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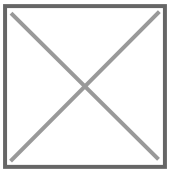
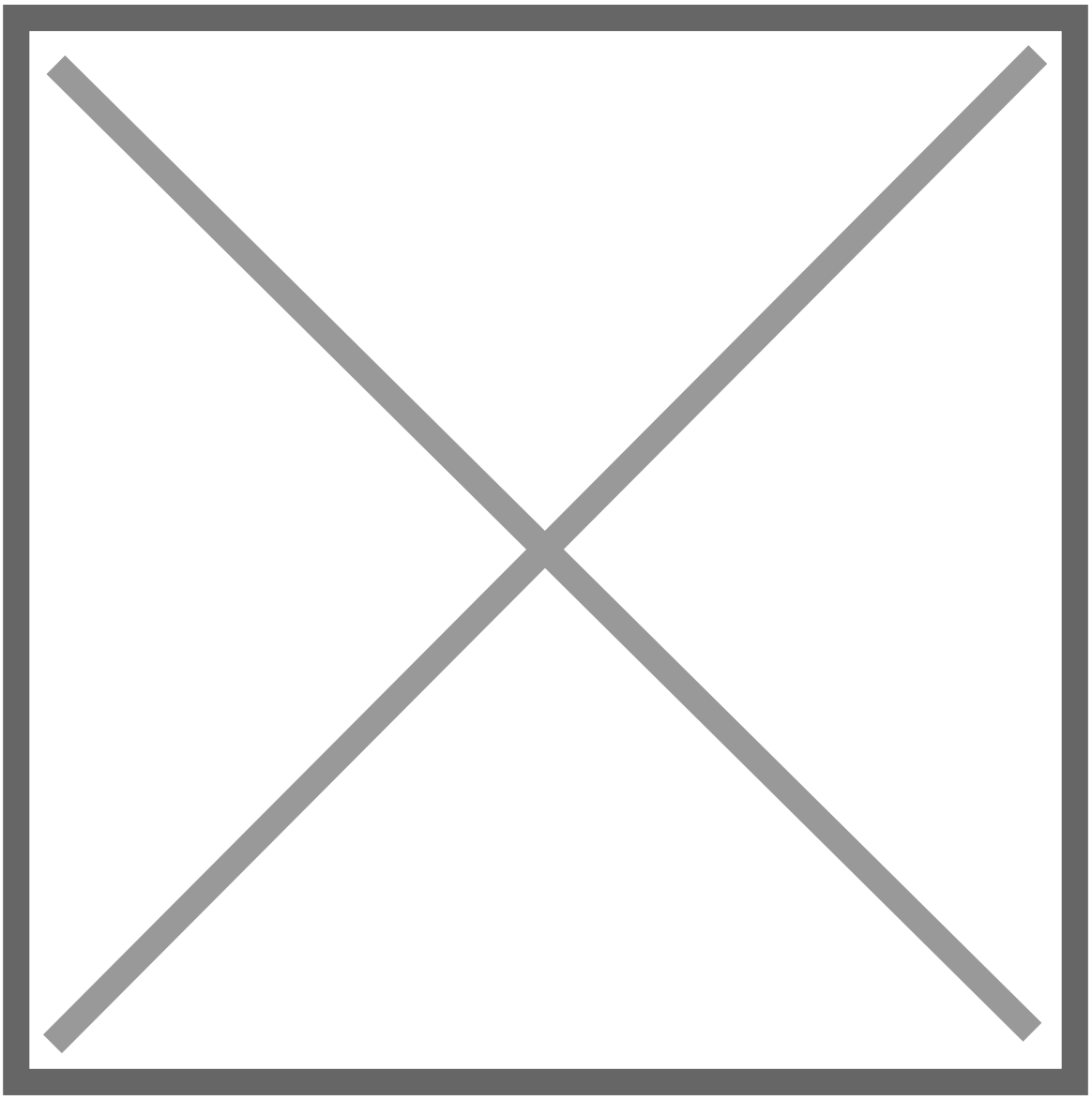
Section 4.16 Resettlement and humanitarian admissions



Resettlement is a durable solution by which third-country nationals or stateless persons in a situation of vulnerability are selected and transferred from a first country of asylum to the territory of a third country which has agreed to admit them as refugees with a permanent residence status.[1247] In the EU context, resettlement programmes are voluntary and persons in need of protection are identified as eligible by UNHCR.[1248]

Resettlement is an expression of international solidarity, involving several national and international stakeholders.
EU resettlement schemes aim to manage migration based on predictable timelines and ensure common grounds for eligibility, while carrying out rigorous security checks. Since the introduction of the first European Resettlement Scheme in July 2015, the process has remained an important point on the policy agenda.

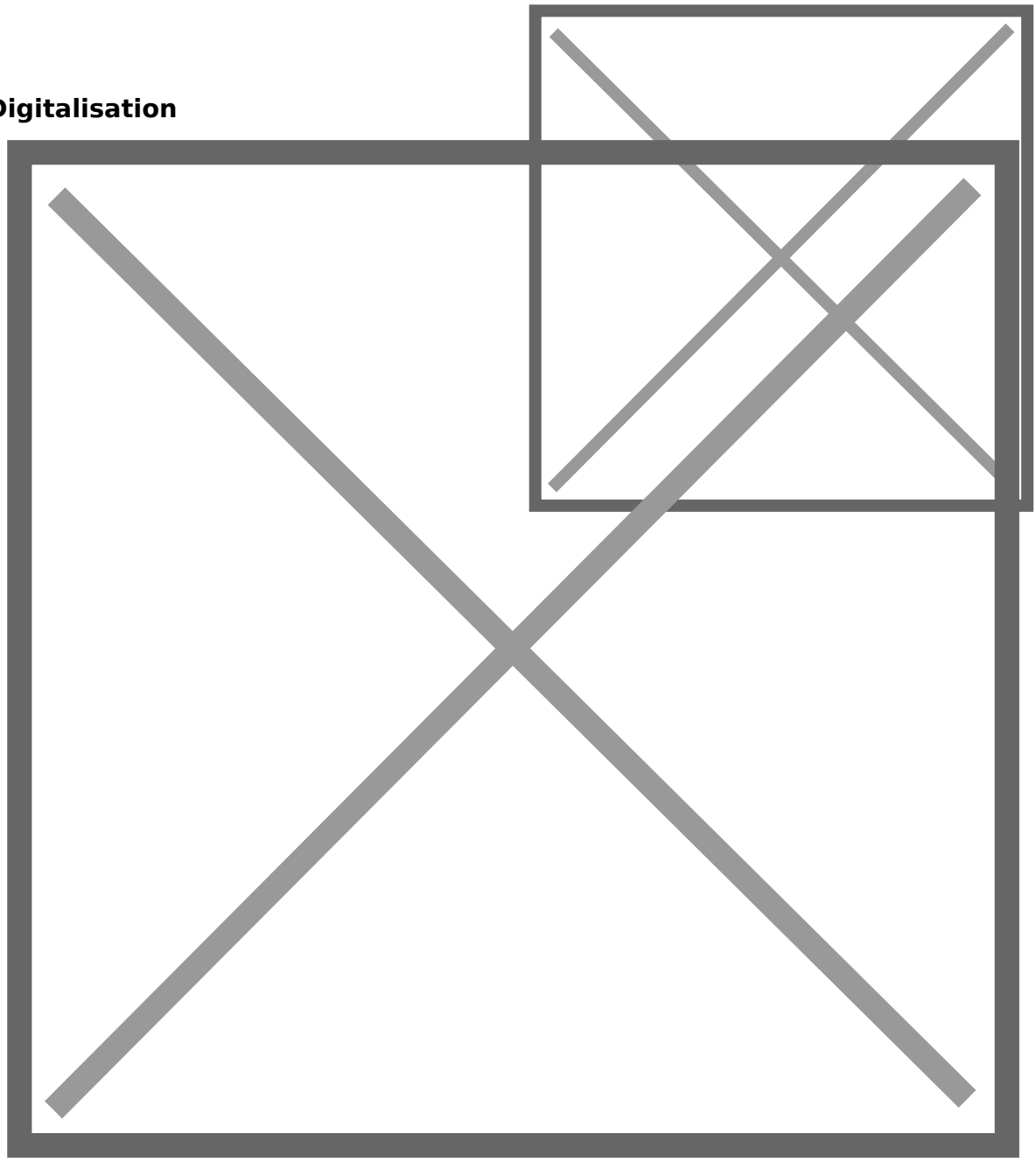
COVID-19



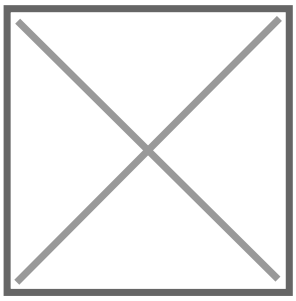
The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a direct impact on resettlement operations which were planned by EU+ countries for 2020. The closure of borders and restrictions to movement resulted in the suspension of the main activities, including the cancellation of selection missions to countries of first asylum and the suspension of transfers of already-selected refugees. Consequently, this led to a decrease in the total number of resettled persons in the EU+ for the first time in 7 years.

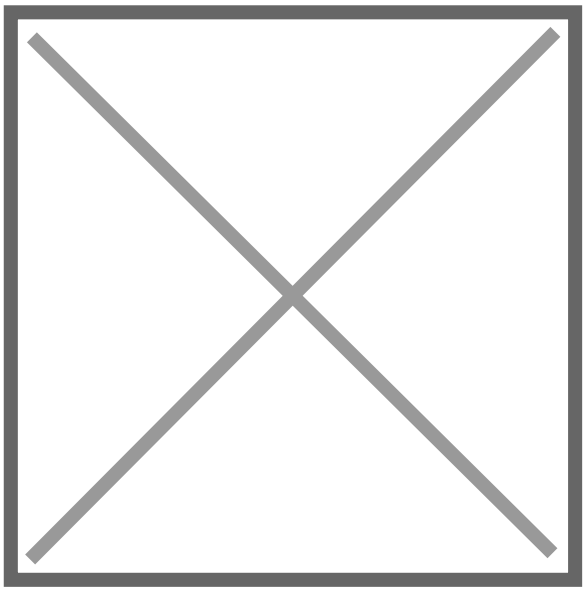
One of the solutions for some countries became selection based on dossiers.[lxix] This means that new cases were decided without organising a selection mission or interviewing an applicant in person. While some countries, such as Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain clarified that they would not increase dossier-selection quotas for the year, other countries are considering increasing the number of cases processed in this way. For instance, Italy announced that in view of the current situation they will process all cases based on documentation until their 2020 pledge is achieved.

Digitalisation



In line with the European Commission’s guidance on the implementation of relevant EU provisions in the area of asylum, return procedures and resettlement,[1249] countries turned to digital solutions to continue activities. Digitalisation allowed national systems to continue to function and helped to stop backlog accumulation. Remote interviews were carried out to process resettlement cases referred by UNHCR and virtual pre-departure orientation were used to carry out preparatory activities for the integration of already-selected refugees.





[lxix] The selection of refugees based on dossier means that the country of resettlement will decide based only on the documentation provided by UNHCR, without requiring a direct interview with the applicant. Before the COVID-19 crisis, this method has been typically used only in emergency and urgent cases, for instance based on medical grounds or when the refugee faces an immediate risk of *refoulement* to the country of origin where there is a risk of suffering persecutions.

[1247] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (April 2018). *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook and Country Chapters*. https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/4a2ccf4c6/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapters.html
[1248] European Migration Network. (2021, May 12). *Glossary: resettlement programme*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/resettlement-programme_en
[1249] European Commission. (2020, April 16). *Communication from the Commission, COVID-19: Guidance on the implementation of relevant EU provisions in the area of asylum and return procedures and on resettlement: C(2020) 2516* . https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/guidance-implementation-eu-provisions-asylum-retur-procedures-resettlement.pdf

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