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The diverse profiles of a rising number of applicants for international protection and displaced persons from Ukraine generated new needs in the provision of information, both for the content and the media used. Despite efforts by national authorities to address the needs, international and civil society organisations in some countries reported that insufficient information, at times in a language not understood by the asylum seeker, hindered their taking informed decisions on processes that affect their future.696

Based on a study carried out in Luxembourg in summer 2023, a new UNHCR report recommended that more information should be made available to unaccompanied minors on the functioning of the asylum system, and the ONA's webpage directed at minors should be updated.697

The Greek NGO Equal Legal Aid reported that gaps in the provision of information were created when legal services were withdrawn from reception facilities in March 2023.698In addition, several NGOs contributed to the Ombudsperson's Strategic Inquiry in February 2023, stating that civil society organisations faced obstacles in providing information due to the closed nature of reception centres, poor Internet connectivity in the CCACs and the requirement for NGOs to be registered.699

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in Poland and the Association for Legal Intervention commented that concerns continued about the lack of information provided to migrants crossing the Polish-Belarusian border or asylum seekers in detention.700Polish authorities underlined that the possibility to apply for international protection is a basic information element during a stay in a centre, in addition to communicating information boards and brochures.

Forum réfugiés reported on cases of a lack of information in waiting zones at the border about requesting entry into France to submit an asylum application and the obstacles in contacting UNHCR or NGOs to seek information and assistance.701

In March 2023, the Human Rights Monitoring Institute, together with the Global Detention Project, submitted a report to the UNCAT on follow-up actions in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations which were provided in its fourth periodic review of Lithuania. Among various observations, the two organisations pointed out that migrants and asylum seekers were not adequately informed of their rights, both at the registration centre and when placed in a detention centre. The motives for the decision on an application are often

communicated only in Lithuanian and applicants were not aware of their right to state-guaranteed legal aid. For example, an information document in the Kybartai Centre states that migrants have the right to free legal aid, but they are not informed how to request this help. In some registration and reception centres, there was a lack of information on internal procedures and the status of the application, leading to uncertainty among applicants.[702]

To this end, the Lithuanian Ombudsperson called on the Migration Department to improve processes in the asylum procedure. The Ombudsperson noted that applicants had not received any information on the status of their application nor any timeframe for a decision to be rendered.[703]

In its Staff Working Document on improving the effectiveness of the Dublin III Regulation, the European Commission called for better information on transfers and the applicant's obligations to be provided to Dublin transferees in order to limit absconding. It emphasised providing individualised information and open communication channels throughout the procedure.[704]

Due to blocked emails and the illegibility of digital documents, temporary measures were implemented by the CGRS in Belgium from March to May 2023. During this time, Immigration Office staff assisted applicants during the initial interview by providing an inventory list of the documents to be submitted. By May 2023, the possibility to submit documents by email was reinstated.[705]

The UN Committee against Torture (CAT) provided recommendations to Slovenia after its fourth periodic report. It stressed that the authorities should inform those entering the country immediately about their right to seek asylum in a language that they can understand.[706]

The European Network of Migrant Women recommended that, while countries work on improving information provision, they should also ensure to provide information directly to female members of asylum-seeking families about their rights and freedoms within the EU. The organisation mentioned that frequently information is given to the male head of the household.[707] Furthermore, the organisation noted that many non-EU languages do not have a literal equivalent for some terms or concepts, so the quality of translations should be reviewed carefully. Poor translations of information material can exclude migrant women from being aware of their legal rights and health services that are available.

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- 703Office of the Seimas Ombudsmen | Lietuvos Seimo Kontrolieriai. (2023, March 13). *Pažyma dėl X skundo prieš migracijos departamentą prie lietuvos respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerijos [Certificate on the complaint of X against the migration department under the ministry of the interior of the republic of Lithuania]*.

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- 707European Network of Migrant Women. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2024.

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