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Several challenges and critical situations in reception in recent years have catalysed authorities in many EU+ countries to comprehensively review their reception systems (*see Table 3*).233 The adoption of the recast RCD 2024 spurs further changes for the management of reception, going beyond simple adjustments.234

The pressure on reception systems decreased in a few countries in 2024, typically due to a decrease in applications – this was for example the case in Austria. Finland decreased accommodation places by not extending contracts for additional reception centres.235 In view of this, the Finnish Immigration Service encouraged some residents in reception centres (typically under temporary protection) to apply for municipality residence.236 Similarly in Sweden, many under temporary protection obtained the right to register in the population registry and transfer from reception to municipalities. Thus, a gradual outflow of persons under temporary protection also contributed to a normalisation of the reception situation. Pressure remained stable in Norway due to a continued number of persons fleeing Ukraine, so the UDI replaced temporary emergency accommodation with regular reception centres in 2024.237 However, in the beginning of 2025, the situation reversed, and the UDI decided to close down several centres hosting Ukrainians.

Table 3. Examples of strategic changes in national reception systems in 2024

Belgium	A legal framework was established for the use of accommodation places for returns and Dublin transfers238
Bulgaria	A comprehensive reception strategy was being drafted.239

Denmark	Following the pilot project of the 24-hour procedure in Zürich, this working method was extended to all federal centres with procedural functions. As a result, even though the number of applications increased, the pressure on the reception system was eased, with the average length of stay decreasing as well. Furthermore, this led to fewer security incidents in reception facilities
Ireland	The government presented a new comprehensive accommodation strategy for international protection applicants. The strategy aims to reform the system over the medium and long term, moving away from a full reliance on private service providers towards a core of state-owned accommodation.240
Lithuania	Following the reorganisation and restructuring of the Refugee Reception Centre, a new Reception and Integration Agency was established, with operations starting in January 2025.241
Luxembourg	A new centre was established for people of the following profiles: i) people in the Dublin procedure; ii) people awaiting a voluntary return after their applications for international protection have been definitively rejected and where all possible appeals have been exhausted; iii) occasionally, irregular third-country nationals who did not apply for international protection.
Netherlands	The Distribution Act came into force, aiming to ensure more structural reception places and a more balanced distribution of applicants across the country. The new government announced its intention to withdraw this act, as a way to deter new applications, but the act remained in force in 2024 and its implementation was ongoing, with strong support from COA and the majority of municipalities.242
Sweden	Following a government assignment, the SMA prepared for a reformed reception system with accommodation based on collective reception centres or return centres for rejected applicants.243 Since 1 March 2025, applicants are entitled to financial support if they live in the facility they were assigned to. Under certain circumstances exceptions can be made, for example, if an applicant lives with immediate family, assuming they are residents in Sweden. Applicants are also obliged to participate in courses on the Swedish society.244
Switzerland	Following the pilot project of the 24-hour procedure in Zürich, this working method was extended to all federal centres with procedural functions. As a result, even though the number of applications increased, the pressure on the reception system was eased, with the average length of stay decreasing as well. Furthermore, this led to fewer security incidents in reception facilities.245

In contrast, reception systems remained saturated in the Benelux and Ireland,246 despite the fact that new places were opened and additional staff were recruited in each country.247 Belgium had a record number of reception places in 2024 but still was unable to meet demand.248 In addition to continuously high numbers of applications and delays in asylum procedures, each country experienced issues with outflow from reception, as several rejected applicants overstayed while recognised beneficiaries could not transfer to their own accommodation due to a general housing crisis. Court judgments condemned national authorities for failing to provide reception to applicants or to abide by agreements with municipalities, and obliged many authorities to pay penalties in these cases.249 In its appeal to one of the judgments, the Dutch Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) underlined that the penalties did not solve the issue of the overcrowded initial reception centre in Ter Apel, and allocating asylum seekers to other crowded reception centres would mean a violation of agreements with these municipalities as well.250

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  See for example: European Union Agency for Asylum. (June 2024). Asylum Report 2024. European Union Agency for Asylum. (July 2023). Asylum Report 2023. European Union Agency for Asylum. (June 2022). Asylum Report 2022. European Union Agency for Asylum. (June 2022). Asylum Report 2022.

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  Finnish Immigration Service | Maahanmuuttovirasto Migrationsverket. (2024, May 6). Now is a good time to apply for a municipality of residence as some reception centres will close .

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  Norwegian Directorate of Immigration | Utlendingsdirektoratet. (2024, March 19). Avvikler 3 000 mottaksplasser [Discontinuing 3,000 reception places].

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  Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers | Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers. (2025, February 24). Spreidingswet [Distribution Act]. Assocation of Dutch Municipalities | Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten. (2024). Standpunt en werking van de Spreidingswet [Position and operation of the Distribution Act].

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  Government Offices of Sweden | Regeringkansliet. (2024, March 7). Uppdrag att förbereda för ett reformerat mottagningssystem [Task to prepare for a reformed reception system].

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  Swedish Parliament | Sveriges Riksdag. (29 Janaury 2025). New procedures for asylum seekers' accommodation.

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  Federal Council | Der Bundesrat | Conseil fédéral | Consiglio federale. (2024, February 20). Beat Jans annonce au Tessin des mesures pour soulager le système de l'asile [Beat Jans announces measures in Ticino to ease the burden on the asylum system]. State Secretariat for Migration | Staatssekretariat für Migration. (2024, September 21). Asile: fort recul du nombre de requérants du Maghreb dans les centres fédéraux [Asylum: sharp drop in the number of applicants from the Maghreb in federal centres].

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