Please cite as: EUAA, '4.7.3.3. Use of pre-paid cards for material reception conditions in cash' in *Asylum Report 2023*, Maggio 2023.

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icon for use of pre-paid cards

Cash benefits have increasingly been paid to rechargeable cards in recent years and this continued in 2022. Some delays and issues persisted due to the high number of applications and changes in the provider of the card.

The pilot project “Cash for Food” continued in Luxembourg: the amount of food aid is paid directly to the applicant’s bank account. The project entered its second phase in 2022 by adding the residents of 12 reception facilities to the users. A second evaluation was launched with this new group of users, which concluded that applicants appreciated the increased flexibility and independence, allowing them to buy food of their choice in the supermarket of their choice. The project is foreseen to be expanded with the residents of five more reception facilities in 2023 and also applies to applicants living in private households.

Due to the large number and rapid arrival of persons in need of temporary protection and the opening of several new reception centres at the same time, the provision of cash benefits was slightly delayed in a few instances in Finland. Reception centres helped with supermarket vouchers or food packages when the payment of cash allowance was not immediate.661 Earlier in 2022, the Finnish Immigration Service explored ways of ensuring that all funds were transferred to an applicant’s new prepaid card. The contract with the previous card provider was discontinued in 2019, and after a transition period, remaining funds should have been transferred to the new cards. However, for approximately EUR 60,000 altogether, mainly outstanding wages, this had not happened.662

In Romania, a new Government Decision established the legal basis for paying benefits in cash to a card for asylum applicants.663 As a result of the arrival of persons in need of temporary protection, the amount paid in cash was also increased.664

The Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sports launched a Youth Cultural Bonus voucher as a virtual prepaid card for mobile phones for asylum applicants. It is also valid for cultural activities and products.665

The Tribunal of Rome ordered the Italian Post to immediately activate the pre-paid card of an applicant who received her COVID-19 financial support on the card, but the bank refused to

activate the card as it did not recognise her residence permit based on her application for international protection as an identity document. The tribunal underlined that the purpose of this payment was to guarantee the needs of those most affected by the pandemic.

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