

Please cite as: EUAA, 'Section 3.6. Reception of applicants for international protection' in *Asylum Report 2024*, Junio 2024.

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icon for reception of applicants for international protection

The recast Reception Conditions Directive (RCD) sets the standards for the conditions which must be met for the reception of an asylum applicant and aims to ensure that applicants' rights and obligations are harmonised across all Member States.

The reception of applicants for international protection encompasses rules on material reception conditions (such as housing, food and clothing which are provided in kind, through financial allowances or in vouchers – or a combination of these three – and 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 recast RCD describes the conditions and processes under which applicants need to be informed about reception benefits and duties (*see Section 3.8*). 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 the 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 4*). Furthermore, the directive lists the criteria, guarantees and conditions for the detention of applicants (*see Section 3.7*). The standards in the directive, however, can be imposed differently in national laws, and thus, variations exist in reception conditions across countries.

Challenges from previous years continued with the reception of applicants for international protection in 2023. Reception authorities in the majority of EU+ countries were still concerned with providing suitable accommodation for each applicant, as reports of homelessness, destitute or sub-standard living conditions, and the lack of support services were frequent by international organisations, national human rights institutions, ombudspersons and civil society organisations. The situation continued to negatively impact applicants with special needs and vulnerabilities, such as children, women, LGBTIQ applicants or applicants with disabilities, including both

physical and mental health issues (*see Section 4*). Courts continued to be called upon frequently to ensure access to material reception conditions and dignified conditions for all applicants.

The European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) requested a study on reception conditions across the EU, which summed up the EU's legal framework, implementation of the current legal framework, EU support provided to Member States, and showcased some of the good practices identified. The final report built on information from several editions of EUAA's Asylum Report, among other sources.[484]

In 2023, the European Commission sent letters of formal notice to Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Spain for having incorrectly transposed certain provisions of the recast RCD.[485]
Next to addressing urgent needs, national authorities in several countries continued their quest for structural solutions to ensure flexible and sustainable reception systems. This entailed changes, for example, to the institutional set-up, funding structure and cooperation agreements with other stakeholders. The environmental sustainability of facilities gained more importance as reception systems had to cope with increased demand and higher energy costs, as presented in a dedicated EUAA situational update.[486]

The pressure on the reception system also caused a revision in and stricter application of the rules on the entitlement to reception conditions. Legislative revisions generally clarified the end of reception. As in previous years, the outflow from reception centres often stagnated or even slowed down, as recognised beneficiaries of international protection faced challenges in finding their own accommodation in social housing or in the private market (*see Section 3.13.4.4*). Policy proposals aimed to facilitate this transition from reception to own accommodation and to allow faster access to the labour market. While challenges will likely remain, national authorities will continue to look for flexible and sustainable solutions in reception to efficiently adapt to the changing numbers and profiles of applicants and reception residents. Under its reinforced mandate, the EUAA will provide guidance and support, in dialogue with all stakeholders with relevant expertise, including civil society organisations.

icon for organisation in reception system

3.6.1. Organisation and functioning of the reception system

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Section 4.7.1 Entitlement mrc

3.6.2. Entitlement to material reception conditions

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icon for the applicants daily life in reception

3.6.3. Applicants’ daily life

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- 484European Parliament. (November 2023). *Reception Conditions Across the EU*.
- 485European Commission. (2023, January 26). *January Infringements package: Key decisions*.
- 486European Union Agency for Asylum. (2023, May 17). *Environmental sustainability of reception facilities for asylum seekers*. Situational Update No 18. https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/environmental-sustainability-reception-facilities-asylum-seekers

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