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4.1.2.3. Online appointment systems for the registration of applications for international protection

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icon showing a person online in a computer screen

Circular 5049/2022 introduced a new registration procedure for first-time applicants in Greece. The Skype service was discontinued, and instead applicants could make an appointment through an online platform either in Thessaloniki or Attica. Applicants undergo a reception and identification procedure in a Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) or a Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC), and they are required to stay in the facility throughout this process, for a maximum of 25 days.308 Civil society organisations observed that this period was often longer in practice as a 5-day quarantine period applied *(see Section 4.7)* and noted that this practice was de facto detention *(see Section 4.8)*.309 Civil society organisations also observed several barriers in accessing the asylum procedure for subsequent applicants or for applicants coming from a safe third country *(see Sections 2 and 4.3)*.310,311

The Spanish Jesuit Refugee Service,312 Convive-Fundación Cepaim313 and CEAR314 in Spain observed issues in accessing the asylum procedure since the establishment of an online appointment system for the registration of applications. Appointments were often available only after several weeks, and many applicants had difficulties in navigating the website, which was available only in Spanish.315 SOS Racism reported on a technical failure which resulted in appointment requests getting lost.316 UNHCR reiterated its concern about accessing the asylum procedure.317 The Spanish Ombudsperson underlined the impact these delays had on associated rights for applicants, such as access to housing, medical care, psychosocial support and other social benefits.318

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