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4.3 Special procedures

During the examination of applications for international protection at first instance, Member States under certain conditions can use special procedures – such as accelerated procedures, border procedures or prioritised procedures – while adhering to the basic principles and guarantees set out in EU law. Various types of border procedures were introduced or extended in 2020, typically focusing on swift processing. At times, concerns were raised in some Member States about the condition of accommodation at the border, resorting to detention and protecting the guarantees for applicants with special needs.

EU+ countries focused on periodically reviewing their lists of safe countries of origin, resulting in several changes to these lists in 2020. The lists serve as background information on asylum applications which are directed to the accelerated procedure, and a trend noted across EU+ countries in 2020 was the prioritisation of cases under the accelerated procedure during the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through legislative and policy changes, many EU+ countries also defined the criteria for repeated or subsequent applications for international protection to prevent misuse of the asylum system by filing repeated applications with no merit. Overall, in 2020 EU+ countries received about 56,000 repeated applications, representing a 19% decrease in absolute numbers compared to 2019 but a 2 percentage point increase in the share of repeated applications within the total number of applications.

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