

4.11.2. Digitalising interpretation services

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EU+ countries continued to invest in the digitalisation of interpretation services throughout the year. Some countries developed or expanded systems, while others resorted more to using existing videoconferencing facilities.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany uses video hubs to provide remote interpretation. The interpreters are connected through video transmission to personal interviews (or other steps in the asylum procedure) which are carried out in requesting branch offices. Transmission is provided exclusively from the Federal Office's premises through a secure internal network.

Finland increased the number of interpretation services provided by video, while Slovenia purchased new equipment in order to launch a remote interpretation system in 2022. The system will facilitate interpretation into rare languages when interpreters are based outside of the country.

In Bulgaria, remote interpretation during registration and eligibility interviews was used in reception centres located outside of the capital, where interpreters are harder to find and employ. According to civil society organisations, however, this creates additional difficulties for the applicant as video communication is often disrupted or unclear due to connection issues.⁹⁶⁶ Similarly, issues with quality were reported during simultaneous telephone interpretation in border procedures in France,⁹⁶⁷ and in Sweden remote interpretation proved to be challenging in some cases as well. ⁹⁶⁸

To address concerns about the inefficiency of the Skype appointment system and issues accessing the platform due to the limited capacity and availability of interpretation, the Greek Asylum Service made instructions available in 16 languages as of October 2021.⁹⁶⁹ In addition, to cope with COVID-19 restrictions, METAdrasi developed a new videoconference system which covers approximately one-quarter of translation needs within the asylum procedure.⁹⁷⁰

Information material related to COVID-19 and vaccinations was translated into different languages. For example, to reach the refugee community in Cyprus, UNHCR translated [COVID-19-related information](#) into 12 languages and disseminated it through different channels,⁹⁷¹ while in Czechia, a [comprehensive information material](#) with relevant information on labour arrangements and rights and opportunities in accessing financial support related to COVID-19 was translated into Arabic, English and Russian and shared

through relevant NGO websites, newsletters as well as hard copies distributed in refugee facilities across the country.⁹⁷²

Bulgaria launched an awareness-raising campaign on vaccinations. SAR's social experts provided information material prepared by the Bulgarian Red Cross and translated it into the main languages of applicants.⁹⁷³ Moreover a child-friendly storybook was developed by UNHCR and translated into several languages, providing child friendly information on COVID-19 (see [Section 4.9](#)).⁹⁷⁴

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⁹⁶⁶ European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (January 2022). Digitalisation of asylum procedures: risks and benefits. <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Digitalisation-of-asylum-procedures.pdf>

⁹⁶⁷ European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (January 2022). Digitalisation of asylum procedures: risks and benefits. <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Digitalisation-of-asylum-procedures.pdf>

⁹⁶⁸ European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (January 2022). Digitalisation of asylum procedures: risks and benefits. <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Digitalisation-of-asylum-procedures.pdf>

⁹⁶⁹ European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (January 2022). Digitalisation of asylum procedures: risks and benefits. <https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Digitalisation-of-asylum-procedures.pdf>

⁹⁷⁰ METAdrasi - Action for Migration and Development | ????????? – ????? ??? ?? ?????????????? ??? ??? ??????????. (2021, November 15). 2020 Annual Report: 1st of January 2020 – 31st of December 2020. (According to the law 4308/2014). https://metadrasi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Annual-report-2020_EN.pdf

⁹⁷¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (September 2021). Integration Policy Brief I: Leave no one behind: promoting effective access of refugees in social protection systems in post-pandemic Europe. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88656>

⁹⁷² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (September 2021). Integration Policy Brief I: Leave no one behind: promoting effective access of refugees in social protection systems in post-pandemic Europe. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88656>

⁹⁷³ European Migration Network. (September 2021). EMN Bulletin. 35th edition. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-09/00_eu_emn_35th_bulletin_final_en.pdf

⁹⁷⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, & United Nations Children's Emergency Fund. (2021, July 9). Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe: Accompanied, Unaccompanied and Separated. Overview of Trends January to December 2020. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/87693>