Please cite as: EUAA, '4.8.3. Detention conditions' in *Asylum Report 2023*, May 2023.

4.8.3. Detention conditions

4.8.3. Detention conditions

icon presenting conditions in detention facilities

Access to rights and conditions in detention facilities were at the centre of criticism by NGOs and independent monitoring mechanisms. In many countries, deficiencies in accessing rights were brought to the forefront. Overall, civil society organisations highlighted the importance of free legal representation for all persons who are detained,731 especially in light of frequent errors in detention orders and the high number of detention cases found to be unlawful by courts.732 In addition, difficulties were reported for detained asylum seekers to receive visits from family members or NGOs, which impeded the effective provision of information on the asylum process.733,734

Concerns were raised about access to information or legal aid for detained asylum seekers in Croatia (for materials distributed in reception centres under the “Legal advice in the process of granting international protection”, *see Section 4.10.4*),735 Greece,736 Italy (Milan),737 Lithuania738 and Poland.739 The Ministry of the Interior in Croatia described the applicable legislation, noting that according to the law, when an applicant’s freedom of movement is restricted, the applicant is informed about the right to legal aid and presented with a list of lawyers to choose the representative. The law also requires a court to evaluate the legality of the restriction.

Other concerns were voiced about the psychological health of detained applicants in Lithuania740 and Italy (Milan),741 access to documentation in Malta,742 and overcrowded conditions and practices in general in Czechia,743 Denmark,744 Greece,745 Lithuania,746 Poland,747 Sweden748 and Switzerland.749

In an effort to improve conditions, the Detention Services in Malta launched a large-scale refurbishing and restructuring process of all detention facilities in Malta in 2020. This involves the creation of new detention facilities (for example, a new detention compound in the Safi Detention Centre was built in 2020, the construction of a new female compound started in 2023), the improvement of detention conditions (refurbishment of several sections, recruitment of a welfare officer in 2020, the creation of a specialised medical section in 2021 operating from the Detention Service and increased accountability (setting up a new control room and refurbished areas equipped with CCTV cameras).

In Italy, an inspection report of the Milan Centre for Stay and Repatriation (CPR) was released by Senators together with the No CPR Network.750 It confirmed that the conditions inside the centre worsened since the first visit in 2021. The report underlined serious violations of resorting to detention and the inhuman and degrading sanitary conditions. Similar issues were noted in other CPR centres, for example in Turin, for which civil society organisations reported on protecting the rights of prisoners, with an emphasis on health, the right to defence and the freedom of correspondence.751

For conditions at the borders, ASGI noted shortcomings in the Lampedusa hotspot, including detention, isolation, restrictions on access to information and the right to defence, overcrowding, degrading sanitary conditions and insufficient health care.752 These findings were also reflected in the annual report of the Ombudsperson for the Rights of Detained Persons to the Parliament for the situation on the quarantine vessels, the Centre for Stay and Repatriation (CPR) and hotspots, which violate the human rights of detained persons.753

In Poland, the profiles of applicants residing in certain detention centres have changed over time, with the Commissioner for Human Rights expressing the opinion that conditions in detention centres were not always adapted to the changed profiles. Nevertheless, after a visit conducted in July 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants observed that efforts had been made by Polish Border Guards in improving the conditions of stay for asylum seekers in closed facilities.754

Within their reviews, the courts set minimum standards for detention conditions and indicated measures to the authorities. In this regard, the ECtHR ordered interim measures under Rule 39 of the Rules of the Court to the government of Malta, requesting the authorities "to ensure that the applicants' conditions are compatible with Article 3 of the Convention and with their status as unaccompanied minors". In another case concerning Hungary, the ECtHR held that the use of handcuffs and a leash on an asylum applicant amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment.

The obligation of Croatian authorities to protect the life of a Moroccan applicant held at a police station was brought before the ECtHR. The court found a violation of Article 2 of the European Convention under both substantive and procedural aspects, due to the failure to protect the applicant when a fire had broken out, leading to his severe injury and death of other persons, and due to the lack of an effective investigation of the incident. The Croatian Ministry of the Interior underlined that the case was not yet final and there was a possibility of filing a legal remedy against the judgment.

- 731AIDA Malta. (2023). Country Report: Malta - 2022 Update. Edited by ECRE. Written by aditus foundation. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AIDA-MT_2022-Update.pdf
- 732AIDA Germany. (2023). Country Report: Germany - 2022 Update. Edited by ECRE. Written by Marlene Stiller and Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AIDA-DE_2022update.pdf
- 733AIDA Malta. (2023). Country Report: Malta - 2022 Update. Edited by ECRE. Written by aditus foundation. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AIDA-MT_2022-Update.pdf

- 734AIDA Slovenia. (2023). Country Report: Slovenia - 2022 Update. Edited by ECRE. Written by PIC. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/AIDA-SI_2022-Update.pdf
- 735Centre for Peace Studies | Centar za mirovne studije. (2022, September 22). Recommendations of the Centre for Peace Studies and the Human Rights House Zagreb for the execution of the judgment of M.H. and Others against Croatia. https://www.cms.hr/en/pravna-pomoc-azil-i-statusna-pitanja/preporuke-centra-za-mirovne-studije-i-kuce-ljudskih-prava-za-izvrsenje-presude-m-h-i-drugi-protiv-hrvatske
- 736Greek Council for Refugees | Ελληνικό Συμβούλιο για τους Πρόσφυγες. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/greek_council_for_refugees.pdf
- 737Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights | Coalizione Italiana Libertà e i Diritti civili. (2022, August 25). Le pessime condizioni del CPR di Milano a un anno dalla prima ispezione [The poor conditions of the CPR of Milan one year after the first inspection]. https://cild.eu/blog/2022/08/25/le-pessime-condizioni-del-cpr-di-milano-a-un-anno-dalla-prima-ispezione/
- 738Lithuanian Red Cross Society. (2022). Stebėsenos ataskaitos apie užsieniečių prieigos prie prieglobsčio procedūrų ir valstybės garantuojamos teisinės pagalbos apgyvendinimo centruose santrauka [Summary of the monitoring report on asylum procedures for foreigners and state-guaranteed legal aid in accommodation centres]. https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/LT-SANTRAUKA-Prieiga-prie-proceduru-ir-VGTP.pdf
- 739Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights | Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/helsinki_foundation_for_human_rights.pdf
- 740Doctors without Borders | Médecins Sans Frontières. (2022, August 30). Discriminatory and cruel migration practices compound suffering in Lithuania. https://www.msf.org/discriminatory-and-cruel-migration-practices-compound-suffering-lithuania
- 741Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights | Coalizione Italiana Libertà e i Diritti civili. (2022, August 25). Le pessime condizioni del CPR di Milano a un anno dalla prima ispezione [The poor conditions of the CPR of Milan one year after the first inspection]. https://cild.eu/blog/2022/08/25/le-pessime-condizioni-del-cpr-di-milano-a-un-anno-dalla-prima-ispezione/
- 742aditus foundation. (2022, August 9). Report on the Obstacles in Accessing Proper and Correction Documentation. https://aditus.org.mt/report-obstacles-accessing-documentation/#.YvTeoHZByp6
- 743Organization for Aid to Refugees | Organizace pro Promoc Uprchlíkům. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/organization_for_aid_to_refugees_opu.pdf
- 744Danish Refugee Council. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/drc_danish_refugee_council.pdf
- 745Greek Council for Refugees | Ελληνικό Συμβούλιο για τους Πρόσφυγες. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/greek_council_for_refugees.pdf

- 746Lithuanian Red Cross Society. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/lithuanian_red_cross_society.pdf
- 747Rule of Law Institute Foundation | Fundacja Instytut na rzecz Państwa Prawa. (2022). Migrants have the right to have rights – detencja cudzoziemców [Migrants have the right to have rights — detention of foreigners]. https://panstwoprawa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Raport-II-detencja.pdf
- 748Council of Europe, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. (2021, September 9). Report to the Swedish Government on the visit to Sweden carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 18 to 29 January 2021. CPT/Inf (2021) 20. https://rm.coe.int/1680a3c256
- 749Swiss Refugee Council | Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe | Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2023. https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/swiss_refugee_council.pdf
- 750Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights | Coalizione Italiana Libertà e i Diritti civili. (2022, August 25). Le pessime condizioni del CPR di Milano a un anno dalla prima ispezione [The poor conditions of the CPR of Milan one year after the first inspection]. https://cild.eu/blog/2022/08/25/le-pessime-condizioni-del-cpr-di-milano-a-un-anno-dalla-prima-ispezione/
- 751Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights | Coalizione Italiana Libertà e i Diritti civili. (2022, July 3). Una delegazione della Cild è entrata nel CPR Brunelleschi di Torino [A delegation from CILD visited the CPR Brunelleschi in Turin]. https://cild.eu/blog/2022/07/03/una-delegazione-della-cild-e-entrata-nel-cpr-brunelleschi-di-torino/
- 752Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration | Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione. (August 2022). Report sulla visita al Centro hotspot di Lampedusa [Report on the visit to the hotspot Lampedusa]. https://www.asgi.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Report-Lampedusa-2022.pdf
- 753National ombudsman for the rights of persons deprived of personal liberty | Garante Nazionale dei diritti delle persone private della libertà personale. (June 2022). Relazione al Parlamento 2022 [Report to the Parliament 2022]. https://www.garantenazionaleprivatiliberta.it/gnpl/resources/cms/documents/c8c57989b3cd40a71 See also: Melting Pot Europa. (2022, May 20). CPR e navi quarantena. A quando la chiusura definitiva? [CPR and quarantine vessels. When is the final closure?]. https://www.meltingpot.org/2022/05/cpr-e-navi-quarantena-a-quando-la-chiusura-definitiva/
- 754AIDA Poland. (2023). Country Report: Poland - 2022 Update. Edited by ECRE. Written by Karolina Rusiłowicz in collaboration with Ewa Ostaszewska-Żuk and Maja Łysienia with the support of Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/AIDA-PL_2022-Update.pdf

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu