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Strategic approaches related to the organisation of reception systems were adapted, for example in Cyprus, Germany, Finland, Spain and Sweden. In Cyprus, work was underway on an integrated national reception strategy. In Spain, the reform of the reception system continued throughout 2021. Only recognised beneficiaries of international protection can be referred to the second phase of the national reception system as of 2021.676 The State Secretary for Migration announced a 17% increase in the budget for migration for 2022,677 covering mainly the upgrade of the reception system, in line with the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan that was adopted in June 2021.678 According to this plan, one in every three reception places will be part of the state reception network by 2024. It was one in every ten places in 2019.679 Civil society organisations, like CEAR,680 Fundación Cepaim 681 and ECRE,682 provided comments on the new and planned reform measures and put forward recommendations aiming to ensure that applicants' reception rights are respected and the new system is fully compliant with CEAS.

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees published an evaluation of 14 AnkER facilities and reception facilities with similar functions in six federal states.683 The evaluation report concluded that the centres allowed for a more rapid identification of applicants and their countries of origin, and the average duration of asylum procedures in these facilities was slightly shorter, 77 days compared to 82 days in other facilities. However, the rate of Dublin transfers was lower and failed returns were higher than in other locations, although the differences were decreasing over time.684 The evaluation found that the overall experience with these centres was positive, but the coalition agreement of the new German government will no longer use the AnkER concept, even though similar facilities for initial reception remain.685

In France, a National Reception Plan for asylum seekers and refugees set out the roadmap for 2021-2023, taking into account the situation of asylum applicants in France and the major measures put in place by the Asylum Law of September 2018. The National Reception Plan was prepared in consultation with everyone involved in asylum policy
(e.g. state services, institutional partners and associations). The plan focuses on two areas:

better accommodation and better support for asylum seekers and refugees. The main objectives are to increase the share of asylum seekers who are accommodated in the national reception system; place asylum seekers in regions at an earlier stage; identify vulnerabilities and direct vulnerable asylum seekers to appropriate facilities; prepare and facilitate Dublin transfers to another Member State; and ensure that refugees are rapidly referred to the appropriate accommodation and rejected asylum seekers to the return preparation centre without being transferred to mainstream accommodation.

In Finland, legislative work continued to prepare for an eventual mass influx of migrants, and several amendments were introduced to the Reception Act. The Finnish Immigration Service must draw up a contingency plan for large-scale arrivals and has a central role in organising reception and give instructions to other actors in this scenario.686 In order to simplify workflows, the Finnish Immigration Service launched the PLANE project with AMIF funding, aiming to reform the electronic documentation of applicant files in reception centres, detention units *(see Section 4.9)* and the system providing assistance to victims of human trafficking *(see Section 5)*.687

Similarly, the online web application, Match-IT, which Fedasil launched in 2015 for the central management of the reception network in Belgium, has been gradually extended and improved over the years. In April 2021, a new feature was rolled out to document social aspects of an applicant. In addition, a new IT system was launched in the arrival centre in Brussels to document residents in accommodation.

The Swedish government established an inquiry on an orderly initial reception of asylum seekers. The inquiry is tasked to propose measures to ensure that asylum seekers choose to live in the Swedish Migration Agency's accommodation throughout the asylum period, propose how a statutory obligation to participate in social introduction can be formulated, consider the scope of persons covered under the Law on Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others, and review the scope of benefits covered by this act *(see Section 4.7.1.4)*.

As in previous years, several changes were implemented in the organisation of the reception system in Greece throughout 2021. The Ministry of Migration and Asylum took over the cash assistance component of the ESTIA programme from UNHCR in October 2021,688 while it had already managed the accommodation part since 2020.689 This transition entailed policy changes in entitlements, while civil society organisations observed delays in the provision of cash assistance *(see Section 4.7.1.4)*. On the islands and in Fylakio (at the border), Law No 4825/2021 foresees that the RIS can create three reception types: Reception and Identification Centres (RICs/K.Y.T.), Controlled Structures for the Temporary Accommodation of Asylum Seekers, and Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCAC/ΚΕΔ). RICs and CCACs were established and operated on the islands in 2021 and the Reception and Identification Service took several measures to strengthen safeguards and improve conditions within these facilities, for example, through a closer monitoring of contractors. CCACs were operating on the mainland in different locations, and it was planned that from November 2021, facility management (maintenance, technical works, repairs, cleaning and security) is managed by private companies.690

As in recent years, the living conditions in reception centres in Greece, particularly on the islands and at the border, continued to be the subject of serious concerns by various stakeholders. Although important improvements were made in CCACs to comply with EU standards on living space and reception conditions within the containers and hygiene conditions, reservations remained related to the site design, set-up and location of the centres. The European Committee of Social Rights found, for example, that Greece failed to provide adequate accommodation to applicant children on the islands and sufficient long-term accommodation for them on the mainland *(see Section 5)*.

The Greek Administrative Court granted pecuniary damages to an Egyptian and Syrian applicant who lost relatives in the fires which destroyed the Moria reception camp in September 2020.691 The appearance of the CCAC in Vathy, Samos – including double barbed-wire fences, watchtowers and the deployment of security personnel in uniform – raised concerns about isolating residents of the camp.692

Several adjustments were made in Italy as well. For example, the Ministry of the Interior announced the plan to build a transit centre for migrants at the border with France, to allow police forces to identify people and verify their legal status.693 The ministry also signed a memorandum of understanding with civil society organisations (Rete per la Parità, Le Contemporanee, the National Council of Italian Women and the Italian division of Soroptimist International) to support the reception and integration of Afghan evacuees.694 Ships continued to be used as quarantine facilities throughout 2021, raising further concerns, for example from the National Authority for the Rights of Persons Deprived of their Liberty695 and several civil society organisations.696

In Luxembourg, the new first-reception centre started its operations at the beginning 2021,697 and staff optimised processes and information flows. Particular focus was given to promote voluntary returns for applicants with little chances of being recognised to avoid forced returns. Reception structures for applicants in the Dublin procedure were established in the initial reception system. In addition, a complete IT overhaul has been started and was under implementation in the country's reception system.

Continuing with its reform of the reception system, the Norwegian UDI announced 12 framework agreements in its five regions. The agreements require contractors to be able to activate up to 5,000 places per region to address fluctuations in capacity needs.

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