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4.14.4.7 Housing



international protection continued to face numerous challenges in transitioning from reception to mainstream accommodation, and many of them become overstayers within the reception system *(see Section 4.7)* or risked homelessness.

The Greek HELIOS programme was set up to support beneficiaries of international protection with their transition from reception to mainstream housing. However, similar to previous years, several civil society organisations noted the limits of the programme. One major obstacle is the requirement that beneficiaries must have a Greek bank account to benefit from the programme, but it is typically difficult to gather all the necessary documents to open the account and no support is given during the reception phase for this administrative process. Beneficiaries who fail to leave their reception place within the new, shorter time limit because they have no place to go (see Section 4.7) are excluded from the programme, increasing further their risk of homelessness. The deadline to enrol in HELIOS was also assessed to be very short. The programme itself is scheduled for shorter programme phases, and Greece still lacks a long-term sustainable strategy to address housing issues for beneficiaries of international protection.[1178]

Beneficiaries continued to face significant administrative hurdles to rent an accommodation in Bulgaria. Due to a legislative loophole, they are required to provide valid identification to sign a rental contract, but domicile is needed to obtain an identification card. This situation gave rise to a court case in the Netherlands, where the court assessed that beneficiaries of international protection could not access their rights due to this situation.

Civil society organisations reported from Croatia that at least 80 refugee families were on the verge of homelessness, as many of them had lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Eight civil society organisations applied for an extension of subsidised accommodation for these families, and the relevant ministry called for an urgent meeting to launch the necessary legislative process. However, no further steps were taken by the end of 2020.[1179] Securing accommodation for beneficiaries of international protection became more difficult following the earthquakes that shattered the country, leaving many people in urgent need of housing.[1180] The Ministry of the Interior considered that extending the entitlement to free housing beyond 2 years would put these persons in a more privileged position compared to other third-country nationals residing in the country and to Croatian citizens, and it would negatively impact their process towards independence. Beneficiaries of international protection can access the social welfare system in the same manner as Croatian citizens.

The Irish Refugee Council observed delays in accessing social housing and the accommodation

allowance as the work of local authorities and administrative bodies was slowed down due to the pandemic. However, the organisation also noted that there was a decreased demand for rentals as a side effect of COVID-19 restrictions and more housing was available for beneficiaries of international protection.[1181]

The French “National plan for the reception of asylum applicants and the integration of refugees” foresees the creation of an additional 204 places to accommodate beneficiaries of international protection in the Ile-de-France region and foresees further measures to facilitate the transition from reception to private accommodation.[1182] Many recognised beneficiaries overstay in reception centres or leave the system with no accommodation, joining eventually one of the informal camps. According to the estimates of Forum réfugiés–Cosi, around 15%-20% of camp inhabitants are beneficiaries of international protection.[1183]

Many beneficiaries in Malta had difficulties in paying rent and were at risk of being evicted throughout 2020. The Ministry of Social Accommodation and civil society organisations started a discussion to find solutions to this issue, and the authorities provided an increased amount of housing allowance to those in need.[1184] Church and civil society organisations stepped in to provide temporary accommodation for beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary.[1185]

The State Secretary for Justice and Security announced that the guest arrangement *(logeerregeling)*[1186] for beneficiaries of international protection will continue and is planned to be expanded.[1187] Under this arrangement, beneficiaries may volunteer to be placed with a host family or friends, while they are waiting for definitive housing arrangements. The civil society organisation, Takecarenbnb, is tasked with the matching of beneficiaries and host families. The evaluation from 2019 found that beneficiaries in this programme learned the language and built up a social network quicker, while it also liberated much needed reception places within the reception system.[1188]

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism provided an overview of housing support for beneficiaries of international protection in Czechia and Slovakia.[1189]

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