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The German BAMF published updated methodology for the identification of vulnerable persons in the asylum procedure, which provides detailed guidance and identifies special procedural guarantees. In addition, the organisation developed two forms for transmitting data to ensure that information flows rapidly to the authorities responsible at the federal and federal-state levels.1308

In Portugal, a new sub-working group was established to foster cooperation and coordination between stakeholders involved in the identification and referral of applicants with special needs. The sub-group is organised under the umbrella of the Single Operative Group, established in 2020 to improve cooperation in general in the asylum procedure, reception and integration.

The Icelandic Ministry of Education established a steering group on refugee children's issues. The group was tasked to monitor the situation of refugee children, provide advice, assess government measures and ensure that measures are aligned with international standards.1309

The UN Human Rights Committee issued its Concluding Observations on Ireland with recommendations. It requested the government to establish a robust system of vulnerability assessments.1310

A legislative proposal amending the Refugee Act was approved by the Council of Ministers in Cyprus. If adopted by the parliament, the Asylum Service will be obliged to obtain a health care professional's advice for an applicant's ability to be interviewed.1311 The Cyprus Refugee Council underlined that standard operating procedures and referral pathways were still lacking, even though authorities were working on their elaboration. The organisation acknowledged that in the meantime the vulnerability team conducts regular meetings to discuss challenges and harmonise approaches on identification and follow-up.1312

Face-to-face training was co-organised by OFPRA, UNHCR, and the Asylum Directorate with the participation of the Red Cross for various stakeholders working with unaccompanied minors in France. The Asylum Directorate developed an online version of the training, which would be deployed soon. The directorate also financed training courses organised by specialised partners. In addition, the Themis association launched a guide to the asylum procedure for unaccompanied minors in February 2022 with the financial support of the French Ministry of the Interior. Training for reception staff on vulnerabilities was ongoing, with three regions covered in 2022.

The Greek RIS, with support from the EUAA, created and deployed a team of case management reception assistants for reception facilities under its responsibility throughout Greece. Their task was to ensure the identification of needs, referral and follow-up for all persons residing in reception facilities. A standard operating procedure was drafted to create a harmonised system for case management in first- and second-line reception. The NGO Network for Children's Rights highlighted gaps in the identification of vulnerable applicants after the launch of the online registration platform for applying for international protection *(see Section 4.1).* The organisation encouraged the relevant ministry to set up an identification system that addresses these gaps.[1313] The Greek Council for Refugees observed delays in vulnerability assessments and referrals, which led to applicants being interviewed prior to establishing their eventual specific needs.[1314]

On 31 December 2022, the ESTIA II scheme – designed to accommodate vulnerable applicants – ended in Greece. Applicants were transferred to larger mainland structures.[1315] Several civil society organisations and UNHCR expressed their concern about the modalities of the move and the fact that the needs of vulnerable applicants could not be adequately addressed in larger facilities. *(see Section 4.7).*[1316]

The Human Rights Committee of the Seimas in Lithuania discussed the situation of applicants, and its chairperson highlighted that the committee had repeatedly raised the lack of vulnerability assessment criteria as an issue. The committee also noted that psychological support was rarely available in reception facilities.[1317] The Lithuanian Red Cross published a thematic monitoring report on the rights of vulnerable groups in reception and detention centres. The organisation concluded that the availability of vulnerability assessments and support services significantly improved in the second half of 2022, due to a decrease in the number of residents, newly-employed specialists and the freedom of movement which allowed foreigners to choose the services independently. However, it noted that the newly-established reception agency should design an effective system for identifying vulnerabilities.[1318]

The Danish Immigration Service launched a tender for providing accommodation to applicants who cannot receive the necessary support within ordinary reception centres. These profiles include applicants suffering from mental and physical disabilities, substance abuse, trauma or mental illness. This service was previously offered by a different service provider, but the Immigration Service did not renew the contract due to unsatisfactory collaboration.[1319] The new centre, operated by the Red Cross, started operating in Sjælsmark as a separate, independent centre from the already-existing ordinary reception facility.[1320]

The Romanian Ombudsperson carried out visits to several reception facilities throughout 2022. In Marumures–Somcuta Mare, recommendations were made to organise training for staff on identifying and supporting persons with special needs.[1321] In Giurgiu, the Ombudsperson recommended adjustments to make all areas accessible for persons with physical disabilities and set up a special, fully-accessible room for their accommodation.[1322]

Improving vulnerable applicants' reception conditions and support, the Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR) and AIDRom launched the second part of their AMIF-funded project, "Complex social assistance for asylum applicants". Among other services, the project offers accommodation and support to vulnerable applicants in Bucharest and Timișoara for a maximum of 6 months.[1323]

The Italian NGO Don Bosco 2000 launched its Child Safeguarding Policy, which ensures that all staff are specifically trained and their work is adequately monitored.[1324]

Input from the Swiss NGO Platform for Human Rights to the Universal Periodic Review of Switzerland highlighted gaps in the detection of applicants with special needs and suggested to address these through the involvement of trained translators and systematic access to medical care.[1325] Asylex added that follow-up measures and referral to medical professionals were particularly sporadic for applicants in the Dublin procedure.[1326]

The AIDA report for Bulgaria highlighted persisting gaps in the identification of applicants' vulnerabilities at registration and their follow-up during the asylum procedure. The report notes, for example, that social reports are prepared for unaccompanied children, but these are rarely shared with asylum case officers.[1327]

The Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsperson launched a project monitoring the identification of and support to vulnerable persons in return procedures. The project aims to help authorities develop structure and guidance in the preparation for the return of a vulnerable person, since the Ombudsperson identified some weaknesses in previous monitoring projects.[1328]

In Belgium, in addition to efforts made by national authorities *(see Sections 5.2 and 5.6)*, the civil society organisation NANSEN organised a workshop on several dimensions of special needs, including applicants with disabilities, applicants with health issues, victims of torture and LGBTIQ+ applicants.[1329]

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