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7.7 Reception of applicants for international protection

The recast Reception Conditions Directive sets the standards for the conditions which must be met during the reception phase of an asylum procedure and aims to ensure that rights and obligations are harmonised across all Member States. The reception of applicants for international protection encompasses rules on material reception conditions, financial allowance, freedom of movement, access to health care, education for children, access to the labour market, language instruction and socio-cultural orientation.

The recast Reception Conditions Directive describes the conditions and processes under which applicants need to be informed about reception benefits and duties. The directive also outlines the circumstances when Member States may reduce or very 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 6)*. Furthermore, the directive lists the criteria, guarantees and conditions for the detention of applicants *(see Section 7.8)*. The standards in the directive, however, can be imposed differently in national laws and thus variations exist in reception conditions across countries.

As a result of significant changes in the organisation of national reception procedures in 2018, Member States in 2019 focused on implementing these changes without embarking on new, major initiatives.

Several countries fine-tuned their institutional framework to facilitate the implementation process, and others continued with efforts to increase the number of places available to accommodate an increase in the number of applications. A few countries descaled reception capacity. Some initiatives over the year reduced (or planned to reduce) material reception conditions for certain groups of applicants.

UNHCR and civil society organisations identified major gaps in several EU+ countries, especially in terms of access to housing, health care and education for children and youth.

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