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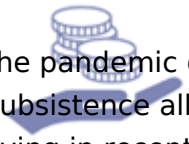
4.7.2.6 Financial support



provided extra financial support to compensate for some of the negative effects of the pandemic on applicants' livelihood. For example, Iceland paid an additional fixed amount subsistence allowance to applicants for international protection in December 2020. Applicants living in reception centres in Ireland were at first not entitled to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment, and this allowance was extended to them only in August 2020[639] thanks to the continued advocacy efforts of civil society organisations.[640] The re-admission of residents in direct provision to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment Scheme was strongly supported by the Irish IPAS and the Minister for Justice at the time. In Italy, the income and family support measures provided for in the "Cura Italia" Decree, including a EUR 600 allowance, babysitting allowance and COVID-19 special leave, were also accessible to employed applicants. UNHCR observed that some measures were introduced also in Spain to facilitate access to financial support, for example, by increasing the limits of cash-based support.

A ministerial decision in Cyprus provided an allowance for food, clothing and footwear for all applicants, which was transferred directly to applicants' accounts. Previously, applicants received food vouchers which they could use in selected shops.[641]

The Supreme Administrative Court in Poland ruled that excluding asylum applicants by using a regulation from governmental support programmes for citizens in general was against the constitution and that the law does not preclude asylum applicants to receive social benefits from different public sources. The Association for Legal Intervention sent a complaint to the European Commission noting that the financial allowance did not ensure the basic living needs of applicants who were residing outside of the reception centre.[642] The Office for Foreigners noted that this element is monitored by the employees of the Office for Foreigners and applicants are informed that they can return to the centre for foreigners.

In France, criticism continued against the payment card, which was introduced in 2019 for applicants and which limits the use of financial allowance.[643] However, the authorities noted that financial allowances were more widely used in general since the launching of the payment card. During the first lockdown, the asylum seeker's allowance (ADA) was extended for persons who would no longer be eligible as of March 2020. This extension of rights ended either on 31 May 2020 or on 30 June 2020 (for newly-recognised beneficiaries of international protection).

The civil society organisation Mobile Info Team saw substantial delays in the payment of cash assistance in mainland Greece due to administrative delays which establish eligibility and occur prior to enrol in the programme and underlined that a ministerial decision in June 2020 reduced the

amount of cash assistance for some household sizes of applicants in reception facilities.644 UNHCR clarified that cash assistance was provided on time throughout 2020, and only a few applicants experienced delays which were rather linked to initial administrative issues which affect the programme.

The AIDA report for the Netherlands found that the COA considered that applicants who had received penalty payments from the IND for delays in their asylum application had sufficient resources *(see Section 4.4).* As the COA decided to implement this approach after the applicants had received the payments, the money had often been spent already.645

[639] Department of Social Protection. (2020, August 18). *Access to COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment for people in Direct Provision*. https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/90416-access-to-covid-19-enhanced-illness-benefit-and-the-pandemic-unemployment-payment-for-people-in-direct-provision/
[640] AIDA Ireland. (2021). *Country Report: Ireland - 2020 Update*. Edited by ECRE. Written by Irish Refugee Council. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AIDA-IE_2020update.pdf
[641] European Web Site on Integration. (2020, September 11). *Cyprus changes its approach to material reception conditions*. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/cyprus-changes-its-approach-to-material-reception-conditions
[642] European Web Site on Integration. (2020, July 7). *Poland: Association for Legal Intervention complains against insufficient aid for asylum seekers*. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/poland-association-for-legal-intervention-complains-against-insufficient-aid-for-asylum-seekers; Association for Legal Intervention | Stowarzyszenia Interwencji Prawnej. (2020, July 7). *Skarga do KE: rażąco niskie środki finansowe dla osób ubiegających się o udzielenie ochrony międzynarodowej [Complaint to the EC: Abnormally low financial support for applicants for international protection]* . https://interwencjaprawna.pl/skarga-do-ke-razaco-niskie-srodki-finansowe-dla-osob-ubiegajacych-sie-o-udzielenie-ochrony-miedzynarodowej/
[643] Forum réfugiés - Cosi. (2021). *Input to the EASO Asylum Report 2021.* /sites/default/files/Forumre-fugies-Cosi.pdf
[644] Mobile Info Team. (2021). *Input to the EASO Asylum Report 2021.* /sites/default/files/Mobile-Info-Team_Combined.pdf
[645] AIDA Netherlands. (2021). *Country Report: Netherlands - 2020 Update*. Edited by ECRE. Written by Dutch Council for Refugees. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AIDA-NL_2020update.pdf

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