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3.8.2.1. Enhanced availability and accessibility of information

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During the year, national authorities introduced some temporary measures, made institutional changes and published additional information on the asylum procedure. Civil society organisations also continued to support the authorities in the provision of information.

Following a public tender, the UDI in Norway awarded a 4-year contract to Caritas Norway to provide information and guidance to newly-arrived asylum seekers as of 1 June 2023.674 This meant that the Information and Guidance Programme, which was run by NOAS, ended on 31 May 2023, after 20 years of operation.675

The Fedasil Info Point, which was closed in 2022, was reopened in 2023 next to the Bordet reception centre in Belgium. The centre has expanded tasks to support applicants residing outside of the reception network, migrants in transit and people without a legal residence. Caritas International is in charge of the initial welcome and information provision, while several stakeholders then provide more in-depth information.676

In Estonia, UNHCR and partners continued to provide information and legal counselling to new arrivals and refugees about asylum procedures, access to temporary protection and access to rights and services to facilitate their inclusion and integration.677

The second Performance Update of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) in the Netherlands indicated that information provision in the asylum process was outdated. To address this, the service plans to modernise the digital system so that the latest information is rapidly available, such as the status of an application and when a decision is expected.678

In Portugal, AIMA plans to create 10 more contact points for asylum seekers and a call centre to address queries in 2024.679

New material, services and platforms related to information provision which were made available during the year are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. New material, services and platforms related to information provision, 2023

Stakeholder	Development	Type

National authority (Slovakia)	A project was initiated to provide improved instructions for asylum seekers, using pictograms and translations in several languages.	Information material
National authority, UNHCR Slovakia and Human Rights League	A leaflet was produced in various languages on what steps asylum seekers can take once they arrive in Slovakia.	Information material
Human Rights League (Slovakia)	A series of Frequently Asked Questions were published to provide information on the authorisation to remain when administrative expulsion is not possible.680	Information material
National authority (Malta)	In March 2024, the IPA, with assistance of the EUAA, published a detailed booklet about the asylum procedure and a booklet specifically for unaccompanied minors. These booklets are given to all applicants who lodge an asylum application in Malta. The IPA, with assistance of the EUAA, also produced three videos related to the asylum procedure, namely on information on the asylum procedure for adults, information on the asylum procedure for unaccompanied minors and the rights and obligations of an asylum seeker in Malta. All these products were translated into different languages. The IPA is currently also working on the development of its own website. UNHCR and the Ministry for Home Affairs developed an information leaflet to be made available at all immigration and reception centres.	Information material
JRS Romania, in collaboration with Terre des Hommes (Romania)	Three videos were produced which explain in detail the obligations of asylum applicants during the asylum procedure, the accommodation system in Romania and the forms of international protection that may be provided to asylum applicants.	Information material
OFPRA (France)	Welcome booklets for beneficiaries of protection were updated.681	Information material
SAR (Bulgaria)	SAR presented a child-friendly video, which was produced by UNICEF Bulgaria, to unaccompanied minors. The video addresses the social services which are available, and it is available in Arabic, Bulgarian, Dari, English and Pashto.682	Information material
Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights (PIC) (Slovenia)	PIC published information videos on complementary pathways, sponsorship schemes and family reunification.683	Information material
Asylum Office (Spain)	A new website was launched: https://proteccion-asilo.interior.gob.es/es/inicio/	Information material
Directorate of Immigration (Iceland)	A new web application was launched to provide information to asylum applicants. Frequently Answered Questions were made available and additional queries can be sent through a web form.684 In response to a high number of inquiries, the directorate published information on residence permits for family members in Palestine.685	Platform
National authority (Luxembourg)	A new website with information for asylum applicants was launched in February 2023 (it is only accessible from within the country). Information is available in several languages, with a read-aloud function. It contains information on first-time applicants, the Dublin procedure for those who have already applied elsewhere, reception, social benefits and returns.	Platform

Office for Foreigners (Poland)	An online portal was launched, which is available in several languages, to help beneficiaries of international protection to fill out residency applications.686	Platform
Ministry of Asylum and Migration (Greece)	The authority's website was enhanced to make content accessible to persons with disabilities, such as dyslexia and visual impairments687	Platform
Central Government Information Portal (Ireland)	A new website was launched with information on international protection, such as statistics, types of protection and procedures to follow.688	Platform
Swedish Migration Agency (Sweden)	As of October 2023, expanded services are available in more service offices. The offices are administrated by the state and provide information from several government agencies in one place. Staff assist applicants with digital services, completing the application correctly, printing and sending documents, and explaining processes.689 In addition, information services are now offered in more locations.690	Services
National authority (Cyprus)	An information kiosk was set up in Pournara where applicants can seek information on the status of their file and ask questions about the asylum procedure in general.	Services
Office for Foreigners (Poland), in collaboration with the IOM	The office continued to organise "Information Saturdays" on the regularisation of stay. Third-country nationals can receive information on the content of and process for regularisation, receive letters and summons, submit declarations and use the document personalisation service.691	Services
IOM Lithuania	A new one-stop information hub was opened for migrants and refugees to help with any challenges upon arrival. The services include legal advice, psychological counselling and career guidance.692	Services
Ministry of Asylum and Migration (Greece)	To immediately assist the families of the victims of the Pylos shipwreck, the ministry opened a hotline to provide information.	Services
National authority (Croatia)	When required, information is provided orally to illiterate applicants.	Services

Prevention and voluntary returns

Some countries focused efforts on deterring nationals from countries with low recognition rates from undertaking perilous journeys to the EU, only to have their application rejected. For example, with the aim of preventing irregular migration and the risks of exploitation, the Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration launched an information campaign in Guinea, raising awareness of the dangers of irregular migration, local employment opportunities and legal migration channels and informing locals that there was a low chance of receiving protection in Belgium. This was in response to an increase in asylum applications by Guineans in 2023, while 75% of the claims were rejected.693

Similarly, the authorities in Cyprus launched the "Let's talk truth about Cyprus" campaign in September 2023, aiming to discourage irregular migration from sub-Saharan countries, such as Cameroon, Congo and Nigeria. The campaign's objective is to debunk myths about Cyprus and

provide accurate information on the realities of asylum in the country.

Some national authorities raised awareness among rejected applicants about the possibility of a voluntary return to the country of origin. To this end, the UDI in Norway launched an application process for organisations to receive grants (NOK 1 million in total) to inform illegally-residing individuals who reside outside of the reception system about assisted returns.694 In Finland, a new Decree on Assistance for Voluntary Returns aims to encourage rejected asylum seekers to leave the country quickly and refrain from appealing the decision. 695

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