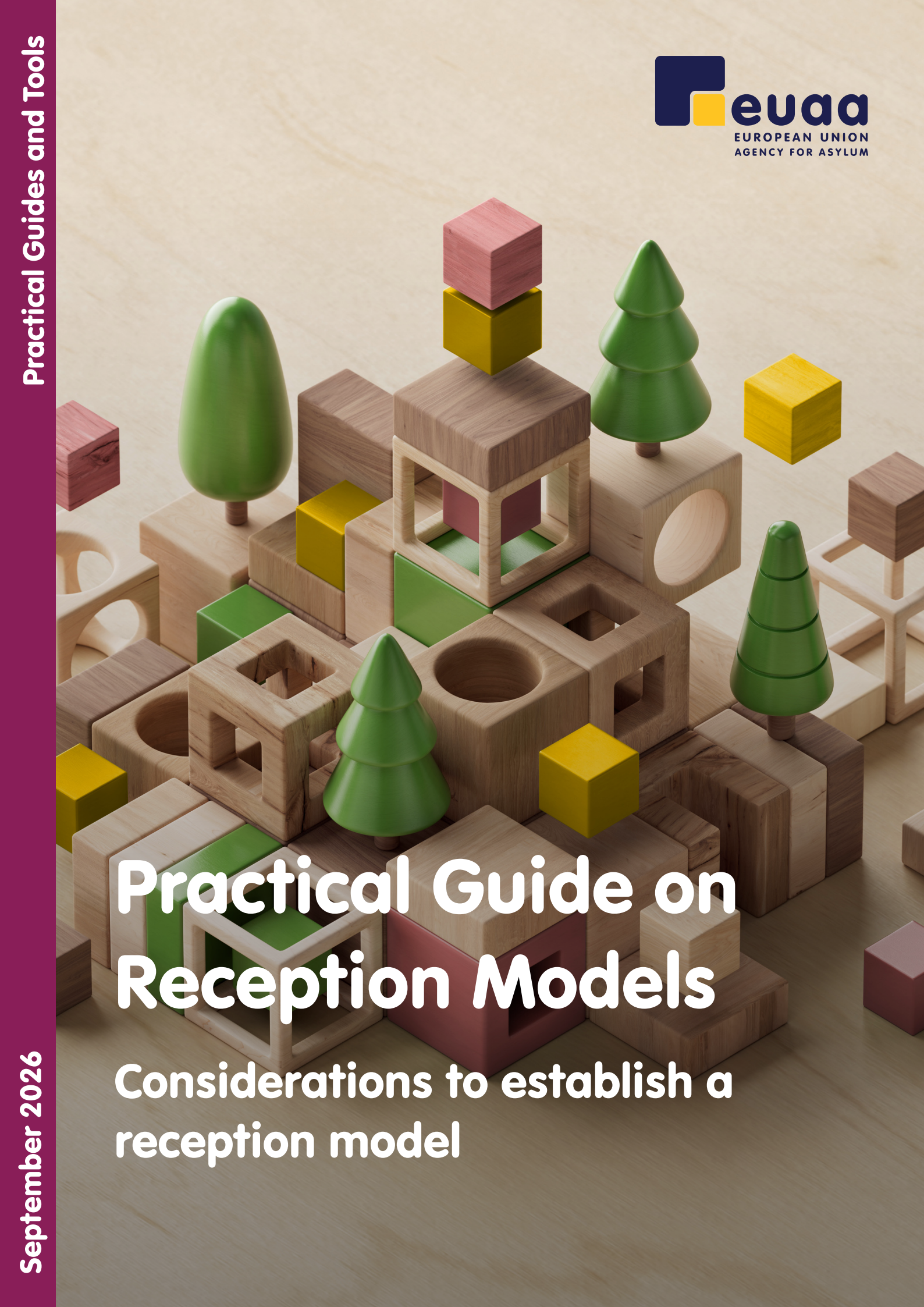




Practical Guide on Reception Models

Considerations to establish a
reception model

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September 2026

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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 EU Member States and Schengen associated countries (EU+ countries ⁽¹⁾) in the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). In accordance with its overall aim of promoting the correct and effective implementation of the CEAS and of enabling convergence, the EUAA develops common operational standards and indicators, guidelines and practical tools.

How was this guide developed? Largely inspired by the knowledge and practical experience gathered from different reception models implemented across the EU+ countries participating in the EUAA Network of Reception Authorities, this guide was created by EUAA experts with valuable input from the European Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ⁽²⁾. Before its finalisation, a consultation on the guide was carried out with all EU+ countries through the EUAA Network of Reception Authorities.

Who should use this guide? This guide is primarily intended for policymakers, decision-makers and senior reception managers in the national reception authorities. Additionally, this tool is useful for any other relevant stakeholders (e.g. national, regional and local authorities, as well as civil society organisations) involved in the field of reception of applicants for international protection in the EU context.

How to use this guide. The guide is structured in three parts. Part 1 covers the governance of reception systems. Part 2 covers the organisation of the reception model. Part 3 covers the management of the reception system. The guide lists, details and analyses separately all the different elements that need to be considered within a reception model. It is structured around central guiding questions to support decision-making on the national reception model to adopt.

How does this guide relate to national legislation and practice? This is a soft convergence tool. It is not legally binding.

How does this guide relate to other EUAA tools? The EUAA's *Practical Guide on Reception Models* should be used in conjunction with other available practical guides and tools, primarily the operational standards and indicators on reception ⁽³⁾ and the practical guide on the management of a reception centre ⁽⁴⁾. All EUAA practical tools are publicly available online on the EUAA website: <https://euaa.europa.eu/practical-tools-and-guides>.

⁽¹⁾ The 27 EU Member States, complemented by Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

⁽²⁾ Note that the finalised guide does not necessarily reflect the positions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

⁽³⁾ EUAA, *Operational Standards and Indicators on Reception including Vulnerability-related Aspects*, 2026, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/operational-standards-indicators-reception-including-vulnerability-aspects>.

⁽⁴⁾ EUAA, *Practical Guide on the Management of a Reception Centre – Focus on the arrival phase*, 2025, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-management-reception-centre-arrival>.

Disclaimer

Following an initial period of implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum () this document may require updating, as needed.

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.



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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AMMR	Asylum and Migration Management Regulation — Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on asylum and migration management, amending Regulations (EU) 2021/1147 and (EU) 2021/1060 and repealing Regulation (EU) No 604/2013
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CSO(s)	civil society organisation(s)
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland
HR	human resources
Member States	EU Member States
RCD (2024)	2024 Reception Conditions Directive — Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection
TCN(s)	Third-country national(s)
Charter	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
UAC(s)	unaccompanied children





Introduction

Member States have the autonomy to structure their reception systems in line with their national contexts, administrative frameworks and policy priorities. Within this set-up, they can assign applicants for international protection to specific accommodation facilities and/or choose among a set of modalities to ensure access to reception conditions. This flexibility allows Member States to manage their reception workflows at national level according to their institutional capacities and national realities.

In the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), the concept of reception encompasses the full set of measures and processes ensuring that applicants for international protection can comply with the obligations and effectively enjoy their rights under the 2024 Reception Conditions Directive (RCD (2024)) ⁽⁵⁾. This includes guaranteeing an adequate standard of living, meeting material, health care and psychosocial needs, and identifying and addressing any special reception needs or vulnerabilities, from the moment of making the application until enforcement of a final decision on the asylum application.

The Pact on Migration and Asylum ⁽⁶⁾ marks an important evolution in the EU approach to asylum and migration. The Commission's Common Implementation Plan dedicates to the organisation of reception systems its 'Building Block 3 – Rethinking reception' ⁽⁷⁾.

The RCD (2024) is a key instrument in this rethinking of reception. It enhances convergence of adequate standards, provides more flexibility in managing reception systems, and improves efficiency in preventing secondary movements. It also strengthens safeguards for applicants, including in detention, and provides earlier access to the labour market, support for physical and mental health care, and reinforced protection for families, children and vulnerable persons. Furthermore, it enables Member States to allocate applicants to specific accommodation facilities or areas and link reception conditions to actual residence, providing tools to better organise national reception systems.

⁽⁵⁾ Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (OJ L, 2024/1346, 22.5.2024); see recital 17 and Article 19, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1346/oj>.

⁽⁶⁾ European Commission: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, 'Pact on Migration and Asylum', European Commission website, 21 May 2024, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en.

⁽⁷⁾ See 'Building Block 3 – Rethinking Reception' in: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM(2024) 251 final, 12 June 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52024DC0251>, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0251>.





Terminology

In this practical guide, a distinction is made between ‘reception system’ and ‘reception model’, as better detailed below.

Reception system

It encompasses **the set of measures, facilities and services established by Member States** to ensure that all reception conditions and reception rights of applicants are met, from the moment of the making of the application for international protection, during all stages and types of procedures for international protection, in all locations and facilities housing applicants, and for as long as they are allowed to remain on the territory of the Member States as applicants ⁽⁸⁾. This includes:

- access to material reception conditions (housing, food, personal hygiene products, clothing, daily financial allowance) and non-material reception conditions;
- access to health care;
- access to employment;
- access to specialised support and assistance;
- other types of support in line with the RCD (2024).

The notion of **reception system** encompasses all facilities, equipment, services, human resources (HR), legal frameworks and funding mechanisms used to provide applicants with adequate reception conditions and reception rights and prepare them for the possible outcomes of their asylum application and the exit from the reception system.

Reception model

This is an **operational term referring to the way in which the national reception system** – encompassing its governance, structure and management of measures, facilities and services established by Member States – is implemented.

From the perspective of Member States, **the reception model** refers to **how the reception system is organised and managed**, for example, the types of accommodation, the governance structures or arrangements of the processes.

It is important to note that while the term ‘reception model’ does not have a direct legal definition in the EU instruments, it is closely linked to the broader notion of **reception system**.

⁽⁸⁾ Recital 7 RCD (2024).





The terminology used to describe reception facilities may vary considerably across Member States, reflecting differences in national systems, procedural choices and the functions assigned to each centre. Depending on operational needs and on the implementation of the RCD (2024) provisions, different terms may be used. This practical guide uses the terms and corresponding meanings indicated below.

Reception centre

The term is used as a synonym of ‘**accommodation centre**’, defined by Article 2(10) RCD (2024) as ‘any place used for the **collective** housing of applicants’ that guarantees an adequate standard of living (as per Article 19(2) RCD (2024)).

Reception facility

The term is used as a synonym of ‘**accommodation facility**’, defined as any place for the housing of applicants (**collective or not**). It encompasses accommodation centres as well as private houses, flats, hotels or other premises adapted for housing applicants (as per Article 20(1)(c) RCD (2024)).



Considerations and how to read this document

This guide lists, details and analyses separately all the different elements that could be considered within a reception model. This separation allows for a more systematic presentation of the building blocks composing a reception model.

To present and detail the variety of existing models (e.g. centralised versus decentralised approaches), artificial distinctions are sometimes introduced between governance, operational structure and organisational models. These are exclusively for the purpose of informing on the strengths and limitations, advantages and constraints/challenges of each approach.

Reception models do not function in isolation. They are fully incorporated within the national governance structures and ministerial architectures of each Member State, which ultimately define how a country is organised and managed, including on migration, asylum and reception matters.

These overarching governance systems directly influence and shape the reception model, determining who is in charge, how decisions are taken, and how coordination among the different stakeholders is ensured. Consequently, each reception model has its own specificities and operational arrangements, including a certain flexibility and margins to redefine or to adapt the model according to evolving needs, national priorities and political orientation.

Another point to consider is that reception hardly ever operates in a stable context. The reception system, and especially its capacity, constantly adjusts to both external and internal





factors such as inflows of third-country nationals (TCNs), including applicants for international protection. Even if some Member States have developed systems with accurate forecasting tools and legislative measures aimed at mitigating the risks posed by unexpected arrivals or secondary movements, the reality shows that the ideal reception capacity can never be calculated with exact precision. Therefore, reception systems must include strong preparedness measures and contingency planning, and should factor in a high degree of flexibility to adapt in a timely manner, depending on national context. Such adaptability is essential to ensure adequate reception conditions, an effective system and to effectively prevent and respond to crisis situations.

Based on the knowledge and practical experience gathered from different reception models implemented across the EU+ countries, the guide presents a catalogue of possible reception models. It does not aim to prescribe a single model or a fixed standard, but rather to provide a common reference, a basis for shared understanding, and an overview of the various components that may be included in a reception model. The guide aims to offer an overview of different reception models that could support Member States in identifying which configuration, or combination of elements, could best correspond to their own national context, capacities and structure, while ensuring quality and efficiency.

When developing or reviewing the governance system for the reception of applicants for international protection, national administrations can reflect on a number of key questions.



Guiding questions

Each section in this guide includes a list of guiding questions. These should not be interpreted as a checklist but rather as a list of guiding questions selected to support decision-makers in reflecting on possible governance arrangements and reception models and identifying the most appropriate ones, taking into account legal requirements, national context, institutional capacities and practical operational needs. They are also intended to stimulate reflection on the flexibility, resilience and effectiveness of a reception model that responds to national needs.

Examples of guiding questions are presented below, to guide the reader through the different parts of this guide. They summarise elements further detailed in this practical guide.

Part 1 – Governance of reception systems

Which authorities are responsible for fulfilling the obligations under the RCD (2024)?

Which authority(ies) (national, regional, local) manage(s) the reception system? Who should oversee the organisation of the reception system? How?

Which authorities are responsible for migration and asylum? How are the migration, asylum and reception systems coordinated?





Who are the other actors involved? What are their roles? What are, if any, the roles of civil society organisations (CSOs), private actors and international agencies and organisations? Is there operational support provided by EU Agencies?

How is the coordination between all actors ensured?

How is the model financed and funded? Is there a sustainable and predictable financing and funding strategy (e.g. national budgets, EU funding such as the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund)? How does the budget adapt to fluctuating needs?

What human resources model should be considered to support the well-functioning of the reception system?

How are the reception standards monitored and assessed? What mechanisms exist for quality control, monitoring, complaints and performance evaluation? Is there a clear chain of accountability?

Part 2 – Organisation of the reception model

How are applicants/residents ⁽⁹⁾ allocated within the reception system, also taking into account their profiles and special reception needs? Does the reception model include different types of reception facilities?

Does the reception model include/accommodate other profiles (beneficiaries of temporary protection, beneficiaries of international protection who are still within the reception system, beneficiaries of other forms of protection specific to the national context, former applicants pending return)? ⁽¹⁰⁾

What is the overall accommodation capacity of the reception system? How flexible is the reception model in responding to fluctuations in capacity needs? Can the model scale up or down? Are contingency planning, emergency capacity and flexible infrastructure (e.g. modular housing) embedded in the reception model? Are they sufficient?

Part 3 – Management of the reception system

How should provision of reception conditions and access to reception rights be organised and delivered?

How should reception capacity be managed and operationalised (direct management, indirect management or a mixed model)? Who are the actors involved?

How could data and case (file) management be organised?

How could staff deployment and management be organised?

⁽⁹⁾ 'Residents' is the generic term used here to refer to persons other than applicants for international protection accommodated within the reception system, depending on the national policy (see also next question).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Though accommodated within the same reception system, residents with different legal statuses will have access to different sets of rights. If a person applies for international protection during the screening, the RCD (2024) applies. Consequently, the facilities used for the screening must be adequate to provide reception conditions in line with the RCD (2024). For convenience and to improve efficiency, it is therefore recommended that material reception conditions pursuant to the RCD (2024) and in line with EUAA standards are applied uniformly at the screening locations. This approach eliminates the need to establish different sets of conditions, enhancing overall effectiveness.





List of Icons

This set of icons is used throughout the guide.

Icon	Meaning
	Guiding questions
	Considerations and how to read this document Examples/
	types of facilities/models/approaches
	Key characteristics of examples/types of facilities/models
	Advantages that examples/models may have
	Challenges that examples/models may have
	Variables regarding reception arrangements





Part 1 – Governance of reception systems

The governance model of reception administrations is very much linked to the pre-established governance modalities in place in the national institution(s). When putting in place its governance model to manage the reception system, the national administration should take into consideration the cross-cutting elements below.

1 Legal framework

The RCD (2024) sets out common standards for the access and provisions of reception conditions. These standards provide the legal basis for reception systems: the directive's transposition into national law is to ensure that the national policies and practices are consistent with EU law, uphold accountability and maintain quality.

2 Level of responsibilities and accountability

Reception systems must designate responsible authority(ies) and/or partners for the implementation and the oversight of reception services. These authorities/partners should ensure support and communication with the applicants and provide operational management, including the recruitment and training of reception staff.

3 Multi-stakeholder coordination

Access to reception conditions must be granted in a transparent and fair fashion to all applicants according to their respective reception needs. Coordination among national, regional and local entities ensures that applicants receive timely and adequate access to reception services. Effective collaboration with all actors involved in the reception system and with asylum authorities is essential for ensuring quality and continuity of care. The precise and transparent definition of roles across stakeholders is critical for legal compliance and accountability, but also for operational effectiveness.

Legal framework

The legal framework of reception systems in the EU is based on the RCD (2024). Member States can freely organise their reception systems, as long as the reception conditions they provide respect common standards, are sufficient to ensure an adequate standard of living for applicants for international protection, and are framed under their national legal and administrative system.





Reception Conditions Directive and national element

The RCD (2024) sets common standards to guarantee adequate reception for applicants for international protection and to ensure that their rights and obligations are applied in a comparable way across the Union. Its scope covers but is not limited to:

- a wide range of material reception conditions (housing, food, clothing, personal hygiene items, and daily expenses allowance);
- the protection of applicants' freedom of movement within the territory or part of the territory of the Member State, the rules under which the Member State may restrict freedom of movement and the grounds for detention and alternatives to detention;
- access to health care and schooling for children;
- access to the labour market within a defined period;
- opportunities for language courses, vocational training courses and socio-cultural orientation courses to enhance applicants' autonomy and support early integration during the asylum process;
- rules under which material reception conditions may be reduced or withdrawn;
- withdrawal of relevant reception conditions once a transfer decision under the responsibility determination procedure is issued, and provision of only basic needs and health care;
- identification, assessment and response to special reception needs.

The directive applies from the moment a TCN makes an application for international protection, during all stages and types of procedures for international protection (e.g. asylum procedure within the territory, asylum border procedure, responsibility determination procedure). It applies to all locations and facilities housing applicants (including during screening) and for as long as the person is allowed to remain on the territory of the Member State as an applicant.

The RCD (2024) aims to strengthen the harmonisation of reception standards across Member States, enhancing the comparability of living conditions while offering more flexible management tools to respond to fluctuating arrivals and improving efficiency in preventing secondary movements.

The directive establishes binding objectives and standards to ensure a common baseline across Member States while providing significant flexibility in the national implementation. This flexibility allows national administrations to organise and manage reception systems according to their own domestic structures, resources and capacities, through centralised, decentralised or mixed models. Member States remain fully accountable under their national legal and judicial systems. This ensures that the rights of applicants are upheld and enables administrations to adapt reception arrangements to local conditions and fluctuating arrivals. In this way, the legal framework balances the EU's aim for harmonisation and protection of the rights of applicants with the practical need of Member States to develop their own reception system and operational efficiency.



When opting to make use of the flexibility offered by the RCD (2024), Member States must transpose into national law also the relevant optional provisions and put in place the necessary administrative measures, procedures and capacities for their implementation.



Article 7 RCD (2024) – Organisation of reception systems

- 1. Member States may freely organise their reception systems in accordance with this Directive. Applicants may move freely within the territory of the Member State concerned.*
- 2. Provided that all applicants benefit effectively from their rights under this Directive, Member States may allocate applicants accommodation within their territory in order to manage their asylum and reception systems.*
- 3. When allocating or re-allocating applicants to accommodation, Member States shall take into account objective factors, including family unity as referred to in Article 14 and applicants' special reception needs.*
- 4. The provision of material reception conditions by Member States may be made subject to the actual residence by the applicants in the accommodation to which they have been allocated in accordance with paragraph 2.*
- 5. Member States may also put in place mechanisms to assess and address the needs of their reception systems, including mechanisms for the purpose of verifying that the applicants are actually residing in the accommodation allocated to them in accordance with paragraph 2.*
- 6. Member States shall require applicants to provide the competent authorities with their current address, a telephone number where they may be reached and, if available, an electronic mail address. Member States shall also require applicants to notify such competent authorities of any change of address, telephone number or electronic mail address as soon as possible.*
- 7. Member States shall not be required to take administrative decisions for the purpose of this Article.*



Recital 17 RCD (2024)

Member States should be able to freely organise their reception systems. As part of that organisation, Member States should be able to allocate applicants to accommodation within their territory in order to manage their asylum and reception systems. Member States should also be able to put in place mechanisms for assessing and addressing the needs of their reception systems, including mechanisms for verifying applicants' actual presence in the accommodation. Such mechanisms should not restrict the applicants' freedom of movement within the territory of the Member State concerned. Member States should not be required to take an administrative decision for that purpose.

Common European Asylum System

The 2024 reform of the CEAS comprises binding regulations of direct applicability in national law to harmonise, among others, migration management at the EU external borders, asylum procedures (including at the external borders), and responsibility determination. The new tools available to Member States for reception management and prevention of secondary movements are interlinked with the other harmonised rules of direct application, and reception arrangements can vary depending on the procedure to which the applicant is channelled.

European and international legal frameworks

Reception systems must comply with the broader EU and international legal frameworks. This includes the fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights ⁽¹¹⁾ (Charter), the European Convention on Human Rights ⁽¹²⁾, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ⁽¹³⁾ and all other relevant international instruments (e.g. United Nations Refugee Convention ⁽¹⁴⁾ and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁽¹⁵⁾), which apply to all individuals under the jurisdiction of the Member States. Together with the CEAS, these instruments create a multi-layered legal framework. Compliance must also be ensured with relevant jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights.

While binding regulations ensure uniformity in areas such as screening, asylum procedures and return, directives like the RCD (2024) provide common standards with flexibility for national implementation. On the other hand, the Charter and European and international instruments guarantee that all reception measures respect fundamental rights, including dignity, non-discrimination and access to essential services.

In conclusion, the implementation of reception systems is based mainly on national legal frameworks that translate EU and international standards into policies and practices, as well as constant efforts to close any existing gaps between legal provisions and practice. While the EU *acquis* lays down common requirements under the RCD (2024) and protects fundamental rights with the Charter, the national administrations organise, manage and operate the reception systems. The national, European and international legal bases allow authorities to adapt the reception system to national, regional and local capacities and governance structures, while keeping compliance with EU and international standards, protecting rights and maintaining clear responsibilities.

⁽¹¹⁾ European Union, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 26 October 2012, 2012/C 326/02, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/char_2012/oj.

⁽¹²⁾ Council of Europe, European Convention on Human Rights, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11, 14 and 15, ETS No. 005, 4 November 1950, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/coe/1950/en/18688>.

⁽¹³⁾ UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 217 A (III), 10 December 1948, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unqa/1948/11563>.

⁽¹⁴⁾ UN General Assembly, Convention relating to the status of refugees, Geneva, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>.

⁽¹⁵⁾ UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3, 20 November 1989, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/unqa/1989/18815>.



Responsible authority (entity/actor/ministry)

When designing a reception model, it is important to consider that, due to the plurality of rights that must be accessible to applicants, there will not be a single responsible authority but there will be more than one.



Article 30 RCD (2024)

Each Member State shall notify the Commission of the authorities responsible for fulfilling the obligations arising under this Directive. Member States shall inform the Commission of any changes in the identity of such authorities.

The responsible ministry plays a central role in the governance of the reception system, as it provides the necessary legal framework, policy direction, and supervisory oversight to guarantee that national reception arrangements respect both international and EU standards as well as national law. Before examining specific governance models, it is necessary to consider several key points:

- the distribution of responsibilities between ministries, specialised agencies and external providers;
- the degree of functional autonomy given to operational entities;
- the mechanisms to monitor and enforce compliance with standards.

Responsible ministries should take into account the need to find a balance between their supervisory and regulatory roles and practical management, to ensure that the reception system operates efficiently while remaining accountable under national law. In addition, the responsible ministry should coordinate with other relevant authorities, including social services, law enforcement and regional or local governments, to provide non-material support to applicants. Understanding these basic elements is essential before analysing how responsibilities are organised in different models.





Guiding questions for determining the responsible authority

Which ministry is primarily responsible for migration and asylum policy at the national/regional level?

Which ministry has the legal mandate and responsibility to oversee reception standards and ensure compliance with the obligations arising under the RCD (2024), national legislation and international law?

How can the responsible ministry ensure that reception governance aligns with broader national migration, asylum, social and security policies overseen by other ministries?

Does the ministry have sufficient administrative capacity and expertise to directly manage reception facilities, or would a specialised agency be more effective?

How will inter-ministerial or inter-agency coordination be ensured to provide holistic support to applicants?

It should be noted that the ministries or national entities responsible for ensuring access to and provision of reception conditions and reception rights vary across Member States. There are as many different set-ups as there are Member States. However, some functions are similar in some cases. Outlined below are two illustrative models, primarily based on the different configurations of the overall administrative architecture of the migration, asylum and reception framework.



Example – Migration agency

In a system where one central **migration agency** ⁽¹⁶⁾ covers all aspects of migration, the agency serves as single hub and primary authority for managing and coordinating the entire migration process at national level. This includes aspects such as the processing of applications for work, study and family reunification, as well as the processing of asylum applications and reception of applicants. The agency acts as the central point of contact for migrants and applicants. On reception related aspects, it may also coordinate health care, education and employment support in collaboration with national, regional and local authorities, while providing funds to ensure the provision of adequate reception services. Additionally, the migration agency leads the allocation of applicants within the territory according to capacity, infrastructure, budget and applicable restrictions.

The migration agency can partner with private actors such as service providers to secure housing, promote labour market access and support early integration, or to access experts in reception (see [Part 3 – Management of the reception system](#)). Additionally, it oversees compliance with migration-related EU legislation.

Depending on the national institutional set-up and context, the migration agency **operates either as a standalone entity under the authority of** a ministry (e.g. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Migration) or as part of the ministry.

⁽¹⁶⁾ The term ‘agency’ is used as a generic term, without detriment to the various terms used by Member States as per their national institutional classifications.



Advantages a migration agency may have

- Advantages related to governance and administration: by concentrating responsibility within a single authority, the system ensures clarity and consistency in decision-making and consequently reduces lengthy coordination processes and administrative burden.
- Strong coordination, case management and follow-up between migration, asylum and reception chain partners: the agency's overview and oversight of the reception capacity at national level and its role in the allocation mechanism and referrals positively affect the reception system.
- Applicants and migrants have one interlocutor only, for all migration matters. A central migration agency makes it is easier for applicants and migrants to access the administration, ask questions and follow up on their case.
- Administrative simplification and cost-effectiveness thanks to the consolidation of functions, resources and administrative processes. The absence of multiple institutions managing different aspects of migration can reduce duplication of efforts and streamline workflows by sharing resources and infrastructure such as integrated IT and data and case file management systems, reception centres and administrative staff.



Example – Reception agency

In a system where a dedicated **reception agency** is responsible for managing the reception of applicants, the agency acts as the central body overseeing accommodation and reception capacity, access to material reception conditions and reception rights, and early integration measures. With the operational focus remaining on reception rather than the overall migration and/or asylum process, a reception agency ensures consistency and efficiency by coordinating national standards and maintaining close cooperation with regional authorities, CSOs and private service providers. This model entails an independent agency specifically mandated to manage the national reception system.

The reception agency operates under the authority of a ministry (e.g. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Migration, Ministry of Social Affairs) but has functional autonomy in core areas such as staff, budget, procurement, facility management and operational planning ⁽¹⁷⁾. This type of agency is responsible for overseeing the reception system from the stage of arrival of the applicant to their exit from the reception pathway.

⁽¹⁷⁾ The budget autonomy will depend on the administration governing rule and will be specific to the context/national budget structure.



Advantages a reception agency may have

- Less bureaucratic fragmentation and shorter decision-making chains may reduce response time in situations of fluctuating inflows and optimise logistics and capacity planning. Centralised procurement and case management systems also reduce administrative burden and increase responsiveness.
- Direct decision-making on establishing and enforcing common national standards for reception conditions to ensure equal treatment and quality services to applicants within the national territory.
- In a Member States with many decentralised functions, it can be an opportunity to streamline cooperation with regional or local authorities, CSOs and private actors to deliver services such as housing, health care and early integration support.
- Retains higher control over staffing and management of its own staff, allowing for more specialisation including for tailored service delivery.

Other set-ups exist, ranging from dedicated ministerial departments in charge of reception to competencies assigned across different regions. Irrespective of the model chosen, reception should remain a distinct component, and any administrative integration with other components should not overshadow nor dilute the reception function (and its own specific features, constraints and areas of expertise).

Irrespective of the exact set-up, the role of the ministry responsible for the governance of the reception system is fundamental, as it provides the overall policy direction, the legal framework and the operational overview/supervision necessary to ensure that national practices align with EU standards and national law.

The entity responsible for reception (either integrated or standalone) also plays an important role due to its operational responsibilities, on-the-ground knowledge and professional expertise in implementing legislation and practical solutions. It is therefore essential that it is actively involved and contributes to the development of legislation, policies and standards that not only comply with EU legislation but are also tailored to the needs of the reception system and of applicants.

Lastly, regardless of how responsibilities are structured across the migration, asylum and reception process, each entity plays an important role in achieving overall success. The process depends on effective cooperation and there is a mutual interest in ensuring that each responsible entity fulfils its role effectively.

The various responsibilities under the reception system and the way they are distributed and managed operationally are explored in the next section.



Organisational structure

In the governance of reception systems, ‘organisational structure’ refers to the established framework that defines how roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers are distributed among the various actors in the reception system, from national authorities to regional or local governments and specialised agencies. It outlines the formal system of relations, authority and communication channels, providing a framework for coordination, accountability and oversight within the reception system.

The organisational structure directly affects how planning, funding and operational responsibilities are allocated, influencing the efficiency, flexibility and quality of services provided to applicants. By clearly defining these roles and interactions, the governance of reception systems ensures that responsibilities are understood, decisions are made effectively, standards are consistently upheld across the national network of reception facilities and accountability is ensured.

Reception systems across EU+ countries can adopt various operational and organisational models, each reflecting different degrees of centralisation, autonomy and operational delegation.



Guiding questions for determining the organisational structure

Who holds primary responsibility for managing reception services? Is it a central authority, a regional or local government, or is responsibility shared among several actors?

How are decision-making powers and operational responsibilities/functions distributed?

What mechanisms are in place for internal coordination and communication?

How are accountability and oversight ensured? What structures are in place to monitor compliance with national/EU legislation and ensure quality standards?

How flexible and adaptable is the system? Can the organisational structure respond timely to disproportionate pressure and situations of crisis?



Centralised model

In a centralised reception model, one national authority or executive agency has the primary responsibility for managing reception, including accommodation and services. The central body oversees all aspects of the reception of applicants for international protection, from strategic planning and legal implementation to operational coordination and service provision. It ensures uniform standards, streamlined decision-making and clear lines of accountability, while making sure that the reception framework complies with both EU and national legislation. The authority is tasked with planning, financing, implementing and monitoring reception services, maintaining consistency and accountability across the country.





Key characteristics

- Central coordination of reception policy.
- One actor is the final decision-maker for reception related topics.
- Central capacity planning and ability to implement scalable reception capacity.
- Centralised resources allocation and resources management.
- Standardised recruitment and training of staff.
- Unified monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Centralised budget and financial management.



Advantages a centralised model may have

- A central authority responsible for reception management allows for timely planning, financing and supervision across the entire reception system. This supports the alignment of policies and operations at national, regional and local level, reducing duplication of efforts and improving the overall efficiency of reception services.
- Centralisation helps to make communication faster and clearer between all actors involved in the reception chain. With less intermediaries, decisions can be made and applied more quickly, especially in case of peaks in arrivals or in situations of crisis. This allows the system to be more flexible and better coordinated.
- The centralised model promotes harmonised standards and uniform procedures within the country/territory, ensuring that all applicants benefit from the same access to services, regardless of location. The application of harmonised standards makes it easier to monitor implementation and evaluate performance across different reception facilities while also allowing for the fast identification of gaps in service provision.



Challenges a centralised model may face

- It can be challenging for the reception system to adapt to the specific capacities and realities of different territories. For example, when different actors/CSOs operate only in certain regions, service provision may become inconsistent across the country.
- Local regions and municipalities may have specificities that affect the responses to reception needs, for example: proximity to the border, specific climate conditions, whether the area is urban or rural and how easy (or not) it is to access public services. In this context, if decisions are made primarily at the national level, the operationalisation of reception services may result in solutions that are less suited to the local circumstances.
- When all responsibilities are concentrated in a single institution, the effectiveness of the entire reception system depends heavily on that authority's capacity, management, and resources. This may limit adaptability and flexibility.



Decentralised model

In a decentralised model, the responsibility for managing reception lies mainly with regional or local authorities. This approach is typical of EU+ countries with a very decentralised institutional / political system. In such a governance structure, decisions concerning how to organise access to reception conditions and reception rights are made closer to the communities and local territories where the applicants reside. This allows for more flexible and context-specific solutions that reflect regional capacities. While a national legal or strategic framework for reception may exist to provide overall direction and define minimum standards, the key operational decisions are made at regional or sub-national level. In practice, this includes the allocation of applicants within the territory, the opening and closing of reception facilities, the management of reception facilities, the timely and adequate provision of reception conditions and access to reception rights. The level of decentralisation largely depends on the national administrative structure, particularly in countries with federal systems, autonomous regions or prefectures, or where significant political authority is delegated to regional governments in migration and reception matters. This model promotes locally adapted approaches, enabling regions to tailor reception arrangements to their specific demographic, economic and social contexts.



Key characteristics

- Regional and local authorities operate reception facilities and services.
- National authorities retain a legislative and supervisory role.
- Budget planning and implementation are shared or locally managed, with national co-funding mechanisms.
- Significant autonomy in adapting reception modalities and procedures to local needs.
- Coordination mechanisms (e.g. inter-governmental bodies, formal agreements) are established to align policy objectives.
- Variability in institutional capacity, service quality and reception models across regions.



Advantages a decentralised model may have

- Regional and local authorities could have more flexibility in adapting the response to applicants' reception needs to the specific realities of their territories, including the capacity of social services. For example, this flexibility enables adequate case management follow-up to specific cases especially for unaccompanied children (UACs) and vulnerable groups.
- Decentralisation can help reduce bottlenecks in case management and prevent excessive strain on a single actor or facility. This operational distribution of tasks allows for effective resource management and ensures sustainable service provision, particularly if the system faces disproportionate pressure, for example during a sudden rise of new arrivals requiring flexible capacity.

- The reception pathway can be segmented between various responsible actors, thus fostering stronger involvement of municipalities, local actors and CSOs in designing and providing reception conditions.



Challenges a decentralised model may face

- Close collaboration between national and regional or local actors is required. This could create administrative complexity and slow down the processing of asylum and reception procedures and workflows.
- At operational level, there could be differences in regional/local capacity in terms of resources and preparedness. These differences can hinder the operational effectiveness and capacity to timely address reception needs.
- At operational level, there could be duplication of efforts to develop operational tools, workflows or processes, with efficiency loss and reduced harmonisation and convergence.
- Ensuring compliance with national and EU law may be more difficult when responsibilities are distributed locally. In such set-ups the level of information flows may affect equal access to and quality of reception conditions within the territory.
- Ensuring standardised data collection may require increased administrative effort and additional investments, enabling accurate data aggregation and comparison.
- There is a high risk that applicants may receive different information across the regions, if no centrally harmonised and coordinated approach on information provision is in place. This makes it more challenging to access accurate and timely guidance on reception services. Although local and regional variations in content and modality of information provision may be necessary due to differences among service providers or specific needs, this might lead to confusion and make it harder for applicants to timely access their reception rights.



Mixed model

The mixed model of reception combines the elements of both the centralised and decentralised approaches, integrating strategic objectives with operational flexibility and implementation. In this context, the national authority(ies) retain responsibility for overall policy, legal frameworks, strategic planning and budget allocation, while the operational management of the reception system is with regional/local actors, including municipal authorities, CSOs and/or private operators. This mixed structure allows national authorities to ensure consistency across the territory in terms of access to reception services and a strong oversight of funding management, while regional and local levels manage the day-to-day provision of reception services, adapting them to local contexts.



Key characteristics

- National reception authorities have responsibility for the legal framework, reception strategy and overall coordination. They are involved in the operational level at various levels.
- There is a shared governance structure between national/regional/local levels.
- The strategic and the overall budget management is centralised, while the implementation may be channelled through regional/local authorities, CSOs or private operators.
- National authorities define national reception standards based on which they set monitoring and evaluation criteria, while local actors adapt service provision to the operational context.



Advantages a mixed model may have

- The division of responsibilities reduces the operational burden on a single entity. The shared governance ensures that the reception system is resilient and able to adjust to fluctuating flows of arrivals and scenarios of disproportionate pressure and crisis. It allows national/central authorities to focus on strategy and coordination, while regional/local actors lead the implementation, improving responsiveness/reactivity.
- This model may support a decentralised approach that allows services to be tailored to the needs of applicants as well as local realities. Proximity to reception facilities, applicants, as well as regional and local authorities, can contribute to designing and proposing a context-specific response, for example for accessing housing, public transportation and health care. This enhances social inclusion, builds trust and acceptance between service providers and applicants, and promotes a more sustainable and resident-centred reception environment.



Challenges a mixed model may face

- Multiple authorities, stakeholders and actors operating at the national, regional and local levels may complicate coordination and slow down decision-making. In such a complex model, there is a risk of overlapping responsibilities or unclear mandates, which can result in inefficiencies, delays or gaps in service provision, particularly during crises when a rapid response is essential.
- Financing and budget management coordination may become more complex, because each actor often operates under its own budget and financing priorities. This may increase the administrative burden by requiring the alignment and management of multiple budgets.
- The diversity of actors involved in a mixed governance system may increase the risk of inconsistencies in reception workflows and variations in the quality of the reception conditions across regions and municipalities, particularly in vast EU+ countries with a large population and national territory. In this set-up, differences may emerge in the living conditions of applicants, the provision of reception services and overall compliance with national and EU standards.

Operational governance: financial, human and material resources

The governance of reception systems operates through a complex interaction of financial planning, HR management and use of material infrastructure. These elements enable Member States to address upcoming flows of new arrivals and fluctuating reception needs but also to ensure and maintain reception standards.

In this context, the operational governance refers to the structured system of coordination and implementation of the reception conditions from human, financial and material resources. It covers the planning and delivery of reception conditions and reception rights. This operational governance translates legal provisions and national policies on reception, reception conditions and reception rights into operational mechanisms, including the overall reception workflows and reception capacity of the national system.

Financial resources and budgeting



Guiding questions about the financial model

How does the budgeting framework ensure that the reception model remains operational, compliant with standards and financially sustainable despite fluctuating inflows?

Where are the prime financial resources laid (national budgets or external sources)?

What budget cycle to use to ensure efficient budget review and approval?

Which budget approach supports flexibility and preparedness, enabling adjustments in reception capacity in a timely and cost-efficient manner in accordance with changing needs?



Key characteristics

In the context of reception, budgeting serves both as a capacity management tool and as a risk-mitigation tool, to:

- ensure continuous provision of reception conditions in line with legal and quality standards;
- adapt capacity to fluctuating inflows (for systems managed according to a scale up / scale down approach);
- maintain cost control and predictability for central government finances.

Budget ownership usually lies with the budget authority sitting at central government level, pertaining to the relevant ministry (potentially the Ministry of the Interior, Migration or Finance). The reception authority is the primary budget holder responsible for spending and financial reporting. Municipalities and any other implementing partners participating in the system of reception conditions provision (both non-profit and private entities) are secondary budget holders. Funding resources can be mixed and comprise core national state budget combined



with EU funding. The latter could be project-based, complementary and less predictable in terms of time and continuity.

EU funding instruments such as the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument can play a vital role in co-financing national reception systems, including reception sites and infrastructure and material reception conditions, and in supporting training of staff. The Technical Assistance Project, part of the EU structural support, can be used to finance experts, capacity building and specialised knowledge to help countries, regions or organisations implement EU policies, manage funds and undertake reforms also in the field of reception.

Budgeting processes entail submitting budget proposals to the state body that is the budget holder, subject to different levels of approval involving the ministerial or parliamentary level. Budget proposals can be based on prognoses/forecasts of needs (annual, bi-annual, tri-annual) and usually include expected arrivals and residents in reception facilities. This is especially the case when the reception system is managed based on a flexible capacity model. With reception systems operating along a stable reception capacity model, the budget approvals and cycle might be less flexible.

The cost structure used for budgeting usually includes:

- costs for material reception conditions and corresponding contingency allocations for crisis response;
- operational costs for staff, utilities and services to provide reception conditions, including security and corresponding contingency allocations for crisis response;
- capital investment for the construction or renovation of facilities.

The total reception budget can be divided by the number of applicants/residents to calculate the cost per applicant.

Budgeting methods may rest on the following pillars.

- **Capacity-informed budgeting** that allows, depending on the reception model chosen, translation of asylum flow projections into financial needs based on
 - the number of reception places/beds,
 - the cost per place per day,
 - the expected occupancy rates (different rates may apply depending on the type of facility, the size of centre and the target group, e.g. UACs),
 - the cost per person staying outside reception facilities (i.e. when housing is not provided in kind),
 - the cost per person staying outside reception facilities (e.g. not opting for accommodation in a reception facility) but still receiving material reception conditions other than accommodation.
- **Forecasting and scenario modelling** to substantiate budget requests and enable mid-year adjustments, based on historical data (5–10 years) and covering arrivals, length of





stay in the reception system and occupancy. Scenarios can typically include baseline, high-influx and low-influx.

Budgeting serves not only financial control purposes. It is a key instrument in pursuing broader policy goals, including:

- stability of reception capacity (avoid collapse during peaks);
- cost efficiency;
- quality assurance (maintaining reception standards, staffing adequacy);
- system resilience (ability to absorb shocks);
- predictability for partners and staff (avoid loss of expertise).

Budgeting best serves these aims when based on evidence, forecasts and structured models enabling the reception system to anticipate fluctuations, maintain staffing and service quality and absorb shocks in a controlled and cost-efficient manner. On the contrary, responding reactively through emergency-driven measures entails risks of higher costs, loss of expertise and deterioration of reception conditions.

Human resources

This section covers the human resource aspect as an element of the operational model. All aspects related to the management of staff are covered in section [Staffing including training](#) in [Part 3 – Management of the reception system](#).



Guiding questions about the human resources model

What are the tasks to be performed/covered in the reception context? What are all the reception profiles and expertise needed to perform those tasks? What are the skills requested for each of these profiles?

Other staff involved in the reception context: what are the different profiles needed to support the reception operations, e.g. security personnel, maintenance staff, administrative staff etc.?

Based on the reception capacity of the country and on the type and capacity of each reception facility, how many reception staff are needed to meet both operational and strategic reception needs?

Geographical needs and repartition on the territory: where are the reception needs?

What HR set-up is to be in place to guarantee sufficient staff (e.g. within the department, outside your agency/ministry, project funding, use of EU funds, work with an interim agency), including in situations of disproportionate pressure or crisis?

How to ensure that staff are sufficiently trained?





Article 33 RCD (2024) – Staff and resources

1. Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that the staff of authorities and other organisations directly responsible for implementing this Directive have received the necessary training with respect to the needs of applicants, including minors. To that end, Member States shall include relevant core parts of the European asylum curriculum related to reception conditions as well as the tool for identification of applicants with special reception needs developed by the Asylum Agency in the training of their staff.

2. Member States shall allocate the necessary resources, including the necessary staff, translators and interpreters, for the implementation of this Directive, taking into account seasonal fluctuations in the numbers of applicants. Where local and regional authorities, civil society or international organisations take part in the implementation of this Directive, they shall be allocated the necessary resources.



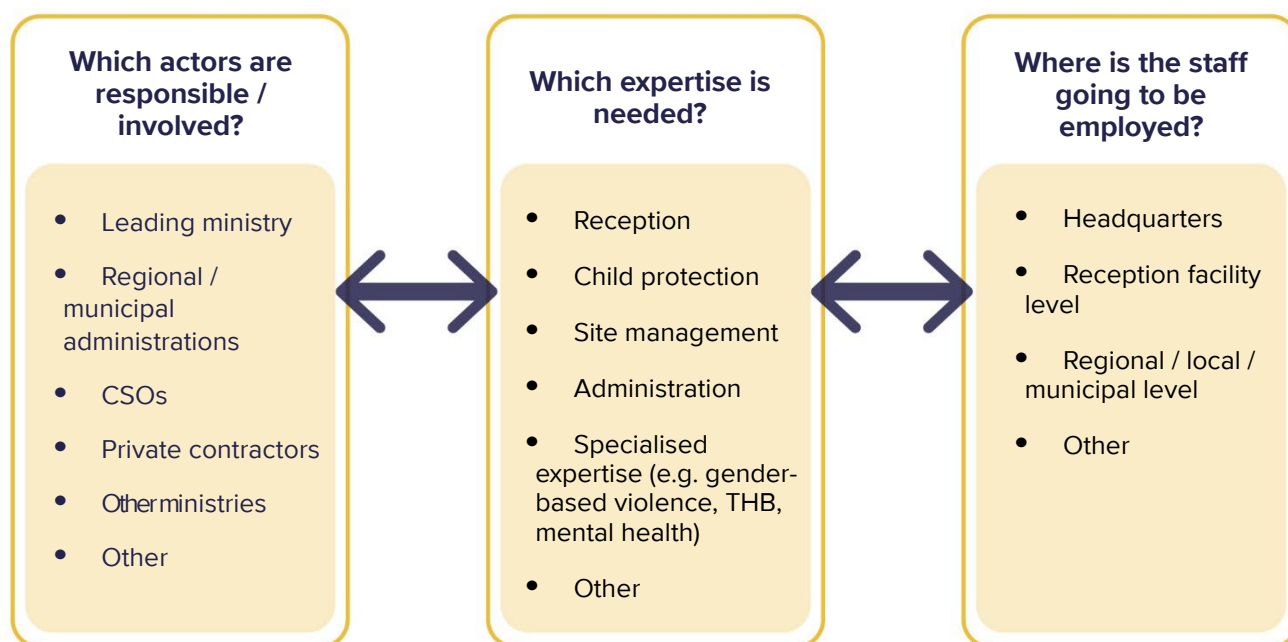
Key characteristics

Human resources represent a central pillar of the operational governance in any reception administration, as the quality and effectiveness of reception systems and service provision depend largely on staff capacity, expertise and clearly defined tasks and roles. Staff must be sufficient in number, adequately trained and equipped with the right skills to respond to the evolving needs of applicants, including persons pertaining to vulnerable groups – be them adults or children (accompanied or not).

As such, the guiding questions above help to reflect on the staffing needs for any reception model, by looking at elements such as tasks, skills, profiles and geographical repartition.

These elements are fundamental for developing a comprehensive HR model that effectively supports the national reception strategy and addresses the fluctuating needs of the reception system. A robust HR model must align staffing profiles, expertise and capacity with the operational realities of reception management, ensuring that the right skills are available in the right place and at the right time. It should clearly define the required expertise for each function of the reception pathway, from reception field roles to managerial, technical, security and maintenance staff, while maintaining flexibility to adjust staffing levels in response to fluctuating arrivals and changing reception capacities.

In designing such a model, the governance structure of reception plays a central role. It is essential to establish clarity regarding which ministries, agencies, organisations and contracted partners are responsible for the recruitment, training and supervision of reception staff. For staffing and recruitment models, such as direct recruitment, outsourcing or mixed approach, see section [Staffing including training](#) in [Part 3 – Management of the reception system](#). The variables to consider when designing the HR model and their interlinks, depending on the national context, are displayed in the following figure.

Figure 1. Factors to consider when designing the HR model

For an overview of possible staff profiles needed in a reception centre and other human resources aspects, see sections ‘Governance structure and decision making’ and ‘Human resources and training’ as well as ‘Annex 2 – Human resources table’ in: EUAA [Practical Guide on the Management of a Reception Centre – Focus on the arrival phase](#), 2025.



Elements to develop the HR model

Coordination mechanisms must be formalised among all actors in the reception chain to ensure consistency in recruitment standards, codes of conduct and capacity-building efforts. By integrating these governance considerations, the HR model serves not only to align reception standards at national level, but also as a strong management tool to ensure workforce capacity and a strategic instrument to enhance accountability, efficiency and quality within the national reception system.

It is recommended that the national reception administration establish a clear organisational structure covering all personnel involved in reception. This should be supported by a national organisational staffing structure that defines the number (or staff ratio), type and distribution of staff required to operate the reception system effectively. The framework should clearly distinguish between operational/expert roles (such as reception officers, social workers, child protection experts, case managers and flow coordinators), strategic roles at the national level (responsible for policy development and standard setting) and supporting functions (such as managers, security personnel or maintenance staff). Working instructions per profile can further support quality and effectiveness in reception processes. Together, these elements ensure a coherent, efficient and well-coordinated staffing structure that aligns with the overall reception strategy.

The HR model should take into account business continuity, which is essential in reception and the measures to preserve institutional knowledge and staff retention, and maintain long-term capacity-building within national reception structures as well as other service providers.

Material resources



Guiding questions about material resources

How to ensure that the reception infrastructure/facilities, the material reception conditions (e.g. accommodation, food, clothing, hygiene items) and any other necessary material resources meet the reception needs of all applicants, including vulnerable groups?

Are overall material resources and reception infrastructure/facilities appropriately distributed across the territory to ensure equitable access and continuity of support throughout the reception pathway?

Does the reception model have mechanisms to adapt infrastructure and material resources in response to new arrivals or disproportionate pressure or crisis?



Article 2 RCD (2024) – Definitions

‘material reception conditions’ means the reception conditions that include housing, food, clothing and personal hygiene products provided in kind, as financial allowances, in vouchers, or as a combination thereof, as well as a daily expenses allowance;



Article 19 RCD (2024) – General rules on material reception conditions and health care

1. Member States shall ensure that material reception conditions are available to applicants from the moment they make their application for international protection in accordance with Article 26 of Regulation (EU) 2024/1348.

2. Member States shall ensure that material reception conditions and health care received in accordance with Article 22 provide an adequate standard of living for applicants, which guarantees their subsistence, protects their physical and mental health and respects their rights under the Charter.



Key characteristics

Material resources constitute a central pillar of the operational governance of any reception system. Their quality, access and management directly determine the ability of the authorities / responsible ministry to guarantee an adequate standard of living for applicants and ensure that the needs of applicants are met throughout the reception pathway.

Material resources include:

- the physical infrastructure to ensure housing (e.g. reception facilities, centres, screening facilities, accommodation units) and any other type of material resources required to ensure adequate reception besides the material reception conditions for applicants (e.g. ICT equipment, communication tools and digital tools);
- in-kind provisions, financial allowances, vouchers, or a combination thereof, to ensure material reception conditions (housing, food, clothing, hygiene items);
- the daily expenses allowance (provided as a monetary amount, in vouchers, in kind, or as a combination thereof provided that it includes a monetary amount).

A coherent and efficient governance model must ensure that material resources are available, accessible and adaptable across the entire territory. It should reflect both the geographical distribution of reception needs and the evolving operational context, including scalability and continuity during sudden increases in arrivals or situations of disproportionate pressure, and be able to cover all asylum procedures under the new CEAS.

For more on this, see Section [Structure and management of the reception system](#) in [Part 3 – Management of the reception system](#).

Stakeholders and coordination



Guiding questions to structure coordination among stakeholders

Are there established coordination structures that bring together all key reception actors?

Are there established coordination structures that bring together all key actors along the migration-asylum chain (including reception, integration, return)?

How regularly do coordination meetings take place at national, regional and local level?

Do coordination mechanisms ensure both vertical coordination (between the national, regional and local levels) and horizontal coordination (between sectors or institutions at the same level)?

Are roles, responsibilities and reporting lines clearly defined, agreed and effectively implemented among all actors?

How is coordination structured to effectively meet time-sensitive requirements, such as response timelines, emergency deadlines, and referral timeframes?



How is coordination maintained during emergency situations or disproportionate pressure/crisis situations?

What formal communication channels exist between national, regional and local actors (e.g. newsletters, circulars, shared databases, online portals)?

How are communication challenges identified and addressed within the coordination framework?



Key characteristics

The national reception system involves many stakeholders and requires a coherent, multi-level coordination framework to ensure that all actors involved in reception provide adequate access to reception rights and services / reception conditions, and communicate effectively.

Effective communication and coordination mechanisms are essential to guarantee consistent implementation across the national territory, at regional and municipal level, as well as across the reception facilities. A strong coordination ensures coherent service provision, improved quality standards in reception, and stronger institutional cooperation at all levels (regardless of the governance system in place). The component of coordination can be differentiated between internal and external coordination elements.

Internal coordination: effective internal coordination within national asylum and reception authorities, and between internal units and departments. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined within each authority and integrated into a general framework of cooperation between the authorities.

External coordination: coordination with external stakeholders is vital and should involve, as appropriate, local and regional authorities, civil society, EU actors and international organisations, as well as other stakeholders involved in migration management. This ensures an efficient use of resources and effective communication during high-pressure or crisis situations. Clear roles and responsibilities, alongside well-defined communication channels and protocols, are necessary for a successful response.

The reception pathway is multi-phased and strongly tied to the asylum procedure. The reception path of applicants includes important referral steps stemming from specific reception needs, the applicant's situation, the type of asylum procedure an applicant is channelled to, and the step in the asylum procedure they are at. Coordination therefore involves multiple actors from various reception phases.



Examples of key actors

National responsible authorities (e.g. Ministry of Migration, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour)

The national ministry designated by the national law on reception matters remains the main responsible entity for the governance of reception, defining legal frameworks, policy and supervisory mechanisms. The ministry is in charge of coordinating the activities of subordinate agencies and operational entities, to ensure that responsibilities are clear and that reporting and monitoring systems are working. The ministry must find a balance between its regulatory and oversight roles and practical management aspects, including the allocation of applicants to accommodation facilities and geographical areas, the management of reception capacity and the implementation of early integration measures. Subordinate agencies responsible for reception contribute with their knowledge and on-the-ground expertise to shaping legislation, policies and standards.

The same applies for all the other policy areas which fall under the strict responsibility of a national ministry (e.g. migration, asylum, return, education, health, child protection, labour).

At ministry level, joint agreements can be concluded as part of a general cooperation framework (e.g. with the Ministry of Education, of Health, of Labour). This facilitates the harmonised implementation at local and regional level.

For more details on practical aspects related to referrals and coordination with stakeholders for mainstream service provision, see Section [Service provision and policies](#) in [Part 3 – Management of the reception system](#).

Local and regional authorities

Local and regional administrations often have a critical operational role, managing reception centres, delivering social services and facilitating access to health care, education and integration (including early integration) programmes. Coordination with national authorities is essential to ensure the consistent application of standards across regions, the efficient use of infrastructure, and to prevent gaps in service provision.

Civil society organisations

CSOs play a key complementary role in reception by providing direct assistance, specialised services and community-based support to applicants. They contribute to identifying needs on the ground, promoting social inclusion and ensuring accountability through advocacy and monitoring. Close collaboration with public authorities enhances the coherence, quality and responsiveness of reception services.



Private contractors

Private contractors are for-profit entities engaged by public authorities to deliver specific services within the reception system under contractual arrangements. Their role may include the management of reception facilities or the provision of essential operational services such as security, catering, cleaning, laundry, maintenance, transportation and facility management.

Relevant stakeholders may also include external actors with independent monitoring or supervisory responsibilities, such as the Ombudsperson, human rights bodies or the Court of Auditors. Depending on the national context, these actors closely monitor the execution of the reception tasks from different perspectives. Ombudspersons may monitor the reception conditions, review compliance with legal obligations and support improvements. Independent external financial auditing ensures that public spending complies with legal and budgetary requirements and is efficient and effective, while also supporting improvements in financial management.

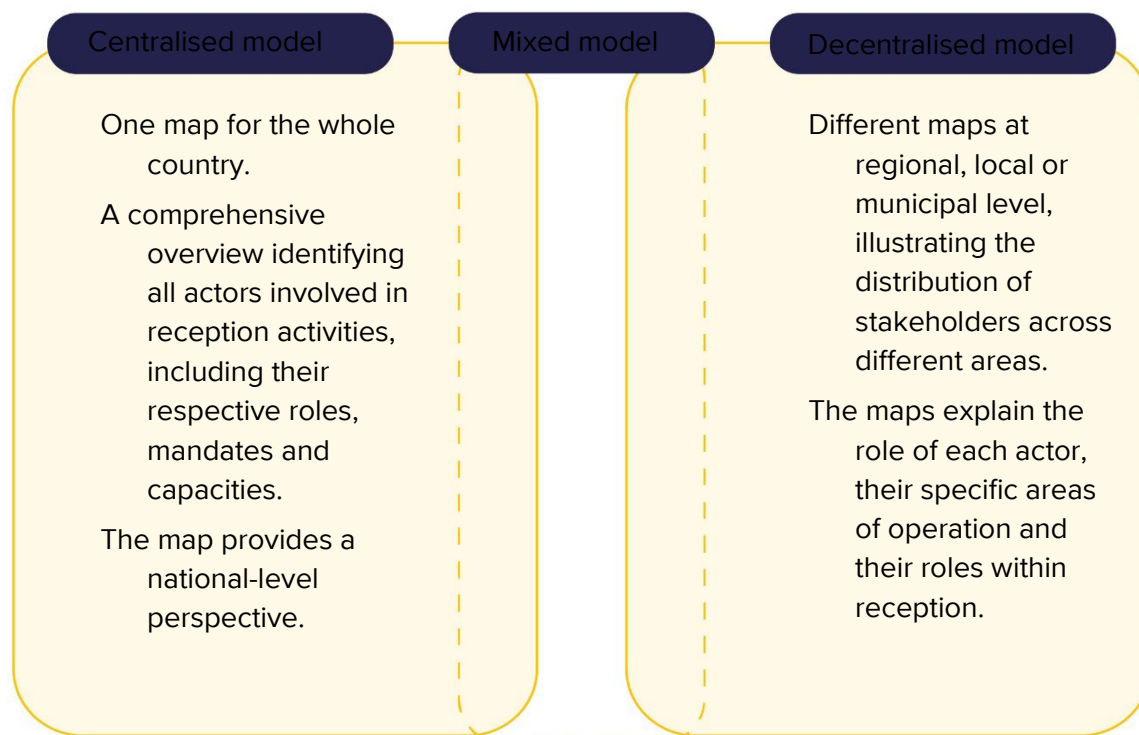
Model of coordination among stakeholders

Stakeholder mapping

A detailed map of all stakeholders involved in reception activities should be developed and regularly updated. The map should identify actors at national, regional and local level, including governmental authorities, service providers, CSOs, private partners and other relevant entities. For each stakeholder, the mapping should include the following information: name, mandate, geographical coverage, area(s) of expertise, availability (days and times) and primary contact details. It can also include the potential capacity and their involvement in reception workflows.

The map should serve as a practical reference tool to clarify roles and responsibility, ensure coherent coordination, prevent overlaps, and facilitate information flow across the reception system.



Figure 2. Mapping according to the governance model

Coordination mechanisms and protocols

Coordination mechanisms and protocols may include the following.

- Regular coordination meetings at various levels (from national to local).
- Thematic working groups on specific topics like access to health.
- Formal communication tools, e.g. situational reports, dashboards or shared reporting platforms, to ensure all stakeholders are timely informed.
- Formal information tools such as newsletters addressed to a comprehensive audience to share the latest information and internal memos.
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs), i.e. an approved set of step-by-step instructions for completing recurring tasks, ensuring consistency, quality and efficiency across an organisation. SOPs define the 'why', 'what', 'who', 'when', 'how' and 'how long' of processes, to reduce errors, ensure compliance with regulations and maintain a uniform standard of performance. SOPs should be agreed and validated by all involved actors.
- Referral mechanisms/pathways ⁽¹⁸⁾, i.e. a standardised mechanism that includes mapping of service providers inside or outside the reception centre, tools to identify

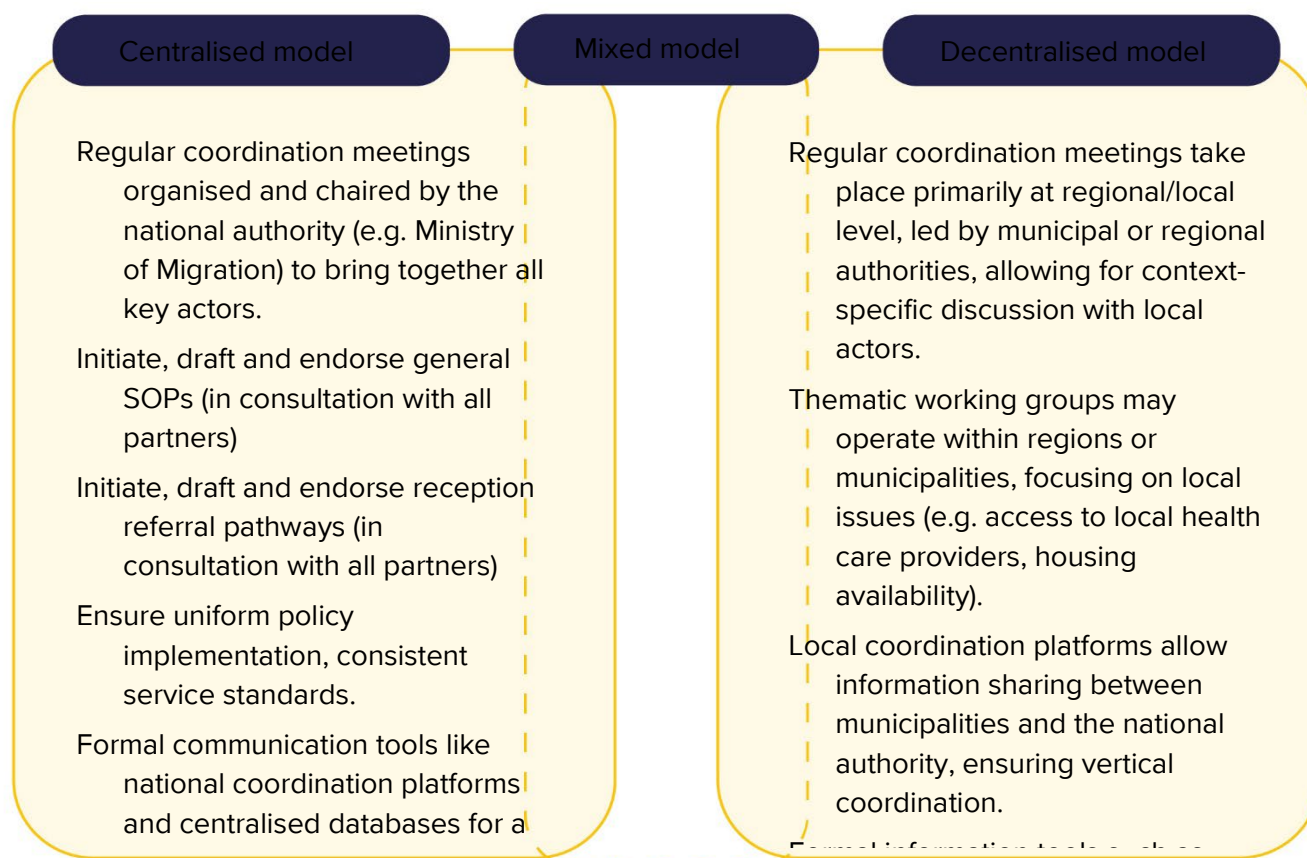
⁽¹⁸⁾ As an example, see the EUAA's Referral Tool at <https://reftool.euaa.europa.eu/en>. This practical tool aims to facilitate the referral of applicants with special needs to adequate support. It includes: a) a standardised referral form to facilitate communication between the actors involved in the referral of the applicant, b) a search tool to help users find the services providing the necessary support, c) guidance on how to adequately conduct a referral.

cases and indicators for referral and a dedicated workflow to ensure access to services through a coordinated approach. These are commonly agreed and regularly updated and reviewed by the actors.

The reception pathway of applicants should also be designed according to specific procedures (health, vulnerability checks etc.) with referral mechanisms. The referral mechanism ensures timely and adequate response to identified reception needs.

Clear communication protocols should define who communicates what, to whom and through which channels. Coordination mechanisms are essential to ensure coherence, efficiency and compliance with EU standards in the management of reception systems. Without structured coordination, responsibilities can become fragmented, leading to gaps in service provision, duplication of efforts and inconsistencies in the application of reception conditions specifically in decentralised reception systems.

Figure 3. Coordination mechanisms and protocols according to the governance model



Reception capacity, data and reporting

Effective data collection, monitoring and reporting on reception capacity constitute a core management tool for national reception authorities and are essential for ensuring preparedness and evidence-based decision-making in the management of national reception systems. An accurate and timely reporting framework also supports compliance with EU-level monitoring and reporting requirements under the EUAA Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS). The data provided by the EUAA are expected to be used by the European Commission to monitor the migratory situation (Article 7(5) AMMR) and prepare the European Annual Asylum and Migration Report (Article 9(2) AMMR). In general, the key data are reported on a monthly basis, reflect the situation on the last day of the reference month and follow consistent definitions to ensure comparability over time.

The following key indicators, as defined below, should be systematically reported as per the Early Warning and Preparedness System Technical Guide ⁽¹⁹⁾.

- **Persons in the reception system (stock at end of the reporting period).** It includes all persons who are effectively covered **by the reception system**, as a measure of the stock of persons in the reception system at the end of the reporting month. For the purpose of reporting, the **reception system** is understood as the set of arrangements in place to accommodate asylum applicants during all stages and types of procedures for international protection, in all locations and facilities housing applicants and for as long as they are allowed to remain on the territory of the Member States as applicants ⁽²⁰⁾.
- **Capacity of the reception system (available beds at the end of the reporting period).** It includes the total number of beds (occupied and non-occupied) **in the reception system**, as a measure of stock in the reception system at the end of the reporting month ⁽²¹⁾. The reception system is defined as above. The types of accommodation correspond to those under the above indicator ⁽²²⁾, to ensure methodological consistency and avoid discrepancies in the calculation of occupation/occupancy rates.
- **Occupation/occupancy rate** (estimated based on the two indicators above). It is the ratio between the number of persons effectively accommodated in the reception system (i.e. excluding cash provision for accommodation purpose and no accommodation support) and the reported capacity of the reception system. This

⁽¹⁹⁾ EUAA, *Early Warning and Preparedness System Technical Guide*, restricted document.

⁽²⁰⁾ The reception system may also cover persons who have either received a final decision on their application for international protection or have not applied for international protection. The indicator is further broken down, for example, by types of accommodation (including separate reporting for cash provision for accommodation purposes or no accommodation support due to sufficient means), legal status or duration of stay, with explanations on the scope of each breakdown.

⁽²¹⁾ The number of beds is further broken down, for example, by types of accommodation and capacity status (regular, buffer or emergency capacity).

⁽²²⁾ With the exception of accommodation provided through cash assistance, or where accommodation support is not provided due to the beneficiary having sufficient means, for which the concept of capacity is not applicable.



indicator provides an immediate measure of the system's pressure and is used to assess operational sustainability under ordinary conditions ⁽²³⁾.

For the national reception authority, gathering and reporting regular and buffer capacity separately is essential for preparedness and contingency planning. In this sense, other indicators and data that it is good to collect include:

- regular capacity, reflecting the baseline capacity of the reception system;
- buffer capacity, i.e. the readily available additional places that can be activated within a short timeframe to manage predictable seasonal peaks without resorting to emergency measures.

When combined, regular and buffer capacity represent the total capacity available under ordinary operating conditions, meaning a situation in which asylum and reception administrations operate at average levels while retaining sufficient flexibility to manage regular fluctuations using existing resources ⁽²⁴⁾.

The indicators above can also give an overview with regard to reception capacity and occupation rate for accommodation arrangements for persons with special reception needs.

At national level, capacity could be further disaggregated by applicant's profile or procedure as well as by so-called 'blocked' or 'inactive' beds/places (e.g. due to renovation works or when a room is assigned to a family and one bed in the room is left empty). This would enable more granular insights to support evidence-based decision-making, planning, resource allocation and corrective measures.

Besides accommodation capacity, '**reception capacity**' should be understood as including aspects related to **human resources**. The Early Warning and Preparedness System also collects data on 'reception human resources capacity', which refers to all personnel employed in tasks directly associated with the reception of asylum applicants.

A **dedicated department or a data and analysis unit** within the reception authority could be established and assigned exclusive responsibility for data collection, validation, analysis and reporting, as well as for the set-up and use of an early warning system at national level. This specialised function supports the continuous modelling and adjustment of the reception system by translating operational data into support to strategic decision-making and better planning. Data analysis and reporting also enable timely activation of contingency measures in line with identified scenarios, indicators and thresholds. At the same time, this function ensures the timely and accurate fulfilment of external reporting obligations under EU law and the related monitoring frameworks.

⁽²³⁾ It should be noted that, by construction, this estimated occupation rate is bound to be an underestimate of the net occupancy rate. Indeed, occupancy is expressed in persons, while capacity is expressed in beds. Additionally, the reporting on capacity does not take into account the so-called 'blocked' or 'inactive' beds.

⁽²⁴⁾ This is reflected in the EUAA's Contingency Planning Template and its Manual (restricted documents).



Part 2 – Organisation of the reception model



How to read this section

This section presents the different components that together constitute a reception model.

It should be read as a ‘menu’ of options: various ways of providing accommodation/housing, together with other material and non-material reception conditions, can be selected and combined to design a model that responds to the specific context, needs, priorities, capacity and operational constraints of each Member State.

Member States can freely organise their reception systems as long as the reception conditions they provide are sufficient to ensure an adequate standard of living for applicants for international protection. The RCD (2024) leaves a considerable degree of discretion for Member States to define how it should be achieved.

When organising their reception model, Member States can decide on various reception arrangements **based on different variables** which can be combined.



As part of their discretion to organise their reception systems and choose how to provide material reception conditions, Member States may provide housing/accommodation:

- in kind,
- as financial allowance,
- as vouchers,
- as a combination of these forms.

Where applicants possess sufficient financial resources, Member States may also require them to cover, contribute to or reimburse the costs of material reception conditions, including housing.



If the applicant undergoes the asylum procedure or the responsibility determination procedure within the territory, Member States may take the measures below ⁽²⁵⁾.

- **Allocate applicants to accommodation (a specific reception facility)** (Article 7(2) RCD (2024)) to support the managing of the asylum and reception systems. Provision of material reception conditions may be made subject to the actual residence in the designated accommodation.
- **Allocate applicants to a defined geographical area** (Article 8 RCD (2024)) to ensure the swift, efficient and effective processing of their application or a homogenous geographical distribution of applicants within the country, taking into account the

⁽²⁵⁾ For information on the application of these measures, see European Commission, *Guidance on the use of Detention, Alternatives to Detention and Restrictions of Freedom of Movements under the 2024 Recast Reception Conditions Directive*, 2026, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/8f7ce248-fba0-4534-8665-31522a0452da_en.



capacities of the geographical areas concerned. Any geographical area used for allocation must be large enough to ensure effective access to reception conditions, procedural safeguards and support for applicants with special reception needs.

- **Restrict the freedom of movement of an applicant** (Article 9 RCD (2024)) and **allow them to reside in a specific place only**, for reasons of public order or to prevent absconding, even if the applicant has the means to afford other accommodation. A decision must be issued to this end, taking into consideration the principles of necessity and proportionality and the individual situation and special needs of the applicant. Material reception conditions are to be provided at the assigned place only.



If the applicant is channelled into the **asylum border procedure** (following screening at the external border), their freedom of movement is restricted and **they are required to reside at or in proximity to the external border or transit zones or in other designated locations within the territory of the Member State** for the duration of the procedure.



Where there are grounds for detention (based on the exhaustive list at Article 10 RCD (2024)), Member States may **detain an applicant in specialised detention facilities**, only as a measure of last resort and within a strict legal framework. Authorities must first assess less coercive measures and, based on the principles of necessity and proportionality, may proceed to detention only where such alternatives cannot be effectively applied. One such **alternative to detention** is the **obligation to stay at an assigned place** (Article 10(5) RCD (2024)). In practice, the obligation to stay at an assigned place may also qualify as a restriction of freedom of movement under Article 9 RCD (2024). Nevertheless, such obligation may be used as an alternative to detention only if there is a legitimate ground for detention ⁽²⁶⁾.



Reception centres can be categorised by function and purpose into two main operational models ⁽²⁷⁾.

- **Single-purpose centres** serving a dedicated or limited function, for example: initial reception, in some cases comprising specific procedural steps; reception during the entire asylum procedure, with no procedural steps executed within the premises; reception of applicants undergoing a specific procedure or procedural steps (e.g. asylum border procedure). Single purpose centres may also provide specific services and support to residents, e.g. to applicants with special reception needs.
- **Multi-purpose centres** integrating several functions (e.g. border procedure centres that may or may not include the screening function), covering a wider range of procedural steps or procedures, and providing a broader range of services and support to residents. All is done under one roof, with designated areas allocated to specific functions and operational workflows, allowing for efficient authority coordination and continuity of case management.

⁽²⁶⁾ For the distinction between the two, see EUAA, *Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention*, 2024, Guideline 2. <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/guidelines-alternatives-detention>

⁽²⁷⁾ This categorisation is for illustrative purposes only, and in practice there may be overlaps between what could be classified as a single-purpose centre or a multi-purpose centre.





From another perspective, reception facilities can be categorised as

- **collective**, housing many applicants in one facility; or
- **independent/individual**, i.e. private houses, flats or other premises adapted for independent housing.



When housing is provided in kind, it must take one or a combination of the following forms:

- premises used for the purpose of housing applicants during the examination of an application for international protection made at the border or in transit zones;*
- accommodation centres;*
- private houses, flats, hotels or other premises adapted for housing applicants.* ⁽²⁸⁾



The RCD (2024) does not prescribe specific typologies of facilities and arrangements but allows for different arrangements tailored to:

- **the applicants' profiles** (such as gender, age, family composition, vulnerabilities, special reception needs and financial means): for example, dedicated facilities for single applicants, families, UACs ⁽²⁹⁾, persons with special needs or in a situation of vulnerability;
- **the stage of the asylum procedure and/or the type of asylum procedure**: for example, dedicated facilities for applicants undergoing the asylum border procedure, the accelerated examination procedure within the territory, or the responsibility determination procedure (entailing possible transfers);
- **the national context**, such as geographical location and inflow trends.



While Member States have the freedom to choose their allocation and distribution mechanisms, **transfers and re-allocation of applicants to another facility should only take place when necessary** – especially in the case of children – and respect family unity, the best interests of the child as well as any special needs of the applicant. Rapid referral to appropriate reception arrangements, including child-friendly ones, must be ensured.

Irrespective of the housing arrangement, the reception of applicants must meet the standards set in the RCD (2024). All reception facilities must ensure adequate conditions for all applicants and provide the necessary support to respond to any special needs they may have. Below are examples.

- Applicants have access to relevant services and support, including health and mental health care, social and psychosocial support, information provision and legal counselling, and benefit from adequate case-management support.

⁽²⁸⁾ Article 20(1) RCD (2024).

⁽²⁹⁾ Article 27(9) RCD (2024) provides the following mandatory placement arrangements for UACs, taking into account the best interests of the child: with adult relatives; with a foster family; in accommodation centres with special provisions for children; in other accommodation suitable for children.



- Facilities support family unity by providing accommodation that allows families to stay together in a dignified environment.
- Children reside in reception facilities appropriate to their best interests, with an adequate standard of living for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- Applicants have sufficient space for leisure and groups activities, including appropriate indoor and outdoor common areas provided according to their needs, to support their mental well-being by conveying a sense of normality in the centre. Children in collective facilities have access to a variety of leisure activities and to open air space within the facility, and additional ones may be accessible outside the facility.
- Measures to restrict the freedom of movement in line with Article 9 RCD (2024) must never amount to de facto detention, and particular attention must be paid to the cumulative effect of measures under Article 9 with measures under Articles 7 and 8. Measures must be adapted to the situation of children and families. Restrictions of movement for children can only be applied where strictly necessary and in line with their best interests.



Guiding questions about the organisation of the reception model

How does the model take into account the stage of the procedure the applicant finds themselves in (e.g. admissibility, appeal)?

How does the model take into account the type of procedure the applicant finds themselves in (e.g. asylum border procedure, asylum procedure within the territory, responsibility determination procedure, accelerated procedure, relocation)?

How does the reception model distinguish between legal statuses (e.g. first-time applicant, returnee, beneficiary of temporary protection, beneficiary of international protection)?

How are the different profiles of applicants, including special reception needs, considered within the design of the model?

How does the reception model take into account the promotion of applicants' early integration and autonomy?

How does the reception model take into account the possible arrangements in support of voluntary return?

How could the reception model best combine the organisation of material (in kind, financial allowance and/or voucher, or a combination of) and non-material reception conditions / support?

How are the different provisions on allocation to accommodation, allocation to a geographical area, and restrictions of freedom of movement reflected in the reception model?

How are alternatives to detention and detention incorporated in the reception model?

How can the reception model contribute to discourage and prevent secondary movements, and ensure applicants' compliance with their obligations, including the one to cooperate with and remain available to the authorities?





Main types of facilities



Screening centres / screening facilities

A screening centre ⁽³⁰⁾ is a facility specifically designated and designed to carry out the screening ⁽³¹⁾ and accommodate TCNs undergoing that process. The maximum timeframe to complete it is 7 days for screening at the external border, and 3 days for screening within the territory. The clock on this timeframe starts from the moment when a TCN is apprehended (at the external border or within the territory) or disembarked, often just hours before transfer to the screening facility.

Screening must be conducted at any adequate and appropriate **location** designated by the Member State. For screening at the external borders, centres are generally situated at or in proximity to the external borders, or in other locations designated within the territory of the Member State. Screening within the territory must be conducted at locations within the territory of the Member State.

Location is an important operational factor too. As such, it should:

- be easily accessible to national authorities and TCNs subject to the screening;
- be situated close to essential services and urban areas to allow 24/7 staff access and provision of essential services to residents (e.g. medical emergency assistance);
- be easily reachable by road by suppliers, for example food services or security;
- take into account the routes by which the persons are transferred, including land border crossing points and disembarkation points after search and rescue operations.

The **capacity** of a screening centre is set according to the projected needs, to allow processing the estimated annual caseload within the maximum legal timeframes. It is recommended that the centre operate 24/7 so that it can receive new transfers and provide them with the necessary support continuously, while the steps of the screening process can be carried out within regular working hours.

The **layout** of a screening centre should enable a clear and efficient screening process and reception support. For this, a logical, sequential layout aligned with the workflow is recommended to minimise movement, reduce delays and ensure continuity. The screening workflow ⁽³²⁾ includes the following steps: information provision (ongoing), preliminary health check, preliminary vulnerability check, identification or verification of identity, collection and

⁽³⁰⁾ To note that with the implementation of the new CEAS, already existing ‘arrival centres’ (depending on the national context, also called ‘initial reception centres’, ‘first reception centres’ etc.) could be used as or transformed into screening centres or could integrate the screening workflow. See more in section ‘Integrated reception and procedural centres during the arrival phase’ in EUAA, [Practical Guide on the Management of a Reception Centre – Focus on the arrival phase](#), 2025 (footnote 4).

⁽³¹⁾ For a detailed explanation of screening, Member States can consult: European Commission, *Guidance on the Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356*, and Frontex and EUAA, *Toolbox on screening*.

⁽³²⁾ For a detailed explanation of the screening step-by-step workflow, Member States can consult the Frontex and EUAA’s *Toolbox on screening*.



registration of biometric data in Eurodac, security check, filling out of a screening form and cross-checking information with the TCN to allow for correction if needed, and referral to the competent authorities for the appropriate procedure.

To fulfil these tasks, the designated location must have in place measures to ensure that the **persons remain available to the authorities during the screening** and to prevent absconding (e.g. entry-exit points / access control systems). Restrictions of freedom of movement are applied, while detention may only be applied as a measure of last resort ⁽³³⁾.

The **conditions of stay** during the screening process must ensure a standard of living which guarantees subsistence, protects the physical and mental health and respects the fundamental rights of the TCNs undergoing the process. Screening centres must have child-friendly spaces and safe areas suitable for children and families.

If a person makes an application for international protection during or before the screening, the RCD (2024) applies. Consequently, the facilities used for the screening must be adequate to provide reception conditions in line with the RCD (2024), taking into account the directive's timelines for the provisions of specific reception conditions. For convenience and to improve efficiency, it is therefore recommended that material reception conditions pursuant to the RCD (2024) and EUAA standards be applied uniformly at the screening facilities. This approach eliminates the need to establish different sets of conditions, enhancing overall effectiveness.

Screening centres are transit facilities characterised by a high and rapid turnover of persons and streamlined administrative workflows. Therefore, the organisation of the reception support should factor in the short duration of stay and the very high and fast turnover of residents. For example, food would be better provided via catering and cleaning services should be available at all times. Additionally, the centre should have sufficient space to organise the arrival of TCNs and applicants and their outflow to other centres and procedures.

A critical function of screening centres is ensuring the timely **transfer of information and referral** to the competent authority responsible either for the registration of the asylum application (to be followed by an asylum procedure within the territory, an asylum border procedure or relocation) or the regular return procedure (in the case of no asylum application). This handover from one authority to another must guarantee that all screening findings accompany the individual to the next procedural stage. In the subsequent steps, the competent authorities must take into consideration these findings, including those from the preliminary vulnerability and health checks. Coordination arrangements and the use of appropriate tools to avoid duplication of effort in information collection can support the effectiveness of the workflow.

Overall, screening centres operate as a transit and first-contact facility designed to rapidly check identity, security, health and vulnerabilities while ensuring access to reception and safeguarding fundamental rights.

⁽³³⁾ For more, see European Commission, *Guidance on the Screening Regulation (EU) 2024/1356*, and Frontex and EUAA, *Toolbox on screening*.





Key characteristics

- Screening process combined with accommodation and the service-provision function. A facility designed for high turnover of residents and transit.
- Strategic and accessible location, taking into account border-crossing points, disembarkation points after search and rescue operations and other country-specific factors, including for screening within the territory.
- Structured workflow for rapid processing within the maximum legal timeframes (3 days for screening within the territory or 7 days for screening at the external border).
- Enable the application of national legal provisions to ensure the persons remain available to the authorities for the duration of the screening, to prevent absconding.
- Adequate transfers upon completion of the screening and referral to the competent authorities for the next appropriate step.
- Can be a single-purpose (only for screening) or a multi-purpose centre (also used for border procedures or other procedures in the case of screening within the territory).



Border procedures centres for asylum and/or return

A border centre hosts both procedural and reception functions, i.e. the asylum border procedure and/or the return border procedure and the reception facility in which applicants and/or TCNs are required to reside for the duration of their respective procedures ⁽³⁴⁾.

In this context, a border centre operates to accommodate residents for:

- a maximum of 12 weeks ⁽³⁵⁾ for the asylum border procedure (registration/lodging and the examination of the application, including the examination by a court or tribunal of a request to remain and, if applicable, the appeal); and
- a maximum of 12 weeks for the return border procedure.

Member States must ensure that the locations used for the border procedures meet the required adequate capacity ⁽³⁶⁾ (i.e. adequate capacity could be ensured in one location or through several locations depending on national context).

Member States must take measures to ensure that the applicant remains available to the authorities during the asylum border procedure.

⁽³⁴⁾ For more details, see EUAA, *Practical Guide on the Asylum Border Procedure*, 2026, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-asylum-border-procedure> and EUAA, *Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention*, 2024 (footnote 26).

⁽³⁵⁾ Or maximum 16 week in case of relocation.

⁽³⁶⁾ See Article 45 APR. This capacity should be understood in terms of reception capacity and human resources required to carry out the asylum border procedure and the return border procedure. For a detailed explanation, see European Commission, *Guidance Document on the Asylum and Return Border Procedures*, and EUAA, *Practical Guide on the Asylum Border Procedure*, 2026 (footnote 34). The required 'adequate capacity' is calculated for each Member State through a Commission Implementing Decision.



- Obligation to reside at the designated location. This is a mandatory restriction of freedom movement that applies to all applicants channelled to the asylum border procedure. The decision on the restriction, including the selected location must take into account the individual situation and the special needs of the applicant, as well as the principle of proportionality. Since these restrictions are automatically applied in the asylum border procedure, Member States do not need to assess the necessity of the restrictions but only their proportionality.

At reception level, the restriction of freedom of movement does not necessarily mean that the applicant cannot exit the border facility. The applicant is allowed to do so as long as they remain available to the authorities in the location for the border procedure.

Applicants may also have the obligation to regularly report to the authorities.

The centre can operate controlled entry/exit points and regulated access between procedural areas.

- More restrictive measures ranging from various alternatives to detention to deprivation of liberty may be applied. This is the case if the restriction of freedom of movement is not sufficient in the applicant's individual situation to mitigate the risk of absconding, or if detention is considered necessary because of other detention grounds, such as reasons of national security ⁽³⁷⁾.

The border facility must support the efficient organisation of all steps of the asylum and return border procedures, e.g. registration, lodging, interviews, examinations, appeals, and the preparation and enforcement of return. If, after receiving a negative decision on the asylum application, the applicant no longer has the right to remain and is not allowed to remain pending the outcome of the appeal, the return border procedure starts. This means that the centre must efficiently manage multiple procedural flows within one controlled environment or be connected to a dedicated border return centre which may not be on the same location/site. Similarly, the centre must efficiently manage transfers to the asylum procedure within the territory and other reception arrangements, if the conditions to apply the asylum border procedure cease to exist.

Reception conditions must ensure access to adequate support and services, including access to information provision, legal counselling, return and reintegration counselling, psychosocial support, child-friendly accommodation and education-related activities. The layout of the border facility should assure sufficient and adequate working areas for these activities.

Applications from applicants in need of special procedural guarantees and/or with special reception needs can be processed in the asylum border procedure facility only when the necessary support can be provided in the designated location. If not, such applicants are exempted from the border procedure. The exception also applies when there are relevant medical reasons for not applying the border procedure, including mental health reasons.

As a general rule, UACs are exempted from the asylum border procedure. As a consequence, they are not accommodated in border procedure facilities. In exceptional and duly justified

⁽³⁷⁾ See more in EUAA, [Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention](#), 2024 (footnote 26).



cases, UACs who pose serious and demonstrable security risks may be channelled to the asylum border procedure and accommodated in a border facility, subject to strict safeguards, dedicated child-specific reception arrangements, continuous best interests assessment, and enhanced child-protection monitoring.

If the guarantees and specific reception needs are not met in the facility, the applicant must be channelled to the asylum procedure within the territory.



Key characteristics

- Mandatory restriction of freedom of movement (obligation to reside in a designated place) for the applicants channelled to the asylum border procedure, taking into account the individual situation and special reception needs of the applicant and the principle of proportionality.
- The centre is located, as a general rule, at or in proximity to the external border or transit zone. To limit the need to transfer applicants, the centre could be located where the majority of the applications for international protection are made. Considering the specific geographic circumstances and the possible existence of appropriate facilities and distance from other facilities and services, it can also be located farther away from the external border within the territory. It is an entry point to the reception system.
- Can be a single-purpose centre (i.e. only for the asylum border procedure with reception function, or only for the return border procedure) or be part of a multi-purpose centre (i.e. for screening and border procedures with reception functions).
- Must have an adequate capacity (distributed across one or more centres, depending on national needs and geographic circumstances).
- Examination of the application in the asylum border procedure can continue only if the dedicated border facility can provide, or continue to provide, the necessary support to applicants with special reception needs or in need of special procedural guarantees.



Regular reception centres

In most reception models, regular reception centres are the backbone of the national reception system. They accommodate applicants who undergo the asylum procedure within the territory, although they could potentially be used for other tracks, such as for beneficiaries of temporary protection. They are sometimes referred to as second line reception.

Regular centres are designed to accommodate applicants for a longer period of time compared to initial reception centres, while they wait for a decision on their asylum application. Thus, a regular reception centre is a place providing housing and a broad range of services. The stable and predictable routines of residents, compared to initial reception centres or other types of centres for short-term stays, facilitate continuous case management follow-up, response to special needs, support to applicants' well-being, and preparation of the end of reception, depending on the outcome of the asylum application.

The layout and set-up of the regular centres should provide all residents with a stable and dignified environment with common and leisure areas organised inside the centre as needed,



to facilitate social interaction and a sense of normality, thus supporting residents' mental well-being.

Regular centres are open reception settings and residents can access services either inside or outside the centre. Access to language courses, civic education courses, vocational training, support services to obtain employment and other activities help applicants develop autonomy while their asylum claims are examined, and contribute to a more ordinary daily life and increased links with the host community.

The capacity of these centres varies from very small to large collective centres.



Key characteristics

- Provide housing in an open reception setting and a broad range of services (inside and/or outside the centre, depending on the service and set-up of the centre), including early-integration activities such as language courses, civic education courses, vocational training, support to access employment and opportunities for community engagement, enabling applicants to gradually develop autonomy while their asylum claims are examined.
- Provide stable and predictable routines, facilitating continuous case management follow-up and response to special needs, supporting the applicants' well-being.



Facilities for applicants with special reception needs including UACs

Facilities designed to accommodate applicants with special reception needs may play an important role in ensuring that their individual needs are addressed in a timely and structured manner. For this, an effective early identification is crucial to ensure that, when necessary, applicants with special needs are allocated to separate, specific facilities that can cater for their needs. In some reception models, such arrangements can be part of a reception centre (sometimes in the form of a 'safe zone') or be secured outside of the reception system via mainstream services in collaboration with responsible authorities, ensuring the same provisions as in dedicated facilities.

These housing arrangements provide an adequate standard of living and include the necessary support measures to respond effectively to specific individual needs, in line with Article 19(2) RCD (2024). Reception conditions are adapted to the personal situation of each applicant, ensuring dignity, safety and access to appropriate services.

Within the reception model, such specialised facilities may operate to respond to particular reception needs or situations. These include small-scale, dedicated facilities for UACs, victims of torture or gender-based violence, and applicants with significant psychological or psychosocial needs or other mental health concerns. They also comprise specialised accommodation facilities for individuals displaying disruptive behaviour. Capacity is limited to enable a personalised approach and targeted case management, to reduce the risk of institutionalisation and to foster a sense of safety, stability and dignity.



Staff working in facilities for applicants with specific reception needs have specific expertise to respond to such needs. This expertise covers, among others, vulnerability assessment, child protection and trauma-informed care. The location of these facilities should be carefully selected to ensure safety and easy access to, among others, health care, education, legal assistance and community services, while avoiding isolation.

Facilities accommodating UACs are specifically adapted to meet the child's best interests and development needs. These facilities guarantee a standard of living that supports the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. They operate on a care-based model rather than a reception-only model, ensuring continuity of care, individual care planning and stable relationships with caregivers and representatives.

Overall, facilities for applicants with specific reception needs combine a protection-oriented approach, tailored support, appropriate supervision and a small-scale design, while ensuring compliance with reception standards and safeguarding fundamental rights.



Key characteristics

- Operate on the basis of early identification and continuous assessment of and response to special needs. Reception conditions are adapted to the individual needs of each applicant.
- Small-scale specialised accommodation facilities allowing for personalised support and the creation of a safe and stable living environment. They can also be part of a reception centre (as 'safe zones' or 'safe areas').
- Dedicated trained staff respond to specific needs, including child protection, mental health support, and recovery from gender-based violence.
- Facilities are located in safe areas with easy access to essential services such as health care, education, legal assistance, and community support.



AMMR transfer centres

In this guide, AMMR transfer facilities are intended as administrative structures that can be used to accommodate and monitor applicants involved in outgoing transfers under the responsibility determination procedure ⁽³⁸⁾. The primary purpose of such facilities is to centralise in one coordinated location all procedural steps, from reception intake to responsibility assessment, interviews, information provision, decisions and preparation for transfer.

Allocating applicants to this type of facilities allows authorities to maintain continuous oversight, ensure rapid case progression and reduce risk of absconding, which is a frequent challenge in the responsibility determination procedure. These centres provide a designated point for continuous provision of information and counselling to applicants regarding their rights, obligations and consequences of non-compliance, including return counselling. They also function as coordination hubs between the authorities responsible for the responsibility determination procedure and the subsequent outgoing transfer procedure, and those managing reception, particularly when supported by integrated case-management systems.

At reception level, AMMR transfer centres ensure access to health care and fulfilment of basic needs, once an applicant has received a transfer decision. Since Member States must withdraw relevant reception conditions once a transfer decision is issued pursuant to Article 21 RCD (2024), such dedicated facilities may also facilitate the organisation of services of different standards from other reception facilities.

These centres also support tracking, information exchange and coordination within the AMMR transfer procedure. They may be used as locations where, if there is a risk of absconding, restrictions of freedom of movement (Article 9(1)(a) RCD (2024)) are applied and monitored, in accordance with national legislation and taking into account the individual situation and special reception needs of the applicant as well as the principles of necessity and proportionality. AMMR transfer centres provide a structured environment for documenting steps in the transfer process, including communication with applicants. As procedural requirements evolve, these facilities can be incorporated into a broader national reception model managing AMMR responsibility determination cases.

A key component of such facilities is the use of targeted case-management support. This includes a structured counselling system. The system could be based, for example, on individual coaches who closely monitor applicants' cases from entry to exit of the facility. This targeted approach ensures that applicants develop realistic expectations regarding next steps, the different options available, the possible outcomes and their obligations. It also ensures ongoing and adequate identification, assessment and response to special needs. For example, in the case of children AMMR facilities support transfer procedures in a manner that

⁽³⁸⁾ Depending on the national context and operational needs, Member States may also consider establishing dedicated facilities or dedicating parts of the existing facilities to the reception of applicants upon incoming transfers under the responsibility determination procedure. They may also be used as locations where, if there is a risk of absconding, restrictions of freedom of movement (Article 9(1)(b) RCD (2024)) are applied and monitored, in accordance with national legislation and the relevant safeguards. This type of facilities for incoming transfers is not covered in this section.

safeguards the best interests of the child, ensures continuity and quality of reception conditions, and maintains uninterrupted access to care, representation and education throughout the transfer process.

Finally, the model demonstrates potential benefits in terms of procedural efficiency, trust-building and applicant compliance, suggesting that specialised AMMR transfer centres can contribute to the effective implementation of the AMMR.



Key characteristics

- Dedicated to hosting applicants under the responsibility determination procedure (AMMR cases) with tailor-made reception services and/or reduced provision of reception conditions.
- Possibility to use restrictions of freedom of movement (obligation to reside only in a specific place and/or reporting obligation) for outgoing and incoming transfers under the responsibility determination procedure, if there is a risk of absconding.
- Possibility to designate part of an existing reception centre as a separate area for applicants under the responsibility determination procedure (AMMR cases).
- Possibility to establish such specific facilities in the vicinity of the places where outgoing transfers are carried out (e.g. close to departure locations) or incoming transfers are received.



Independent housing via direct provision

Collective housing is not the only possible set-up for providing housing in kind to applicants. Member States can also provide housing in kind in private houses, flats or similar premises adapted for individual/independent housing ⁽³⁹⁾. The other material reception conditions (food, clothing, personal hygiene items) can be provided in kind, as financial allowance, as vouchers or as a combination thereof.

In the reception model, the premises used for individual housing can be state-owned or rented through framework contracts. Renting can be done directly by the reception authority or indirectly, by outsourcing in-kind provision of housing to a service provider as part of a more comprehensive package of services (including for example provision of other material reception conditions and support services).

This housing arrangement can be the main configuration of the reception model or only a part of it dedicated to housing for specific reception needs or reception tracks (e.g. special reception needs of the applicant, a specific stage in the asylum procedure, higher prospects of being granted international protection).

⁽³⁹⁾ For independent housing accessed directly by applicants by means of a financial allowance provided by the state as part of material reception conditions, see Section [Independent housing with financial allowances](#).



This model is very suitable for families, specific cases such as victims of trafficking in human beings or victims of gender-based violence, or older adolescents approaching the age of majority. Houses or flats can be allocated per family or shared by single applicants.

Independent housing arrangements promote independence and family life and facilitate early integration by allowing applicants to engage directly with the local community. To further promote early integration, independent housing could be located where there are potential employment opportunities.

As Member States remain responsible for ensuring that the material reception conditions provide for an adequate standard of living for applicants, independent housing arrangements require additional safeguarding, monitoring of living conditions, continued case management and procedural follow-up. This is especially as far as children are concerned, to mitigate risks of neglect, material deprivation or exploitation, or to support the gradual transition into adulthood. An individual file needs to be established and kept up to date for all applicants living in independent housing, to ensure that the Member State can monitor the situation of applicants in the system.

To facilitate access to materials reception conditions and effective access to reception services, individual housing can be located close to collective centres or to service provision points.

Since the stay in such accommodation is temporary, one important challenge of this housing arrangement is the risk of overstay of the persons once they no longer have the right to stay in that accommodation (e.g. because they have been granted international protection and the transition period has elapsed).



Key characteristics

- Individual housing for individuals, households or very small groups accommodated directly in a flat within the community or in the city.
- The other material reception conditions may be provided in kind, as financial allowances, in vouchers or as a combination thereof (see also Part 3 – Management of the reception system).
- The reception authority retains responsibility for effective access to other reception conditions, such as information, health care, assessment of vulnerabilities, social care, child-related services etc.
- Individual housing is subject to eligibility criteria, monitoring and continued case management to ensure adequate living conditions and procedural follow-up.
- Independent housing promotes independence, family life and early integration by enabling applicants' direct engagement with the local community.
- Independent housing is a suitable accommodation option for applicants with specific reception needs (e.g. victims of trafficking in human beings or gender-based violence).
- Independent housing can be particularly important in supporting the gradual transition into adulthood, especially for older adolescents approaching the age of majority and young adults. It can foster autonomy, life skills and social inclusion.



Other types of facilities



In addition to the facilities described above, Member States may operate further types of arrangements designed to address specific reception needs or to accommodate within the reception system persons undergoing other legal procedures, including in situations of high number of new arrivals. The list below is not exhaustive but highlights some of these arrangements.



Voluntary return centres

Voluntary return centres ⁽⁴⁰⁾ operate as open facilities designated to support applicants / former applicants during the process of voluntary return to third countries. They can target applicants with a high likelihood for opting for voluntary return while still in the asylum procedure or applicants who have received a negative decision on their asylum application and a return decision, within the time limit for voluntary return specified in the latter (if granted) – including any extension.

They combine reception functions with enhanced supervision and structured support, without resorting to detention. Applicants / former applicants remain physically present at the designated site throughout the voluntary return procedure, which strengthens case management and can contribute to reduce the risk of absconding, a major operational challenge in voluntary return workflows.

Accommodation in a stable and known location enables authorities to maintain regular contact with applicants / former applicants, provide timely and targeted information and counselling, and effectively monitor procedural developments. This setting can support swift and coordinated action once decisions are taken, including facilitating the organisation of voluntary return. The close proximity of applicants / former applicants can contribute to prompt implementation and ensure procedural continuity.

Within the centre, applicants / former applicants receive clear and accessible information and counselling on their legal situation, procedural steps and available options, including assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes. Trained return counsellors must be present in the centres or have regular access to the centres. Counselling and case management services support informed decision-making on how to return and encourage cooperation. During their stay, applicants have full access to material reception conditions in line with the RCD (2024), while former applicants receive support in line with the Return Directive ⁽⁴¹⁾.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ This is only one example of return related centres, which also hosts applicants who are undergoing or underwent the asylum procedure within the territory. It does not cover centres exclusively dedicated to TCNs in the regular return procedure in preparation of either voluntary return/departure or forced return/removal, nor voluntary return in the context of the return border procedure. For conditions applicable in the latter case, see for more information, see European Commission, *Guidance on the Asylum and Return Border Procedure*, https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/guidance-asylum-and-return-border-procedures_en

⁽⁴¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2008/115 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), <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2008/115/oj>.



Buffer capacity

Well-managed and well-designed buffer capacity provides a flexible component of reception. Buffer capacity is activated in response to seasonal peaks in arrivals, increased pressure on existing infrastructure or risks of temporary shortages in reception capacity. It allows a reception authority to swiftly increase capacity while maintaining continuity in operations and service delivery.

Buffer capacity complements the regular capacity of reception facilities within the reception model, by swiftly providing additional accommodation that allows authorities to stabilise the system, while longer-term arrangements can be organised if the pressure is expected to last.

This flexibility enables systems to respond more rapidly to changing inflow conditions and avoid maintaining high levels of unused capacity during low-demand periods.

‘Buffer reception capacity or facilities’ refers to a reserve of reception places (either within an existing facility or through additional (sometimes pre-contracted) facilities) maintained or pre-arranged to be activated quickly when demand increases, intended to absorb short-term fluctuations without relying on emergency measures.

The introduction of structural buffer capacity helps to guarantee sufficient reception capacity in high-peak moments. Keeping the existing capacity when occupancy rates are lower and converting it into buffer capacity – instead of closing and reopening, or creating new centres in cases of high influx – is a more durable and efficient solution. Buffer capacity allows for flexibility to respond to the ‘normal’ fluctuations that can be expected overtime (rather than downscaling as soon as numbers go down and fixing capacity at a level that ignores the normal regular fluctuations).



Emergency capacity

‘Emergency reception facilities’ refers to short-term reception capacity activated in response to sudden increases in inflows, typically characterised by rapid deployment, higher costs, temporary infrastructure, and potentially reduced reception conditions. Emergency capacity is specifically needed when levels of needs reach the extraordinary thresholds defined in contingency plans.

Emergency facilities are set up to meet immediate needs, including shelter, safety, food, and hygiene. Compared to regular reception facilities, they often operate with altered or reduced service provision, reflecting their short-term and surge-capacity function. Support services such as psychosocial assistance, early integration activities and specialised care may be limited, with referrals organised once applicants are transferred to longer-stay facilities. Safeguards specific to applicants with special reception needs, including children, must still be ensured throughout their stay in such facilities. Child-specific safeguards include separation from unrelated adults, access to health care (including psychosocial support), temporary education and rapid referral to appropriate child-friendly reception arrangements.

Member States have the obligation to have a well-prepared reception system as well as a contingency plan setting out the measures to be taken to ensure an adequate reception of applicants when confronted with a disproportionate number of applicants (Article 32 RCD (2024)). Emergency capacity remains an essential tool for ensuring flexibility, continuity and resilience within reception, allowing Member States to respond effectively to fluctuating demands while maintaining minimum standards of dignified reception and meeting applicants' basic needs. However, any derogation from the material reception conditions generally provided must be preceded by the activation of the contingency plan and not exceed a reasonable period that must be as short as possible. Member States should put in place all efforts to ensure that the standards applicable in normal circumstances are progressively achieved (Article 20(1) RCD (2024)).



Transit centres/hub

Transit centres function as short-term accommodation facilities used at particular procedural or logistical stages, such as immediately after arrival, during screening and registration, or pending transfer to another facility. Their purpose is to ensure safe and orderly temporary accommodation while essential administrative steps, health screening and vulnerability assessments are completed. Stays are limited to the time strictly necessary to finalise procedures. The term 'transit centre' can also define those facilities serving an international airport, where screening processes and possibly also border procedures are performed. Where transit centres are located outside but in the vicinity of the airport, they can take the form of small multi-purpose centres.



Citizen hosting schemes

Citizen hosting schemes, such as those implemented in response to displacement from Ukraine under the Temporary Protection framework, provide independent accommodation on a voluntary basis through private initiatives. These arrangements are typically coordinated or supported by national or local authorities and may include financial assistance. If such schemes are used, authorities should ensure monitoring mechanisms and guidance for both hosts and beneficiaries of the scheme ⁽⁴²⁾. However, they should be used strategically and cautiously. They can serve, for example, as a short-term, rapid-response solution. However, availability depends on public willingness and social sentiment.

⁽⁴²⁾ For more on this, see also the EUAA, *Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*, 2022, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-recommendations-provision-emergency-placement-private-accommodation-persons-displaced-ukraine>.



Solidarity hubs

Solidarity hubs operate as dedicated facilities supporting the organised departure and/or arrival of applicants or beneficiaries **transferred between Member States under solidarity and relocation mechanisms**. On the departure side, they host individuals temporarily while travel arrangements and coordination are finalised. On the arrival side, they facilitate reception, registration, orientation and referral to appropriate accommodation. Stays in solidarity hubs are short and limited to logistical and administrative purposes, ensuring procedural continuity and clear information provision, and contributing to the effective functioning of EU solidarity. They can also be used for resettlement programmes, where necessary.



Dedicated small-scale shelters

Dedicated small-scale shelters operate as specialised facilities exclusively accommodating children arriving without a parent or other legal caregiver, or other vulnerable groups. For UACs, these shelters provide a child-centred and protective environment separate from adult reception facilities, allowing for tailored supervision and strengthened safeguarding. Placement should occur immediately upon identification, ensuring access to guardianship, health care including psychosocial support, education and best interests assessments. For other vulnerable groups, they provide the needed special reception conditions. Collectively, these facility types enhance the flexibility and responsiveness of the reception system while addressing specific procedural and protection needs.



Integration facilities

Integration facilities for beneficiaries of international protection are designed to provide a structured and supportive environment that facilitates their integration into society. They serve as a bridge between initial reception and early integration support for applicants and long-term integration. Their objective is to equip beneficiaries of international protection with tools and cultural and societal knowledge to easily integrate in the host country. These facilities help to enhance autonomy and independence of the newly recognised beneficiaries. Services like language training, cultural orientation and access to education and employment support are either organised on-site or facilitated through support to access them outside the facility. Guidance on administrative procedures, such as access to housing, health care and legal rights is also provided in these facilities. Integration facilities often collaborate with local authorities and CSOs to ensure coordinated support. They promote community engagement to contribute to long term social cohesion.

Integration facilities for beneficiaries of international protection could also be used to serve resettled refugees by providing access to the same core integration services and support mechanisms for establishing independent live in the host country.



Specialised detention facilities

Detention facilities operate as a place of confinement where an applicant for international protection is deprived of freedom of movement ⁽⁴³⁾. In the reception framework, detention is a measure of last resort and functions within a strict legal framework. Where there are grounds for detention, in every individual case, authorities must first assess less coercive measures and proceed to detention only where such alternatives cannot be effectively applied. Such a decision must be based on the principles of necessity, proportionality and respect for fundamental rights ⁽⁴⁴⁾.

As a rule, detention takes place in specialised detention facilities designed for applicants for international protection. Within the reception model, these facilities operate separately from the prison system and apply the reception standards and detention conditions specific to applicants for international protection. Member States must ensure that applicants who are detained are provided with the same adequate standard of living as all applicants, which guarantees their subsistence, protects their physical and mental health and respects their rights under the Charter.

Applicants must not be placed in detention where their physical or mental health is at serious risk. Health assessments support the identification of vulnerabilities, and detention conditions are monitored to ensure they do not aggravate medical or psychological conditions. Where detention is incompatible with an applicant's state of health, alternatives to detention must be applied.

As a general rule, children must not be detained. Whenever considering the detention of children, alternatives to detention must be applied in line with the principle of the best interests of the child. Detention of children is a measure of last resort permissible only in exceptional circumstances, where it is demonstrably in the child's best interests. For example, in a situation where the accompanied child's parent or primary caregiver is also detained and it is in the best interests of the child to stay with them. Or where detention safeguards an unaccompanied child and there are no effective alternatives to detention ⁽⁴⁵⁾. In such exceptional cases, recognising the negative impact of detention on children, special safeguards apply: for instance, adapted facilities must ensure access to education, age-appropriate activities and support, while the same type of health care as that afforded to child nationals is provided ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

⁽⁴³⁾ See the definition of 'detention' at Article 2(9) RCD (2024).

⁽⁴⁴⁾ EUAA, [Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention](#), 2024 (see footnote 26). European Commission, *Guidance on the use of Detention, Alternatives to Detention and Restrictions of Freedom of Movement under the 2024 Recast Reception Conditions Directive*, 2026 (see footnote 25).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ There is broad international consensus (e.g. Committee on the Rights of the Child, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention) on the fact that children should not be detained for immigration-related purposes, irrespective of their own or their parents' legal/migratory status, and that detention is never in their best interests.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ For more information on applicable guarantees, see: EUAA, [Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention](#), 2024 (footnote 26); and European Commission, [Guidance on the use of Detention, Alternatives to Detention and Restrictions of Freedom of Movement under the 2024 Recast Reception Conditions Directive](#), 2026 (footnote 25).



Provision of material reception conditions through financial allowances and vouchers

Member States have the possibility to provide material reception conditions through financial allowances or vouchers (or a combination of those and in-kind provisions). A reception model based on financial allowances and/or vouchers ensures that applicants for international protection who do not have sufficient resources can maintain an adequate standard of living, while keeping a certain level of autonomy in their daily life.

Under this model, Member States must ensure that the amount enables effective access to the material reception conditions they are entitled to. To reflect differences in national contexts, no common European level is determined as benchmark. Member States decide the level of financial allowances or vouchers by using national social protection references, such as minimum income schemes, minimum wages, pensions, unemployment benefits or social assistance benefits. The amounts granted to applicants do not need to be the same as those given to nationals. However, they must be high enough to ensure an adequate standard of living in the national context.

To ensure the suitability and the amount of material reception conditions provided through financial allowance or vouchers, Member States must ensure a timely and effective identification and assessment process to detect vulnerabilities and special needs. The level of financial allowances or vouchers should be adapted to meet any special reception needs, ensuring the allocation of adapted/additional resources enabling applicants to effectively access relevant support.

Where Member States ensure housing through financial allowances or vouchers, specific administrative arrangements need to be adapted. In particular, an individual file needs to be established and kept up to date for all applicants living outside reception facilities, to ensure that the Member State can monitor the situation of applicants in the system.

The calculation of the amounts remains the responsibility of the Member State, which allows flexibility to take into account differences in the cost of living, housing markets and welfare systems.



In a model **based on financial allowances**, the money can be either transferred to a bank account (or similar arrangements depending on national practice, including providing bank cards that can only be used in the Member State concerned) or provided in cash, and paid on a regular basis. A mixed approach can be considered, to ensure adequate geographical reach and accessibility, for example in locations where access to traditional banking infrastructure is limited. The allowance enables applicants to meet their essential needs. It can cover rent, in particular in independent housing arrangements, but also costs for food, clothing, transport, communication and other daily expenses. When financial allowances are used in the context of independent housing arrangements, applicants can live in accommodation within the community. These arrangements are often supported by higher financial

allowances, which reflect the higher costs of living independently. This type of support is particularly suitable for applicants who are able to live autonomously.



In a model **based on vouchers**, these are usually dedicated to specific categories of goods or services (such as food, clothing, hygiene products or public transport). In some cases, vouchers may also be used to cover accommodation costs, for example for emergency hotel nights. When vouchers partially cover the daily expenses allowance, the total allowance must include a monetary amount (cash- or card-based), in order to guarantee a minimum level of personal autonomy and freedom of choice.

The use of cash-based support (in cash or through bank cards) allows applicants to organise their daily life more independently. It encourages responsibility and self-sufficiency while they are waiting for the outcome of their asylum procedure. This model may also carry a risk that funds are not always used in accordance with the intended purpose of addressing the identified needs. Mitigation methods may include providing basic financial education and budgeting support to applicants.

There are situations, not covered in detail in this guide, in which applicants might reside in independent/private housing.

- Applicants who have their own means (47) and reside in private accommodation, either paid with their own resources or by staying with family members, within the diaspora communities or with friends. Where an applicant possesses sufficient financial resources, Member States may require them to cover, reimburse or contribute to the costs of material reception conditions and health care, except where the health care is provided free of charge to the Member State's nationals.
- Applicants who are entitled to receive material reception conditions but opt to stay with family members, within the diaspora communities or with friends. Depending on the rules applied by the Member States, the following may apply.
 - The applicant may receive the rest of the material reception conditions in-kind, as financial allowances, in vouchers, or as a combination thereof, together with the daily expenses allowance. In case of pressure on the reception system, this option may relieve the burden on the reception authority in terms of providing accommodation places.
 - The applicant may not receive the rest of the material reception conditions if their provision is conditional to residing at the accommodation allocated to them by the authorities.

In both cases, the Member State has the possibility to require an applicant to reside within a geographical area, report regularly to the authorities and/or confirm their address at a certain interval of time, as ways to ensure that the applicant remains available to the competent authorities. The authorities can also verify the address provided by the applicant.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Assessed either upon arrival in the reception system following the reception intake or during the stay in the reception system.



Applicants subjected to a restriction of freedom of movement are obliged to reside in that specific place even if they have the means to afford accommodation at their own cost. However, the specific place does not need be a reception centre, but can also be a private house, flat, hotel or other premises adapted for housing applicants.

In both cases, the applicant must have effective access to their full set of reception rights while reception authorities must maintain case management and procedural follow-up.



Independent housing with financial allowances

Ensuring independent housing through financial allowances is one form in which the state may provide material reception conditions. While in this case the applicant receives the equivalent of housing in the form of a financial allowance, other material reception conditions (food, clothing and personal hygiene products) can be provided in kind, as financial allowances, in vouchers or as a combination thereof. In addition, the daily expenses allowance ensures a minimum degree of autonomy in their daily life.

The reception model may include independent housing through financial allowance either as an optional arrangement or as the main housing alternative. Independent housing schemes are generally subject to eligibility criteria and monitoring to ensure that accommodation remains adequate and safe. When all or part of the material reception conditions are provided as financial allowances, enabling applicants to manage expenses such as rent, utilities, food, clothing and personal hygiene products, the model is also called cash-based reception.

Independent housing arrangements promote independence and family life, and facilitate early integration by allowing applicants to engage directly with the local community.

When opting to provide housing through financial allowances, Member States must still ensure compliance with reception standards, including identifying and monitoring special needs. Applicants residing in independent housing must be guaranteed effective access to health care and reception-related services, including social counselling, legal counselling, legal assistance, language learning opportunities, access to education for children, and specific child-protection care when needed. Reception authorities must also maintain case management and procedural follow-up. These arrangements are particularly suitable for applicants who demonstrate a higher degree of autonomy or who have existing social support networks.

Overall, independent housing with state-provided financial allowances provides a flexible and dignified alternative. This housing arrangement often proves less costly than collective accommodation and can provide flexibility when capacity is exhausted. It supports a reception system that can more easily distribute applicants housing across the territory as it is not dependent on the infrastructure owned or subcontracted by the reception authority. It is influenced, however, by the accessibility of the applicants to the private housing market and the support available to them to rent adequate housing within the margins of the financial allowance.





Member States remain responsible for ensuring that the material reception conditions provide for an adequate standard of living for applicants. If applicants cannot secure adequate private housing, for example due to a housing market crisis, Member States should provide for an adequate standard of living through other means (such as regular reception centres or by making use of their buffer capacity) to prevent destitution.



Key characteristics

- Applicants reside in private housing arrangements, such as houses, flats or hotels using state-provided financial allowances to cover the costs of housing. The reception authority might provide support and guidance (either directly or through partners) for searching for adequate private housing. If adequate private housing is unavailable, the reception authority should provide alternatives in reception facilities to prevent destitution.
- The rest of the material reception conditions may be provided in kind, as financial allowances, in vouchers or as a combination thereof (see also Part 3 – Management of the reception system).
- The reception authority retains responsibility for effective access to other reception conditions, such as information, health care, assessment of vulnerabilities, social care, child-related services.
- Independent housing may function as an optional pathway or as the main reception modality, subject to eligibility criteria, monitoring and continued case management to ensure adequate living conditions and procedural follow-up.
- Independent housing promotes independence, family life and early integration by enabling applicants' direct engagement with the local community.

See also the EUAA, [*Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*](#), 2022.

Examples of reception models combining reception arrangements

After outlining the different types of reception facilities, it is now useful to illustrate with four examples how Member States may combine multiple reception arrangements and forms of material/non-material support within a single national reception model.

In practice, reception arrangements are rarely based on one uniform system. They usually reflect the national territory (sea border, number of crossing points, geography), migratory pressure, and the administrative organisation and governance of the state.



Disclaimer

All data, examples, and references to the fictive Member States used in this section are entirely fictitious and are provided for illustrative purposes only. Data and reception capacity indicated in each example assume that the fictive Member State has enough 'adequate capacity' as defined in Article 45 APR (see footnote [36](#)). The examples do not correspond to any real country, authority or existing national reception system.

Fictive Member State A. State located at the external border (both mainland and islands) with reception arrangements structured around first entry, sea arrival and rapid processing

Context

Fictive Member State A is located at the external border, with both mainland and island entry points. It receives approximately 18,000 applicants per year in need of material reception conditions. The applicant population comprises 55 % single adults and 5% UACs. Its reception system is structured around rapid first-entry processing and includes 4 screening centres, 2 on the islands and 2 on the mainland. In addition, the state operates 3 border procedures centres, 10 regular reception centres with a capacity of 200 places each, and 400 units of individual housing.

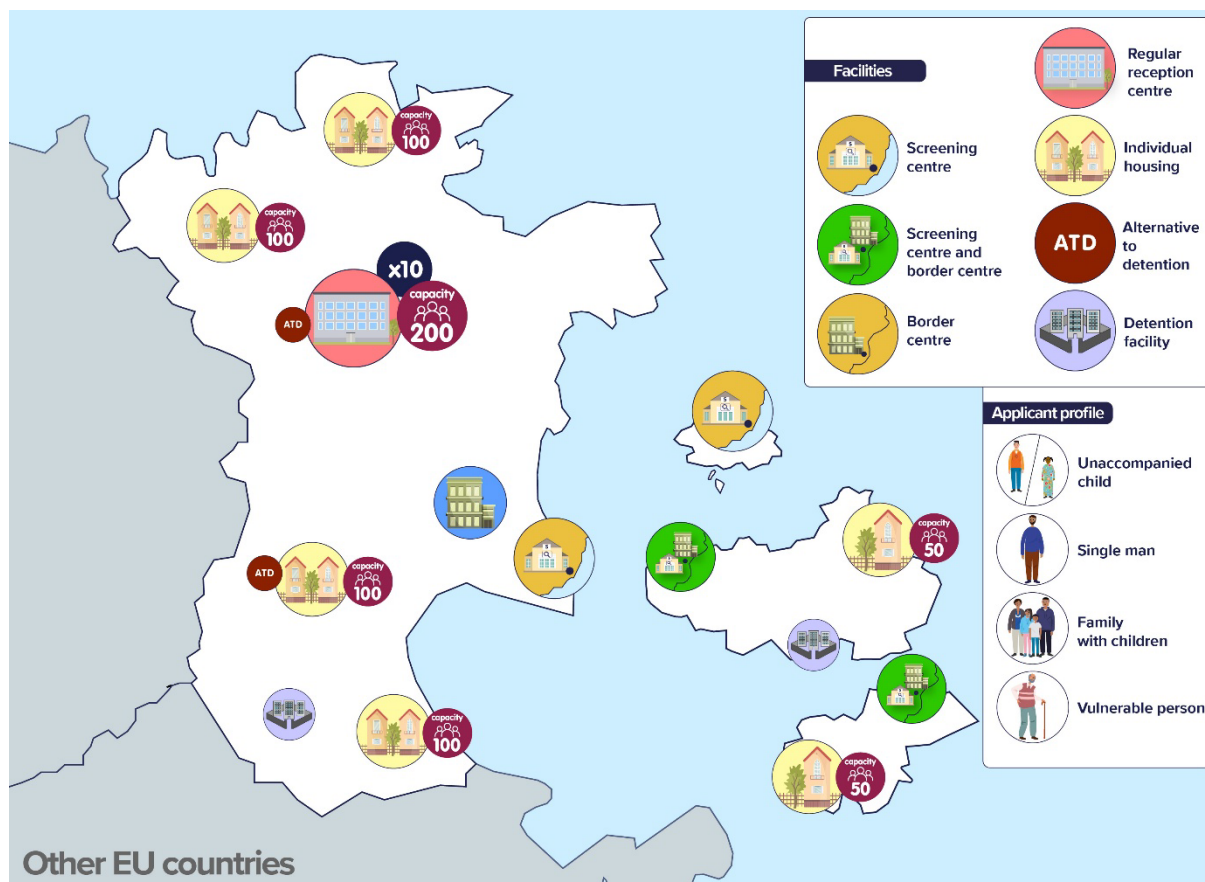
Reception model

The reception model is designed as a first entry and border-oriented system adapted to a state with both mainland and island external borders, receiving an annual inflow of around 18,000 TCNs mainly through sea arrivals and with seasonal peaks during summer.

Newly arrived TCNs are first accommodated in 4 screening centres, where identity verification, security screening, health and vulnerability preliminary checks are carried out, in line with the maximum 7-day period for screening at the external border.

Following screening, those who apply for international protection are referred to the authority competent for registration. Around 10,000 persons per year are channelled to the asylum border procedure and are accommodated in 3 border centres (2 on the islands and 1 on the mainland) where cases are processed within maximum 12 weeks. TCNs whose application has been rejected in the context of the asylum border procedure are then channelled to the return border procedure and continue to be accommodated in the 3 border centres while the procedure is completed within 12 weeks. Applicants not channelled to (or channelled out of) the asylum border procedure are transferred to the regular reception system, which consists of 10 regular reception centres (all on the mainland) with approximately 200 places each, providing a total collective reception capacity of 2,000 places. Asylum claims are examined under the regular procedure while applicants stay in these locations. The system is complemented by 400 individual housing units, mostly for applicants with specific reception needs, UACs and families. Some of the collective and individual reception places are used for alternatives to detention. Detention facilities are used only as a measure of last resort in line with national law, have a limited capacity, and represent only a small proportion of the overall reception framework.

Figure 4. Map of fictive Member State A





Fictive Member State B. Medium-sized state with no external borders, many regular reception facilities and other specialised facilities

Context

Fictive Member State B is a small inland state with no external borders, situated within the Schengen area and primarily receiving applicants through secondary movements, airport arrivals and AMMR transfers. Other caseload involves TCNs with legal stay or arriving legally and applying for asylum. The state manages a limited annual inflow of 10,000 applicants in need of material reception conditions. The applicant population consists of single adults and families, with many applicants with specific reception needs including UACs. A significant proportion of cases are linked to AMMR transfer procedures, with approximately 1,800 applicants per year subject to outgoing transfer arrangements. The estimated recognition rate stands at 48 %, reflecting a mixed caseload.

Reception model

The reception model is designed around a system relying mainly on collective accommodation, including first arrival centres, regular reception facilities and more targeted reception accommodation.

After registration in the arrival centre, which is focused on short-term transit accommodation, applicants are transferred either to the network of regular reception facilities or to other dedicated facilities, such as AMMR centres or voluntary return facilities. Applicants whose claims are examined under the regular procedure are accommodated in 15 reception centres across the national territory, managed directly by the reception authority, each with a range of between 80 to 300 places, representing a total collective capacity of approximately 2,700 places. Reception there ensures access to basic needs, legal information and social support services, depending on the individual situation of each applicant.

In parallel, the state operates 2 dedicated AMMR centres with a total capacity of approximately 120 places, used for applicants subject to outgoing transfer procedures, designed for short stays of a few weeks pending transfer. The centres are prepared to ensure the necessary services for a longer stay in case of transfers requiring more time.

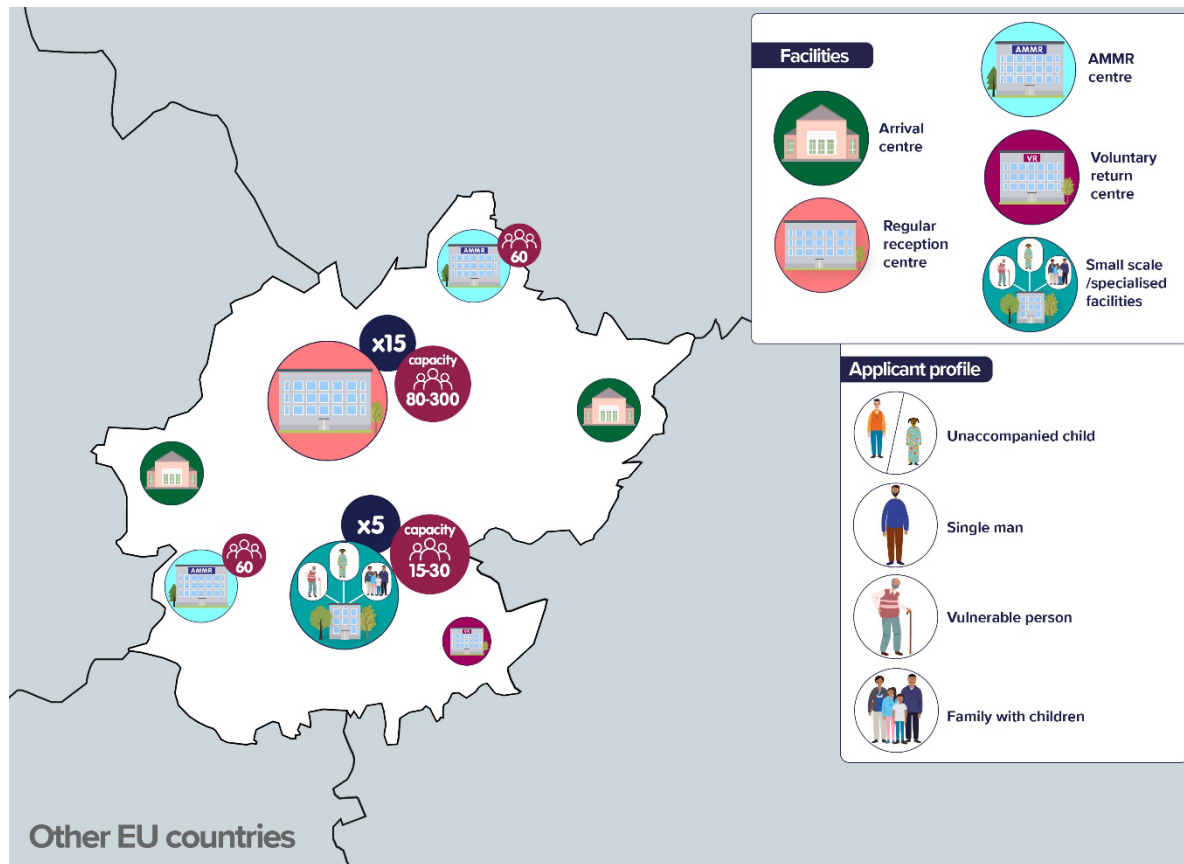
The system also includes very small, specialised facilities with around 180 places in total for applicants with specific reception needs. These targeted reception services are mainly run by operators from CSOs. Some of these places cater for the specific needs of UACs.

Finally, there is 1 voluntary return facility available for a limited number of applicants, providing targeted support services. Overall, the model prioritises decentralised accommodation and efficient transfer management.





Figure 5. Map of fictive Member State B





Fictive Member State C. State with no external borders and a reception model mainly relying on financial allowances

Context

Fictive Member State C is a small to medium-sized inland state with no external borders, receiving a relatively limited number of asylum applicants, estimated at approximately 4,500 per year. Of these, around 3,000 applicants annually require material reception conditions. The applicant profile is highly mixed, with a limited number of UACs and a predominance of single adult applicants. A high rate of absconding is reported by the immigration authorities.

Reception model

The reception model is designed mainly around financial allowances and vouchers, ensuring that applicants who do not have sufficient resources can maintain an adequate standard of living.

When necessary, screening on the territory is carried out in various locations across the territory. Here, TCNs are subject to identity, preliminary health and vulnerability checks. Following registration of their asylum application with the responsible authority, applicants are channelled either to a very small network of reception centres or to financial allowance support schemes, which constitute the main form of material reception conditions.

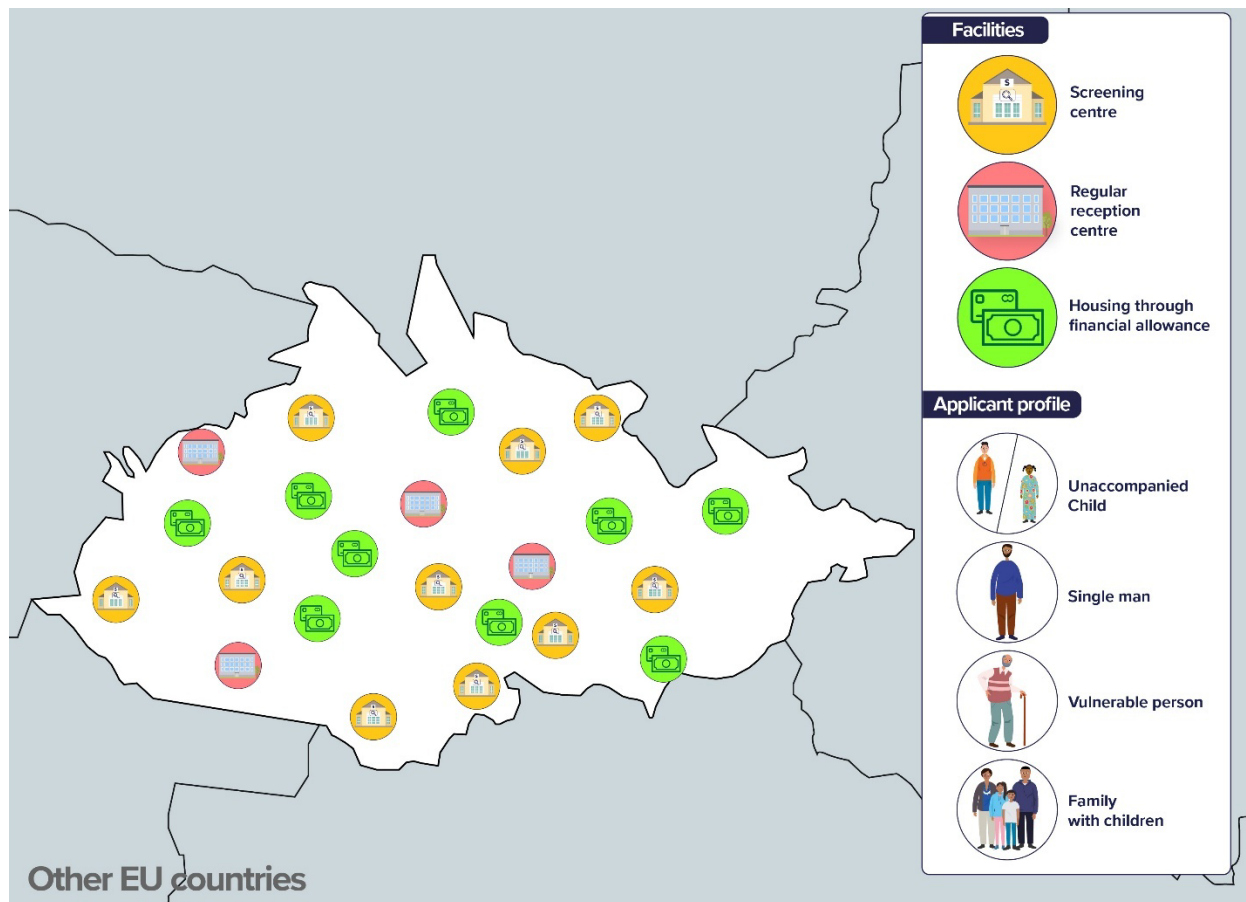
Under this model, financial allowances are transferred on a regular basis, usually through bank accounts or equivalent national arrangements, and are intended to cover materials reception conditions and other essential needs such as rent, food, clothing, transport, communication, and the daily financial allowance. In parallel, vouchers may be provided for specific groups of applicants to access goods such as food, hygiene products, clothing, public transport or, in exceptional cases, temporary accommodation costs.

The level of financial support is determined by the Member State on the basis of national social protection reference points. For households with children, the amounts explicitly take into account the number, age and specific needs of the children. The model prioritises financial autonomy and independence while ensuring effective administrative oversight through a dedicated mechanism. Reception authorities maintain case management and procedural follow-up. Applicants are in regular contact with the authorities through dedicated info points, where also necessary support is available (e.g. medical, social, legal).





Figure 6. Map of fictive Member State C



**Fictive Member State D.** Specific focus on UACs for a state located at the external border under migratory pressure**Context**

Fictive Member State D is a state located at the external border, with both mainland and island entry points, receiving a sustained number of arrivals mainly by sea. The state records an average annual inflow of approximately 12,000 TCNs, of whom many are UACs, representing a significant share of the overall asylum caseload. Due to its geographical position and mixed migratory routes, early identification of children upon arrival, respecting all the safeguards in place, including timely appointment of representation and assessment of best interests, is a key operational priority. The majority of UACs are boys aged 15 to 17, although younger children and girls are also regularly identified and require specific reception arrangements. Additionally, based on the assessment of quantitative and qualitative criteria set out in the Pact, this Member State is considered under migratory pressure and will benefit from the solidarity measures of the solidarity pool, specifically supporting with relocation of UACs.

Reception model

The reception model is designed so that newly arrived UACs are initially accommodated in screening centres where identity, security, preliminary health and vulnerability checks are carried out. UACs are identified at an early stage, and a representative (or a person designated to provisionally act as a representative) is appointed.

In the absence of security risks, UACs are referred directly from screening facilities to small-scale, specialised reception or care facilities where they are supported through individual care planning, representation and access to education and health care.

In this case, a specific reception model is applied to UACs, built around care-based and child-sensitive arrangements. Where an UAC is approaching adulthood, the reception arrangement may gradually transition to semi-independent or independent housing, accompanied by continued supervision, case management and safeguards to ensure a safe transition into adulthood.

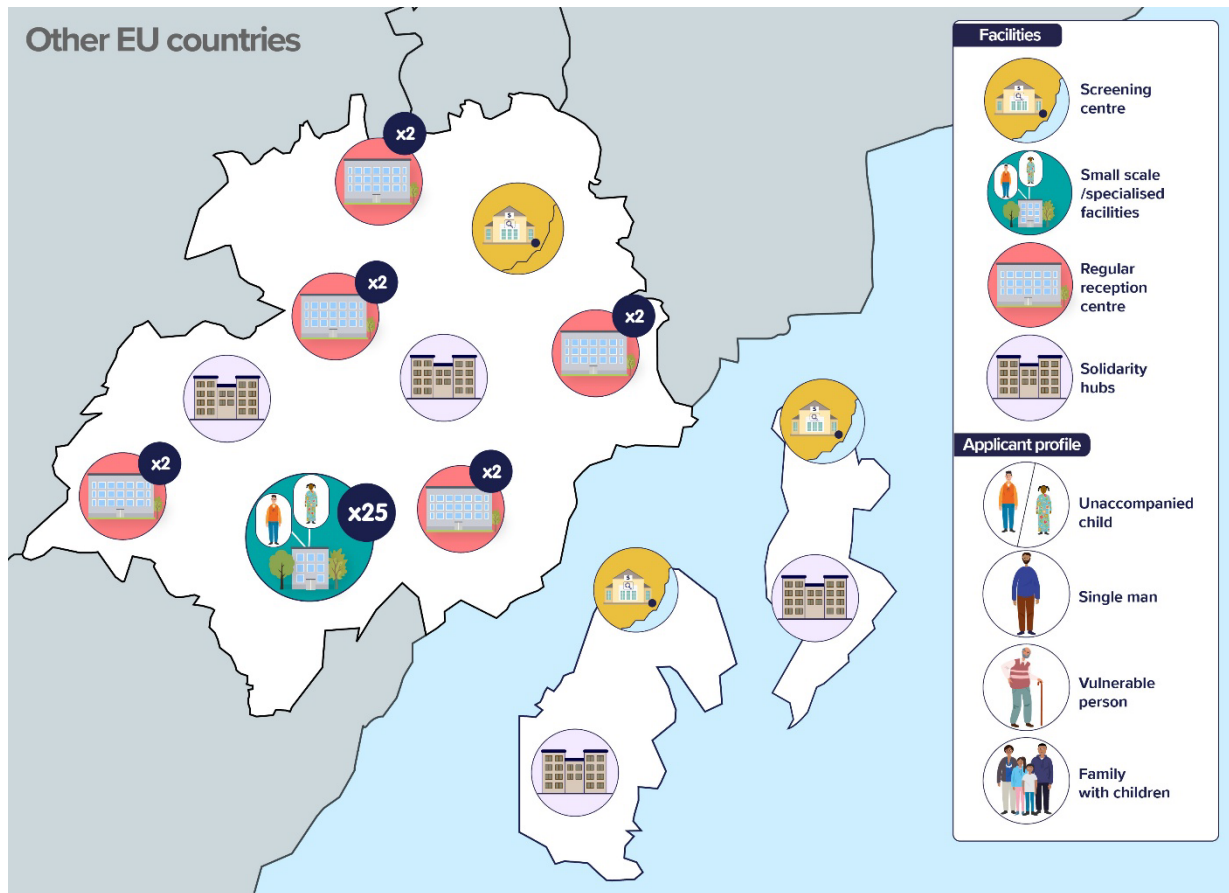
In addition, the model includes solidarity hubs operating as dedicated facilities to support the organised departure of UACs or other applicants transferred between Member States under solidarity mechanisms.

These facilities provide short-term accommodation for logistical and administrative purposes, including reception, registration, orientation and referral to appropriate child-sensitive accommodation or care arrangements. Stays in solidarity hubs remain strictly short-term, ensuring procedural continuity, clear information provision and the effective functioning of EU solidarity and relocation mechanisms.





Figure 7. Map of fictive Member State D





Part 3 – Management of the reception system

Management of the reception system means how Member States organise and deliver reception conditions and ensure access to reception rights to asylum applicants while their claims are being processed. It includes planning and adjusting reception capacity, using different implementation models (direct public management, through external providers or as a combination) and applying flexible tools to increase efficiency and prevent overcrowding in the facilities and delays in the reception workflows. A well-managed system ensuring effective access to reception rights can also contribute, at least partially, to preventing secondary movements. The options for managing the reception system can be linked to the reception models chosen for allocating applicants to specific locations or accommodation types and for providing material reception conditions. These options can combine in-kind support, services and financial assistance based on applicants' profiles and reception needs across all reception phases (see also [Part 2 – Organisation of the reception model](#)). The management of the reception system should take into account all phases of the reception process (arrival in reception, stay in reception and end of reception).



Guiding questions about the management of the reception system

Who are the authorities responsible for implementing the RCD (2024) and do they have adequate capacity and expertise? Do they have adequate capacity and expertise to cater for special reception needs?

Should certain reception functions or capacities be outsourced to service providers?

How will authorities monitor and evaluate the performance of in-house staff and service providers?

Are qualified service providers available, and how can they be contracted while ensuring quality and up-to-standards services? How to have in place a timely tendering process and contract management of service providers?

What monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms to have in place to ensure quality and up-to-standards services?

How can staffing needs to manage and oversee the reception system effectively be met?

What training is necessary to ensure staff have the skills to meet all reception needs, including support for applicants with special reception needs or in a situation of vulnerability? How will authorities ensure that staff receive appropriate training aligned with their roles, responsibilities and applicable standards?

How can the reception model incorporate different housing arrangements and different modalities of service provision based on applicants' profiles and special reception needs?



Structure and management of the reception system

The management of the reception system is closely linked to the type of ownership and control of the infrastructure used to host applicants. Reception authorities can decide how best to carry out their infrastructure management (real estate management). Different and mixed approaches can be adopted depending on national contexts and needs.

Examples of approaches for infrastructure (real estate) management.

- Ownership: the authority owns the reception facility.
- Leasing: the premises are rented from public or private entities.
- Contracting: management of the facility is outsourced to external service providers.
- Building: the facility is built specifically on demand to meet reception needs.



Direct management

Direct management of the reception system means that the public reception authorities keep full responsibility for organising, operating and supervising reception facilities for applicants for international protection, while also ensuring the day-to-day management of access to reception services.

In this model, the public authorities responsible for reception own or rent the facilities and oversee all activities and provision of services. A dedicated public actor (see Section [Organisational structure](#) in [Part 1 – Governance of reception systems](#)) usually manages the placements, monitors the occupancy, and makes sure that applicants receive reception conditions and can access essential services. Staff working in the centres may be public employees or be employed by the authority based on temporary or permanent contracts. The main reception authority also oversees the referral to other services, health providers and local authorities which are part of the overall reception model.



Key characteristics

- Public authorities retain full responsibility for organising, operating and supervising all reception facilities, reception referral pathways and access to services.
- Reception facilities are managed directly by public actors. A dedicated public actor oversees placements, monitors occupancy and ensures delivery of material reception conditions.
- Staff in reception centres are public employees or directly-hired personnel under public authority oversight.
- Coordination with health services, education service, social services and local authorities is managed directly by the reception authority.



Advantages direct management may have

- Direct management allows public authorities to supervise all reception activities closely and consistently.
- Quality standards, safety and compliance with national and EU legislation can be monitored directly, enabling tighter oversight and more immediate control over follow-up actions, without relying on reporting from contracted service providers.
- A publicly managed system facilitates cooperation with municipalities, health services, education actors and other ministries involved in reception.
- Communication channels are clear and responsibilities are aligned easily across institutions. This coordination supports timely referrals of applicants.



Indirect management (contracting and service agreements)

Indirect management of the reception system means that the management, coordination and/or operation of reception facilities and services are outsourced to external actors rather than carried out directly by the public authorities responsible for reception.

In this model, CSOs, private/for-profit companies or other actors (e.g. municipalities part of capacity management framework contracts, independent publicly funded agencies) are contracted by the responsible public reception authority to manage reception facilities, provide material and non-material reception conditions and manage daily reception activities. The public authority responsible for reception retains control over the legal framework, policy orientation and overall supervision and coordination at central level. The facility's management, coordination and daily operation, however, are implemented through formal contracts, procurement procedures or framework agreements with selected service providers. These contracts typically set quality standards, performance indicators and reporting obligations to ensure compliance with national and EU requirements. The contracted service provider is also directly responsible for staffing and staff management.

For more on outsourcing at the level of a reception centre, see Section 1.1. 'Governance structure and decision making', box 'Outsourcing', in: EUAA, [Practical Guide on the Management of a Reception Centre – Focus on the arrival phase](#), 2025.



Key characteristics

- Reception services are delivered by external actors such as CSOs, private/commercial companies or municipalities, through public procurement contracts.
- Contracted partners manage, operate and/or coordinate reception facilities, provide material and non-material reception conditions and are responsible for recruiting and training the staff working in reception facilities.
- The public authority retains supervisory control by defining and monitoring quality standards, performance indicators and reporting requirements within the contracts,

while the service providers/operators are in charge of the operational delivery of reception.

- Reception capacity can be expanded through existing provider networks, allowing for a flexible response to sudden increases in arrival of applicants.



Advantages indirect management may have

- Indirect management places operational responsibility with various contracted actors and allows authorities to benefit from the specialised knowledge and skills that external providers already possess.
- Indirect management can support geographical coverage across the full territory, especially in areas where the public authorities responsible for reception may have limited presence or capacity. It also increases the number of specialised reception facilities, enabling authorities to better address the specific needs of applicants with special reception needs, such as victims of trafficking in human beings, persons with mental health conditions, victims of gender-based violence and others.
- External providers can quickly increase or adjust reception capacity to respond to fluctuating numbers of TCNs and asylum applicants. Their existing networks across the territory, involving many different actors, allow to mobilise resources such as staff, services and infrastructure for new or temporary reception sites and services.
- Delegating daily operations to service providers can reduce internal administrative workload for public authorities.
- Competitive procurement processes can foster cost efficiency, innovation and higher performance of contracted organisations.



Mixed management

Mixed management of the reception system means combining, in a single reception model, elements pertaining to both direct and indirect management.

In this approach, national authorities retain the legal responsibility for reception policy, overall implementation, central supervision and coordination, as well as monitoring obligations. National authorities typically administer the reception framework and maintain control over strategic decisions (e.g. transposition of the RCD (2024), developing national reception policies, managing the budget, depending on the national context). At the same time, regional and local authorities may play an active role in coordinating reception workflows and ensuring coordination with local services. Many operational tasks are delegated to CSOs or private/for-profit companies that deliver specific services under the supervision of the public authority. These partnerships allow authorities to draw on the technical expertise and specialised skills of external actors. Contracts and agreements are used to ensure accountability, transparency and consistent quality across all providers. National authorities may also choose to tailor their approach depending on the type of reception facility or other factors: they may retain the management, administration and operational tasks in some facilities; limit their role to



management and administration tasks while outsourcing operational tasks in others; or fully contract all tasks to external actors.

Depending on the national set-up, mixed management can select and combine key characteristics and advantages that the direct and indirect management models presented above may have.

Quality in reception

The term ‘quality’ refers to the degree to which reception conditions comply with national and EU standards. Under Article 31 RCD (2024), Member States must put relevant mechanisms in place to ensure that appropriate guidance, monitoring and control of the level of reception conditions are established. Such mechanisms focus on quality assurance or the assessment of reception conditions, a set of activities that Member States authorities ⁽⁴⁸⁾ carry out to observe, check and control on a regular basis, compliance with reception standards in their facilities. Quality assurance and assessments help identify areas of improvements and take corrective measures, ensure compliance with standards and enhance the overall quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the reception system.

This responsibility falls under the public reception authority, irrespective of the implementation model(s) chosen by the Member State to manage its reception system (direct, indirect or mixed).

Data and case (file) management

Data and case (file) management is a core function of reception. It supports continuity, coordination and individual follow-up of applicants throughout the asylum and reception processes. Data and case (file) management refers to the digital systems that allow national authorities and service providers to collect, manage, share and use information relevant to applicants, while ensuring interoperability, data protection and confidentiality.

With the increasing interconnection between the different legal instruments of the CEAS and for an effective coordination and efficient and seamless flow of information between the relevant authorities and services, national authorities are encouraged to establish integrated case management systems ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

Reception systems may organise case (file) management through different technical and organisational models, depending on national structures, governance arrangements and the division of responsibilities within the reception model.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ This does not refer to monitoring activities carried out by other actors or institutions (e.g. the EUAA under its monitoring mandate, international organisations, ombudspersons).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ See Communication from the Commission of 12 June 2024 – [Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) (footnote 7). Reference is made under Block 1 on Common Information Systems/Eurodac, Block 2 on Return systems, Block 3 on Reception and Block 6 on Responsibility.





Centralised data and case (file) management system: all applicant-related data are recorded and updated in a single digital environment. Such systems can support interoperability with national and EU-level databases, including links to Eurodac, and provide a consolidated overview of the applicant's situation across the procedures. This approach supports continuity and case follow-up, for example from screening to the asylum procedure. It allows key information, such as the outcome of the special reception needs assessments, to be available to all competent authorities involved in the applicant's asylum and reception processes.



Interoperable or modular system: different authorities maintain separate databases but relevant data are shared through structured interfaces or agreed workflows. In this set-up, reception authorities access and update information related to accommodation, service provision and reception-related assessments, while other authorities manage asylum data and other procedural data. Interoperability ensures that assessment outcomes like the identification of special reception needs or changes affecting reception arrangements are shared efficiently, without repeated data collection or unnecessary re-interviewing of an applicant. Depending on the chosen reception management model, staff of other entities working within the reception system may be specifically authorised and required to input and update reception-related information, such as case management data, service provision, transfers etc.

In practice, data and case (file) management in reception usually combine two complementary dimensions. The first concerns individual profile data, including quantitative and qualitative information such as family composition, age and gender, health-related information relevant for reception, vulnerabilities and special reception needs. The second dimension relates to service and workflow management, which tracks procedural steps, referrals, appointments, timelines and follow-up actions. Where possible, automated reminders or alerts can support compliance with time limits, reduce duplication of activities and improve coordination.

Data and case (file) management tools can also support the operational management of reception systems. They allow authorities to monitor reception capacity, occupancy and population composition at facility, regional and national level. This supports informed decisions on allocation, transfers and service planning, including cases where applicants with special reception needs must be accommodated in facilities able to provide appropriate support. Access to up-to-date data also facilitates cooperation with external service providers involved in health care, psychosocial support, education or employment-related activities.

Across all data and case (file) management models, **data protection and confidentiality** are essential. The collection, storage, processing and sharing of personal data must comply with data protection laws, and respect the principles of necessity and proportionality. Access to case files is normally restricted according to the competence of each authority and on a need-to-know basis, ensuring that staff can only access information relevant to their tasks. Applicants' information is not shared beyond competent authorities without consent, and reception facilities should ensure privacy during data handling. Well-organised case management systems — whether centralised or interoperable — support smoother cooperation between authorities, reduce the administrative burden for applicants and administrations, and help ensure that assessment outcomes are effectively reflected in reception conditions and service provision, while safeguarding confidentiality throughout the process.



A distinction is made in this section between the case (file) management system, on one hand, and care and case management, on the other, despite the two being inter-related.

A **case management system in reception** helps coordinate support services for applicants with special reception needs through a process that includes case assignment, assessment, planning, implementation with follow-ups and reviews, and closure. The process is not linear and requires continuous re-assessment of the situation based on the progress of the applicant, possible new needs, and the applicant's involvement in the case planning and its evolution. Case managers coordinate access to services inside and outside the reception system with the applicant's informed consent. Effective case management also requires clear mapping of available services, a structured referral system with defined procedures and communication channels, and strong coordination with external support providers such as national authorities and CSOs at both central and local level.

Staffing including training

Staffing is an essential element in the management of reception systems. This section covers all aspects related to the management of staff. The human resource aspect as an element of the operational governance model is covered in the Section [Human resources](#) in [Part 1 – Governance of reception systems](#).

Arrangements for staff deployment and management can take different forms, depending on national administrative frameworks, operational priorities and available resources. Key considerations include which authorities are responsible for staffing, the legal or/and contractual basis for recruitment, and how staffing arrangements respond to short-term operational needs and long-term requirements.

-  **Direct recruitment within the public administration through permanent contracts** (e.g. public employees integrated into existing administrative structures). Staff are recruited through public procedures and may work within services responsible for reception, asylum, migration or social work. Staff with reception functions are managed in line with public service rules and procedures; coordination with other public authorities takes place through institutional channels.
-  **Direct recruitment within the public administration through non-permanent contracts.** Employees may be recruited by a public agency for a limited period or for specific tasks linked to operational reception needs. This approach allows to recruit specialists on shorter notice, which is not always possible with public procedures for the recruitment of civil servants. These arrangements are often used where staffing needs change over time or where additional capacity is required swiftly and/or in a short-term.
-  **Outsourcing through an external agency responsible for recruiting and administrating staff** (e.g. equivalent of an interim scheme) for contracts with personnel who deliver specific services for the public administration within the reception system.





Outsourcing expertise through external providers, such as private companies or CSOs. This approach is often used for services requiring specific expertise or operational arrangements, such as interpretation, security or health care.



Mixed approach, where different staffing models are used for different functions (described in the Section [Human resources](#)). In this case, some roles are filled by public employees, while others are delivered by external providers, such as private companies or CSOs.

Responsibilities are defined through contracts or partnerships, allowing different staffing models to coexist.

Across all staffing models, training is a vital component. Continuous training and capacity-building help strengthen the effectiveness of both the authorities and the service providers involved in reception functions. Reception systems include in their staffing model an induction programme, as well as an ongoing professional development plan with continuous training to enhance skill upgrades for staff. Member States must include in their training programme core parts of the European asylum curriculum ⁽⁵⁰⁾ related to reception conditions and identification of applicants with special reception needs (Article 33 RCD (2024)). Training may cover areas such as reception standards, operational workflows, data protection and confidentiality, psychosocial support, intercultural communication, crisis management, coordination between services, management of facilities and teams. Training can be organised in learning pathways by profiles (e.g. managers, reception staff, interpreters, support staff). Capacity-building activities should target both public staff and externally contracted personnel, ensuring consistent quality, professionalism and compliance across all staffing arrangements.

Irrespective of the staffing model, **ensuring staff well-being is an essential component.** It is important to acknowledge that working with people in a vulnerable situation can put additional stress on the welfare of staff, and adequate measures should be implemented ⁽⁵¹⁾.

Service provision and policies

This section sets out a range of options capturing/explaining the practical implementation of ensuring effective access to rights and services for applicants for international protection under the RCD (2024). The options are intended to provide adaptable operationalisation according to the reception model chosen by the Member State. Each option is designed to be applied across key areas of reception rights and support and can be adjusted to reflect the applicable legal obligations, exceptions and practices.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ The European Asylum Curriculum developed by the EUAA provides a comprehensive range of modules covering the entire area of international protection. The *European Asylum Curriculum Training Catalogue*, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/training-catalogue>, offers a detailed description of all available training modules. Additionally, the EUAA Training Academy is the first accredited, international training institute specifically dedicated to standardising asylum and reception practices across Europe.

⁽⁵¹⁾ See EUAA, *Practical Guide on the Welfare of Asylum and Reception Staff*, 2021, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/practical-guide-welfare-asylum-and-reception-staff>.



Below is a selection of rights: consider that the legal responsibilities for ensuring effective access to certain reception rights, as well as defining policies, may fall with other ministries, depending on the type of right. National legislation must regulate the modalities of access to these rights, including the relevant safeguards.

Education

Education is provided within the general education system and, as a rule, children should be integrated alongside nationals and receive education of the same quality, with access ensured as soon as possible and no later than two months from the lodging of the application (Article 16 RCD (2024)). In practice, reception and education authorities should cooperate to ensure effective access to schooling through timely enrolment and, where necessary, transportation. Authorities must also not request unnecessary or a disproportionate number of documents or impose other administrative requirements as a prerequisite to access education. Preparatory measures such as targeted language support and preparatory classes must be offered where necessary to support children's entry and participation in school life, adapted to their educational background and individual needs. Where access to the general system is not possible due to the child's specific situation, alternative education arrangements must be provided in line with national law and practice.



Centralised approach: educational support is coordinated directly among public authorities and closely linked to reception actors/providers. Under this model, key steps such as referrals to the schools, enrolment procedures, transportation and the identification of additional learning needs is managed through a single coordinated structure, allowing for clearer lines of responsibility and more consistent implementation across different reception locations. With this model, there is standardised cooperation between reception services, local authorities and schools, including the planning of initial assessments of education level and needs, the needs of pre-schooling and the allocation of support measures. This model can be complemented with additional support provided by, for example, CSOs and/or private initiatives.



Decentralised approach: access-related support is organised through partnerships with other actors and delivered through partnerships agreement. In this model, local service providers, private initiatives and CSOs play an active role in facilitating access to education, by assisting with referrals, offering language classes or homework support. Such partnerships complement public services particularly when there are capacity constraints.

Health care including psychological support

Member States must ensure that applicants receive necessary health care of adequate quality, including emergency care, essential treatment of illnesses (including serious mental disorders), and essential sexual and reproductive health care, as part of ensuring an adequate standard of living that safeguards both physical and mental health. The term 'health care' encompasses both physical and mental health, including well-being, psychosocial support,



necessary rehabilitation services and assistive medical devices where needed. Children must receive the same type of health care as provided to nationals who are children.

In practice, provision of health care can be organised through different models, as long as applicants can effectively access the required services in a timely manner and without obstacles. Health care provision may be organised entirely through the national public health system, or complemented by on-site capacity in reception facilities, with clear pathways for referral to specialised and hospital care when needed.

Health care may be provided inside or outside reception centres, using public and/or private local services, or combining them with services provided directly by the reception authority. Some reception centres can provide health care on-site to a certain extent (e.g. basic/primary care), whereas more specialised care and examinations are carried out at local/regional hospitals or other external health care facilities. Services provided outside the centre must be at reasonable walking distance or accessible by public transportation or organised transport provided by the reception service. The decision on whether to provide health care partially or fully inside or outside the centre should be made early on, when planning the opening of the centre.



Referral-based model: the Ministry of Health (or public health system, depending on the country set-up) is fully responsible for providing health care; no medical services are delivered directly by the reception actor (except basic facilitation upon arrival and urgent needs). In this model, applicants access care through primary health care services and, where needed, through public hospitals and specialised providers, using a structured referral mechanism. This option requires practical arrangements to ensure easy access, in or out of reception centres, clear information provision to applicants on how to access services, support with registration and appointments, interpretation services when needed, transport solutions where services are not accessible nearby, and follow-up to ensure continuity of care and treatment adherence (with respect for consent and confidentiality).



Mixed model with on-site medical capacity in the reception centres: the reception centre includes adequate space and resources for medical/nurse's offices, to be decided on a case-by-case basis considering factors such as the type and size of the facility, profiles of residents and cost-efficiency. This allows immediate access to first-line support such as basic consultations and treatment, support to identification of vulnerabilities and assessment of special reception needs requiring medical support, follow-up for chronic illnesses, basic health advice and support for medication management. More complex cases (specialist diagnostics, specialist consultations, complex treatments, hospital admissions) are referred to the public health system or other health provider. This option can support early identification of medical needs and ensure that referrals to hospitals are limited to cases requiring escalation, while maintaining a clear division of responsibilities between the reception actor and the mainstream health care system.



Administrative support through the reception system to cover health related costs of the applicants and ensure effective access in practice. This may involve enrolment in health insurance schemes: this option requires the provision of a unique identifying



number assigned to the person to ease workflows and payment, and budget and financial frameworks to settle the health care services provided by hospitals or specific health practitioners. Such arrangements support access to medical consultations, diagnostic services, hospital care and prescribed medication, and help ensure that applicants are not prevented from receiving treatment due to uncertainty about payment or reimbursement mechanisms.

Irrespective of the model chosen to provide health care, Member States may request applicants to undergo an initial **medical screening** (Article 15 RCD (2024)) upon arrival in a reception facility, followed by in-depth examinations where necessary. This can be used to identify urgent medical needs, detect communicable disease risks where relevant, and ensure early recognition of vulnerabilities and special reception needs, including mental health-related concerns, so that timely referral and appropriate support can be activated. Depending on capacity and operational needs, this can be organised through the public health system, by the reception authority or contracted partners, either on-site or in local health facilities. Notwithstanding the optional nature of the medical screening, in cases where the applicant was subject to the screening as per the Screening Regulation, the results of the preliminary health check should be shared with the competent reception authorities on a need-to-know basis and must be taken into account when carrying out the vulnerability assessment and the medical screening, if applicable.

Across all reception models, the reception system should include clear provisions for **mental health / psychosocial support**. Necessary health care covers both physical and mental health and includes essential treatment for serious mental disorders. Reception arrangements should therefore ensure that applicants can access basic mental health care and psychosocial support services as part of standard health care provision. For applicants with special reception needs, psychological support should go beyond basic care and include access to necessary specialised treatment. This includes rehabilitation, counselling and trauma-informed support for victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of violence. Reception systems should establish clear procedures for identification, referral and follow-up, ensuring continuity of care and safe access to specialised services throughout the reception period.

Finally, reception should address dental health as part of necessary health care in practical and operational terms. At a minimum, applicants should have access to urgent dental treatment such as pain management, treatment of infections and emergency interventions. This access may be ensured through public dental services, contracted providers or referral pathways where dental care is not available on site. Similar arrangements should apply for medical vision care when considered part of necessary health care. Children must benefit from dental care and vision care equivalent to nationals who are children.



For practical aspects related to the organisation of health care in a reception centre, see Section 3.3. Organisation of ongoing health care in EUAA, [Practical Guide on the Management of a Reception Centre – Focus on the arrival phase](#), 2025.

For guidance on how to set up mental health support, see EUAA, *Guidance on Mental Health and Well-being of Applicants for International Protection: Part 1 – for senior management*, 2024, <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/publications/mental-health-well-being-applicants-part-i-senior-management>.

Employment and access to language, civic education and vocational training courses

Member States must ensure that applicants have effective access to the labour market no later than six months from the registration of the application for international protection, provided that the applicable conditions are met. Access must be organised in a practical and effective manner. Requirements and restrictions should not, in practice, make access to employment impossible or disproportionately difficult. Reception systems can support access to employment through different models and combinations of measures. These depend on national arrangements and on the division of responsibilities between reception authorities, responsible ministries (e.g. for labour, for recognition of qualifications and recognition of prior learning and experience), public employment services and labour actors/institutions. Other actors such as labour associations, the private sector, CSOs and private initiatives can contribute.

The RCD (2024) recognises the importance of early integration measures in helping enhance applicants' ability to act autonomously, interact with competent authorities and find employment. Provided that the applicable conditions are met, applicants must have access to early integration courses, which must include at least language, civic education and vocational training courses, regardless of whether they have access to the labour market. Member States can opt to make some early integration measures mandatory.

Effective access to employment can be supported through different practical delivery arrangements, depending on whether employment-related support services are mainly provided by external labour actors, directly within reception centres, or through a mixed approach.



External referral-based model with support activities provided outside the reception centre. In this model, access to employment is ensured primarily through public employment services and/or labour market institutions. In such a set-up, the reception actor plays a role by informing applicants about their rights and obligations related to work, explaining procedures, directing them to the relevant services, supporting the scheduling of appointments, and assisting with basic administrative steps needed to start work, such as registration or the issuing or collection of required documents. Relevant support activities are organised outside the centre including, where necessary, through agreements concluded by the reception authority.

**External referrals complemented with employment-support activities provided inside the reception centre.**

This may include dedicated employment services/activities or helpdesks with dedicated staff or partner organisations offering practical assistance with job search, CV preparation, online applications and interview preparation. Basic guidance on workplace rules and labour rights may also be provided together with a *mise en relation* with industries that are acutely hiring (e.g. HoReCa). These services can be combined with individual employability dialogues where an applicant's skills, education and work experience are identified and documented, and tailored pathways are developed towards employment or training.

**Comprehensive employment support integrated within the reception function.**

This model embeds a dedicated employment-integration position within the organisational structure of the reception centre. It can include enhanced tailored support such as assessing employability, designing personalised employment pathways, and guidance on job search strategies, labour rights and access to training opportunities. Practical support may include CV preparation, interview coaching, and referral to language and vocational training. It ensures coordination with employers, public employment services and multidisciplinary reception teams.

Similar options are available for the reception authorities to put in place a system to either directly provide or facilitate access to early integration courses, such as language courses, civic education or vocational training.

Depending on the model, reception systems can, if applicable, support access to employment through partnerships with local actors such as municipalities, employers, CSOs and training providers, while also providing support to address bureaucratic, administrative and/or practical barriers like opening of a bank account, validity of temporary documentation, transport, digital access and scheduling constraints. Depending on the national context, they may also put emphasis on work-readiness activities aligned with local labour market needs, helping prevent de-skilling and supporting gradual progression towards employment.





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