



COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems

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Introduction



On 2 June 2020, EASO published a public report on [COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems](#), which analyses how emergency measures during the COVID-19 pandemic affected asylum and reception procedures in EU+ countries.

The report presents variations and similarities in national efforts to address the situation and describes interim solutions which were put in place. Emergency measures were clustered into two main phases:

- i) The outbreak of the pandemic to mid-April 2020: During this phase, EU+ countries declared a state of emergency or enforced extraordinary measures to contain the spread of the virus which impacted asylum and reception systems; and
- ii) Mid-April 2020 onwards: In this phase, EU+ countries began to ease measures and gradually resumed activities adapted to preventative measures to avoid a further COVID-19 outbreak.

Building on the findings of the first report, the current report aims to:

- Supplement the initial report by presenting new developments in the period 15 May to 10 July 2020; and
- Identify national trends and practices in asylum and reception systems in response to COVID-19 that may be implemented over the long term.

Recently, the [WHO acknowledged](#) that the outbreak is accelerating with currently more than 11.4 million cases worldwide and more than 535 000 deaths registered, clearly denoting that the peak of the pandemic has not been reached.

Key Findings

- The new tools and processes used in asylum and reception systems in the immediate response to the health emergency no longer represent just a short-term solution for EU+ countries to mitigate COVID-19, but the emerging ‘new normal’ in European societies and legal systems with long-lasting effects on the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).
- As EU+ countries have been affected by COVID-19 to varying levels, measures implemented in response to the ‘force majeure’ in asylum and reception systems also differed in nature, intensity and scope in time. As COVID-19 is likely to remain a concern for the foreseeable future, and its spread seems to already intensify again in different areas in the EU+, this situation can over time exacerbate pre-existing divergencies among national asylum systems in EU+ countries and related practices (also at national level for countries with decentralised asylum systems at federal state levels), contributing to secondary movement. Swift and comprehensive practical EU-level guidance on adherence to CEAS standards is of key importance to minimise the impact of these divergences.
- Physical distancing and enforcement of sanitary requirements among larger populations pose a particular challenge, especially in EU+ countries with asylum and reception systems which had been operating at high occupancy or full capacity before the crisis. The development of contingency plans for the immediate operationalisation of emergency shelters or isolation areas will be crucial for controlling incidents within reception centers. In addition, national authorities are adapting practices to continue to provide reception services beyond accommodation, such as educational activities, information-sharing, counselling via e-services, etc. In that context, similar to services organised by state authorities, logistical and financial arrangements may need to be revised for services managed by other stakeholders, such as civil society organisations and public-private partnerships.
- As anticipated, e-governance – including the automatisisation of processes, the introduction of electronic tools for registration and lodging an application, remote management of applications along with the provision of information with video tools, and remote interviewing via IT means – has improved the efficiency of national asylum systems and allowed timely processing of applications for international protection. While initial efficiency gains may have affected certain caseloads that are easier to process (e.g. manifestly founded cases, cases where the interview had already been held), the proficiency in using IT tools in asylum procedures can be expected to also facilitate case-processing and decision-making on a wider scale.
- Similarly, new logistical arrangements (such as adapted hearing rooms), the digitalisation of second instance procedures by submitting documents electronically, and the possibility of remote hearings are vital for the timely processing of applications for international protection.
- At the same time, new challenges arise in guaranteeing an effective and fair asylum procedure for both first instance applications and appeals, e.g. the quality of remote interviews, access to and skills needed to use electronic tools by applicants, the quality of processes and data protection. These circumstances underline the role of legal advice and representation, who can act as the intermediary and effectively mitigate the risk of new solutions adversely affecting applicants.
- Overall, procedures and safeguards in asylum practices should be aligned with the CEAS framework to avoid an arbitrary revision of rules and introduction of new practices which could infringe on the existing legal framework. National courts have already begun analysing this situation and any possible impact on individual cases and outcomes. In the future, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) may be called to provide its interpretation in line with its competence and jurisdiction.

In the aftermath of emergency responses

Urgent COVID-19 confinement measures, justified under public health and security, were enforced based on emergency clauses and constitutional derogations as of March 2020 onwards.¹

As of the end of April 2020, EU+ countries began gradually phasing out the exceptional measures. In June 2020, EU+ countries further eased restrictions adjusting to the new reality with preventative measures. Restrictions on public gatherings and distancing measures remain, e.g. in [Austria](#), [Belgium](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#), [Croatia](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Hungary](#),² [Iceland](#), [Ireland](#),³ [Italy](#),⁴ [Latvia](#),⁵ [Lithuania](#),⁶ [Malta](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Netherlands](#), [Norway](#), [Portugal](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#),⁷ [Spain](#), [Slovakia](#),⁸ [Slovenia](#),⁹ [Sweden](#) and [Switzerland](#).

At this stage (phasing out of restrictions and gradual resumption of services), there have been fewer specific developments compared to the previous period (introduction of restrictions and new measures), while the initial reflection on the impact of the situation and resulting debate increased significantly.

The severity of confinement measures significantly impacted fundamental freedoms and asylum procedures, often in an unprecedented manner. Consequently, concerns were raised by European institutions, UNHCR and civil society organisations, which contested the legality of measures in many cases.

Specifically, the **European Parliament** repeatedly discussed the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on asylum applicants in the EU. In its [April briefing](#), it identified vulnerabilities of asylum applicants during pandemics (e.g. population density, access to basic services, misinformation, funding cuts, etc.) and underlined the situation of applicants in the hotspots and other Member States. Discussions also centred around safety at sea (see below) and the situation at the EU's external borders in Greece.¹⁰

The **Fundamental Rights Agency** pointed to fundamental rights concerns in the field of migration, including asylum, in its [Quarterly Bulletin 2](#)¹¹ and [country studies](#). Based *inter alia* on media and NGO reports, FRA noted challenges at land borders and pushbacks at sea and the suspension of asylum

¹ See EASO, [COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems](#), 2 June 2020. (EASO report)

² The state of emergency was lifted on 16 June and Hungary introduced [interim transitional measures](#). See the announcement [here](#) (in Hungarian).

³ The government announced a roadmap that sets out Ireland's [plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions, which](#) will be implemented in five phases for unlocking restrictions, at three-week intervals.

⁴ According to the [Decree](#) of the President of the Council of Ministers, as of 15 June, measures to ease some of the restrictions are implemented under Phase 3.

⁵ The [COVID-19 Infection Prevalence Management Act](#) was introduced on 5 June. The law prescribes the basic principles of operation for state institutions and the rights and obligations of state institutions and private persons for the prevention and management of threats after the end of the emergency situation caused by the spread of COVID-19 infection.

⁶ A state-wide state of emergency remains. <https://vrm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/vyriausybes-sprendimu-atsaukiamas-lietuvoje-paskelbtas-karantinas>

⁷ [Law No. 55 of 15 May 2020 on measures to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) establishes a state of alert.

⁸ The state of emergency was lifted on 13 June. However, the emergency situation declared by the Government Resolution of 11 March continues after the end of the state of emergency. The emergency situation does not have a time limit set by law (if necessary, further measures will be taken through the provisions of the Civil Protection Act). <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy-2&sprava=nudzovy-stav-skoncil-mimoriadna-situacia-stale-trva>

⁹ Decree on the revocation of the epidemic of the infectious disease SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. [68/20](#)).

¹⁰ See [2 April](#), [6 July](#)

¹¹ See also [FRA Bulletin No 1](#) published on 8 April and [country studies](#).

procedures, child protection, detention, etc., while referring to national good practices as ‘bright spots’. FRA also published the [Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – Fundamental Rights implications: With a focus on contact-tracing apps](#) with an analysis of their legitimacy.

UNHCR published a public section on [COVID-19 Temporary Measures and Impact on Protection which](#) presents data on measures by region/country. The organisation also published periodic regional updates on UNHCR operational responses and areas of intervention, while expressing concerns about challenges reported by NGOs, e.g. reception in Melilla centre (Spain), Kofinou camp (Cyprus),¹² communication with communities and cash assistance. On 15 April, UNHCR issued a guide on [Practical Recommendations and Good Practice to Address Protection Concerns in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), as well as specific [recommendations and good practices for States on remote interviewing across Europe](#). In coordination with the **Council of Europe**, UNHCR encouraged states to benefit from [the support that refugee health professionals can provide to national health systems](#) on the basis of the **European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)**.

The resumption of judicial proceedings¹³ in several EU+ countries (re)opened the legal pathways for the judicial review of emergency laws and ordinances introduced as part of COVID-19 measures and the impact that they may have had on individual procedures, beyond urgent cases.¹⁴ For instance, the Council of State in France issued various orders on the legality of ordinances amending the CNDA to hold hearings by a single judge and using videoconferencing,¹⁵ the detention of third country nationals with COVID-19 pending return procedures at CRA de Vincennes¹⁶ and the temporary discontinuation of registrations in Île-de-France. In the latter, the Council of State ordered the resumption of registration within five days in Île-de-France.¹⁷

To this end, ECRE issued a legal notice on [‘Derogating for EU Asylum Law in the name of ‘Emergencies’: The Legal limits under EU Law’](#) addressed to legal practitioners challenging emergency measures in the field of asylum before national courts.

Sea borders and travel restrictions

Sea borders and search and rescue operations have featured high on the agenda of the LIBE Committee, which regularly exchanges views on the situation of refugees and migrants in the Central Mediterranean.¹⁸ The challenges in this area have also been discussed in the EU Council. Recently, the first meeting of 27 EU Home Affairs Ministers under Germany’s Council Presidency [focused on search and rescue at sea](#) and agreed on strengthening the European police partnership.

¹² Latest from the [Regional Bureau for Europe Update Number 11](#) covers developments 12-18 June 2020.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See for instance cases brought before the superior courts challenging the legality and proportionality of various confinement measures in [Austria](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Romania](#), etc.

¹⁵ France: Council of State [Conseil d’État], Association Elena France and others vs Ordinance No. 2020-558 of 13 May, 2020, No. 440717, 440812, 440867, 8 June 2020. Read more on [EASO Case Law Database](#).

Link: <https://caselaw.easo.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=1139>

¹⁶ France: Council of State [Conseil d’État], Minister of Interior vs Association Avocats pour la défense des droits des étrangers and others, No. 440255, 7 May 2020. Read more on [EASO Case Law Database](#).

Link: <https://caselaw.easo.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=1140>

¹⁷ France: Council of State [Conseil d’État], La Ligue des droits de l’Homme, l’association Action des chrétiens pour l’abolition de la torture, l’association Kali, l’association Utopia 56, and others, No. 440250, 440253, 30 April 2020. Read more on [EASO Case Law Database](#).

Link: <https://caselaw.easo.europa.eu/pages/viewcaselaw.aspx?CaseLawID=1141>

¹⁸ See the LIBE Committee [meeting on 15 June](#).

Following related developments in [Malta](#), the Commissioner of the Council of Europe addressed the Prime Minister [urging Malta to meet its obligations to save lives at sea, ensure prompt and safe disembarkation, and investigate allegations of delay or non-response to situations of distress](#).¹⁹ In a [statement](#) earlier, the Commissioner had also called on the Council of Europe Member States to promptly respond to any call of distress at sea, deploy the necessary rescue capacity in a timely manner, and effectively cooperate to identify a place of safety where survivors can be disembarked, taking all necessary measures to protect the health of all involved. This commitment was reiterated recently in the form of a [recommendation](#) in an effort to balance security and border control with the legal obligations to ensure effective search and rescue operations, swift and safe disembarkation and the treatment of rescued people, as well as the prevention of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment.

The closure of the EU's external borders and travel restrictions had impacted heavily on return procedures and resettlement.²⁰ In this context, the IOM²¹ issued [recommendations for stranded migrants](#) to ensure their inclusion in all national COVID-19 response plans, including measures being introduced to mitigate economic downturns as they may also need additional support, such as accommodation and socio-economic support in case of lost income/jobs.

First instance procedures



The general measures on confinement and social distancing affected face-to-face services in asylum procedures. The registration of applications and personal interviews were interrupted in many EU+ countries from March to April 2020,²² resulting in an unprecedented drop in asylum applications by 87 % compared to pre-COVID-19 levels in January and February, according to EASO data.²³

The discontinuation of personal interviews in conjunction with flexible working arrangements in asylum authorities (e.g. teleworking)²⁴ allowed for existing backlogs to be reduced in EU+ countries²⁵ (e.g. [Finland](#), [Greece](#), [Netherlands](#)).

The gradual resumption of face-to-face activities as of May 2020 is subject to strict protocols and preventative health measures. In particular, the registration of new applications may be done by appointment only or using an online form, as in the case of the Immigration Office in [Belgium](#).

Similarly, personal interviews are gradually resuming under strict preventative measures that guarantee social distancing and hygiene (e.g. [Austria](#), [Belgium](#), [Bulgaria](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#)). Measures entail a limited number of applicants who are invited at staggered hours ([Belgium](#), [Germany](#)), the use of face masks ([Belgium](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Latvia](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#)), the

¹⁹ [Read the Commissioner's letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Malta.](#)
[Read the reply by the Maltese authorities.](#)

²⁰ The IOM reported that as of 3 May, a total of 1 272 IOM movements and 11 240 individuals had to be cancelled including refugee resettlement. [Read more](#)

²¹ From the beginning of the pandemic, the IOM introduced a dedicated section '[Mobility Impacts COVID-19](#)' mapping the impacts on human mobility, at global, regional and national levels. Subsequently, the IOM has initiated the following activities: COVID-19 Travel Restriction Monitoring and COVID-19 Country Points of Entry (PoE) Status Baseline Assessment.

²² Op. cit. EASO Report, p.10.

²³ EASO, [Special Report: Asylum Trends and COVID-19](#), Issue No. 2, 11 June 2020, p.5.

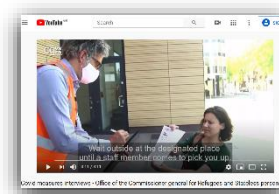
²⁴ Op.cit. EASO Report, p. 11.

²⁵ Op.cit. EASO, Special Report, p. 6-7.

installation of plexiglass screens in interview rooms between participants, the submission of additional documents via electronic tools (e.g. [Austria](#)), and social distancing ([Austria](#), [Germany](#), [Poland](#)).

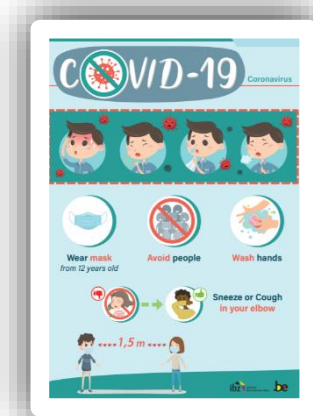
Remote personal interviews/videoconferences are taking place in many EU+ countries (Belgium, [Germany](#), [Netherlands](#), Sweden, etc).

Information materials on YouTube (e.g. [Austria](#), [Belgium](#)) and [video presentations](#) represent new communication tools that allow applicants to get acquainted with the new measures and procedural steps.



To minimise the physical presence of asylum applicants, some national authorities automatically extend expired applicant cards (e.g. [Greece](#), [Spain](#)).

Specific arrangements for minors: In some EU+ countries, specific arrangements have been implemented to resume personal interviews for minors. For instance, in [Belgium](#) the invitation letter is accompanied by [recommendations with pictograms adapted to unaccompanied minors](#) (in Dutch, English and French) about the health component, as well as a document (available in different languages) explaining that it is necessary to arrive on the date and at the precise time of the appointment and the consequences if this is not respected. This last instruction is important and must be respected in order to comply with the recommendations of the government on public health. In addition, a [limited pilot project](#) was launched in Belgium in consultation with the Guardianship Service, Fedasil and the Red Cross, following EASO's recommendations on video interviews. In this context, the Red Cross and its guardians are organising a limited number of video interviews at their head office in Mechelen. The head office possesses a meeting room with a large video screen, where social distancing rules are observed.



E-administration: In an effort to uphold confinement measures and abide by social distancing imperatives, many national authorities resorted to electronic tools and/or portals of digital services that allow applications to be lodged and documents to be submitted remotely (e.g. [France](#), [Greece](#)), remote personal interviews (as above), the provision of information online (see above) and electronic tools that allow applicants to check the status of their application (e.g. [Czechia](#), Greece), and the notification of decisions (e.g. [Finland](#)).

Special conditions for submitting an application for asylum pursuant to [Government Decree 233/2020 v. 26](#) were defined in Hungary on the basis of [Act LVIII of 2020 on the transitional rules and epidemiological preparedness related to the cessation of the state of danger](#). These procedural rules apply to an alien who wishes to enter [Hungary](#) in order to submit an application for asylum after 17

June 2020. The application must be submitted primarily in person in the form of a **letter of intent** to a Hungarian diplomatic mission operating in a non-EU border country of Hungary.²⁶²⁷

Dublin procedure

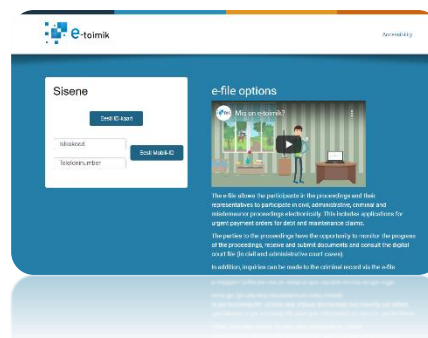


Dublin procedures in Member States have been affected by the ongoing pandemic as administrations have had to take various measures to ensure the safety of their staff and applicants. Border controls and travel restrictions imposed by Member States have resulted in *de facto* discontinuation of Dublin transfers. Recently, [Denmark](#) announced the restart of transfers to/from other Dublin countries, taking into account the guidelines from the health authorities.

Specific measures for second instance procedures



Appeal procedures have resumed²⁸ under strict preventative measures, including access to the building only by parties in a case, use of facemasks and/or gloves (e.g. [Croatia](#), [Estonia](#), [France](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Cyprus](#)), compulsory hand disinfection at the entrance of the court (e.g. [Croatia](#)), social distancing in the premises (e.g. [Croatia](#), Denmark, [Estonia](#), [France](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Norway](#)), and electronic applications to submit files remotely, e.g. [Estonia](#).



Remote hearings are also retained in appeal procedures (e.g. ([Ireland](#), [Latvia](#), [Norway](#))).

In Belgium, [CALL](#) gradually resumed regular hearings as of 19 May 2020. Initially, there was a reduced number of cases per hearing to ensure the best possible progress and guarantee compliance with safety and health measures. Security measures have been taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the maximum number of persons per case is restricted to the applicant's lawyer, the applicant if he/she wishes to appear in person, the lawyer or the representative of the administration concerned and, where appropriate, an interpreter. At the entrance of the building, the temperature of visitors can be taken, and access is prohibited if a fever is detected. Each visitor must wear their own mask in the building.

²⁶ The letter of intent is examined by the asylum authority, during which the authority may hear the foreigner appearing in person at the embassies by remote hearing. If, as a result of the examination carried out by the asylum authority, he/she becomes entitled to a foreign document entitling him/her to travel to Hungary (hereinafter: travel document) issued for the purpose of submitting an asylum application, the asylum authority shall inform the embassy of this fact within 60 days. Based on the information of the asylum authority, the embassy of Hungary issues a travel document valid for 30 days if the foreigner does not otherwise have a permit to enter Hungary. If, on the basis of the examination carried out by the asylum authority, the authority does not propose to issue a travel document, the authority shall inform the alien thereof via the embassy. In the course of the procedure, the asylum authority communicates with the foreigner exclusively through the embassies.

²⁷ The intention of the foreigner holding a travel document to submit an **asylum application** is confirmed to the border police authority immediately upon entry into the country. The border police body shall present the alien to the asylum authority within 24 hours. For asylum applicants, the asylum authority may, by order, designate accommodation in a closed host institution. Four weeks after the application has been lodged, provided that the conditions for ordering asylum detention are not met, the asylum authority shall determine the additional accommodation in accordance with the general rules of the asylum procedure.

²⁸ See also EASO Report, 2 June

The Refugee Appeals Board of Denmark concluded an [Agreement concerning the extension of the first phase of a controlled reopening](#), prioritising single asylum applicants in view of limiting the number of persons in the Board's premises and cases which were scheduled and postponed due to the restriction of service as of 13 March. Specific arrangements related to the hearings include *inter alia*:

- Temporary re-arrangement of the layout of the meeting rooms so that there is distance of 2 meters in between individual participants, in line with social distancing measures;
- Placement of information boards with instructions of the National Board of Health in the waiting rooms. Instructions are translated into five languages: Danish, English, Arabic, Farsi and Somali;
- Access to the waiting room for the lawyer, the asylum applicant and interpreter cannot be earlier than 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the hearing;
- Notification of persons concerned about the re-scheduling of the hearings and the arrival time, following arrangements by the Chairman of the Board;
- Limitation on the time of Board meetings and the possibility for the Board not to issue a decision if it is deemed necessary to shorten the duration of the hearing; and
- Request for information during the arrival of the applicant if symptoms of COVID-19 are detected.

Reception procedures



Preventative measures: Accommodation centres for asylum applicants continue to apply strict prevention and hygiene measures (e.g. [Cyprus](#)), in particular, the use of a mask when it is not possible to respect safety distances (e.g. [Fedasil](#) - Belgium), daily temperature checks (e.g. [Bulgaria](#)), regular disinfections (e.g. [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#)), provision of personal protective equipment and disinfectants (e.g. [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#)) and restrictions of movement within reception centres ([Greece](#)).

Medical screening/quarantine: In [Belgium](#), all people who have registered their asylum application in the arrival centre in Brussels are tested for COVID-19. Following the recommendations of Sciensano, the scientific institute of public health, an applicant is referred to an ordinary reception centre after a minimum stay of 7 days in the arrival centre, and only if the person shows no signs of illness. If a resident of one of the reception centres tests positive for COVID-19 or symptoms of the disease are apparent, the medical service places the applicant in an isolation room provided for this purpose. The sick person (and possibly their family) remains in isolation until complete recovery.

In [Bulgaria](#), upon registration and accommodation in the territorial divisions of State Agency for Refugees all applicants are placed under quarantine for a period of 14 days while their health is monitored, whereas in [Croatia](#) all asylum applicants in Kutina and Zagreb are under constant medical supervision. Similarly, all new arrivals undergo screening in [Cyprus](#). COA ([Netherlands](#)) announced the re-opening of the Willemstraat building in Hengelo, from mid-July 2020 to mid-July 2022 to host a maximum 135 asylum applicants.

Provision of information: Residents are continuously informed about various measures, via multilingual posters and leaflets (e.g. [Croatia](#), [Cyprus](#)) and official websites (e.g. Belgium – www.fedasilinfo.be where information is available in 12 languages based on the latest regulations), [Ireland](#), etc.

Detention



General restrictions affected detention given the temporary discontinuation of asylum procedures and/or returns. Restrictions on visits to closed institutions was required to help prevent COVID-19 outbreaks. Some EU+ countries (e.g. [Belgium, Spain, Netherlands, Norway](#)) released third country nationals in administrative detention, whereas others counter-balanced restrictions by providing access to frequent and longer communication.²⁹

In this regard, the Commissioner of the Council of [Europe had called](#) on all Council of Europe Member States to review the situation of rejected asylum applicants and irregular migrants in immigration detention, and to release them to the maximum extent possible. Similarly, the [Committee on the Prevention of Torture](#) (CPT) issued a set of principles to be applied by relevant authorities, including refraining to the maximum extent possible from detaining migrants.³⁰ In its follow-up statement, CPT was satisfied with the good practices reported by Member States.

In the broader context, the United Nations Network on Migration released practical [recommendations with guidance](#) for countries and stakeholders on preventing and responding to COVID-19 in the context of immigration detention, including best practices to highlight positive responses by national and local governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, in e.g. Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain.

Building on the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted on 19 September 2016, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the IOM published a thematic paper on [immigration detention and alternatives to detention](#). The paper reinstates the existing normative framework and puts forward targeted action points to ensure the effective protection of detainees in the context of immigration detention, including alternatives to detention, technical assistance and training to officials, enhanced assisted voluntary return services, improvements in detention infrastructure, monitoring and exchange of practices between countries.

With regard to minors, [UNICEF](#)³¹ stressed that country responses to combat the COVID-19 pandemic for children deprived of their liberty, including emergency measures based on public health goals, must strictly adhere to international human rights law and standards addressing the unique vulnerabilities of asylum applicants, refugees and stateless children. The organisation called to stop continued detention or deprivation of liberty of children who should otherwise be released and ensure immediate screening and referral to appropriate protection.

²⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/16809ef566>

³⁰ Civil society organisations also responded actively, urging countries to follow principles derived from international treaties and instruments, customary international law, decisions of UN treaty bodies and guidelines which are widely accepted by the international community. See for instance: [Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility](#) (The New School), [Columbia Program on Forced Migration and Health](#), and [Cornell Migration and Human Rights Program](#), 'Human mobility and human rights in the COVID-19 pandemic: Principles of protection for migrants, refugees, and other displaced persons', April 2020.

³¹ UNICEF, Technical Note: COVID-19 and Children Deprived of their Liberty, 8 April 2020.

Temporary stay – Return procedures



The travel restrictions and the ban on external flights from the EU disrupted voluntary and/or enforced return procedures. To address the legal vacuum, EU+ countries introduced transitional measures, for example the possibility to ‘tolerate’ or ‘legalise’ a stay, extending the period of voluntary stay, suspending sanctions, etc.³²

In the period under review, these measures were prolonged. In [Belgium](#), a third country national prevented from leaving due to force majeure (quarantine, cancellation of a flight, closure of a border, etc.) may request authorisation to extend his/her stay via email. Additionally, the Immigration Office issued [advice on return to one's country of origin or residence](#) showing the "Schengen effect" so that the person could travel to another Member State in order to return to his/her country of origin.

In [Czechia](#), third country nationals whose residence permit in the Czech Republic has expired after 12 March must leave the territory by 16 July at the latest. For this period, the exit order for foreign nationals is not issued. To ensure easier passage through other EU Member States, the police mark a special stamp on the travel document. This stamp certifies the tolerance of the foreign national's stay in the Czech Republic for the purpose of informing other EU Member States in the event of a transit through their territory. However, the stamp does not provide automatic entry into the territory of these states.

The [Danish Immigration Service announced](#) an initiative, in cooperation with municipalities, the Red Cross and the police, to track and refer cases of foreigners without legal residence and living in the street, and who have been found to be infected by COVID-19, to be offered quarantined accommodation in selected asylum centres.

In Iceland, the government [published an amendment on the regulation for foreigners](#) according to which persons who were in Iceland before 20 March 2020 and have not been able to return home due to travel restrictions, quarantine or isolation, may stay in the country without a residence permit or visa until 10 August.³³

Resettlement



COVID-19 related measures and the closure of the EU's external borders¹ have affected the continuation of resettlement programmes. Recently, [UDI \(Norway\)](#) reportedly resumed interviews via videoconferencing tools (Teams) for resettlement purposes. In May and June 2020, the UDI interviewed 53 refugees in Libya. Those who are granted entry permits will travel directly to Norway when travel restrictions are revoked.

³² Op.cit. EASO, Report, p. 21.

³³ See also [press release](#)

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- ICMPD, Expert voice series available at: www.icmpd.org/

National authorities

Austria

- [Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum \(BFA\)](#) - News section
- [Administrative High Court](#) (Verwaltungsgerichtshof - VfGH) - [Media](#)
- [Constitutional Court](#) (Verfassungsgerichtshof - VfGH) - [News](#)

- [Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons \(CGRS\)](#) - Homepage
- [Federal Agency for the Reception of the Asylum Seekers \(Fedasil\)](#) - News section and [Fedasil Info](#)
- [Council for Alien Law Litigation \(CALL\)](#) - Homepage
- [Council of State](#) - [News](#)

Belgium

- [Immigration Office \(IO\)](#) - Homepage

Bulgaria

- [State Agency for Refugees](#) with the Council of Ministers (news section: [here](#))
- [Migration Directorate](#) of the Ministry of Interior (news section: [here](#))
- [Border Police](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [National Assembly](#)
- EMN (European Migration Network), [EMN Bulletin - Edition 30](#), May 2020

Croatia

- Ministry of Interior [Website](#) - Government Measures on Covid [Website](#)
- Administrative Court in Zagreb Announcements [Website](#)
- High Administrative Court [Announcements on Website](#)
- Constitutional Court [Announcements on Website](#)

Cyprus

- [Press and Information Office, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus](#) (News Section [here](#))
- [Ministry of Interior, Cyprus, News section](#)
- Asylum Service [Website](#)
- Supreme Court [Website](#) ([Announcements](#))
- Ombudsperson Cyprus, [Report on temporary reception and accommodation of migrants in Kokkinotrimithia and Kofinou](#)
- [Special Annex to the 30th EMN Bulletin EU Member States & Norway](#): responses to COVID-19 in the migration and asylum area January – March 2020, 8 May 2020

Czechia

- [Ministry of Interior](#) - News
- [Refugee Facilities Administration](#) [*Ministerstvo vnitra/Správa uprchlických zařízení*] - News
- [Administrative Court \(Nejvyšší soud\)](#)
- Supreme Administrative Court [*Nejvyšší správní soud*] [Website](#)
- [Constitutional Court](#) (Usoud)
- [Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic of 4 May 2020 No. 511 on the adoption of a crisis measure](#)

Denmark

- [Danish Immigration Service - Section on Covid with updates](#)
- [Danish Refugee Appeals Board](#)
- [Ministry of Immigration and Integration](#) (new section: [here](#))
- [Government of Denmark - News section](#)

Estonia

- [Police and Border Guard Board \(PBGB\)](#) Website
- [Accommodation centre for asylum seekers](#) Website
- [Council for the Administration of Courts](#) (KHN) Website

Finland

- [Finnish Immigration Service](#) (news section: [here](#); updates about the Covid-19: [here](#))
- [Border Guard](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Finnish government](#) (news section: [here](#))

France

- [The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons \(OFPRA\)](#) (News section [here](#))
- [French Office for the Immigration and the Integration](#) (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (OFII))
- [National Court of Asylum](#) (Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile (CNDA))
- [Council of State](#) (Cassation instance)
- [Ministry of Interior](#)

Germany

- [Federal Office for Migration and Refugees \(BAMF\)](#) - Infothek section [here](#), [Covid Section](#)
- Federal Constitutional Court [[Bundesverfassungsgericht](#)]
- Higher Federal Administrative Courts [[Verwaltungsgerichtshof/Oberverwaltungsgericht](#)]
- Federal Administrative Court [[Bundesverwaltungsgericht](#)]
- Regional Administrative Court [Verwaltungsgericht; i.e. [Karlsruhe](#)]

Greece

- General Secretariat for Immigration Policy, Reception and Asylum [Website](#)

- Asylum Service - [Latest News](#)
- [Ministry of Migration Official FB page](#)
- Minister of Migration [Website](#)
- [Reception and Identification Service](#)
- [EKKA \(National Center for Social Solidarity\)](#)
- Administrative Court of First Instance of [Athens \(Announcements\)](#); [Pireaus\(Announcements\)](#); [Thessaloniki](#)
- Administrative Court of Appeal [Athens \(Announcements\)](#)
- Council of State [Website \(Announcements\)](#)
- Hellenic Government- [Legislative measures related to COVID-19](#)

Hungary

- National Directorate General for Aliens Policing [Website](#)
- Hungarian Government Website - [News Section](#)
- Prime Minister [News](#)
- Supreme Court [[Kúria](#)]
- Regional Courts of Appeal [[ítélőtáblák](#)]

Iceland

- [The Icelandic Directorate of Immigration](#) - Homepage/New section [here](#)
- [The Icelandic Directorate of Immigration - Information concerning COVID-19](#)
- [Government of Iceland - News Section](#)

Ireland

- EMN Ireland - [News section](#)
- [International Protection Office \(IPO\)](#) - Homepage
- [Irish Immigration and Naturalisation Service \(INIS\)](#) - Homepage
- Government of Ireland: [Daily briefings on the government's response to COVID-19 - Webpage](#)
- [Department of Justice and Equality](#), Ireland
- [Supreme Court](#)
- [High Court](#)
- [Court of Appeal](#)
- [International Protection Appeals Tribunal](#)
- [The Courts Service of Ireland](#) - News page
- [Ombudsman commentary on Direct Provision Centers](#)

Italy

- [Ministry of the Interior](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration](#) of the Ministry of the Interior (news section: [here](#))
- [State Police](#) (news section: [here](#))
- Inter-ministerial Integrazione Migranti [Portal](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [SIPROIMI](#) - former SPRAR (news section: [here](#))
- [Portal Jumamap](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Court of Cassation](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Italian government](#) (news section: [here](#); regular updates on measures adopted by the government: [here](#))

Latvia

- State Border Guard [Website](#)
- Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs ([OCMA](#)) of the Ministry of Interior - News
- Supreme Court [[Augstākā tiesa](#)]
- District Administrative Courts [[Administratīvā rajona tiesa](#)]

Lithuania

- [Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania](#)
- [Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania](#)
- [Administrative courts News](#)

Luxembourg

- [Information Portal "Guichet" of the Government of Grand Duché de Luxembourg](#) (news section [here](#))
- [Directorate of Immigration, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs - News section](#)
- [The Luxembourg Government - News Portal](#)
- Judicial Institutions [Official Website](#)

Malta

- Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) [Website](#)
- Office of the Refugee Commissioner - [Ministry of Home Affairs](#) National Security and Law Enforcement
- Maltese Government [Website](#)

Netherlands

- [Immigration and Naturalization Service](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers](#) (news section: [here](#))

Norway

- [Norwegian Directorate of Immigration](#) (news section: [here](#); regular updates on Corvid-19 situation in NO: [here](#))
- [Police](#) (news section: [here](#); regular updates on Corvid-19 situation in NO: [here](#))
- [Immigration Appeals Board](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Norwegian Government](#) (news section: [here](#))

Poland

- [Office for Foreigners](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Border Guard](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Ministry of the Interior and Administration](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Supreme Administrative Court](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Voivodship Administrative Court in Warsaw](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Polish government](#) (news section: [here](#))

Portugal

- [Foreigners and Borders Service \(SEF\) - News section](#)
- [Public Ministry](#) (for Judicial Institutions)

Romania

- [General Inspectorate of Immigration \(IGI\)](#)
- President of Romania [Official Website](#)
- Superior Council of Magistracy [[Consiliul Superior al Magistraturii](#)]
- High Court of Cassation and Justice [[Înalta Curte de Casație și Justiție](#)]

Slovakia

- [Ministry of Interior](#) of the Slovak Republic (news section: [here](#))
- [Bureau of Border and Aliens Police](#) (news section: [here](#))

Non-governmental organisations

- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: Poland](#), April 2020
- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: Cyprus](#), April 2020
- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: Croatia](#), April 2020
- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: France](#), April 2020
- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: Netherlands](#), April 2020
- ECRE (European Council for Refugees and Exiles), [AIDA - Country Report: Portugal](#), April 2020

- [Migration Office](#) of the Ministry of the Interior (news section: [here](#))
- [Supreme Court](#) (news section: [here](#))
- [Government](#) of the Slovak Republic (news section: [here](#))
- Website [korona.gov.sk](#) (news section: [here](#))

Slovenia

- Government [Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants](#)
- Constitutional Court [[Ustavno sodišče](#)]
- Supreme Court [[Vrhovno sodišče](#)]
- Administrative Court [[Upravno sodišče](#)]
- [Slovenian government](#) (news section: [here](#))

Spain

- [Asylum and Refugee Office \(OAR\)](#), Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of [Labor, Migration and Social Security](#)
- [National High Court](#) (Audiciencia Nacional)
- [Supreme Court](#) (Tribunal Supremo)

Sweden

- [Swedish Migration Agency](#) (news section [here](#); regular updates on Corvid-19 situation in SE: [here](#))
- [Swedish Courts](#) (news section: [here](#))
- Swedish [government](#) (news section: [here](#))

Switzerland

- [State Secretariat of Migration \(SEM\)](#) - (Home page section [here](#))
- Federal Court [[Bundesgericht – Cour fédéral](#)]
- Federal Administrative Court [[Bundesverwaltungsgericht - Tribunal administratif fédéral - FAC](#)]

- FIERI (Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione) [initiatives related to information provision on COVID-19 in different languages](#)

¹ [COM \(2020\) 2050 final](#).