts. For this reason, printed materials can communicate detailed messages and an extensive amount of information.

Printouts are a one-way communication channel that is primarily intended for functionally literate applicants. At the same time, some of the core messages can be illustrated in visual aids to communicate limited content to applicants who are illiterate or have poor reading skills. Printed communication materials can be made available to the applicant at all times.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach large audiences • Are available to applicants at all times • Can be in several languages • Save time in the information provision process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited use for illiterate/low-literate persons • Hard to make fully accessible according to the applicant's personal circumstances • Need tailoring to communicate different information to different applicants • Not possible to verify understanding • Costly to print and keep information up to date



Practical tips to use with low-literate and illiterate persons

- Use simple summaries and self-explanatory illustrations

People with low reading skills do understand the importance of written information and have often developed techniques to use it. They can often access the content of written material if it contains simple summaries, such as a box with short summaries at the beginning of each chapter.

An illiterate person will take and keep printed materials if they recognise that the information is relevant for them. This can be achieved by using self-explanatory cover illustrations.

People with low reading skills and illiterate persons will often ask others from their communities to read more extensive texts out loud to them.

(c) Digital communication

Information can be disseminated via digital platforms so that it is available to the applicant at all times. However, this implies that the applicant has the digital skills required to use the information platforms, and access to the relevant equipment (i.e. an internet connection and a computer or mobile phone). Furthermore, information platforms need to be accessible in a language that the applicant can understand.

Digital platforms can be used to store different types of information material, including material with a high level of detail on a number of information topics. In this way, the applicant can find detailed information on all topics that are relevant to them.

Information can be distributed via a variety of digital platforms, some of which allow interaction with the applicant.



One-way digital communication

Information material that is disseminated digitally is often intended for one-way communication. However, it can be adapted to the personal circumstances of the applicants and include written text, visual communication items and audio.



Practical tip on using digital tools to make information available in different formats

- Use text-to-speech systems to make your written information available in audio format.

This is useful both for persons with limited reading skills and those with limited fluency in the language used.

Two-way digital communication

Digital communication can entail interactive platforms, such as dedicated mobile applications for information provision, social media and chats embedded in a website. These platforms allow the applicant to contact the information provider in order to receive more information or clarifications.

Call-in and messaging services can also be used to communicate directly with the applicant. These include hotlines, emails, phone calls and mobile applications such as WhatsApp. These channels can be used to disseminate specific information or announcements. Interpretation or translation needs to be available to ensure effective communication.

Even though digital interaction cannot replace face-to-face oral information provision, the above-mentioned means can answer the most pressing questions or concerns that the applicant may have in between in-person information provision sessions.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches large audiences • Information provision format can be tailored to the needs of the applicants, including text, visual aids and audio • Enables interaction between the applicant and the information provider • Available at all times • Can be made available in several languages • Can provide specific and updated information • Not time consuming or costly to provide information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for applicants with the appropriate digital skills • Only for applicants who have access to an internet connection and the relevant equipment • Specialised materials need to be developed to communicate information according to the personal circumstances of the applicants • Limited opportunity to ensure understanding





Practical tip on frequently asked questions

- Prepare frequently asked questions (FAQs) and answers for each information topic. It will facilitate information provision for both the provider and the applicant.

FAQs can be automated in digital platforms by using chatbots that ‘talk’ to the applicant about their most common questions on the asylum procedure and refer to relevant information materials. Chatbots can be programmed to communicate in different languages. They function 24/7 and can also be made available in public spaces in reception centres, or in the waiting area at the asylum service.

(d) Audiovisual communication

Audiovisual communication refers to broadcast media, including loudspeakers, video screens, television or radio. This one-way communication channel is intended for communicating simplified messages or announcements that need to reach applicants within short time limits. Broadcasted information is often delivered in an environment with distractions, which makes broadcasting less suited for detailed, complex or personalised messages.

Even though broadcast media can reach large audiences, this channel is most effective when it targets a well-defined audience. For example, loudspeakers are a useful channel to make announcements and video screens can be used to disseminate videos and animations in reception facilities.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaches large audiences • Can be made accessible to applicants regardless of their personal circumstances • Not time consuming to provide information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only for targeted messages or announcements, not for complex, detailed or personalised information • Target audience reachable only in certain contexts, such as operations, refugee camps and reception centres • Difficult to make available in several languages • Not possible to verify understanding

1.3.2. Use several channels at the same time

It is desirable to disseminate the same information through different communication channels for various reasons.

- Information is more accessible when it is made available in several channels that can suit the personal circumstances of each applicant, including various degrees of literacy, education, cognitive capacity, maturity, etc.



- By engaging more senses (listening, watching, speaking), it is easier to understand and retain new information.
- Repeating content increases the understanding of and the trust in the information being provided.
- By using additional channels you increase the chance of actually reaching the applicant.

Therefore, using various channels to distribute information helps you to reach the applicant and strengthen the message.

Applicants must be given the opportunity to receive personalised information. This can be done through oral communication that adapts the communication techniques according to the applicant's personal circumstances and allows you to deliver messages that are directly relevant to them. Oral communication can be combined with other communication channels to ensure that the information is available to the applicant at all times.

When the information is made available in several channels, it is necessary to ensure that it is consistent.



Practical tip on establishing a link between the printed and digital channels

- Use printed materials to direct the applicant to online information. To do so:
 - make all your printed materials accessible on digital platforms;
 - include a link and/or QR code on your printed material.

1.3.3. Support information provision with different information material

In order to disseminate information through different communication channels, you need to have information material available. You can choose among numerous types of information material to host information in written, visual and/or audio format. Most material types allow you to combine different formats, which increases access to information for applicants.

Table 1 lists the most common information material types, grouped in categories by their format and accompanied with the respective advantages and disadvantages.



Table 1. The advantages and disadvantages of different material types

Material type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Written communication that can be supported by visual aids		
Leaflet/brochure/newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows targeted messages • Can communicate general and detailed information • Can communicate a number of different information topics • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions, printouts and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits complex messages only if they can be simplified • Not suitable to deliver extensive explanations or many details
Booklet/guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits complex messages and information on a specific theme • Can communicate extensive details • Can communicate many different information topics • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions, printouts and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary target are not the applicants but asylum practitioners • Extensive and detailed information may be difficult for the applicant to absorb • Time-consuming to read



Material type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Visual communication that can be supported by written information		
Poster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits simplified messages or announcements • Can be used to highlight or give visibility to an information topic • Possible to distribute through printouts and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only suits simplified core messages • Limited space for information; not for detailed information • Only for maximum two information topics • Printed posters require large wall space
Flowchart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits messages that can be illustrated as a chronological timeline or process • Can be used to explain or simplify complex information • Can communicate detailed information • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions, printouts and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cover only for one information topic or a limited number of topics • Only for information that can be presented as a chronological process
Cartoon / picture book / colouring book / activity book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits core messages • Can communicate emotionally charged messages • Can communicate several information topics • Child-friendly format • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions, printouts and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily for simplified messages; no space for explanations • Only for messages that can be communicated through a limited number of picture frames • Not for detailed information



Material type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Audio communication that can be supported by written information		
Audio file / podcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can communicate complex messages • Often suits information on a specific theme • Can communicate general and detailed information • Can contain several information topics • Can be converted from written format • Possible to distribute through different communication channels, such as oral information provision sessions, screens in waiting areas, and digital platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to focus on long audio files • Detailed explanations may be difficult to follow without visualisation or script • Audio cannot be distributed as a printout (transcripts of audio files can be printed)

Material type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Combination of written, visual and audio communication		
PowerPoint presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits targeted messages • Can communicate general and detailed information • Can communicate a number of different information topics • Accessible to all applicants when combining written text, still visuals, audio and even video • Catches the attention easily • Information can be modified and updated without considerable costs • Production is less costly than a video/animation • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions, printouts and digital platforms • Can be dubbed in many languages at little additional cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily for core messages with limited level of details • Not for extensive explanations or details • Only for information that can be communicated through a limited number of slides
Videos/animations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits simplified core messages • Can communicate emotionally charged messages • Can communicate general and detailed information • Accessible to all applicants when written text, visualisation and audio are combined • Catches the attention easily • Possible to distribute through oral information provision sessions and digital platforms • Can be dubbed in many languages at little additional cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily for one information topic or a limited number of topics • Primarily for core messages with limited level of detail • Cannot be distributed as printouts • Requires technological readiness, including sufficient bandwidth • High production costs; difficult to update content

Further training on information provision

The provision of information to applicants is generally considered a special expertise. Methodologies for the provision of information are briefly explained in this chapter, but to understand the full complexity of the subject and to be able to use that knowledge in practice, the EUAA recommends attending a dedicated training module on the subject.



Related EUAA training

The EUAA offers the module '**Communication with and information provision to asylum seekers**' which outlines the skills needed in designing, planning and implementing cross-cultural communication strategies. The aim of this module is to enable practitioners to assess the information needs of persons in need of international protection, applicants and potential beneficiaries of international protection. After attending this training, you will be able to adapt and disseminate accessible messages through the appropriate channels.

If you are interested in attending EUAA training courses, please contact the person responsible for training within your authority in order to receive additional information.



2. Organisational set-up of information provision

The circumstances related to when information is delivered to the applicant vary depending on whether the procedural steps of access to procedure – making, registering and lodging – happen separately or concurrently and whether there are additional opportunities to interact with the applicant. Contexts in which information is delivered vary depending on whether you are in an operational environment that responds to large number of arrivals or in an office environment that enables individual meetings with a smaller number of applicants. Who delivers information varies depending on whether information provision is centralised with one stakeholder or delivered in cooperation with multiple organisations.

The authorities are responsible for ensuring that information provision is guaranteed to applicants for international protection (Article 12 APD (recast)). Thus, they are responsible for coordinating the delivery of information so that the relevant messages reach the applicant. Consistent information provision can be guaranteed by identifying, in your national setting, which information should be delivered, when, where and by whom.

Access to the asylum procedure often includes two settings: the first-contact setting, which refers to the arrival context, including the procedural step of making an application for international protection; and registering/lodging an application for international protection.





Related EUAA tools

The **EASO-Frontex, *Practical Guide on Access to the Asylum Procedure*, 2016** supports first-contact officials in their role of guaranteeing effective access to international protection in the first contact context, for example by providing information.

This practical guide provides information about the core obligations of first-contact officials, the rights of persons in need of international protection and information on the procedural guarantees, and support that is provided in the first-contact context.

The practical guide and its translations are available here: <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-tools-first-contact-officials-practical-guide>

The **EASO, *Practical Guide on Registration – Lodging of applications for international protection*, 2021** supports officials in their daily work of registering and lodging applications for international protection in the after first-contact setting, by adhering to common European registration standards.

This practical guide lays down the legal framework related to the three steps of access to procedure, including detailed information on the rights and obligations triggered at different steps of registration. The guide, among others, describes the main characteristics of the after first-contact environment and provides information for the identification of applicants with potential vulnerabilities or Dublin cases.

The practical guide and its translations are available here: <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-registration>

This chapter introduces the settings regarding when, where and by whom information can be delivered to applicants for international protection. It presents how different settings can affect information provision in practice.

2.1. When to provide information

The applicant's rights apply from the beginning of the asylum procedure. Therefore it is paramount that information is delivered in time to enable them to exercise their rights and to comply with their obligations ⁽¹⁶⁾.

It is necessary to consider when applicants need to receive certain information to fully participate in the asylum procedure. At the same time, you should be careful not to overwhelm the applicant with too much information at the beginning of procedure.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Article 12(1)(a) APD (recast).



2.1.1. Identify opportunities to provide information

Access to procedure entails several opportunities to interact with the applicant. The phased approach allows you to deliver information at different times during access to procedure, without overwhelming the applicant with too much information or overly detailed information at the same time. It also allows you to repeat core information to the applicant several times and to build on the core information with more details each time that you interact with the applicant.

Besides phased information provision, information can be made available to applicants at all times through digital platforms and printed materials. For more information refer to Section 1.3 '[How to convey information](#)'.

(a) Procedural steps during access to procedure

Procedural steps that happen during access to procedure refer to activities conducted by authorities in order to register applications for international protection. In accordance with Article 6 APD (recast), there are three steps in access to procedure: making, registering of the making and lodging.

Making of an application refers to the act of expressing to an authority the wish to apply for international protection. After this step, the applicant is considered to be an asylum seeker and enjoys the rights and obligations attached to this status.

Registering of the making means establishing a record of the applicant's intention to seek protection, thus noting down that the applicant is an applicant for international protection. In some national settings basic data is also collected from the applicant during the registration step.

Registration should happen within certain time limits after the application is made (Article 6 APD (recast):

- maximum 3 working days for applications made to the authorities responsible for registering them;
- maximum 6 working days for applications made to other authorities that are not responsible for registering them;
- maximum 10 working days for simultaneous large numbers of applications that make it very difficult to respect a 3 or 6-day time limit.

Lodging completes the registration procedure. The examination procedure of the application starts at this stage.

Lodging typically refers to a stage when more comprehensive data is collected from applicants to complete the registration. Afterwards, the application is submitted to the determining authority and its examination starts.



These procedural steps do not necessarily reflect three segregated phases. The making can occur before or at the same time as the registration, and several EU+ countries combine the steps of the registration and lodging into one phase.

The procedural steps provide an opportunity to deliver information, particularly on the procedure to follow and the rights and obligations of the applicant. Authorities often conduct these steps while at the same time providing information to the applicant and explaining procedural information to them in practical terms.

The procedural steps often require that the applicant presents themselves in person and offer the opportunity to provide information to the applicant orally. As basic information is often collected from applicants during registration, this allows the message to be tailored to the personal situation of each applicant, for example on topics such as the available support in relation to potential special procedural or reception needs, or a special examination procedure to follow if the application is channelled to a particular procedure. These steps also provide an opportunity to verify understanding and allow the applicant to ask questions and clarify any doubts.

(b) Other opportunities during access to procedure

Access to procedure offers several opportunities to deliver information to the applicant besides during the procedural steps of access to procedure itself. These opportunities include the following:

- arrival context, including activities during first contact at the border;
- medical screening;
- fingerprinting;
- meeting with legal counsellor or guardian;
- referral to specialised actors for second-line support;
- receiving support services.

These opportunities allow you to provide more detailed information on the step at hand, for example, what the medical screening entails or what can be expected from second-line support.

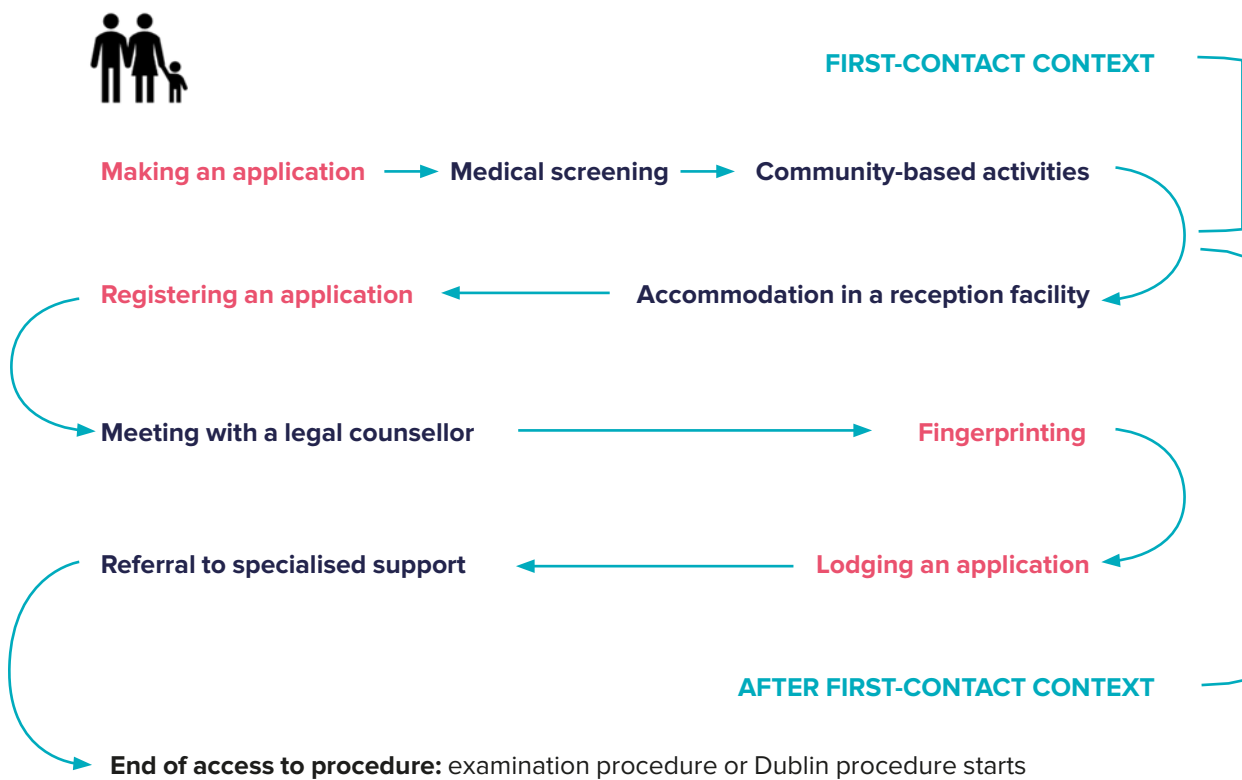
In addition to the above, you can deliver any information related to the asylum procedure, including general procedural information or information that focuses on a particular topic during:

- intake in the reception centre;
- community activities.

You can use these opportunities to complement the information provided during the procedural steps, and to repeat and explore further previously shared information.

Figure 1 shows different opportunities that may allow interaction with the applicant during access to procedure. In your national setting, the procedural steps can take place concurrently, and other opportunities to provide information may arise in a different order, not occur at all, or there could be additional opportunities.

Figure 1. Different opportunities that may allow interaction with the applicant



- **Procedural steps and other procedural requirements**
- **Other opportunities**

**Practical tip on making information available at all times during access to procedure**

Next to these opportunities for delivering information in person, information should be made available to the applicant at all times through different communication channels. See Section 1.2. '[How to communicate information](#)' for further details.

2.1.2. Determine when to provide information on certain topics

In the information provision process, it is recommended to distinguish between:

- when you need to provide core information;
- when you can provide further detailed information.

As information can be delivered in a phased manner, you can first deliver basic information on each topic and then complement it with further details, as follows:

- identify the core messages related to each information topic;
- repeat the core messages during the different steps of the procedure;
- each time, accompany the core message(s) with further details.

For more information on when to deliver information on certain topics, see [Chapter 3](#).

2.2. Where to provide information

The practical aspects of providing the information are strictly linked to the operational setting where access to the asylum procedures' phases actually takes place.

Usually, the information provision component is part of a broader workflow that regulates the roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders concurrent to the implementation of the asylum procedures. A workflow such as this depends on the operational setting. For example, the information flow established in a location receiving a large number of applicants will be different from the one taking place in an office space where asylum applications are processed individually.

When dealing with large number of arrivals, it is important to distinguish between:

- operational settings where applicants are supposed to be hosted in the same location as the arrival until conclusion of the first instance process (such as in the context of a hotspot);
- situations where applicants are quickly moved from the port or harbour of arrival to a first reception centre.



In the former case, the concerned authorities and operational partners can take advantage of the applicants' longer stay to convey more detailed messages throughout the stages of the asylum procedures. This will allow to clarify doubts and activate relevant referral pathways.

In the latter case, due to time and space limitations, the responsible first contact officials need to ensure that core messages are clearly and efficiently conveyed to the applicants, particularly with regard to what happens next in the procedure.

The operational setting is another key aspect to consider when it comes to securing a confidential environment to interact with the applicant, particularly with certain profiles such as LGBTIQ persons, victims of gender-based violence or persons with health problems or disability. Confidentiality is a prerequisite when interacting with such persons, in order to ensure their protection and foster cooperation with the authorities.



Practical tips on large number of arrivals

Disembarkation: applicants can be screened upon arrival and then transferred to first-reception centres.

- **Use printed and audiovisual materials or QR codes linking to digital material** when providing information about the asylum procedure. This material can complement the information that was provided orally at the time of disembarkation.
- **Group the applicants by language**, based on the available information about nationalities on board. Address the groups to provide information on the asylum procedures in the country of disembarkation.
- **Look out for vulnerabilities.** If vulnerable profiles are pre-identified on the basis of the available indicators, make sure that they are provided with the relevant information. Take confidentiality requirements into account as much as possible, for instance by gathering those persons in a different group.

Hotspot-like settings. As the applicants can be hosted until completion of the asylum procedure, the information flow can be structured by taking into consideration the standard methodological recommendations described in this guidance document.

- **Look after vulnerabilities.** If available, use **safe zones and/or child-friendly spaces** to provide information on asylum procedures to vulnerable profiles and unaccompanied children. This will help meet the confidentiality requirements while allowing for a more participative interaction, as you could use information materials tailored to the communication needs of vulnerable profiles and children.





Practical tips on individual interaction

- **Adjust your workflows to overcome space limitations and ensure confidentiality**

The administrations involved in operational settings are sometimes confronted with temporary or permanent space limitations that could make it difficult to ensure the confidentiality requirements.

- **Schedule one registration at a time to ensure confidentiality**

Workflow adjustments could be considered in order to mitigate the risk of an applicant being overheard. For example, you could consider scheduling only one registration at a time to ensure that the applicants and respective interpreters cannot recognise and/or hear each other.

- **Register applicants speaking different languages at the same time**

If a significant backlog does not allow for individual registrations, you could schedule in the same time slot applicants speaking different languages. This will mitigate the risk of being overheard. The registration officers should check in advance that the applicants being registered cannot understand the language of the other applicant and, therefore, could not understand the account shared by them.

- **Install visibility barriers or hold registrations online**

Confidentiality can be further supported by installing visibility barriers so that the applicants cannot see each other.

Remote processing, such as online asylum registrations, is also an option in case the availability of adequate physical space is an issue. However, the concerned authority should make sure that the IT equipment and technical requirements for remote processing are in place.

2.2.1. Provide information at first contact

Information provision at first contact often takes place in a situation when the person seeking asylum has recently arrived in the country and has little knowledge of the asylum procedure. These first-contact situations can happen in different settings, including:

- at the **external border**, such as at border crossing points, green borders, ports and in the transit zones of an airport;
- within **the territory** of an EU+ country, when meeting the authorities with the intention of applying for international protection.

First contact at the external border is often characterised by an operational environment in the context of cross-border movements. It can include simultaneous regular and irregular arrivals, while first contact within the territory typically happens in an established office environment.

One of the main aims of information provision at first contact is to identify those persons who might be in need of international protection and to provide them with information in order to ensure effective access to the asylum procedure.



Related EUAA tool

For more information on the setting around first contact contexts and how to recognise a potential applicant for international protection, see the EASO-Frontex, [*Practical Guide on Access to the Asylum Procedure*, 2016.](#)

To ensure effective information provision during first contact, you need to take into account the particular challenges related to information provision in this context.

Table 2. The challenges and possible solutions to ensuring effective information provision during first contact

Challenges	Possible solutions
<p>Distracting environment</p> <p>An influx of applicants can create time pressure and coordination challenges in receiving new arrivals. External border zones may be crowded and distracting environments, thus limiting the communication channels available for the dissemination of information and the time available for information provision.</p>	<p>Coordinate and establish workflows</p> <p>Advanced levels of coordination and workflows can be established to deliver information effectively during times of high numbers of simultaneous arrivals, for example following search-and-rescue operations or arrivals in large numbers at land borders. Implementing partners can be contracted for providing information.</p>
<p>Limited ability to absorb information</p> <p>Before arrival, applicants have often completed a long and precarious journey, during which they may have been exposed to exploitation and abuse or other ill-treatment. This can affect their physical and mental state. They may have pressing needs that do not necessarily relate to asylum. Stress can limit their ability to absorb information.</p> <p>Applicants may also have little or no previous knowledge of international protection and asylum procedure, or how administrative procedures are conducted in Europe. This lack of previous knowledge can limit their ability to absorb large amounts of new information or understand legal terminology.</p>	<p>Provide less detailed information</p> <p>The information provision can focus on delivering core information with less details in environments that are distracting or when the applicants may have a limited ability to absorb information. This core information can later be complemented with more details and additional information topics.</p> <p>Printed information material that they can later revisit can be handed to applicants. The material can include instructions on how to access more information on digital platforms or orally.</p>

Challenges	Possible solutions
<p>Limited opportunity to provide tailored information</p> <p>It may be difficult to immediately identify the personal circumstances of each applicant, due to limited interaction and data collection from applicants upon arrival. Thus, the opportunity to provide tailored information in a manner that is adapted to the applicant's situation is limited.</p>	<p>Encourage applicants to bring forward their personal circumstances</p> <p>As it may be difficult to identify personal circumstances that are not visible during first contact, applicants can be encouraged to flag their circumstances to the authorities. Thus, you should explain clearly and in an understandable way what special needs are and how the applicants can bring them forward.</p>
<p>Limited opportunities to meet each applicant individually, including providing interpretation</p> <p>The arrival context may limit the ability to arrange individual appointments with applicants.</p> <p>In the context of new arrivals, it is also not possible to predict all the languages that would need interpretation at a given time.</p>	<p>Disseminate information via different communication channels</p> <p>Information can be disseminated via different communication channels to increase the efficiency of information provision. For example, you can use leaflets that combine written text with self-explanatory visual details on how to find more information on digital platforms and how the interaction with the authorities will happen. This information can be translated into several languages.</p> <p>A pool of remote interpreters can be made available to provide ad hoc information provision in rarer languages.</p>

2.2.2. Provide information during registration and lodging

During registration and lodging, information is usually provided in an established setting, such as an office environment or an accommodation centre. Depending on your national context, it often takes place after the applicant has stayed in the country for a short while and some of their most pressing needs, such as health, food or shelter needs, have already been met. Thus, the applicant may be able to absorb more information than in the first contact context.

An established setting allows for a potentially calm environment in which to provide information. This context often includes an individual appointment with the applicant in an environment that ensures confidentiality and security. However, it can additionally include meetings with groups of applicants. The context often allows for information to be distributed through several communication channels, including oral communication, printouts and digital platforms.



Applicants usually attend **individual appointments** for the collection of personal data during registration and lodging. These appointments are a good opportunity to provide individualised information to the applicant according to their personal circumstances. It is also possible to determine which information material would be the most effective.



Related EUAA tool

For more information on the registering/lodging settings, see the EASO, [*Practical Guide on Registration – Lodging of applications for international protection*](#), December 2021.

2.3. Who provides the information?

You may not be the only person providing information to the applicant. Other authorities and organisations working in the field of asylum can provide information in partnership with you. The responsibility to secure and coordinate information provision lies with the authorities. At the same time, all involved stakeholders have a responsibility to engage in field coordination and ensure that their information provision is coherent.

2.3.1. Determine which organisations should provide information

Information is primarily given by the authorities responsible for conducting the procedural steps of access to procedure in your national setting. These can include:

- determining authority,
- police administrations,
- border and coast guard administrations,
- local citizens' offices.

Information provision can also be delivered by other authorities or organisations that interact with applicants during access to procedure (Article 21(1) APD (recast) ⁽¹⁷⁾). These can include:

- actors running reception centres;
- civil society organisations;
- legal counsellors;
- international organisations, such as UNHCR or the International Organization for Migration;
- European Union agencies;
- legal counsellors;

⁽¹⁷⁾ Article 21(1) APD (recast) 'Member States may provide that the legal and procedural information free of charge referred to in Article 19 is provided by non-governmental organisations, or by professionals from government authorities or from specialised services of the State.'



- actors running detention facilities;
- penitentiary institutions.

The lists above are general. In your national settings, the organisations involved in the first-contact situation and during registering/lodging may not always be the same. Moreover, it is worth highlighting the valuable contribution to information provision given by the civil society organisations and community volunteers.

It is also good to keep in mind that not all organisations necessarily have the capacity to provide information on a wide variety of topics that may be beyond their specialisation.



Practical tip on countering misinformation received from informal sources

Applicants from certain cultural backgrounds may be drawn to seek advice from members of their own community, for example because they are not used to seeking information from authorities, who, unintentionally, could spread inaccurate and/or incomplete information. As a result, applicants rely on misinformation instead of institutional information.

Disinformation could also come from deliberate attempts of smugglers or traffickers to mislead the applicants by feeding them fabricated and manipulated information.

You can counter this with frequent repetition and consistency of information from authorised sources, through different communication channels.

2.3.2. Coordinate among organisations that provide information

To ensure the trust of the applicant in the asylum procedure, it is of utmost importance that all authorities, services providers and civil society organisations involved spread a consistent message.

As multiple organisations can be involved in delivering information during access to procedure, coordination may be needed to ensure the delivery of coherent messages to all applicants and to guarantee that information reaches all applicants. Keep in mind that different coordination may be needed for first-contact situations and during registering/lodging.

When coordinating information provision, you will need to consider at least content and accessibility.

Coordination of content relates to how coherent messages are systematically delivered to applicants. It can consider, for example, what information materials are used, what the reference material is, who drafts these materials and how information providers can be trained. Coordination may also be needed to keep the information up to date and consistent over time.

Coordination of accessibility refers to how all applicants receive information. It can consider, for example, which organisations are responsible for delivering certain information at each



phase of access to procedure and how an appropriate skillset can be ensured so that the communication style can be adapted to the audience.

Coordination includes, for example, the following mechanisms:

- a centralised system where information is delivered by one organisation;
- standard operating procedures;
- referral mechanisms;
- formal partnerships with authorities;
- framework agreements.



Good practices on coordination through thematic working groups and referral pathways

In complex operational contexts, information provision can be coordinated through thematic working groups. Each working group would coordinate several organisations involved in information provision activities round the same theme. Daily coordination can be organised through liaison points assigned to each working group.

In complex contexts, such as disembarkation events, referral pathways play a crucial role to properly address protections needs and provide the applicants with a timely response, particularly in terms of service and specialised support. To this end, information and service providers must contribute to keep referral pathways functional and easily accessible.

The following practical arrangements can be used to deliver information to different locations, by one or multiple organisations:

- mobile/roving teams travelling to different locations where applicants arrive or reside;
- information booths installed in locations where a high number of applicants are located;
- hotlines that allow the applicants to reach you in multiple locations – make sure to widely announce the numbers of the hotlines in locations frequented by applicants.

If information is provided by multiple organisations, make sure that the applicant understands the role of the organisation that provides information to them. If the information provider is not the authority responsible for their application, the applicant should at least receive information on how they can contact the responsible authority in case they have questions about their personal application.



3. Information provisions topics

This chapter provides an overview of information provision topics in the context of access to procedure.

The topics are based on the legal provisions of the Common European Asylum System, which can be mandatory ('shall clauses') or discretionary ('may clauses'). The relevance of the topics connected with the 'may clauses' will depend on the transposition of the respective articles into the national legislation and the individual circumstances of the applicant.

The guidance presented in this chapter also includes complementary information points, in cases when they significantly enhance the applicant's understanding of the administrative process.

Table 3 provides an overview of the information provision topics considered to be the minimum that has to be provided to applicants for international protection during access to the procedure. EU+ countries can further complement the information with topics that are relevant in their specific national set-up.

The table reflects the stages of access to the asylum procedure and distinguishes between the making stage and registration-lodging stage. For each topic, it also indicates the stage in which the topic should be covered and whether information provision should be standard or detailed.

The following colour code has been applied to the information topics:

- information provision topics to be covered in all circumstances;
- information to be provided only if suitable in the personal circumstances of the applicant;
- messages in the guidance that are particularly relevant for the first contact (making).

Table 3. An overview of the information provision topics considered to be the minimum to provide to the applicant during the access to procedure stage

Information topics	First contact (making)	Registering/lodging
<u>Core concepts and principles of the asylum procedure</u>		
<u>What is international protection?</u>	standard	detailed
<u>What is the asylum procedure?</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Confidentiality</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Principle of the best interests of the child</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Complaints mechanism</u>		standard

Information topics	First contact (making)	Registering/lodging
<u>Procedural information</u>		
<u>Registration procedure</u>	detailed	detailed
<u>Registering dependent adults</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Registering children</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Age assessment</u> (when relevant)		detailed
<u>Personal interview</u>		standard
<u>Time frame for the examination</u>	standard	standard
<u>Detention</u>		detailed
<u>Next steps if the application is channelled to special examination procedure</u>		
<u>Dublin procedure</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Subsequent application</u>		detailed
<u>Admissibility procedure</u>		detailed
<u>Accelerated procedure</u>		detailed
<u>Border procedure</u>		detailed
<u>Rights of an applicant for international protection</u>		
<u>Remain in the country pending the examination procedure</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Access to an interpreter</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Legal assistance and representation</u>		detailed
<u>Right to communicate with UNHCR and other organisations providing legal counselling</u>	standard	standard
<u>Right to material reception conditions</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Withdraw an application for international protection</u>	standard	detailed



Information topics	First contact (making)	Registering/lodging
<u>Rights considering (unaccompanied) children</u>		
<u>Appointment of a representative/guardian</u>		detailed
<u>Family tracing, family members in other EU+ countries and family reunification</u>	standard	standard
<u>Rights considering applicants with special needs</u>		
<u>Adequate support to benefit from their rights and to comply with obligations during the asylum procedure</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Obligations of an applicant for international protection</u>		
<u>Cooperate with the authorities</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Be subject to personal search for security reasons</u>	standard	
<u>Have biometrics taken</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Communicate contact address and any changes to the address to the authorities</u>		detailed
<u>Submit the elements to substantiate the application</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Possible consequences of not complying with obligations</u>		
<u>Application can be considered as implicitly withdrawn or abandoned</u>	standard	detailed
<u>Assessment of relevant elements in the asylum claim may be affected</u>		detailed
<u>Asylum procedure may be accelerated</u>		detailed
<u>Material reception conditions may be reduced or in exceptional cases withdrawn</u>		detailed
<u>Voluntary return</u>		
<u>Voluntary return</u>		standard





You can click on the hyperlinks in the table to be redirected to the complementary guidance that comes with each information topic.

The guidance contains, for each topic:

1. **background information** on what the registration officer needs to know about the topic;
2. **an information provision** message on the information to be provided to the applicant ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Within the information provision messages, the messages that are particularly relevant for the **first contact (making)** are marked with pink background shading. The remaining information may be provided during the registration or lodging stage instead.

The guidance is further complemented with **practical tips** on how to provide this information in practice: what to emphasise, what to be cautious about, how to explain the information and ensure it is understood, etc.

Remember to tailor all information provision topics to your national setting, so that they are compatible with your national legislation and established practice.

Remember also to adapt the level of detail of the information provided to each specific step in the procedure and adapt your communication style to the personal circumstances of the applicant.

3.1. Core concepts and principles of the asylum procedure

3.1.1. What is international protection?

(a) Background information

International protection is a substitute for national protection. When a state fails to protect its own citizens against persecution or serious harm or when the state itself is the actor of persecution, the need for international protection arises. International protection includes refugee status ⁽¹⁹⁾ and subsidiary protection ⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ This practical guide does not aim to provide specific formulations that should be directly conveyed to the applicant. Rather it outlines the information provision messages. Concrete examples of formulations that should be directly conveyed to the applicant will be available in the repository of templates in the Let's Speak Asylum portal.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The definition of 'refugee' is provided in Article 2(d) QD (recast): "refugee" means a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Article 12 does not apply'.

⁽²⁰⁾ The definition of 'person eligible for subsidiary protection' is provided in Article 2(f) QD (recast): "person eligible for subsidiary protection" means a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify



The Geneva Convention ⁽²¹⁾ provides for five reasons for persecution, on the basis of which refugee status is recognised: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion.

Subsidiary protection is granted when applicants are facing a real risk of serious harm which includes death penalty or execution, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or serious harm resulting from indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict.

The reasons for applying for asylum can be very sensitive or personal. This can be the case, for example, when the applicant is a victim of domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, or if the persecution is linked to the expression of one's gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. In such cases, the applicants might hesitate to share information openly. It is important to be aware of these possible situations and to take this into account when providing information.



Related EUAA tool

For further guidance regarding qualification for international protection consult EASO, [*Practical Guide on Qualification for International Protection*](#), April 2018.

(b) Information provision message

- Everybody has the right to apply for international protection.
- The need for international protection arises when a person is unable to return to their home country because they would be exposed to a risk of persecution or serious harm, and their country would not protect them. The risk of persecution or serious harm includes threats to life, freedom or physical integrity.
- The EU law recognises two types of international protection: refugee status or as subsidiary protection. Refugee status is granted if the applicant would face persecution for the reasons of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or belonging to a certain group upon return to their country and if the state would not protect them. The subsidiary protection is granted if the applicant would face a serious risk due to a conflict in their country or other form of serious harm and if the state would not protect them.

as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Article 15, and to whom Article 17(1) and (2) does not apply, and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.'

⁽²¹⁾ UN General Assembly, '[Convention relating to the status of refugees](#)', *United Nations Treaty Series*, Vol 189, Geneva, 28 July 1951, p. 137; UN General Assembly, '[Protocol relating to the status of refugees](#)', *United Nations Treaty Series*, Vol 606, 31 January 1967, p. 267 – (referred to in EU asylum legislation and by the CJEU as 'the Geneva Convention').

- After the lodging of the application for international protection, the administration will first check if the refugee status can be granted, and, if not, if subsidiary protection can be granted.
- If relevant, provide information on other forms of protection applied by your national administration.



Practical tip on explaining relevant terminology to the applicant

Applicants may be familiar with the term ‘asylum’ or ‘refugee protection’, but not with ‘international protection’. When referring to international protection, it is therefore advisable to explain that international protection is the same as ‘asylum’. Also explain that, legally, international protection could mean either a refugee status or subsidiary protection under Directive 2011/95/EU. Once the explanation is given, it is important to remain consistent in your choice of words.

3.1.2. What is the asylum procedure?

(a) Background information

One of the cornerstones of the asylum procedure is the principle of **non-refoulement**. It is one of the main fundamental rights and refers to the obligation of states to refrain from expelling or returning a person in any manner whatsoever to a situation where they may face persecution and/or torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

In order to ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is respected and for the right to asylum to be effective, every person who may be in need of international protection must be ensured **access** to the asylum procedure. As such, national officials have a duty to provide information about the possibility to apply for international protection at external border posts or in detention whenever there are indications that the persons may wish to do so. Indications can stem from an expressed intention to apply for international protection or these indications can be more indirect, for example an expression of anxiety or the fact that the applicant belongs to a certain minority group in their country of origin. These latter indicators can be identified through a proactive attitude by the first contact officials⁽²²⁾.

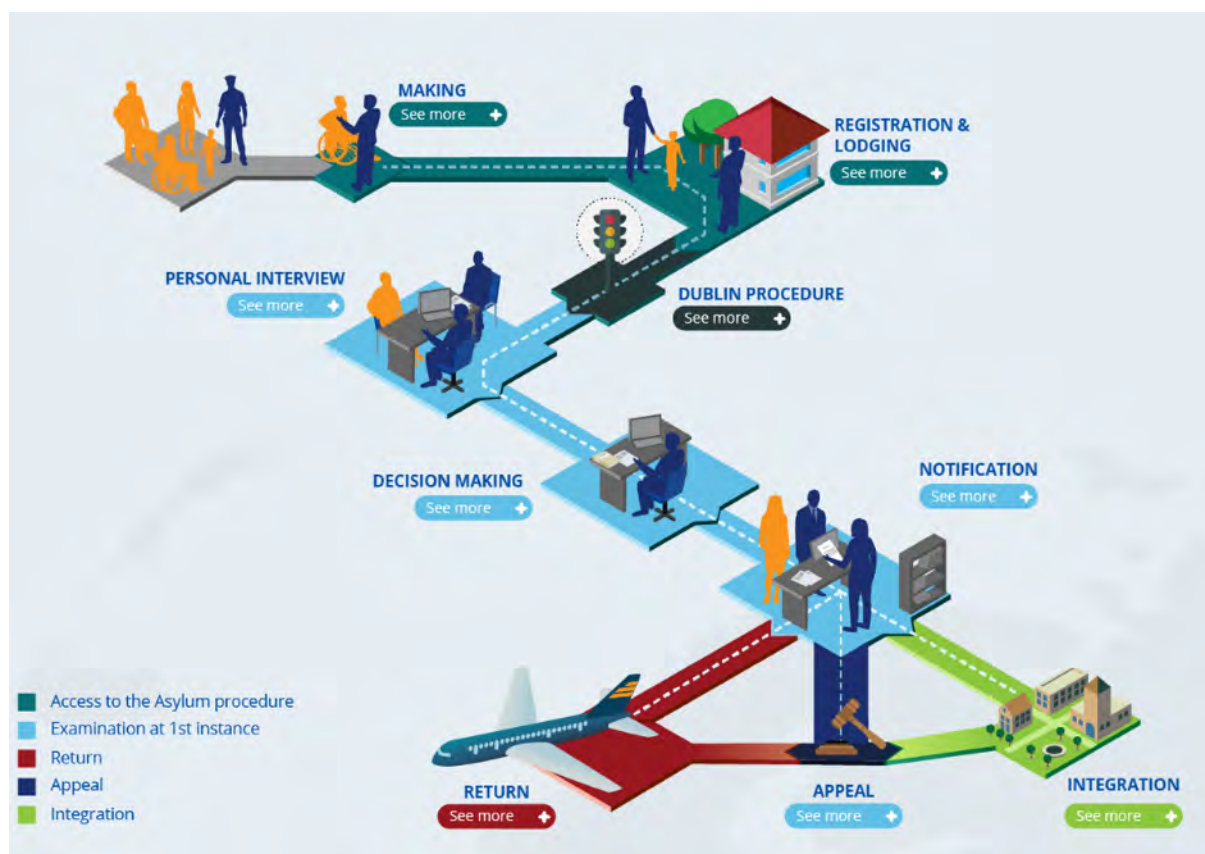
The access to asylum procedures comprises three different phases: making an application, registering the making, and the lodging. Making an application is the act of expressing, in any way and to any authority, one’s wish to apply for international protection. Registering the making consists of recording the applicant’s intention to apply for international protection. Finally, lodging an application means for the applicant to provide information/documents to complete the file created at the time of registering the application. Lodging of the application triggers the start of the first-instance examination. These three procedural steps can be conducted concurrently or separately, depending on the national set-up or the location where

⁽²²⁾ EASO-Frontex, *Practical Guide on Access to the Asylum Procedure*, Section ‘Indications that someone may wish to apply for international protection’, 2016, pp. 12–13.

the application is made. Merging these steps is a rather common practice in operations that are set up to respond to mass arrivals of asylum seekers, for example, during disembarkations or in transit zones.

At the core of the asylum procedure is the **personal interview**, during which the applicant can explain why they cannot return to their home country, even when they cannot provide documentary evidence of the feared persecution or serious harm. After the personal interview, the application is assessed. The **decision** on the application has to be in writing and must state the reasons for the decision in fact and in law. In the event of a negative decision, the applicant has the right to an **effective remedy** before a court or tribunal (appeal) and the right to receive free legal counselling. In some countries, free legal assistance may already be provided during the first instance procedure under certain conditions. Please refer to your national practice for further guidance.

Figure 2. Asylum procedure infographic



(b) Information provision messages

- Asylum procedure is a process which determines whether an applicant will be granted international protection or not.
- The asylum procedure is free of charge.

- The asylum procedure includes several steps. As soon as the applicant expresses the wish to apply for asylum, there is no risk for the applicant to be returned to their country of origin or a third country, before the examination is completed.
- The application first has to be registered and lodged (see for further details the topic '[Registration procedure](#)').
- The authorities will assess if no other EU+ country is responsible for the examination of the application in accordance with the Dublin regulation (see for further details the topic '[Dublin procedure](#)').
- After the registration process is finalised, the applicant will be invited to a personal interview, where they can explain why they left their country.
- The authority will then assess all available information and decide if the applicant will be granted international protection or not.



Practical tip on introducing information gradually, starting with an overview of the procedure

At the early stage of the asylum procedure, the applicant should only be provided with a basic overview of the asylum procedure in order to be aware of what steps it entails. The applicant should not be overwhelmed with detailed information during the first contact. More elaborated information will be provided at each stage of the asylum procedure. For example, you may adapt the information on the procedural steps and explain at which step the applicant currently is, which steps have been accomplished and what is next. Remember to tailor the information to the applicant's needs.

It is advisable to support the information provision with a visual aid explaining the asylum procedure.

3.1.3. Confidentiality

(a) Background information

The principle of confidentiality underlies the whole asylum procedure. It is important that the applicant understands that confidentiality is guaranteed by the authorities: information provided by the applicant is not disclosed to any party beyond the competent authorities without the permission of the applicant ⁽²³⁾. In practice it means that data provided by the applicant is not shared with anyone who does not have the right to access it, that the case management system is ruled by appropriate data protection rules and that the facilities where the applicant is heard ensure adequate privacy.

⁽²³⁾ Article 48 APD (recast): 'Member States shall ensure that authorities implementing this Directive are bound by the confidentiality principle as defined in national law, in relation to any information they obtain in the course of their work.'

(b) Information provision message

- Authorities treat all data given by the applicant with utmost confidentiality. This means that data is not shared outside the authority without the consent of the applicant.
 - Data given by the applicant is under no circumstances shared with authorities in the country of origin.
-
- Data provided by the applicant can be shared with other authorities under certain circumstances regulated by your national legislation. Explain to the applicant what is shared, with whom and why, in line with your national practice.
 - The principle of confidentiality also applies to how data is managed and stored.
 - Data can be shared with the applicant's legal representative, if applicable.
 - If relevant, certain data can additionally be shared with certain services ⁽²⁴⁾ that provide assistance to the applicant, but only if the applicant gives their consent for this data to be shared.
 - If the applicant applied for asylum together with their family members, the countries should inform the applicant about their practice to use the information in the family members' applications according to their national practice. This concerns all family members, including accompanied children. Generally, the examination will take into account all the reasons for applying for asylum stated by the applicant and their family members. The applicant should therefore indicate to the asylum authorities if there are good reasons for not sharing the reasons for applying for asylum with their family members.

**Practical tip on illustrating to the applicant what confidentiality means in practice**

For example, if there is a camera in the room, explain to the applicant that the camera is in the room only for security reasons and that the security personnel can only see through the camera, but they cannot hear anything that is being said. You can also explain that the transcript (or recording, if relevant) of the interview is being taken for the purpose of the decision-making. Similarly, confidentiality is ensured by specific arrangements during the interview, such as separated interview rooms.

⁽²⁴⁾ For example, Article 29(1)(b) APD (recast) implies that Member States shall allow UNHCR 'to have access to information on individual applications for international protection, on the course of the procedure and on the decisions taken, provided that the applicant agrees thereto'.



3.1.4. Principle of the best interests of the child

(a) Background information

If the applicant for international protection is a child, their best interests are a primary consideration⁽²⁵⁾. The principle of the best interests of the child means that, in every step of the asylum procedure, the specific circumstances of each child is to be taken into consideration. These include the child's protection and safety, well-being and social development, identity and background, family situation and family unity, and the child's views according to their age and maturity. Specific procedural safeguards and guarantees must be in place to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is applied.

This means that a child applicant needs to receive specific information related to the special guarantees that are provided in application of the principle of best interests of the child.



Related EUAA tool

For more information see the EASO, *Practical guide on the best interests of the child in asylum procedures*, 2019.

(b) Information provision message

- Inform applicants that, in Europe, everyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child and thus is entitled to certain protection and safeguards. If the applicant is under the age of 18, or they are not sure if they are older, they should inform the officials in order to receive appropriate support.
- Any unaccompanied person should inform the authorities if they are younger than 18 (or if they are not sure if they are). Unaccompanied minors are entitled to special protection and assistance. For further details see the topic '[Rights concerning \(unaccompanied\) children](#)'.
- The child's best interests and well-being are the primary considerations during all steps of the asylum procedure in order to ensure their safety, welfare, social development, etc.
- The child has a right to express their views and opinions (concerns, fears, wishes). These will be taken into consideration if fitting their best interests and well-being.
- When considering the child's views and opinions, their age and maturity will be taken into account.
- Explain how the child can share views and opinions with the asylum administration, either through their parents or guardian or directly, according to your national practice.

⁽²⁵⁾ Article 25(6) APD (recast).





3.1.5. Complaints mechanism

(a) Background information

Complaints mechanisms ensure that the fundamental rights of applicants are respected. The applicant can submit a complaint if they are negatively affected by the actions of the EU or national administrations or of a person representing the administration. This is the case especially when an institution does not act in accordance with the law or the principles of good administration or violates their fundamental rights. Depending on the character of the violation and the administration concerned, the applicant can submit a complaint, for example, to a regional or national ombudsman ⁽²⁶⁾. In case the national administration is supported by an EU agency, such as the EUAA ⁽²⁷⁾ or Frontex ⁽²⁸⁾, and the misbehaviour concerns support teams sent by these agencies, specific complaint mechanisms are foreseen. For more information regarding your national complaints mechanism, follow your national law and practice.

(b) Information provision message

- Applicants can raise a complaint in different situations, for example, if:
 - their fundamental rights have been violated;
 - a state authority treated them inappropriately or unethically.
- How to submit the complaint, to whom, and in which format and language, including relevant addresses or links.
- Submitting the complaint is free of charge.
- What information is necessary to provide in the complaint (for example name, contact details, case file number). It is not possible to follow up on anonymous complaints.
- Reassure the applicant that submitting a complaint will not negatively influence the outcome of their application.
- A complaint is not an appeal against the decision in the application for international protection. A complaint may be raised before a decision on the asylum application has been taken.
- If applicable, provide information about deadlines.

⁽²⁶⁾ European Ombudsman, [Members of the European Network of Ombudsmen](#).

⁽²⁷⁾ Article 51 of the EUAA founding regulation: [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2303](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021).

⁽²⁸⁾ Frontex, '[Complaints mechanism](#)'.





Practical tips

- **Reassure the applicant that it is safe to make non-anonymous complaints**

Applicants might hesitate to provide personal and contact details in the complaint. You may explain that the information is needed in order to be able to inform them about the results, in case additional information is needed, etc.

- **Explain the difference between a complaint and an appeal**

To avoid any confusion, it is useful to explain that complaint procedures are distinct from appeal procedures. The complaint procedure should not be used to request a review of the decision.

3.2. Procedures to be followed

3.2.1. Registration procedure

(a) Background information

After an applicant has expressed the intention to apply for international protection, the application is registered. Registration prepares the grounds for the examination of the application and ensures that applications are effectively channelled to the correct examination procedure.

The APD (recast) specifies three steps of the access to procedure ⁽²⁹⁾: the making, the registration of the making and the lodging (for more details see [Section 2.1.1 'Identify opportunities to provide information'](#)).

Depending on the national set-up, the registration and lodging of an application may be conducted at the same time or separately by different authorities.

Full registration (making, the registration of the making and the lodging) is deemed to be complete when the following steps have been completed.

- The applicant's data are recorded in national databases.
- The form or official report filed by the applicant is received by the national authorities.

Biometrics are collected. The fingerprints of every applicant for international protection of at least 14 years of age are taken promptly and must be transmitted to the central system of Eurodac ⁽³⁰⁾ as soon as possible and no later than 72 hours after the lodging of the application for international protection.

⁽²⁹⁾ Article 6 APD (recast).

⁽³⁰⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) No 603/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the establishment of Eurodac for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law



A security check might also take place.

Furthermore, within 3 days of the lodging, applicants should receive a **document certifying their status as an asylum seeker** ⁽³¹⁾. This document proves that the person is allowed to legally stay in the territory of the state while their application is being examined.

(b) Information provision message

- Once a person expresses the wish to apply for international protection, you need to provide practical information on how the application can be registered, including the following.
 - Location where the registration process will take place and how the applicant can get there.
 - Time of the appointment and opening hours of the competent office.
 - What can be expected from the registration process (submitting a form, short interview, etc.)
 - Which documents to bring and who should accompany the applicant if there are family members or dependants.
 - Biometrics will be taken (see for further details the applicant's obligation '[Have biometrics taken](#)').
 - Security checks may be carried out (see for further details the applicant's obligation '[Be subject to personal search for security reasons](#)').
 - Medical checks may be carried out.
- The applicant will receive documentation certifying their status as an asylum seeker. This is a personal document. It cannot be shared or given to anyone else. Provide further information in line with your national practice, for example:
 - how the document will be delivered;
 - the duration of the certificate's validity and the procedure to renew it;
 - the consequences of the applicant failing to renew the certificate;
 - which steps the applicant is supposed to follow if the certificate gets damaged or lost;

enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, and amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 establishing a European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (recast) (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013).

⁽³¹⁾ Article 6(1) RCD (recast): 'Member States shall ensure that, within three days of the lodging of an application for international protection, the applicant is provided with a document issued in his or her own name certifying his or her status as an applicant or testifying that he or she is allowed to stay on the territory of the Member State while his or her application is pending or being examined. If the holder is not free to move within all or a part of the territory of the Member State, the document shall also certify that fact.'





- the obligation, depending on national legislation, to carry the document with them at all times;
- the applicant should check if the personal data on the document is correct;
- how to inform the authorities if the data on the document is not correct.

Additional information if registration and lodging are conducted separately

- If the registration and the lodging phases occur at different times and/or in different places, the applicant needs to understand that the process will not be concluded after the registration. Clear information needs to be provided to ensure the applicant can in fact lodge the application as soon as possible.
- Provide practical information about the appointment for the lodging of the application, including where and when the application should be lodged. This can be complemented with information on whether it is possible to change the appointment and how to do so.



Practical tips

- **Ask test questions to make sure that the applicant has understood the message**

For example, you can ask the applicant to repeat where and when they need to report for the registration and/or the lodging of the application.

- **Collect all relevant contact information of the applicant**

The applicant's contact information (e.g. address of the accommodation and telephone number) can be used to reach out to the applicant when needed, to complete the next step of the procedure in a timely manner.

- **Call out for persons under 18 when providing information to a larger group of applicants after arrival**

During group information provision sessions, it is advised to establish that any person younger than 18 years of age is considered to be a child. For this reason, persons below 18 years without parents or a guardian present should inform the authorities to ensure that they receive appropriate support.

3.2.2. Registering dependent adults

(a) Background information

Each applicant has the right to make an application for international protection on their own behalf.

If an application is made through the applicant's relative on their behalf, the dependent adult should be informed, in private, of their right to make a separate application. This is to ensure



that every (dependent) adult has an effective opportunity to make a separate application for international protection.

If the application is made through the applicant's relative, the dependent adult should be informed, in private, of the procedural consequences of not lodging an application on their own. Such consequences may include that one single decision will be issued. The dependent adult's consent should be requested at the time the application is lodged or, at the latest, when the personal interview with the dependent adult is conducted ⁽³²⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- While it may be possible (depending on national legislation) that an applicant lodges an application on behalf of dependant adults, any adult applicant can always apply for international protection on their own behalf.
- It is not an obligation to lodge one single application for the whole family. Dependent adults have the right to lodge a separate application for international protection.
- Inform the applicant on how to lodge a separate application.
- If an applicant applies on behalf of dependant adults, the dependant adults have to consent to the lodging of the application on their behalf. Information on how to give consent should be provided.
- Regardless of whether an applicant is applying on their own or someone is applying on their behalf, the applicant will be given the opportunity for a personal interview. This should normally take place without the presence of family members so that confidentiality is ensured.
- If the application is lodged on behalf of dependant adults, a decision that considers why the family members fear returning to their home country will normally be provided.
- The examination will take into account all the reasons for applying for asylum stated by the applicant and their family members. The applicant should indicate to the asylum authorities if there are good reasons for not sharing the reasons for applying for asylum with their family members.



Practical tips on providing information to dependent applicants individually

- Make appropriate arrangements in order to be able to provide information to the dependent applicant individually and in a place that ensures sufficient privacy.
- Pay particular attention to actively identifying applicants to whom this information is relevant, such as women and elderly people. In such cases, make sure that the (perceived) dependent applicant has an opportunity to take an independent decision without anybody intervening or speaking on their behalf.

⁽³²⁾ Article 7(2) APD (recast): 'Applications made on behalf of dependants or minors'.



3.2.3. Registering children

(a) Background information

If the applicant for international protection is a child, the application for international protection can be lodged in at least one of the following ways:

- on their own behalf (if they have the legal capacity);
- through their parents;
- through an adult family member or an adult responsible for them, if this is in accordance with the national law or practice;
- through a legal guardian.

National law will further specify the conditions for lodging an application in each of the ways listed above. At the same time, the best interests of the child should be considered when examining the possibility of making the application on their own behalf or through parents ⁽³³⁾.

(b) Information provision message

For accompanied children

- Children can apply for international protection through their parents, an adult family member, an adult responsible for them or on their own behalf, if the child has the legal capacity to do so. Explain any further conditions as stipulated in the national legislation.

For unaccompanied children

- If a person under 18 years old has arrived alone, without a parent or another responsible adult, they are considered unaccompanied children.
- The application can be lodged on their own behalf if the child has the legal capacity to do so or through a legal guardian. For further details on the topic see [‘Appointment of a representative/guardian’](#).

3.2.4. Age assessment

(a) Background information

If, after considering available information, there are substantial doubts about the age of an unaccompanied child, the authorities may conduct an age assessment to determine whether the person is an adult or a child. Age assessment can include various methods of examination. The least intrusive method should always be used. If less intrusive methods are not reasonably

⁽³³⁾ Article 7 APD (recast) ‘Applications made on behalf of dependants or minors’.



indicative, the age assessment can include a medical examination. In this case, the applicant and/or their guardian are required to provide consent to the examination ⁽³⁴⁾.



Related EUAA tool

For more information see the EASO, *Practical Guide on Age Assessment*, second edition, 2018.

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant might be asked to undergo an age assessment to determine their age, if there are doubts about it.
- Age assessment does not determine if an application should be accepted or rejected; it helps to determine which guarantees an administration has to put in place.
- The age assessment is performed by qualified professionals in respect of the dignity of the applicant. The procedure does not cause harm or pain.

If relevant, include the following.

- Provide further information about the method of examination and the procedure.
- Provide practical information related to the appointment (address, time).
- For age assessment involving medical examination, inform the applicant and/or the guardian of the requirement to provide consent to the examination, and the possible consequences of a refusal, which shall in any case not lead by itself to a rejection decision.
- Explain the possible consequences that could occur if the applicant is considered an adult as a result of the age assessment procedure. The guarantees for unaccompanied children will be lifted and special procedure might be applied. See Section [3.2.8 'Next steps if the application is channelled to special examination procedure'](#).

3.2.5. Personal interview

The personal interview is the next procedural step after completing the registration of the application. During the personal interview, the applicant is given an opportunity to present all elements needed to substantiate their application ⁽³⁵⁾. The applicant can express specific requests regarding the interview, including the wish to be interviewed by a case officer and/or an interpreter of the same sex, and for certain third parties (lawyers, social workers, doctors,

⁽³⁴⁾ Article 25(5) APD (recast) 'Guarantees for unaccompanied minors'.

⁽³⁵⁾ Article 4(2) QD (recast): 'The elements ... consist of the applicant's statements and all the documentation at the applicant's disposal regarding the applicant's age, background, including that of relevant relatives, identity, nationality(ies), country(ies) and place(s) of previous residence, previous asylum applications, travel routes, travel documents and the reasons for applying for international protection.'



guardian, a trusted support person etc.) to attend the personal interview, under the conditions laid out in your national practice.

In exceptional circumstances, national authorities can decide not to conduct a personal interview. This can occur when the available information is considered enough for the authority to grant refugee status to the applicant. It can also occur when the authority deems that the applicant cannot attend the interview due to sustained medical reasons ⁽³⁶⁾. If in doubt, a doctor is to be consulted to establish whether the applicant is expected to recover or whether that medical condition is of an enduring nature.

(a) Information provision message

- Upon completion of the registration procedures, the applicant will receive an invitation for a personal interview. It should be specified how the applicant will be informed in accordance with national practice.
- If the interview is omitted, information should be provided to the applicants regarding the reasons for the omission.
- The interview will be in the language preferred by the applicant, or otherwise in a language that the applicant can understand and in which they are able to communicate clearly. An interpreter will be available during the interview.
- The personal interview is the opportunity for the applicant to tell the authority in detail the reasons why they left their country of origin and why they are not able to return there. Any type of violence, harm or threats, physical or psychological, or restrictions of their freedoms and rights, by authorities or certain groups in the society or by individuals or even family members, may be relevant for their application.
- The applicant is under the obligation to tell the truth during the personal interview.
- The applicant should also bring and present the relevant documents and/or any other evidence that can substantiate the application, including documents relating to the applicant's identity and background. For more information see the topic '[Submit the elements to substantiate the application](#)'.
- If the information is available, inform the applicant about the time and place of the personal interview. Other practical information can be included, for example, how to get there and the approximate length of the interview. If it is not possible to provide a date or an exact time frame in your national set-up, provide at least an approximate time frame in order to allow the applicant to prepare for the interview and collect relevant documents.

⁽³⁶⁾ Article 14(2) APD (recast): 'The personal interview on the substance of the application may be omitted where: (a) the determining authority is able to take a positive decision with regard to refugee status on the basis of evidence available; or (b) the determining authority is of the opinion that the applicant is unfit or unable to be interviewed owing to enduring circumstances beyond his or her control. When in doubt, the determining authority shall consult a medical professional to establish whether the condition that makes the applicant unfit or unable to be interviewed is of a temporary or enduring nature.'



- The consequences of not appearing at the interview without providing a valid explanation to the authority, in line with the national law or practice.
- Applicants in need of special procedural guarantees will be ensured adequate support. The applicant should highlight if they have additional special needs that are not yet known by the authority. Depending on the applicant's special need(s), a broad range of support measures may be taken, for example, special medical assistance, special arrangements for the interview, and time extension.
- The interview is organised in conditions ensuring confidentiality and without the presence of family members, unless their presence is considered necessary ⁽³⁷⁾. If relevant, inform the applicant whether they will need to arrange childcare for their children or whether it will be provided during the interview in line with national practice.
- The possibility of having a legal adviser present during the interview and the role of the legal adviser.
- The possibility to ask for special arrangements, including the wish to be interviewed by a case officer and/or an interpreter of the same sex.
- Basic information about the next steps, for example, the time needed for the authority to assess the applicants' statements and any other available information and issue a decision. The applicant will receive a decision in writing stating the reasons for the decision. In the event of a negative decision, the way to challenge that decision will be explained (including information concerning the suspensive effects).



Practical tip on focusing only on topics relevant to the registration phase

It is advisable to share only basic information and focus on topics that are relevant at the registration stage, for example, how the applicant can prepare for the interview. At the same time, avoid providing details that are not relevant at this stage and will be elaborated once the interview appointment takes place, such as detailed information about the step after the personal interview is completed.

3.2.6. Time frame for the examination

(a) Background information

The general principle is that the examination procedure at first instance (i.e. not including the appeal) is concluded within **6 months** of the lodging of the application ⁽³⁸⁾. Under certain

⁽³⁷⁾ Article 15(1) APD (recast): 'A personal interview shall normally take place without the presence of family members unless the determining authority considers it necessary for an appropriate examination to have other family members present.'

⁽³⁸⁾ Article 6(4) APD (recast): '... an application for international protection shall be deemed to have been lodged once a form submitted by the applicant or, where provided for in national law, an official report, has reached the competent authorities of the Member State concerned.'



circumstances, explained in the following section, the time limit can be extended. However, the procedure cannot be concluded later than **21 months** of the lodging of the application ⁽³⁹⁾.

The time limit of 6 months can be extended by a further 9 months, i.e. reaching a total time limit of 15 months, in the following cases:

- when complex issues of fact and/or law are involved;
- when there are a large number of applications lodged in a Member State simultaneously;
- if the delay can be clearly attributed to the applicant's failure to cooperate with the authority.

The time limit of 15 months may exceptionally be extended by a further 3 months, i.e. reaching a total time limit of 18 months, where necessary and duly justified, in order to ensure the adequate and complete examination of an application.

Finally, due to an uncertain but temporary situation in the country of origin, concluding the examination procedure may be postponed where the determining authority cannot decide within the time limits stated above. However, in any event, even if the conclusion of the examination is postponed, the examination shall be concluded within 21 months.

A different time frame usually applies for accelerated procedures or other special procedures. For more information, please refer to Section 3.2.8. '[Next steps if the application is channelled through a special examination procedure](#)'.

In specific cases, the examination of an application may be prioritised and the decision is issued within a shorter time limit ⁽⁴⁰⁾. These include situations when the application is likely to be well-founded and the asylum status or subsidiary protection will be granted and/or where the applicant is vulnerable and in need of special procedural guarantees, particularly unaccompanied children.

(b) Information provision message

- The examination procedure can last several months (approximate time frame should be indicated in accordance with national practice).
- The examination procedure should normally be concluded as soon as possible and the applicant should receive a decision within 6 months after the application was lodged. This does not include the appeal procedure.
- This time frame to issue a decision may be extended in certain circumstances. However, the total time frame will not exceed 21 months. If the examination procedure is extended, the applicant has to be informed within a reasonable time of the reasons for the postponement. There can be different reasons for extending the time limits

⁽³⁹⁾ Articles 31(3),(4), (5) and (9) APD (recast), 'Examination procedure'.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Article 31(7) APD (recast) 'Examination procedure'.



which can include external factors, for example, in situations where large numbers of applications are made simultaneously. Delays could also be directly linked to the assessment of an application if it is particularly complex.

- Should the time frame to issue a decision be extended (i.e. beyond 6 months), the authorities will notify the applicant. Inform the applicant about how they will be notified in line with national practice.
- The applicant can enquire about the reasons for this delay and ask for an estimate of when the decision will be made. Provide additional information on the procedure to enquire about this information based on your national practice.
- The procedures and time limits might be different if the application is assessed within a special procedure, such as the accelerated procedure, border procedure or admissibility procedure. The application may also be prioritised. In such cases, applicants are provided with specific information by the national asylum authorities.



Practical tip on providing additional explanation and reassurance regarding the length of the procedure

The waiting time to receive a decision might vary, depending on a broad range of factors. An applicant who has arrived later might get a decision earlier. You should reassure the applicant that this is not a reason to worry, every application is different and is examined individually. The applicant should not leave the country, as leaving the country and returning will have consequences. For more information see the topic '[The possible consequences for not complying with obligations and not cooperating with the authorities](#)'.

3.2.7. Detention

(a) Background information

Detention is the confinement of an applicant in a particular place, where they are deprived of their freedom of movement ⁽⁴¹⁾.

An applicant may be detained for the following purposes, when these cannot be obtained without detention (including when there is a risk of absconding) ⁽⁴²⁾:

- determining or verifying the identity or nationality of an applicant;
- determining elements of the application when these cannot be obtained without detention, in particular when there is a risk that the applicant will abscond;
- deciding on the applicant's right to enter the territory;
- preparing or executing a return by virtue of the 2008 Returns Directive ⁽⁴³⁾;

⁽⁴¹⁾ Article 2(h) RCD (recast) 'Definitions'.

⁽⁴²⁾ Article 8(2) and Articles 8(3)(a) and (b) RCD (recast) 'Detention'.

⁽⁴³⁾ [Directive 2008/115/EC](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals (OJ L 348, 24.12.2008, p. 98).



- for national security or public order;
- in accordance with Article 8(3) of the Dublin III regulation ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

An applicant can only be detained for as long as the grounds are applicable and for as short a period as possible ⁽⁴⁵⁾. For complete information about detention grounds and time limits refer to your national law.

Detention is a measure of last resort in the absence of effective but less coercive alternatives. It is applied based on an individual assessment. At the same time, certain rules and conditions need to be fulfilled.

- The applicant needs to be informed in writing of the reasons for their detention and remedies.
- The lawfulness of detention should be reviewed at regular intervals or on the applicant's request.
- The applicant must have access to free legal assistance and representation for the judicial review of the detention order.
- Applicants should be detained, as a rule, in specialised detention facilities, separated from ordinary prisoners.
- Applicants should have access to open air spaces.
- Access should be given to family members and advisers or counsellors, in conditions that respect privacy (with limited exceptions).
- Applicants must be informed of their rights, obligations and the rules in the detention facility, in a language they understand or are reasonably supposed to understand.
- For specific groups, such as vulnerable persons, (unaccompanied) minors and families, certain rules and detention conditions apply, as per Article 11 RCD (recast).

(b) Information provision message

- Reason(s) for the applicant's detention and the maximum duration envisaged by national law (information to be provided by the authorities in writing).
- How to challenge the detention order and how to request legal assistance and representation that is free of charge (information to be provided by the authorities in writing).
- Contacts of organisations or groups of persons that provide legal assistance.
- The possibility to communicate with family.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) No 604/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast) (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Article 9(1) RCD (recast) 'Guarantees for detained applicants'.



- The possibility to communicate with a UNHCR representative and how to access a UNHCR representative.
- Applicant's rights and obligations in the detention facility ⁽⁴⁶⁾.
- The same guarantees and standards apply for the examination of the application as for any applicant who is not detained.



Practical tip on clearly explaining that detention is not prison

Explain the entire notion of detention and the difference between prison and detention as this might be a new concept for some applicants and might trigger traumatic memories.

3.2.8. Next steps if the application is channelled through a special examination procedure

i. Dublin procedure

(a) Background information

As soon as a non-EU-country national or stateless person lodges an application for international protection in an EU+ country, that country has to assess which EU+ country is responsible for examining the application in accordance with the Dublin III regulation ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

If 'Dublin triggers' are recorded during the lodging phase, the applicant is channelled to the Dublin procedure, where their file is handled by the Dublin Unit of your country.

It is therefore recommended to provide basic information on the Dublin procedure as soon as possible. If the applicant is an unaccompanied child, a legal representative must be appointed as soon as possible. An assessment of the best interests of the child will be conducted as part of the procedure to determine the EU+ country responsible for examining the application for international protection.

Detailed provisions regarding implementation of the Dublin III regulation are provided in the Commission Regulation (EC) No 1560/2003, as amended by the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014 ⁽⁴⁸⁾. It also contains the full texts of the common information leaflets, including a specific leaflet for unaccompanied minors, which were designed to explain the Dublin procedure to applicants and which must be provided to them.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Article 9 RCD (recast) 'Guarantees in detention'.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) No 604/2013](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast) (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1560/2003](#) of 2 September 2003 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (OJ L 222, 5.9.2003, p. 3), as amended by the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014 of 30 January 2014.



Related EUAA tool

For more information refer to the EASO, *Practical Guide on Information Provision in the Dublin Procedure*, December 2021. Information about Dublin criteria is provided in Section 1.7. 'The criteria used to determine responsibility and their hierarchy'.

Refer also to the EUAA training module on identification of Dublin cases.

(b) Information provision message

- Inform the applicant that the Dublin procedure is an EU system to determine which EU+ country is responsible for examining their application for international protection. This means that applicants cannot choose the country in which they apply for international protection. The authorities will determine which country will be responsible for the examination of their application.
- The applicant must not leave the country which is responsible for the examination of their application and move to another country on their own initiative before the end of the procedure. If they do so, they will be returned to the country that is responsible for their application.
- Explain to the applicant that it is important to cooperate with the authorities and provide relevant information, in particular if they have a family member in another European country, since they may be reunited with them through the Dublin procedure.
- If Dublin triggers are detected, provide additional information about the Dublin procedure and share the information leaflet which was developed for this purpose ⁽⁴⁹⁾.



Practical tip on acknowledging the sensitivity of the topic and encouraging the applicant to ask questions

This information provision topic can be sensitive as it includes the prospect of being reunited with relatives. For this reason, encourage the applicant to ask questions. This will help to clarify any misunderstandings and diminish the potential expectations that are not in line with the Dublin procedure.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Annex X of [Commission Regulation \(EC\) No 1560/2003](#) of 2 September 2003 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (OJ L 222, 5.9.2003, p. 3), as amended by as modified by the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014 of 30 January 2014.

ii. Subsequent application

(a) Background information

If the final decision has been made on the previous application (either a negative decision or a decision granting subsidiary protection), the new application will be registered as a subsequent application and preliminary examination will be carried out to assess the new elements.

The new application will be admissible if new elements significantly add to the likelihood of qualifying as a beneficiary of international protection. In such a case, the subsequent application will be admissible and the examination of the claim will be continued.

It will be inadmissible if new elements are not provided by the applicant or new findings do not arise. In such an event, the determining authority will not examine the applicant's claim on the merits ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The right to remain in the host country during the examination may be restricted if the applicant has already benefited from a thorough examination of two or more applications for international protection which were rejected ⁽⁵¹⁾.



Related EUAA tool

For more information please refer to the EASO, *Practical Guide on Subsequent Applications*, December 2021.

(b) Information provision message

- Inform the applicant that their previous application has been concluded and their new application is going to be assessed as a subsequent application. The subsequent application is not another chance to appeal against the previous decision, but an opportunity to present new elements, either new events that happened after the previous application was rejected or new evidence or documents related to the

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Article 40(2), (3) and (5) APD (recast): '2. ... a subsequent application for international protection shall be subject first to a preliminary examination as to whether new elements or findings have arisen or have been presented by the applicant which relate to the examination of whether the applicant qualifies as a beneficiary of international protection ... 3. If the preliminary examination ... concludes that new elements or findings have arisen or been presented ... the application shall be further examined in conformity with Chapter II. ... 5. When a subsequent application is not further examined pursuant to this Article, it shall be considered inadmissible, in accordance with Article 33(2)(d).'

⁽⁵¹⁾ Article 41(1) APD (recast): '1. Member States may make an exception from the right to remain in the territory where a person: a. has lodged a first subsequent application, which is not further examined pursuant to Article 40(5), merely in order to delay or frustrate the enforcement of a decision which would result in his or her imminent removal from that Member State; or b. makes another subsequent application in the same Member State, following a final decision considering a first subsequent application inadmissible pursuant to Article 40(5) or after a final decision to reject that application as unfounded. Member States may make such an exception only where the determining authority considers that a return decision will not lead to direct or indirect refoulement in violation of that Member State's international and Union obligations.'



reasons why the applicant cannot return to their country, which could not be presented before.

- Inform the applicant how the new elements and explanations can be submitted in line with national practice. The applicant can be also asked to explain why the new elements were not submitted earlier and how, if applicable, the new elements relate to (a) previous application(s).
- Inform the applicant that in the next step the authority will assess the new elements. This assessment is called a preliminary examination. It can reach the conclusion that the subsequent application is either admissible or inadmissible. You may also inform the applicant about the time frame of the preliminary examination.
- If it is in line with the national practice, inform the applicant that the examination could be carried out solely based on the written submissions, without a personal interview ⁽⁵²⁾.
- If relevant, inform the applicant that the right to remain in the host country may be restricted and the reception conditions can be reduced or withdrawn.

iii. Admissibility procedure

(a) Background information

Each EU+ country can establish admissibility procedures within their national asylum legislation in order to decide if an application is inadmissible and will not be further assessed on the merits.

The grounds for channelling an asylum application to the admissibility procedure relate to the following circumstances.

- Another Member State has granted the applicant international protection ⁽⁵³⁾.
- The applicant has been recognised as a refugee by another non-EU country or they can enjoy sufficient protection in that country, including benefiting from the principle of **non-refoulement** ⁽⁵⁴⁾.
- The applicant has a connection with a third country that is considered as a safe third country ⁽⁵⁵⁾ by the host country, where the applicant can request international protection ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

⁽⁵²⁾ Article 42(2)(b) APD (recast): 'Member States may lay down in national law rules on the preliminary examination pursuant to Article 40. Those rules may, inter alia: a. permit the preliminary examination to be conducted on the sole basis of written submissions without a personal interview, with the exception of the cases referred to in Article 40(6).'

⁽⁵³⁾ Article 33(2a) APD (recast).

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Article 33(2a) APD (recast).

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Article 38 APD (recast) 'The concept of safe third country'.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Article 33(2c) APD (recast).



- A dependent applicant wants to lodge a separate application but the authorities deem that there are no facts justifying such a request after the applicant's consent to an application on his or her behalf ⁽⁵⁷⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- Inform the applicant that their application is going to be assessed in an admissibility procedure and explain for which particular reason(s). The authority will assess only the reason(s) why they have been channelled the application to the admissibility procedure but not the reasons why the applicant left their country and cannot return there, which will be assessed only if the application is considered admissible.
- Applicants have the right to present their views with regard to the reason(s) why they have been channelled to the admissibility procedure through a personal interview ⁽⁵⁸⁾.
- Whenever an application is considered inadmissible, the applicant's eligibility for international protection will not be examined further and therefore the administrative procedure will come to an end.
- The applicant has the right to appeal against an admissibility decision.

iv. Accelerated procedure

(a) Background information

Based on the APD (recast) ⁽⁵⁹⁾ and the national legislation, your country can conduct an examination under the accelerated procedure on the following grounds.

- The applicant is presenting facts that are not relevant for the examination of whether they qualify for international protection.
- The applicant is from a safe country of origin.
- The applicant has misled the authorities by presenting false information or documents or by withholding relevant information or documents with respect to their identity and/or nationality that could have had a negative impact on the decision.
- It is likely that, in bad faith, the applicant has destroyed or disposed of an identity or travel document that would have helped establish their identity or nationality.
- The applicant has made clearly inconsistent and contradictory, false and obviously improbable representations which contradict sufficiently verified country of origin information, thus making their claim clearly unconvincing.
- The applicant has introduced a subsequent application that is not inadmissible and therefore will not be examined in the substance.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Article 33(2e) APD (recast).

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Article 34(1) APD (recast) 'Special rules on an admissibility interview'.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Article 31(8) APD (recast) 'Examination procedure accelerated'.



- The applicant is making an application merely in order to delay or frustrate a removal order.
- The applicant entered the territory of the Member State unlawfully or prolonged their stay unlawfully, and, without good reason, have either not presented themselves to the authorities or not made an application for international protection as soon as possible, given the circumstances of their entry.
- The applicant refuses to comply with the obligation to have their fingerprints taken.
- The applicant may, for serious reasons, be considered a danger to the national security or public order of the Member State, or the applicant has been forcibly expelled for serious reasons of public security or public order under national law.

(b) Information provision message

- Inform the applicant that their application is going to be assessed under an accelerated procedure and explain for which particular reason(s).
- This means that the time frame for deciding on the application is shorter. If possible, inform the applicant about the exact time frame in line with your national practice.
- The time frame to file an appeal against a negative decision is reduced. Inform the applicant about the exact appeal deadline in line with your national practice.
- Except for the shorter timelines, their application will be assessed with the same standards, rights and obligations as the regular procedure.

v. Border procedure

(a) Background information

Your country may have adopted a special procedure for applications made at the border or in a transit zone, whereby the examination takes place in the border or transit zones before access to the territory is granted. The grounds on which an asylum claim can be assessed at the border or transit zones are to examine:

- the admissibility of an application;
- the substance of an application that could be assessed under the accelerated procedure.

In both circumstances, the decision is to be taken in a reasonable time frame. When a decision cannot be taken in 4 weeks, the applicant is to be authorised to enter the territory of the Member State, where the assessment of their claim under the normal procedure will take place ⁽⁶⁰⁾.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Article 43 (2) APD (recast) 'Border procedures'.





(b) Information provision message

- The applicant cannot enter the territory of the country because the country has adopted a special procedure called a border procedure which is conducted at the border or transit zone. Inform the applicant of the reason for which the border procedure was adopted and if the application will be assessed in the admissibility procedure.
- If the request is considered admissible, its substance will be examined in a reduced time frame. If possible, inform the applicant about the exact time frame in line with your national practice.
- If the application is rejected, the applicant will have a reduced time frame to file an appeal, in line with the modalities provided for in your national legislation. Inform the applicant about the exact appeal deadline in line with your national practice.
- In any event, if a decision or final decision has not been taken within 4 weeks, the applicant will gain access to the territory.

3.3. The rights of applicants for international protection

The applicant's rights apply from the moment of the making of the application ⁽⁶¹⁾. Therefore, it is important to provide information on these rights as early as possible ⁽⁶²⁾.

3.3.1. Remain in the country pending the examination procedure

(a) Background information

Applicants for international protection have the right to stay in the country during the examination of their application. The right to remain is a key principle of the asylum procedure. It applies as a general rule during the examination of an application ⁽⁶³⁾.

There are limited exceptions to this right (under very strict circumstances) which are different during the first instance and the appeal.

During the first instance, exceptions may apply only in the context of a subsequent application ⁽⁶⁴⁾ or of an extradition ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

The exceptions from the right to remain in the context of a subsequent application apply when an additional subsequent application has been made (when an applicant has made three or more applications and exceptionally when an applicant has made a second application), after the previous one was found to be inadmissible or rejected as unfounded.

⁽⁶¹⁾ CJEU, judgment of 25 June 2020, *VL v Ministerio Fiscal*, C-36/20 PPU, EU:C:2020:495, paragraphs 90–92.

⁽⁶²⁾ EASO, *Practical Guide on Registration – Lodging of applications for international protection*, December 2021, p. 19.

⁽⁶³⁾ Article 9(1) APD (recast) 'Right to remain in the Member State pending the examination of the application'.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Article 41(1) APD (recast) 'Exceptions from the right to remain in case of subsequent applications'.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Article 9(2) APD (recast) 'Right to remain in the Member State pending the examination of the application'.





The exception in the context of an extradition applies when the Member State is going to surrender or extradite the applicant following a European arrest warrant or for other reasons to another Member State, to a third country or to an international tribunal or court. Extradition cannot take place unless the authorities are satisfied that the person will not be exposed to risk of direct or indirect **refoulement** (Article 9(3) APD).

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant has the right to stay in the country for as long as their application is being examined. Alternatively, information about the exception, if relevant, should be provided. Refer to the following practical tip on ‘providing details on the exceptions only if relevant for the applicant’.
- The right to remain will end when a final decision rejecting the application is taken. ‘Final decision’ means a decision that is no longer subject to a remedy.



Practical tip on providing details on the exceptions only if relevant for the applicant

There is no need to inform all applicants on the content of the exceptions. Information detailing the exceptions should be given only to those applicants to whom these exceptions may apply, i.e. only to applicants who lodge a subsequent application or applicants concerned by an extradition.

3.3.2. Access to an interpreter

(a) Background information

If proper communication cannot be ensured without interpretation, the applicant has the right to receive the services of an interpreter, free of charge, at least during the personal interview ⁽⁶⁶⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant will, when needed, be assisted during the personal interview by an interpreter of the language of their preference or at least of a language they understand and in which they can communicate clearly.
- Interpretation is provided free of charge.
- The applicant should always mention when there are difficulties to understand the interpreter, or when the interpreter does not act in a neutral way.
- The interpreter is bound by the principles of confidentiality and impartiality. They cannot talk about anything that was said during the interview outside the interpretation situation. The interpreter has no influence on the outcome of the decision.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Article 12(1)(b) APD (recast) ‘Guarantees for the applicant’.



- The role of the interpreter is strictly limited to translating what is being said, without adding or omitting information.
- It is possible to ask for a male or female interpreter if it helps the applicant to present their claim. The request will be accommodated if possible.

**Practical tip on clarifying that the right to interpretation only applies to the asylum procedure**

If the applicant asks for interpretation for personal purposes, explain to the applicant that the interpreter is available only for matters related to their application for international protection when dealing with authorities. This means that the support of an interpreter does not include, for example, help for a medical appointment. For such queries, provide advice on where the applicant can obtain support, according to your national practice.

3.3.3. Legal assistance and representation

(a) Background information

The applicant has the right to legal assistance and representation at all stages of the asylum procedure. Legal assistance and representation should be provided free of charge at least at the appeal stage. For the other stages (registration and first instance), it may or may not be free of charge, depending on national laws and policies ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant has the right to access legal assistance and representation at any point during the procedure, including registration.
- Inform the applicant about the available forms of legal assistance and representation in your country, for example, private lawyers, dedicated lawyers cooperating with the asylum service, and legal aid provided by civil society organisations.
- Inform the applicant about how they can access the legal assistance and representation.
- Inform the applicant about when the legal assistance is at their own costs and when it is provided free of charge.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Article 22 APD (recast) 'Right to legal assistance and representation at all stages of the procedure'.



Practical tips

- **Explain the notion of legal representation**

Explain the entire notion of legal representation, as this might be a new concept for some applicants. Include an explanation about the role of the legal representative, what kind of services/support the legal representative can provide, for example, legal advice about the applicant's case and the procedures, preparation of the applicant for an interview, and assistance with preparation of appeal and other official documents.

- **Stress the applicant's right to be informed**

It can be emphasised that the applicant, in general, has the right to ask questions and can ask the authorities for information regarding the procedure, legal information or their application. Receiving information is free of charge.

3.3.4. Right to communicate with UNHCR and other organisations providing legal counselling

(a) Background information

The applicant has the right to communicate with UNHCR at all stages of the asylum procedure, including if the applicant is in detention or in airport or port transit zones ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Almost every country is covered by UNHCR representation and there will usually be a UNHCR website covering your particular country, providing contact details and information to UNHCR's persons of concern.

(b) (Information provision message

- UNHCR is the United Nations' agency mandated to protect asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons worldwide.
- The applicant has the right to communicate with UNHCR and to seek legal counselling or advice from UNHCR (and the organisations working on its behalf) at any stage of the asylum procedure.
- Explain how to access UNHCR, including applicable contact details.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Article 29APD (recast) 'The role of UNHCR'.



Practical tip on explaining what UNHCR is and what it does

The role of UNHCR might be unclear for the applicants and they might not understand to what extent UNHCR is relevant for their situation and what to expect / not expect. For this reason, explain the position of UNHCR, what kind of support UNHCR can provide, for example, legal advice about the applicant's case and the procedures, preparation of the applicant for an interview, and assistance with the preparation of official documents.

3.3.5. Right to material reception conditions

Depending on the applicant's situation, they will receive accommodation, food or money to buy food, basic and necessary medical care, social assistance, and education for children.

Further information on the right to material reception conditions is provided on the Let's Speak Asylum platform, which hosts all the products developed under the Let's Speak Asylum project. The platform can be accessed through the EUAA website.

3.3.6. Withdraw an application for international protection

(a) Background information

A withdrawal can be implicit or explicit. Explicit withdrawal happens when the applicant explicitly informs the administration that they wish to withdraw their application. The applicant's request, generally, needs to be recorded in writing⁽⁶⁹⁾. A withdrawal is implicit when the applicants abandons the asylum procedure without informing the authorities. For information about implicit withdrawal see Section [3.7.1 'Application can be considered as implicitly withdrawn or abandoned'](#).

(b) Information provision message

- An applicant can terminate their application for international protection at any time, for example, if they decide to return to their country of origin. This is called explicit withdrawal.
- After the application is explicitly withdrawn, the examination procedure ends. Consequently, the access to rights that are provided to applicants, including the right to remain in the Member State will end (unless there are other grounds for staying in the country).
- To withdraw the application, the applicant needs to express the intention to withdraw their application. Explain how this can be done.
- Inform the applicant about the possibility to receive assistance with the voluntary return (for more information, see the topic '[Voluntary return](#)').

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Article 27 APD (recast) 'Procedure in the event of withdrawal of the application'.



3.3.7. Rights concerning (unaccompanied) children

i. Appointment of a representative/guardian

(a) Background information

Unaccompanied children are to be provided with a legal guardian as soon as possible and the child should be immediately informed about the appointment. For specifics regarding the appointment of a legal guardian, the procedure and deadlines, please refer to your national law. Specific provisions regarding reception applies to unaccompanied children ⁽⁷⁰⁾.

A guardian acts on behalf of the child in line with their best interests and assists the child throughout the asylum procedure, ensuring that the child can benefit from their rights and comply with the obligations ⁽⁷¹⁾. A guardian ensures the best interests of the child, including that their legal, medical and other needs are appropriately addressed throughout the asylum procedure ⁽⁷²⁾. The guardian must have the required expertise to carry out their duties and will be changed only when necessary. For information related to the appointment or the possibility to change a guardian, please refer to your national practice.

(b) Information provision message

- A legal guardian will be appointed to assist the unaccompanied child and act on their behalf throughout the asylum procedure.
- The role of a legal guardian is to stay in contact with authorities and accompany the unaccompanied child during the appointments, including the personal interview, to inform the child about the procedure, ensure that the child's needs are addressed and ensure that the unaccompanied child's views are taken into consideration.
- The unaccompanied child may refer to the guardian for any concern or question they may have at any time during the asylum procedure.
- With consideration for the child's age, provide additional explanations regarding the procedure for the appointment of a legal guardian.
- The unaccompanied child should inform the authorities if there are any concerns or complaints regarding the cooperation with the legal guardian. Information should be provided on how to reach out to the authorities and file a formal complaint and on the possibility to change the legal guardian.

Useful resource: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) handbook, *Guardianship for Children Deprived of Parental Care* ⁽⁷³⁾.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ Article 24 RCD

⁽⁷¹⁾ See Section 3.6 'Obligations of an applicant for international protection'.

⁽⁷²⁾ Article 25(1)(a) APD (recast) 'Guarantees for unaccompanied minors'; Articles 31(1) and (2) QD (recast) 'Unaccompanied minors'.

⁽⁷³⁾ FRA, *Guardianship for Children Deprived of Parental Care – A handbook to reinforce guardianship systems to cater for the specific needs of child victims of trafficking*, 2015.



**Practical tip on being very clear about the role of the legal guardian**

Ensure that the child understood that the role of the legal guardian is to support them and their well-being. They should not hesitate to tell the guardian their views, needs, concerns, wishes, etc. At the same time, explain what is not in the guardian's competences. For example, the legal guardian does not live with the child or provide money. You may inform the child about their accommodation and the benefits they will receive.

ii. Family tracing, family members in other EU+ countries and family reunification**(a) Background information**

The QD (recast) highlights the principle of family unity. If the applicant does not know where their parents or guardians are, or is unable to contact them, the administration will initiate a procedure to find out where the family is and contact them. The tracing of family members must be launched as soon as possible after the application is made⁽⁷⁴⁾. Collecting information about a child's relatives must be conducted in line with the principle of confidentiality. The family tracing should be in the best interests of the child⁽⁷⁵⁾.

**Related EUAA tool**

For more information see the EASO, *Practical Guide on Family Tracing*, March 2016.

(b) Information provision message

- It is important that the applicant provides any information about the whereabouts of their parents or guardians, their contact details and any other relevant information.
- It is important that the applicant shares any concerns and reasons for why they would not want the parents or guardians to be contacted.
- Reassure the applicant about confidentiality. The information they provide about family members will not be shared with people not entitled to know, for example, in the home country. The family members will not be put in danger.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Article 24(3) RCD is also relevant, as the obligation to start family tracing as soon as possible after the application is made comes from there.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ Article 31(5) QD (recast) 'Unaccompanied minors'.



3.3.8. Rights concerning applicants with special needs

i. Adequate support to benefit from their rights and to comply with obligations during the asylum procedure

(a) Background information

Certain applicants may be in need of special procedural guarantees due, inter alia, to their age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, serious illness, mental disorders or as a consequence of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence ⁽⁷⁶⁾.

The authorities have the obligation to assess if the applicant is in need of special procedural guarantees. When this is the case, applicants should be provided with adequate support and time and appropriate conditions to ensure effective access to asylum procedures and to ensure that they can benefit from the rights and comply with the obligations ⁽⁷⁷⁾.

The procedures related to the identification of special needs and the nature of the support will depend on the individual procedural needs of the applicant, and on national practice. This may include, for example, specific services for specific groups, such as:

- medical and psychological assistance for disabled applicants or applicants with health problems;
- support for victims of human trafficking, such as the national referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking;
- specialised social services for children, such as childcare;
- appointment of a representative/guardian, providing extra assistance with the relevant procedures and formalities or information on the possibility to appoint a representative for applicants with intellectual disabilities or severe mental health disorders.

(b) Information provision message

- Applicants should inform the authorities if they are unwell, if they need psychological or medical support, if they are pregnant, if they had serious traumatic experiences, like torture, rape and serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, in order to receive adequate support. This should also include informing the authorities about any protection concerns in the host country.
- If the applicant has special needs, explain how the needs will be addressed, the available support and relevant procedural safeguards in accordance with national practice. These may include providing additional time, appointing specialised staff to the case, and the possibility to a request male or female case officer and interpreter.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Recital 29 APD (recast).

⁽⁷⁷⁾ Article 24(1) and (3) APD (recast) 'Applicants in need of special procedural guarantees'.



**Practical tip on considering the need for special arrangements for the personal interview**

Specific profiles (e.g. disabled applicants, single parents with children) might need additional information regarding specific arrangements for the personal interview.

3.4. Obligations of an applicant for international protection

The applicant's obligations apply from the beginning of the asylum procedure. Therefore, it is important to provide information on these obligations as early as possible.

It is important to inform the applicant that if they cannot comply with one or more obligations they should address the authorities and explain the reasons.

3.4.1. Cooperate with the authorities

(a) Background information

The applicant has the obligation to cooperate with the authorities to establish their identity and other elements such as their statements, the documentation at their disposal regarding their age, background (including that of relevant relatives), identity, nationality(ies), country(ies) and place(s) of previous residence, previous applications for international, travel routes, travel documents and the reasons for applying for international protection.

Moreover, depending on your national laws and policies, the applicant may have the obligation to report or to appear in person before the competent authorities ⁽⁷⁸⁾ either as soon as possible or upon appointment.

It may also be applicable in your national context that the oral statements during the personal interview are recorded ⁽⁷⁹⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant has to cooperate with the authorities to allow the authorities to process their case.
- The applicant should appear in person before the authority if they have an appointment. Explain what to do and which steps to take if the applicant cannot attend the appointment.
- The applicant must provide to the authorities all information and documents available to establish their identity and nationality.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Article 13(2)(a) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Article 13(2)(e) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.



- The applicant must provide to the authorities all information that is relevant to their application, including documentary and other evidence at their disposal.
- The applicant must not provide false information to the authorities.
- The applicant should respond to requests for information (if this is required in your national law).
- Explain how applicants can, in practice, provide information and submit documentary evidence to the authorities. This includes to which office the information should be provided and by what means (e.g. by mail, by email or by appearing in person).
- The applicant should remain available to the authorities throughout the asylum procedure
- If relevant, the authority will record the applicant's oral statements. The recording will be stored and used in full respect of the principle of confidentiality.
- Other obligations that may be applicable in your national context.

3.4.2. Be subject to personal search for security reasons

(a) Background information

Depending on your national laws and policies, the competent authorities may search the applicant and the items they are carrying ⁽⁸⁰⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- Applicant may be subject to a personal search, including a search of the items which they are carrying.
- The search of their person is to be carried out by a person of the same sex, without prejudice to any search carried out for security reasons.
- The search will be conducted with full respect for the principles of human dignity and of physical and psychological integrity. Their personal belongings will be handed it back them.

3.4.3. Have biometrics taken

(a) Background information

The applicant is obliged to have their fingerprints taken latest within 72 hours after lodging their application, if they are older than 14 years of age ⁽⁸¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Article 13(2)(a) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.

⁽⁸¹⁾ Article 9(1) Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 'Collection, transmission and comparison of fingerprints (excerpt)'.



(b) Information provision message

- Applicant will have their fingerprints taken. The applicant has the obligation to allow their fingerprints to be taken ⁽⁸²⁾.
- All 10 fingerprints will be taken.
- At the time when fingerprints are taken, explain where, when, why and by whom the fingerprints are taken.
 - In order make the information less overwhelming, when explaining the reason for which fingerprints are taken, the applicant can be told, for example, that fingerprints are taken to see if anyone is already known to the authorities and to assist with determining which EU country is responsible for examining their application.
- If the applicant refuses to have their fingerprints taken, the accelerated procedure may apply along with other possible consequences, depending on your national context.
- The authority will take a photograph of the applicant. The applicant has the obligation to allow their photograph to be taken ⁽⁸³⁾.
- The photograph and the biometric data will be stored and used in full respect of the principle of confidentiality.

Useful resource: FRA leaflet '[Right to information – Guide for authorities when taking fingerprints for Eurodac](#)' ⁽⁸⁴⁾. A leaflet developed by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights to assist officers and authorities in informing applicants for international protection in an understandable and accessible way about the processing of their fingerprints in Eurodac.

3.4.4. Communicate contact address and any changes to the address to the authorities**(a) Background information**

Depending on your national laws and policies, the applicant may have the obligation to inform the competent authorities of their current address and any changes thereof, so that they can be contacted by the authorities ⁽⁸⁵⁾.

Moreover, depending on your national set-up, authorities may also decide on the place of residence of the applicant ⁽⁸⁶⁾.

⁽⁸²⁾ Article 9(1) Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 'Collection, transmission and comparison of fingerprints (excerpt)'.

⁽⁸³⁾ Article 13(2)(e) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ FRA, [Right to information – Guide for authorities when taking fingerprints for Eurodac](#), 2019.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ Article 13(2)(c) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ Article 7(2) RCD (recast) 'Residence and freedom of movement'.



(b) Information provision message

- The applicant must inform the competent authorities of their current address and of any changes thereof as soon as possible, so that they can be reached.
- The applicant must be reachable at the most recent address that they gave to the authorities; explain the procedure to be followed if the person is reached at home but is not present.
- Authorities may decide on the residence of the applicant or put restrictions on where the applicant may move.

3.4.5. Submit the elements to substantiate the application

(a) Background information

The applicant has the duty to substantiate their application for international protection and submit all relevant elements ⁽⁸⁷⁾. Depending on your national set-up, the applicant may have the obligation to submit such elements as soon as possible, or within the time limit set in your national law if such a time limit exists ⁽⁸⁸⁾. If according to national legislation the applicant is required to submit evidence as soon as possible, this information should be provided to the applicant early in the process. Depending on the circumstances, ‘as soon as possible’ means both as soon as the elements are **available** and as soon as the applicant **has knowledge** of such elements.

These elements consist of the applicant’s statements and all the documentation at the applicant’s disposal regarding themselves, including:

- age;
- background, including that of relevant relatives;
- identity;
- nationality(ies);
- country(ies) and place(s) of previous residence;
- previous applications for international protection;
- travel routes;
- travel documents; and
- the reasons for applying for international protection.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Article 4(2) QD (recast) ‘Assessment of facts and circumstances’.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Article 4(1) QD (recast) ‘Assessment of facts and circumstances’.





Example of types of documents include:

- personal/identity documents:
 - passport,
 - ID card,
 - school ID card,
 - birth certificate,
 - driving licence,
 - family book,
 - wedding certificate,
 - military ID card,
 - evidence of employment,
 - certificates, etc.,
 - card indicating membership to a political party;
- documents supporting the application for international protection:
 - photographs,
 - court judgements/orders,
 - arrest warrants,
 - reports from police investigations and other documents from the police,
 - threatening/warning letters,
 - newspaper articles (including reference to specific names),
 - baptism certificate,
 - social media posts, etc.;
- medical/psychological reports and attestations:
 - medical report / letter from a doctor,
 - psychological report,
 - attestation of violent acts / torture, etc.;
- documents including digital material:
 - websites,
 - blogs or other social media,
 - videos, etc.





Depending on your national laws and policies, the applicant may also have the obligation to hand over all documents in their possession that are relevant to the examination of their application, such as their passports ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- The applicant's duty to cooperate includes an obligation to submit elements to substantiate their application for international protection (as soon as possible).
- The elements consist of:
 - the applicant's statements, including the reasons for applying for international protection;
 - all the documentation at their disposal, including personal/identity documents, documents related to their application, and medical/psychological reports and attestations.
 - other evidence such as social media content, videos or other digital material.
- Inform the applicant on the means, place (addresses), recipient and time that the applicant can submit evidence, according to your national laws and policies.
- Cover the following points regarding documentation.
 - The applicant **must not** submit documents that are false or have been forged as this may negatively affect their application.
 - Destroying ID documents may negatively affect their application.
 - The applicant should provide their original documents if available.
 - Relevant documents should be submitted as soon as possible to the relevant authorities.
 - If applicable, inform the applicant of time frames to submit documents to complete the registration.
 - Explain that there is no need to present documents that only contain general information about their country of origin.
 - Explain how, in practice, to provide information and submit documentary evidence to the authorities. This includes to which office the information should be provided and by what means (e.g. by mail, by email or by appearing in person).
 - Encourage the applicant to obtain any missing documents to the extent feasible. You should, however, make it very clear that it is not expected from the applicant to expose themselves or any other person to risk by attempting to obtain documents, including by contacting the authorities of the country of origin if this would entail a risk.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ Article 13(2)(b) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.



- Explain how original documents will be dealt with (e.g. whether the authority will keep them, whether they will be copied, and how and when they will be returned).
- Specify that it is not a problem if the original documents are in a foreign language.



Practical tips

- **Advise applicant to make a copy of original documents**

If the applicant is submitting original documents, they should be advised to make a copy of them to keep.

- **Use communication techniques to cover this complex topic**

As information regarding the obligations is rather complex, after providing the information, you can summarise the information and highlight the main points again. It is also practical to divide the information, allowing for short discussions/questions before you continue.

3.5. The possible consequences of not complying with obligations and not cooperating with the authorities

The possible consequences of not complying with obligations may apply during the registration process and during examination of the application. As such consequences may be applied at the beginning of the asylum procedure, it is important to provide information on these consequences as early as possible.

3.5.1. Application can be considered as implicitly withdrawn or abandoned

(a) Background information

The authority may assume that the applicant has implicitly abandoned their application in one of the following situations ⁽⁹⁰⁾.

- The applicant failed to lodge their application after having made one ⁽⁹¹⁾.
- The applicant failed to respond to requests to provide information essential to their application.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ Article 28 APD (recast) 'Procedure in the event of implicit withdrawal or abandonment of the application'.

⁽⁹¹⁾ Article 6(2) APD (recast): '[...] Where the applicant does not lodge his or her application, Member States may apply Article 28, [the procedure in the event of implicit withdrawal or abandonment of an application], accordingly.'



- Other reasons. For a full list, refer to the following point (b) 'Information provision message'.

The assumption is lifted if the applicant demonstrates within a reasonable time that their acts were due to circumstances beyond their control.

In the event of an implicit withdrawal, the determining authority will take a decision to either:

- discontinue the examination; or
- reject the application.

If the decision is to discontinue the examination but the applicant reports again to the competent authority:

- the case can be reopened; or
- the applicant can submit a new application which will not be considered as a subsequent application.

The EU+ country may set a time limit of at least 9 months, after which the case cannot be reopened, or the new application will be considered as a subsequent application.

The EU+ country may provide that a case can be reopened only once ⁽⁹²⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- If the applicant does not cooperate with the authorities, (permanently) leaves the accommodation without informing the authorities or does not appear for appointments, it may negatively affect the application, which might be discontinued or rejected and, consequently, the applicant would no longer be considered an applicant.
- The application can be discontinued or rejected in the following cases, unless the applicant demonstrates that their acts were due to circumstances beyond their control.
 - If the applicant did not conclude the registration procedure and, in particular, failed to conclude lodging, that is the last step.
 - If the applicant does not provide information essential to their application, after being asked for this information.
 - If the applicant does not appear for a personal interview or other appointment.
 - If the applicant (permanently or for a long time) leaves the place where they lived without informing the relevant authority.
 - If the applicant did not comply with reporting duties or other obligations to communicate.

⁽⁹²⁾ Article 28(1) APD (recast) 'Procedure in the event of implicit withdrawal or abandonment of the application'.



- However, if the application is discontinued, it can be reopened, or a new application can be submitted without being considered as a subsequent application. This can occur if the applicant reports again to the competent authority within a certain time frame, defined in your national context.



Practical tip on providing examples to understand non-compliance and its consequences

It is useful to provide practical examples, for example, if an applicant has an appointment to lodge their claim and does not show up despite being invited multiple times, this would be considered failure to conclude lodging unless there are valid reasons for not following the lodging process (e.g. medical reasons).

3.5.2. Assessment of relevant elements in the asylum claim may be affected

(a) Background information

The applicant generally has the obligation to submit all elements needed to substantiate their application as soon as possible. Such elements include information relevant to their claim along with all the supporting evidence at their disposal ⁽⁹³⁾.

The provision of incomplete or false information or evidence may lead to a rejection of the application. If the applicant misrepresents or omits facts, including the use of false documents, which were decisive for granting the protection, the refugee status and the subsidiary protection status can also be revoked ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- Applicant should bring forward all relevant elements.
- If the applicant provides misleading information, statements or documents related to their identity or reasons for applying for international protection, this may negatively impact the assessment. Incomplete or false information will affect the credibility assessment of the application, and lack of credibility may be a reason to reject the application for international protection.

3.5.3. Asylum procedure may be accelerated

(a) Background information

In a limited number of situations, the authorities can decide to apply the accelerated procedure, in which case an application is examined within shorter time limits.

⁽⁹³⁾ Article 4(1) QD (recast) 'Assessment of facts and circumstances'.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ Article 14(3)(b) and Article 19(3)(b) QD (recast).



Depending on your national legislation, the accelerated procedure can be applied, inter alia, when the applicant provides false or incomplete information or documents, if the applicant refuses to have their fingerprints taken or if it is likely that, in bad faith, they destroyed or disposed identity document ⁽⁹⁵⁾. For further details on the accelerated procedure see the information topic '[Accelerated procedure](#)'.

(b) Information provision message

The accelerated procedure can be applied if the applicant does not cooperate with the authorities. For example, if they present false information or false documents, refuse to have their fingerprints taken or have destroyed or disposed of identity documents.

3.5.4. Material reception conditions may be reduced or withdrawn

(a) Background information

The material reception conditions may be reduced or, in exceptional cases, withdrawn if the applicant abandons the place of residence or does not comply with reporting duties ⁽⁹⁶⁾.

(b) Information provision message

- Depending on your national law and practice, the possible consequences of not cooperating with authorities or of not being reachable by the authorities include that reception entitlements may be reduced or withdrawn. Decisions related to the reduction or withdrawal of material reception conditions may be subject to an appeal procedure.

3.6. Voluntary return

(a) Background information

Providing information on voluntary return is not intended to be an encouragement to pursue voluntary return and should not be understood in this way by the applicant. However, voluntary return may respond, for various (personal) reasons, to the need of the applicant, also among those who recently arrived.

Applicants can leave voluntarily at any point during the asylum procedure and return to their country of origin or habitual residence. Applicants may face doubts and uncertainties when it comes to the possibility of return and often receive conflicting information. Timely information about the possibilities of return may prevent persons from staying in the asylum procedure

⁽⁹⁵⁾ Article 31(8)(c) and (i) APD (recast) 'Obligations of the applicants'.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ Article 20(1)(a) and (b) RCD (recast) 'Reduction or withdrawal of material reception conditions': 'Member States may reduce or, in exceptional and duly justified cases, withdraw material reception conditions where an applicant: a. abandons the place of residence determined by the competent authority without informing it or, if requested, without permission; or b. does not comply with reporting duties or with requests to provide information or to appear for personal interviews concerning the asylum procedure during a reasonable period laid down in national law'.





and/or in difficult circumstances on the territory of the host country for an unnecessarily long time after a final decision has been issued.

If the applicant decides to return, depending on the national practice, they may be able to obtain advice and assistance from the administration or other organisations ⁽⁹⁷⁾. The authorities can provide:

- general information and advice on voluntary returns;
- procurement of the necessary travel documentation;
- flight booking and travel organisation;
- the financial cost of their travel;
- a small integration grant upon return;
- enrolment in a reintegration programme.

(b) Information provision message

- An assistance programme for voluntary return exists and has availability.
- Explain the main elements of the assistance programme.
- Tell the applicant which authorities or organisations to contact for further information on the assistance programme for voluntary return.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ The International Organization for Migration is one of the most important organisations assisting in returns. Assistance can also be provided by other organisations and non-governmental organisations (e.g. Caritas International) or directly by state authorities, etc.





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