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4.9.1.1. New initiatives to improve access to information

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icon on new initiatives to improve provision of information

In 2021, most EU+ countries continued to develop new technology or upgrade existing ones to provide information readily to asylum seekers. As seen in Table 4.1, the initiatives included launching new websites so information can be accessed in one central place. Online multilingual information hubs and in-person information points were also created.
Staff who work directly with asylum applicants need to be aware of different methods of communicating information effectively. With this aim, national authorities in Portugal provided training to police officers and the personnel of the High Commission for Migration (ACM) to improve information provision for applicants for international protection and refugees.865

Table 4.1. Examples of methods or features to relay information on the asylum procedure, 2021

	Initiatives	Country
icon for new website	New website	Belgium (asyluminbelgium.be) Ireland (www.irishimmigration.ie) Italy866
icon for online information hub	Online information hub	Bulgaria (rumorfree.org) Iceland (https://newiniceland.is)
icon for online	New information point	Czechia, Poland (in reception centres and designated hotels) 867
icon for phone line	Improved communication by telephone	Cyprus: New phone numbers were launched 868
icon on information exchange	New features on existing information system	Lithuania (Lithuanian Migration Information System (MIGRIS) 869

For accessibility, information should also be made available in various languages. To ensure that asylum applicants and protected persons fully understand the asylum procedure, their rights and their obligations, a new website, asyluminbelgium.be, was launched in Belgium in nine

languages. Similarly, online counsellors in Iceland provided information in eight languages through a newly-introduced information hub, newiniceland.is, and telephone interpretation was available in additional languages through this hub *(see Section 4.11)*.

The French Council of State also stressed the importance of providing information in multiple languages. It annulled a Dublin transfer when an applicant was not informed in a language he understood of the consequences of refusing a PCR test.

The importance of information provision was highlighted in 2021 by the Italian Court of Cassation, which referred a case for a preliminary ruling to the CJEU *(see Section 2.4)*. Administrative courts found that there was a breach of the duty to provide information according to the Dublin III Regulation, Article 4 when an applicant to be transferred was not given adequate information or an information brochure. The transfer decision was deemed invalid and annulled.

Under the "Let's speak asylum" project, the EUAA has developed methodologies and practical tools to support the provision of information in the context of asylum and reception. The resources, which include webinars and training modules, are valuable to national administrations to reduce the duplication of efforts at the EU level and to harmonise practices.

Civil society organisations across EU+ countries expressed concerns about the quality and accessibility of information on the asylum procedure.870 In Greece, the Border Violence Monitoring Network and Mobile Info Teams reported that only a small share of applicants were informed about how to access the asylum procedure and the possibility of remote pre-registration.871 Additionally, Equal Rights Beyond Borders in Greece reported on the limited access to information for detained asylum seekers.872

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee noted that information on the asylum procedure was hard to find online and was available only in English and Hungarian.873 To tackle similar issues, the Aditus Foundation in Malta called for information on the asylum procedure to be provided in several languages.874

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- 868Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου. (2021). Asylum Service new contact numbers. http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/asylumservice.nsf/All/F8F064A148305764C225866B0029CF3C
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