**Please cite as:** EUAA, 'Section 4.3 Special procedures to assess protection needs' in *EASO Asylum Report 2021*, Januar 2022.

# Section 4.3 Special procedures to assess protection needs

In addition to regular examination procedures, the recast Asylum Procedures Directive sets the framework to examine applications for international protection at first instance under special conditions involving accelerated procedures when:

- an application is presumably unfounded;
- applications are made at border or transit zones; or
- when the admissibility of the application is in question.

Cases which require special procedural guarantees should normally be processed within regular procedures, but for other categories of applicants, Member States have developed various systems based on special procedures.

## COVID-19

COVID-19 restrictions on travel and social distancing measures affected the application of the border procedure in EU+ countries. Some countries re-established controls at their borders, imposed travel bans or implemented additional conditions for entry (for example, medical certificates).

While most EU+ countries temporarily stopped the identification, registration and interviewing of third-country nationals *(see Section 4.1)*, they still provided an exemption to those wishing to apply at the border. Applicants at the border were required to comply with conditions of entry related to the health and sanitary precautions during the pandemic, such as mandatory quarantine. EU+ countries had to provide accommodation through adequate arrangements *(see Section 4.7)* and coordinate with local authorities which do not have competence for asylum procedures.

The restrictions led to a decrease in applications at the border. For instance, from 19 March to May 2020, no asylum applications had been submitted at the borders in Finland.[381] Because it was not possible to create a safe space for new arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Czechia paused the border procedure which is conducted only in the international airport with a dedicated reception centre.

## Digitalisation

Besides the developments noted in Section 4.4, no other developments were reported by EU+ countries specifically on the digitalisation of special procedures.

[381] Finnish Immigration Service | Maahanmuuttovirasto. (2020, April 9). *Number of asylum seekers has diminished significantly during coronavirus epidemic*. https://migri.fi/en/-/turvapaikanhakijoiden-maara-on-vahentynyt-selvasti-koronaepidemian-aikana ; Finnish Immigration Service | Maahanmuuttovirasto. (2020, May 15). *Only a few asylum applications have been submitted during the coronavirus pandemic* . https://migri.fi/en/-/koronaviruspandemian-aikana-on-jatetty-vain-vahan-turvapaikkahakemuksia

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