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4.8.2 Temporary practical arrangements



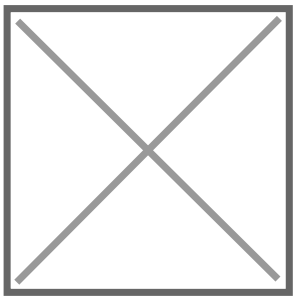
In general, health measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented in detention, and newly-arrived detainees needed to quarantine in designated areas, for example in Czechia, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland and Latvia. In addition, services such as meal distribution were adapted to the new requirements in Luxembourg and quarantine sectors were established in Hungary and Ireland.

In some EU+ countries, the asylum procedure for applicants in detention was temporarily discontinued, while in others, personal interviews/hearings continued through videoconference, for example in Belgium, [683] Czechia [684] (where UNHCR retained its full access) and Latvia.

The possibility to communicate with and visit detention facilities were often limited or sometimes even prohibited to all visitors and organisations due to health measures or quarantine restrictions, for example in Czechia (with the exception of legal and psychological services), [685] Cyprus, [686] Greece,[687] Malta [688] , Romania [689] and Sweden.[690] In contrast, Croatia reported that there were no restrictions imposed as measures focused mainly on prevention (health instructions were available in multiple languages at the detention centre, testing was done before entering the detention centre, etc.).

In 2020, detention centres in the majority of EU+ countries were decongested due to the suspension of removals and the subsequent release of third-country nationals, for example in Belgium,[691] Finland, Norway, [692] Spain, Slovenia [xliii] and Sweden. Nonetheless, some countries, like Cyprus,[693] Denmark [694] and Slovakia, retained detention. NGOs raised concerns over widespread detention, particularly in France [695] (where authorities emphasised that detention is only used when it is the only way to guarantee the implementation of a return and several procedural guarantees ensure the review of the measure) and Italy. [696] Similarly, they requested the Border Guard to use alternatives to detention or release third-country nationals in Poland, [697] France, [698] Slovakia [699] and Sweden. [700] In Switzerland, Asylex signalled restrictive practices in the cantons which were contrary to the Federal Supreme Court's ruling that detention pending deportation was unlawful since removal was not enforceable in the foreseeable future.

The CPT issued a "Statement of principles relating to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic" on 20 March 2020, underlining that any measures should not result in inhuman or degrading treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.



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