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In December 2023, the European Parliament and the European Council reached political agreement on the new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act, as put forth by the European Commission.[222] The aim is to regulate AI systems which are used in migration, asylum and border control management and to support competent authorities in accurate, non-discriminatory and transparent decisions. AI systems should respect fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination and the protection of personal data and private life, and comply with the recast QD and other EU legislation. The act provides a classification of high-risk AI systems, such as ones used in the context of migration and asylum, and defines the requirements for their use.

At the country level, digitalisation initiatives continued throughout 2023 to enhance the efficiency and quality of asylum processes. For example, in Greece, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum upgraded the Greek Asylum Service's unified information system for reception and asylum to "Alkyoni II" in May 2023. With the upgrade, several services for asylum seekers and refugees are provided in multilingual and digital formats, such as registering applications, booking interviews and submitting documents. Users can also renew the International Protection Applicant's Card and the Uniform Format Residence Permit, in addition to requesting travel documents.[223] Refugee Support Aegean expressed concern when technical glitches resulted in the suspension of services from May-August 2023, exposing some applicants to the risk of detention and deportation.[224]

A preliminary study on the reform of the Aliens Act in Finland concluded that the immigration and asylum systems need to be further digitalised to better serve clients and uphold fundamental and human rights.[225] The most urgent reform by the Ministry of the Interior is to simplify and streamline the residence permit system. The initiative forms part of a pilot project funded by the European Commission to formalise an EU regulation on a digitalised EU residence permit card, with a 2D barcode including biometric data.[226] In addition, the Ministry of the Interior granted EUR 11.4 million of funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to digital innovation projects to improve the capacity and efficiency of the asylum procedure.[227]

The first project is a study carried out by the Finnish Immigration Service on the use of a transcription tool to improve the quality and efficacy of asylum interviews. Minutes of the interview would be produced through speech-to-text, allowing to clarify matters during the

interview and shortening the duration of the procedure. A second project on Predictive Country Information, “ENNACOI”, aims to create a new working process in the Country Information Service which produces COI. The system will anticipate and prepare for fluctuations in the number of asylum applicants.

The Swedish Migration Agency noted that administrative processes and the risk of incorrect payments were reduced with the introduction of the digitalised LMA card, which certifies that an asylum seeker has the right to stay in the country and is entitled to healthcare and medicine. The digital card was introduced in 2022 and resulted in savings of approximately SEK 6.5 million in 2022.228

Box 3. Digitalisation of appeals

The digitalisation of appeals in international protection cases continued throughout 2023 through remote hearings, while shortcomings were identified by civil society organisations. In Norway, a legislative proposal was made in March 2023 for the possibility to hold remote hearings at the UNE.229In April 2024, NOAS commented on this proposal, noting that it agrees with the ministry that decisive factors to hold remote meetings are that the applicant’s legal certainty is safeguarded and the person consents to participate using teleconferencing technology.230

Displaced persons from Ukraine

The Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) in Germany, in partnership with BAMF, the company Wunderflats and a non-profit social enterprise ProjectTogether, developed a housing mediation platform (‘Helfende Wände’) for displaced persons from Ukraine, which is available in German, English and Ukrainian. To ease the burden on municipalities, the platform provides offers of private housing to beneficiaries of temporary protection. It complements the wide-ranging information for displaced persons from Ukraine provided by the central portal of the Federal government through BAMF, “Germany4Ukraine.231

The Migration Department of the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior began to issue digital residence permits to beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine. The digital temporary residence permit, which includes biometric data, is issued in a PDF format in English and Lithuanian through the Lithuanian Migration Information System (MIGRIS). This has resulted in savings in cost, time and staff availability, in addition to accelerating the extension of the permits. Limitations reported by the Migration Department were linked to technical issues, the lack of digital literacy, and interoperability and standardisation of a digital document across Member States.232

- 222European Council | Council of the European Union. (9 December 2023). *Artificial Intelligence Act: Council and Parliament strike a deal on the first rules for AI in the world.*
- 223Greek Government | ΕλληνικΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ (2022). *Integrated asylum management system – ALKIONI II*.

- 224Refugee Support Aegean (2023, March 2023). *The upgrade of the "Alkyoni" system of the Asylum Service leaves processes and people in the air.* https://rsaegean.org/en/alkyoni/

  Greek Council for Refugees | Ελληνικό Συμβούλιο για τους Πρόσφυγες. (2023). Input to the Asylum Report 2024.
- 225Ministry of the Interior | Sisäministeriö. (2023, April 4). *Esiselvitys suosittaa ulkomaalaislain kokonaisvaltaista uudistusta[The preliminary study recommends a comprehensive reform of the Aliens Act procedure].*

- 226European Migration Network (2023, August 28). *Ad Hoc Query on digitalisation of identity documents and residence permits issued to third country nationals* . https://www.emnbelgium.be/publication/ad-hoc-query-digitalisation-identity-documents-and-residence-permits-issued-third
- 227Ministry of the Interior | Sisäministeriö. (2023, September 27). *EU-finansiering till ett belopp av cirka 4,3 miljoner euro för främjande av det gemensamma europeiska asylsystemet och laglig invandring[EU funding amounting to approximately €4.3 million for the promotion of the Common European Asylum System and legal immigration].*

- 228Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) | Migrationsverket. (2023, March 20). *Digitala LMA-kort sparar miljoner* [Digital LMA cards save millions].

- 229Norwegian Government | Reggeringen. (2023, March 24). *Prop. 67 L (2022–2023) Changes to the Immigration Act (remote meetings in the Immigration Board, etc.)*.

- 230Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers | Norsk organisasjon for asylsøkere. (2023, April 12). *Høring om endringer i utlendingsloven (fjernmøter i Utlendingsnemnda mv.) Prop. 67 L (2022-2023)* [Consultation on changes to the Immigration Act (remote meetings in the Immigration Appeals Board, etc.) Prop. 67 L (2022-2023)].

- 231Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Community | Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (2023, February 28). *Zentrale Wohnraumvermittlung für Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine[Central housing agency for refugees from Ukraine].* https:/www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2023/03/wohnraum_ukr.html
- 232European Migration Network (2023, August 28). *Ad Hoc Query on digitalisation of identity documents and residence permits issued to third country nationals.* https://www.emnbelgium.be/publication/ad-hoc-query-digitalisation-identity-documents-and-residence-permits-issued-third

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