

5.2.1. Adjusting reception capacities

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The decrease in asylum applications led to reduced strain on reception systems in several countries in 2025, continuing the downward trend from 2024. This was the case in Austria, which streamlined reception capacities, including the consolidation of 17 federal reception facilities over the last 2 years[259] and Finland, which terminated or did not renew contracts with 26 reception centres due to reduced demand.[260] Denmark closed the Jelling reception centre in February 2026 and repurposed it as an emergency centre,[261] while the Swiss SEM adjusted to demand by closing and reopening reception centres to respond to seasonal increases in applications.[262]

In contrast, reception systems in some EU countries remained under pressure, including in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.[263] In a landmark case concerning reception capacity in Ireland, the CJEU ruled that a Member State cannot invoke an unforeseeable and unavoidable influx of applicants to evade its obligations under EU law to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers,[264] highlighting the need for buffer capacity to absorb potential inflows of applicants.

The capacity of the Belgian reception system was challenged[265] despite maintaining a record number of 36,000 places for the second year in a row.[266] Belgian authorities focused on scaling up support for applicants residing outside of reception facilities and planned to enhance information provision, socio-legal counselling and access to medical services for this group.

The Irish reception system struggled to meet demand, relying on contingency accommodation including hotels, hostels and tents for a number of single male applicants.[267] Throughout 2025, Ireland significantly increased the number of state-owned reception places as part of a continuing government strategy[268] and purchased the Citywest Hotel, intended to house applicants under the border procedure.[269] The Irish reception authority reallocated some housing units previously used to host beneficiaries of temporary protection to asylum applicants.[270]

The Dutch reception system was also under high pressure, while steadily increasing capacity in an effort to reach the 101,500 goal set by the Distribution Act, with several sites under construction.[271] At the same time, the Hotel and Accommodation Regulation, a housing scheme

for applicants leaving COA, was renewed and increased to 12 months per applicant.272

Similarly, to encourage residents who were granted international protection to move to private accommodation, Spain and Iceland reduced the time that they can remain in collective accommodation after recognition. Spain issued instructions in 2025 (after the relevant Royal Decree was adopted in 2022) to discontinue authorising extensions of reception services for beneficiaries of international protection beyond 6 months following the granting of protection, thereby limiting services in practice to a maximum duration of 6 months.273 Iceland shortened the entitlement period from 8 weeks to 4 weeks.274

Among countries with the highest number of applications per capita, Cyprus worked on expanding reception capacity through the construction of an accommodation centre for applicants for international protection in Limnes, expected to be delivered by September 2026. 275 Meanwhile, Sweden began phasing out apartment accommodation and opened several reception and return centres for applicants in a policy shift towards collective accommodation, 276 while the Spanish reception system had to adjust to interim measures issued by the Supreme Court, ordering the central administration to take responsibility for unaccompanied minors applying for international protection on the Canary Islands. This caused difficulties since unaccompanied minors were previously housed by regional social services,277 and the reception system on the islands was not scaled to accommodate them.278

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