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The recast Reception Conditions Directive sets the standards for the conditions which must be met during the reception phase of an asylum procedure and aims to ensure that rights and obligations are harmonised across all Member States. The recast Reception Conditions Directive describes the conditions and processes under which applicants need to be informed about reception benefits and duties *(see Section 4.9)*.

- material reception conditions (such as housing, food and clothing which are provided in-kind, as financial allowances or in vouchers – or a combination of these three, in addition to a daily expense allowance);
- freedom of movement;
- access to health care;
- education for children;
- access to the labour market;
- language instruction; and
- socio-cultural orientation.

The directive applies to all applicants throughout the whole asylum procedure from the moment an application is made and for all types of procedures until they are allowed to remain on the territory.

The directive also outlines the circumstances when Member States may reduce or exceptionally withdraw material reception conditions. Member States must have appropriate guidance, monitoring and controls to ensure that EU standards are upheld. They also need to provide suitable staff training and allocate sufficient resources. Member States are required as well to take into account the specific situation of vulnerable applicants *(see Section 5)*. Furthermore, the directive lists the grounds, guarantees and conditions for the detention of applicants *(see Section 4.8)*. The standards in the directive need to be implemented by all Member States, however, variations still exist in reception conditions across countries.

The reception of applicants for international protection encompasses rules on: The re-organisation and adaptation of reception systems remained at the forefront in national strategies to ensure fast and sufficient responses to changes in migratory flows. In 2021, reception authorities reached out increasingly to local authorities to address together some of the challenges related to the reception of applicants for international protection. Digitalising reception procedures focused on simplifying workflows.

Despite these efforts, the significant increase in the number of applicants in 2021 meant that reception systems in many EU+ countries were under strain. In some cases, this resulted in high occupancy rates in facilities, necessitating services to be quickly adapted to respond to the needs of all applicants.

In countries where the pressure on reception systems has been building up already prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the new arrivals led to the saturation of the system. In these cases, reception authorities responded by opening new, typically temporary, places, while examining longer-term structural solutions, for example, by creating more permanent accommodation places and helping recognised beneficiaries of international protection move on quicker from reception facilities. Facing unexpected influxes of applicants, some EU+ countries turned to the EUAA to provide support in various areas of reception.

The persisting COVID-19 context continued to add to existing and new challenges, as requirements for physical distancing, quarantine and isolation continued to demand more space. Reception staff needed to make adjustments when positive cases were reported and they were actively engaged in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out for applicants throughout 2021. As COVID-19 restrictions began to ease, the number of support activities in reception facilities grew in 2021, often aimed at preventing tensions and de-escalating violence within and surrounding the centres.

The quality of reception remained an overall concern in many EU+ countries, as UNHCR and civil society organisations continued to report on sub-standard accommodation and support. In addition, courts were called on to deliberate on the adequacy of reception conditions in other EU+ countries in the framework of the Dublin III Regulation (see *Section 4.2*).

icon for organisation in reception system

4.7.1. Organisation and functioning of reception systems

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icon for the applicants daily life in reception

4.7.2. Applicants’ daily life

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