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4.8.3 Types of detention facilities and capacity



In 2020, some EU+ countries increased the capacity of detention facilities, particularly in case of a mass influx of third-country nationals and return procedures. For example, Bulgaria increased the capacity of two pre-removal facilities (Busmantsi and Lyubimets) from 700 to 1,060 persons. The increase highlights the rise in using detention after the strict COVID-19 confinement measures were lifted following the first wave of the pandemic· 701 In total, 1,487 new persons were placed in pre-removal facilities between July and September 2020, marking a significant increase from the 193 persons who were held in a pre-removal facility during the previous 3-month period (April to June 2020). At of the end of September 2020, there was a total of 523 detainees, the majority being from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

Similarly, in Czechia, regional offices of the Return Unit in detention centres in Bělá–Jezová, Balková and Vyšní Lhoty were established during autumn 2020 to ensure the swift and effective voluntary return of rejected applicants under the “Strengthening of the Ministry of the Interior’s Capacities in Return” project, which is financed by AMIF.

Finland launched a project on 31 August 2020 to prepare legislative amendments on the possibility of a mass influx of migrants.702 The legislative proposal, which will be submitted in autumn 2021, aims to create a flexible framework for the immediate increase of detention capacity in the event of a mass influx of migrants, among other changes.

Temporary establishments were used in Slovenia to accommodate detainees. To this end, containers outside of the Centre for Foreigners were used. 703

Due to the migratory pressure in Greece as a result of the events at the Evros border, in March 2020 the Ministry of Migration and Asylum created temporary detention camps in Malakasa (Attica) and Kleidi (Serres) for newly-arrived asylum seekers, which were operated as open accommodation centres later that month. The facilities accommodate third-country nationals who entered the country illegally. 704 Through a joint pilot project, a separated closed detention area is planned for the new Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centre (MPRIC) in Lesvos.705

In Poland, one detention centre (Przemyśl) was transformed from a general detention centre (for single men, single women and families with children) to a male detention centre. The authorities noted that the pandemic situation showed that not many places were needed for families with

children, who were often provided with an alternative to detention.

The CPT noted that the Irish authorities need to create a designated centre for immigration detainees, specifically designed for that purpose.706 Pending the opening of such a centre, the CPT requested that immigration detainees should be allocated designated cells on a quiet enhanced wing at Cloverhill Prison. In its response to the CPT report, the Irish authorities stated that work was completed on a new Block F in Cloverhill Prison which was intended to be used to accommodate persons detained for immigration purposes and to ensure they can be housed separate from other remand prisoners 707 - this was postponed in 2020 because the wing was used as an isolation unit for suspected cases of COVID-19. While this will address the situation in the immediate term, work is also proceeding on the consideration of a longer-term sustainable and compliant solution. Similarly, in Cyprus, the increasing use of police stations for detention purposes raised concerns as the conditions and prolonged duration of the measures were inadequate.708

Denmark plans to increase the capacity of its detention facility (Ellebæk Detention Centre) to accommodate detained asylum seekers. As noted in the government's response to CPT, 709 the project was postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic. Similar initiatives were announced in Belgium to construct additional centres in Zandvliet (200 places) and Jumet (120 places) and to expand the 127bis and Merksplas centres, bringing total capacity to 1,066 places. 710

The Swedish Migration Agency reduced the number of detention places from 520 to just under 300 to reduce the occupancy rate in accordance with COVID-19-related requirements which were defined by the Swedish Public Health Agency. However, a new detention centre near Gothenburg was established and plans were underway for detention facilities in northern Sweden. Cyprus also reduced the capacity of the Menogeia detention centre to 128, in line with recommendations of independent national authorities and European agencies. 711

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[701] See in details: European Asylum Support Office. (2020, June 2). *COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems*. /sites/default/files/covid19-emergency-measures-asylum-reception-systems.pdf ; European Asylum Support Office. (2020, July 15). *COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems: Issue No 2* . /sites/default/files/publications/covid19-emergency-measures-asylum-reception-systems-issue-2.pdf; European Asylum Support Office. (7 December 2020). *COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems: Issue No 3*. /sites/default/files/publications/COVID-19%20emergency%20measures%20in%20asylum%20and%20reception%20systems-December-2020_new.pdf

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