Please cite as: EUAA, 'Section 3.10. Interpretation services' in *Asylum Report 2024*, Ιούνιος 2024.

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icon for interpretation services

Interpreters play a key role throughout the asylum procedure to ensure that the exchange of information between an applicant and the asylum authority is accurate and understood by both parties. They are pivotal in enabling applicants to tell their story in their own words. Thus, skilled interpreters can reflect the nuances of a dialect and address the specific needs of applicants with vulnerabilities. Interpretation helps to reduce misunderstandings and cultural biases, and promotes mutual understanding and respect.

The support of interpreters is important not only during the personal interview but also in providing information at the first stage of an asylum application and during daily life in reception. While the recast APD sets out the legislative provisions for interpretation, the recast RCD calls for information on reception conditions to be given in a language that the applicant understands or is reasonably supposed to understand. It does not, however, mention interpretation for other purposes. Therefore, in practice, the quality, availability, integrity and efficiency of interpretation services may differ country by country. In the absence of adequate services, the result of the final decision could be affected.

Some Member States have invested in establishing interpretation services with qualified and experienced interpreters covering several aspects of applicants' everyday life, while others may have limited resources or capacity to provide these services. This can lead to disparities in the quality of interpretation services, which can have a significant impact on the fairness and efficiency of the asylum process. In addition, the integrity and impartiality of the professionals are crucial for an accurate interpretation and a fair asylum procedure.

In 2023, national authorities, courts and tribunals, civil society organisations and service providers pursued efforts to enhance access to and the quality of interpretation in asylum procedures and the reception system. Across EU+ countries, increasing applications led to growing interpretation needs. In some countries, where the profiles of applicants remained similar, the impact on the provision of interpretation was limited; in others which received applicants with diverse profiles, additional challenges were noted. On the whole, shortages in certain languages, the unavailability of interpretation for certain services and heterogenous standards continued to impact applicants' procedural rights and access to services, such as healthcare.

Section 4.11.1 Interpretation legislative updates

3.10.1. Access to interpretation

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Section 4.11.2 Interpretation new initiatives

3.10.2. Quality of interpretation

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