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Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection

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Explanatory note

This inform was prepared on the basis of national contributions from 25 EMN NCPs (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE and NO) collected via an EMN Ad Hoc Query developed by the EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. The listing of the EMN Member and Observer Countries in the inform following the presentation of synthesised information indicates the availability of relevant information provided by those EMN Member and Observer Countries.

It is important to note that the information contained in this inform refers to the situation in the abovementioned EMN Member and Observer Countries up to August 2022 and specifically the contributions from their EMN National Contact Points.

EMN NCPs from other EMN Member of Observer Countries could not, for various reasons, participate on this occasion in this EMN inform, but have done so for other EMN activities and reports.

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CONTENTS

1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- Pressures and challenges in housing applicants of international protection have been a common phenomenon across EMN Member and Observer Countries between 2017 and 2021, with 14 of 25 EMN Member and Observer Countries experiencing these.
- High volatility and unpredictability of migration flows during the period 2017-2021 and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on requirements for reception facilities were key challenges for EMN Member and Observer Countries when providing sufficient housing for asylum applicants.
- More specific challenges included the limited availability of adequate housing when beneficiaries of international protection needed to move from reception facilities to private accommodation and various challenges in opening new reception facilities such as difficulties in finding suitable locations and opposition from local residents to the opening of a facility nearby.
- To analyse migratory inflows and outflows of housing and to estimate the demand for reception, EMN Member and Observer Countries used statistics and data sources, such as data on expected migration flows, housing trends and other internal and external factors.
- To manage rapid changes in demand for housing, EMN Member and Observer Countries have undertaken various measures to provide accommodation for applicants for international protection, including the provision of additional accommodation as buffer capacity or to be used immediately; budget flexibility; application of different modalities of reception conditions in emergency situations (e.g. housing in tents/containers/gyms); and regional/local distribution of applicants for international protection throughout the territory.
- Whilst most EMN Member and Observer Countries have not had surplus housing capacity in the reporting period, a few countries reported such surpluses. In some cases, the available spare housing was used for other purposes, such as to accommodate homeless persons.
- Measures seen as successful or important as reported by some Member States include: creating extra capacity in existing accommodation centres or adding new accommodation centres; application of different reception modalities; regional allocation and distribution; and multi-level stakeholder cooperation.
- The organisation of outflow to housing and support services for beneficiaries of international protection varies significantly across EMN Member and Observer Countries and is typically linked to integration policies and services offered. Some EMN Member and Observer Countries allow beneficiaries of international protection to continue their stay in a reception centre until suitable accommodation is found. In some EMN Member and Observer Countries, housing is arranged for beneficiaries of international protection, for example by allocating them to a region or municipality. In others, a higher degree of independence is expected, although typically, support services are available.
- The large number of persons fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 resulted in high demand for immediate support, including housing and accommodation. Key measures to ensure adequate housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection included creating additional accommodation centres acting as buffer capacity or to be used immediately; budget flexibility and hosting in private accommodation/host families.

2. INTRODUCTION

The inflow of applicants for international protection can be subject to rapid, substantial changes. Together with other factors, this can lead to pressures on the reception systems of EMN Member and Observer Countries, including their capacity to provide housing. To manage changes in demand for housing, countries need to be able to both quickly upscale their capacity to provide accommodation for all those in need, and to downscale, when necessary, for example, by utilising accommodation centres for other purposes.

The Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU serves as the legal framework for EU Member States for laying down common standards for the reception of applicants for international protection in the EU Member States.[1] The provision of housing is included under the definition of 'material reception conditions' in the Reception Conditions Directive alongside food and clothing, provided in kind, or as financial allowances, or in vouchers, or a combination of the three, and a daily expenses allowance.[2] Art. 18 (9) of the Reception Conditions Directive provides that, in duly justified cases, EU Member States may exceptionally set different modalities for material reception conditions that are provided in Article 18 for a period which should be as short as possible when the housing capacities normally available are temporarily exhausted. In any event, Member States shall ensure that arrangements provide a dignified standard of living and cover basic needs.

Although not reaching the 2015-2016 levels, the number of asylum applications in the EU in 2021 increased by almost 34% in comparison to the previous year, returning to pre-COVID-19 levels.[3] Several developments contributed to this increase, including COVID-19 travel restrictions being lifted at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022. Conflicts and political unrest, such as the Belarus border

1 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.
2 Article 2g, Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.
3 Eurostat, asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data.

crisis and the fall of Afghanistan's government and subsequent evacuation of Afghan nationals.[4] Furthermore, in 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive necessitated a flexible approach to housing. Within this context, organising and managing housing capacity is a pertinent topic across EMN Member and Observer Countries.[5]

While contingency planning constitutes an important tool in preparing for crisis situations, the last years have shown that even without crisis, flexibility is required. The inflow of applicants for international protection can change rapidly within a very short timeframe and is not always related to a clear triggering event. At the same time, housing capacity can also be subject to pressure as a result of limited outflow from accommodation centres. This latter pressure can be due to factors such as high demand within the national or local housing market, backlogs in the processing of asylum applications, or limited returns. This may require EMN Member and Observer Countries to adapt their housing capacity accordingly. Furthermore, reluctance of landlords to rent their property to beneficiaries of international protection in the private housing market has been highlighted as a specific challenge by studies.[6]

In this context, this inform aims to present information that can support policy makers to better organise their respective reception systems, in a flexible manner, whilst anticipating further changing inflows in the future. It also aims to inform the public, particularly as housing of applicants for international protection is a frequent topic of public and political debate. This inform was prepared on the basis of contributions from 25 EMN Member and Observer Countries.[7]

This inform covers the provision of housing to international protection applicants. The housing of other groups (i.e. beneficiaries of international protection and persons whose application for international protection has been rejected as well as beneficiaries of temporary protection) is also included. This is because challenges in the outflow to housing for these groups may impact on the reception capacity for applicants for international protection. The inform focuses on accommodation only and other services related to reception (e.g. access to healthcare, education or employment) are not covered.

3. PRESSURES EXPERIENCED IN ACCOMMODATING APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries reported on pressures and challenges in housing applicants for international protection between 2017 and 2021.[8] One of the main challenges reported was the volatility of fluctuations in migration flows. Following the significant increase in asylum applications in 2015-2016, the pressure decreased in some EMN Member and Observer Countries,[9] whilst others reported increased[10] or constant level of flows[11] of applicants for international protection. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 also significantly impacted housing capacities due to social distancing rules, even for EMN Member and Observer Countries who did not otherwise experience pressure in providing sufficient housing. EMN Member and Observer Countries needed to ensure isolation areas and to quarantine applicants upon arrival in reception centres to prevent the spread of the disease.

Another main challenge reported by some EMN Member and Observer Countries[12] was the availability of adequate housing when beneficiaries of international protection needed to move from reception facilities to private accommodation (i.e. outflow from reception accommodation). This was mainly due to difficulties faced by beneficiaries of international protection in finding affordable and suitable housing or for Member State authorities in finding suitable rental accommodation for beneficiaries (whether this is a primary responsibility of the beneficiary or the authorities varies between Member States, for more details please see Section 6 below).

Opening new reception facilities is also a challenge in some EMN Member and Observer Countries.[13] In Luxembourg, such challenges included the temporary or permanent closure of a number of facilities due to the expiry of contracts, health requirements, risk checks or renovations. In Germany, some municipalities face difficulties in finding suitable lots of land to build or lease new facilities, in procuring necessary equipment and in obtaining sufficient funding. Moreover, in Belgium and Germany, political perspectives - such as disapproval of reception centres for housing applicants for international protection or opposition to the construction of a facility by residents living nearby - may pose a difficulty in ensuring sufficient capacities.

4 EMN, Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2021, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-annual-reports_en, last accessed 16th December 2022.
5 See for example OECD (2022), Housing support for Ukrainian refugees in receiving countries, available at: https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/housing-support-for-ukrainian-refugees-in-receiving-countries-9c2b4404/, last accessed 16th December 2022.
6 European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Housing out of reach? The reception of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, 2019, available at: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/aida_housing_out_of_reach.pdf , last accessed 16th December 2022.
7 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Norway.
8 AT, BE, BG, CY, ES, FR, HR, IE, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, NO.
9 CZ, FI, SK.
10 BG, ES, FR, HR, LT, LU, LV, NL (from 2019 onwards), PL, PT.
11 DE.
12 BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, IE, LT, LU, NL, SK.
13 BE, DE, IE, LU, NL.

4. DETERMINING AND FORWARD PLANNING OF HOUSING CAPACITY

Determining and planning housing capacity is essential for ensuring sustainable levels of housing for new arrivals. Several EMN Member and Observer Countries[14] make use of **periodic forecasting and analysis** to determine and if needed, make changes to available housing capacity for applicants for international protection. In Sweden and Norway, such analyses are carried out four times a year and in the Netherlands an analysis is carried out twice a year, whilst in Germany and Finland this is done annually, and in Estonia every three years with calculations revised on an annual basis. In Sweden, the forecasts have a timeframe of four years, whilst in the Netherlands and Norway this is two years.

Various statistics and data sources are typically used in these EMN Member and Observer Countries to analyse migratory inflows and outflows to estimate the demand for reception capacity. In Finland, for example, data sources that feed into the calculations include: expected migration flows; housing trends; and other factors (see Box 1 below). Similarly in Norway, the following data is considered: number of asylum seekers, and share of this group that will need accommodation; housing capacity in municipalities; and number of people expected to move to private housing, be returned or abscond. The estimates are made in collaboration with the immigration authorities, the police and the integration authorities.

In Belgium, simulations of the reception needs are elaborated by the Cabinet of the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration in collaboration with asylum authorities. To determine the necessary housing capacity, several factors are taken into account, including historical data on arrivals and departures during a reference period (usually at least 12 months); the workload of the decision-making institutions; the number of decisions that can be made per month (both positive and negative); the proportion of persons appealing a negative international protection decision and the number of applicants residing outside the reception network.

In Germany, the housing capacity is calculated and determined by the federal states. The calculation is based on: current inflow of asylum seekers and a comparison with the previous year; and current and probable future influencing factors. Due to the federal structure, not only the federal states but also the municipalities which provide housing (counties and independent cities) are involved. In Luxembourg, the National Reception Office performs time series analyses to establish trend-based forecasts of the number of people in need of housing expected in the coming years. Using both the number of beds available in the near future and the number of expected people to be housed, a simulation of the future occupancy of accommodation structures is prepared for national budget negotiations.

Box 1: Estimating housing capacity in Finland

In Finland, the estimate for housing capacity for the following year is carried out in the previous autumn by the Finnish Immigration Service. Several different sources are used:

- **Migration trends and flows:** Based on the previous years' distribution of applicants between EU Member States, an estimate for Finland is calculated. Migration trends in countries of origin and countries of transit are followed. Country of origin information (COI) from the most common countries of origin and transit countries is analysed. Information sources include e.g. the Finnish Border Guard reports, the Integrated Situational Awareness and Analysis (ISAA), International Organization for Migration (IOM) return/departure statistics, EUAA and GDISC Prognosis network. Migration trends are also followed through media and social media analysis.
- Housing trends of applicants in Finland: The share of applicants accommodated in the reception centres and in private accommodation is calculated.
- Other factors: In addition to the above, numbers of current new applications, returns, negative decisions, expired applications and repeat applications are taken into account. All of the above information is entered into an Excel sheet, which calculates the required housing capacity for the current year and an estimate for the following year.

In contrast, Latvia, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic[15] reported that no forecasting calculations are carried out and the capacity is determined by the available infrastructure.

Most EMN Member and Observer Countries[16] allow for some margin or buffer capacity to anticipate fluctuations in the need for accommodation. Norway, for example, prepares three scenarios: low, middle and high within the expected room for possible outcomes. The middle scenario is used for planning and budget calculations. In Finland, there is a target occupancy rate per reception centre set at 90% occupancy. This was lowered to 75% in 2021 due to low number of asylum applicants, allowing for 25% buffer capacity. In Belgium, the reception network should not exceed a total of 94 % occupancy rate. France implemented mechanisms to ensure the fluidity of the national reception system by offering temporary care to migrants who are not hosted. Thus, the CAES system (reception and situation assessment centres) enables asylum seekers to be temporarily sheltered with a view to being directed from the Paris region towards a permanent accommodation solution, in the region or in another territory.

14 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE, NO.
15 This is due to the low number of asylum applicants in the long-term and available capacity in existing facilities.
16 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SK, NO.

5. FLEXIBILITY MEASURES UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE HOUSING CAPACITY

Types of measures undertaken to ensure housing capacity

To manage changes in demand for housing, EMN Member and Observer Countries have undertaken a number of measures needed to provide accommodation for those seeking protection in the period 2017-2021.

One of the most common measures adopted by several countries is the **creating additional accommodation as buffer capacity or to be used immediately** (please see Table 1 below). The form and provision of such buffer capacity differed significantly across EMN Member and Observer Countries. Luxembourg, for example, launched a programme for the construction of standardised modular accommodation structures in order to respond to the arrival of a high number of applicants for international protection. A high quality and durable module for 33 people can be built in 9 months. Spain reported that increasing the reception capacity with additional accommodation, such as hotels, hostels and shelters, has been a fundamental measure to absorb the increase of international protection applicants entering the system.

Similarly, in Germany, opening new reception centres or operating accommodation centres on stand-by in order to have buffer capacity at reduced costs has been successful, especially when solutions are meeting local or regional needs. In Norway, contingency clauses in contracts with existing service providers have been important to cover the need for establishing new capacity as fast as needed, allowing to increase or reduce capacity of 40% on short notice.

Another main measure reported by some EMN Member and Observer Countries is **budgetary flexibility** and the option to increase the budget when necessary. In Latvia and Spain, for example, budget flexibility has been essential to make the additional funds available necessary to manage the rapidly growing increase of applicants. In Latvia, this was done by additional funds from the national Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) programme.

Regional and local distribution of applicants for international protection throughout the territory is another measure to ensure flexibility of available housing. In Germany's experience, territorial distribution has allowed the burden to be shared between the federal states. The federal states may further implement a distribution scheme in order to achieve the same on municipal level.

Table 1. Flexibility measures undertaken to address insufficient housing capacity to accommodate applicants for international protection (2017-2021)

Measures in place	EMN Member and Observer Countries
Additional accommodation centres acting as buffer capacity or to be used immediately	**AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, IT, LV, LT, LU, NL, PT**
Budget flexibility (to increase the budget when necessary)	**BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, HU, IT, LV, LT, LU, PL, PT**
Creating extra capacity within an active accommodation centre	**BE, CZ, DE, FR, HR, IT, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT, SK**
Application of different standards/modalities of reception conditions temporarily in emergency situations (e.g. housing in tents/containers/gyms)	**BE, CY, DE, EE, ES, HR, LT, LU, NL**
Regional/local distribution of applicants for international protection throughout the territory	**DE, ES, FI, FR, IT, NL, PT**
Employing more case workers or temporarily (re-assigning (former) case workers to speed up decision-making in asylum procedures	**DE, ES, LV, LT, LU, NL, PL**
Pre-arranged contracts with external service providers (e.g. private companies, NGOs, hotels)	**BE, DE, ES, IT, LU, PL, PT**
Fast-tracking asylum procedures[17]	**CY, FR, LT, LU, NL, PL, PT**
Reserving an area to build extra housing capacity to accommodate applicants for international protection	**HR, LT, LU**
Housing in private settings / host families	**DE, EL, ES, NL**
Provision of financial vouchers/allowance to cover costs of private accommodation	**BE, CY, DE, EL, PL, PT**
Contingency clauses in contracts with external service providers	**DE, ES**

17 Art. 31 (8) of the Asylum Procedures Directive provides for specific conditions when Member States can resort to accelerated examination of asylum applications.

In regard to which measures were successful or important as reported by EMN Member and Observer Countries in meeting the additional demand for housing of applicants for international protection, some countries[18] indicated that all of the measures they reported on (see Table 1 above) were important in this regard. Poland, for example, highlighted that all measures in combination made it possible to guarantee the provision of housing and food for applicants for international protection. In Portugal, measures, such as fast-track asylum procedures and the collaboration with civil society organisations and private donors, enabled the increase in reception capacity, and in particular to respond to the exceptional arrival of Afghans at risk.

Some EMN Member and Observer Countries[19] highlighted that particular measures were successful and/or important to meet additional demand for housing of applicants for international protection. **Creating extra capacity in existing accommodation centres or in new accommodation centres** was one of such successful measures.[20] In Cyprus, for example, the opening of a new Accommodation Centre LIMNES was an important national measure to comply with measures linked to the pandemic and to respond to the high influx in the country. In Italy, in October 2021, 3 000 additional places were created in the national reception network in support of Afghan nationals and their families. In Lithuania, in preparation for the coming winter of 2022, all migrants who attempted to irregularly enter the territory of Lithuania from Belarus were transferred to heated premises in modular houses that were newly constructed in accommodation centres; vulnerable infants with their mothers were accommodated in a newly created accommodation centre in Vilnius; and unaccompanied minors were transferred to an extension of the Refugees' Reception Centre in Rukla.

As reported by the Netherlands, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) has been able to significantly expand housing capacity for applicants of international protection through several measures laid down in an action plan for the up-and downscaling of housing capacity which was developed in cooperation with the Association of Dutch Municipalities, including expanding existing accommodation centres, re-opening recently closed centres, and opening new centres; using (pre-existing) reserve/buffer capacity; creating temporary housing locations; and opening emergency locations.

Besides creating extra capacity, some EMN Member and Observer Countries[21] indicated other measures as important. In Lithuania and Luxembourg, **cooperation with key stakeholders** was considered important. In Lithuania, cooperation between the national authorities and international and non-governmental organisations aimed to monitor reception conditions for applicants of international protection to effectively respond to their needs. In Luxembourg, decision-making regarding the establishment of new accommodation structures involved the intervention of numerous partners, including municipal authorities and relevant Ministries.

Regional allocation and distribution was highlighted as a successful measure in France and Spain. In France, for example, the regional referral mechanism created by the law of 10 September 2018 has rebalanced the distribution of flows of applicants for international protection across the country, contributing to optimising the national accommodation pool. The referral of 16 700 people from the Ile-de-France region to other regions has reduced the proportion of flows to the Ile-de-France region (from 51% to 37%). These results were achieved by creating additional places in temporary and permanent reception and accommodation centres.

Other countries[22] did not report on effective/successful measures, for example, because there were no issues with additional demand in the reporting period (e.g. Slovakia) or because none of the measures or combinations of measures proved to be successful in sufficiently meeting the additional demand for housing of applicants for international protection (e.g. Belgium which is still facing a reception crisis).

Managing surplus housing capacity

Whilst most EMN Member and Observer Countries[23] have not had surplus housing capacity in the period between 2017-2021, a few countries[24] reported such surpluses. In Germany, for example, some federal states and municipalities anticipated higher numbers of arrivals based on the experiences of the years 2015-16 and experienced a surplus in the following years. This surplus housing capacity was used, in some municipalities in Germany, to accommodate homeless persons or to reduce the occupancy rate per reception centre and minimize the risk of infection in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Netherlands, in 2017, there was a surplus of housing capacity after the Central Agency for Reception (COA) had scaled up due to the high influx of asylum seekers in 2015 - 2016. After the asylum influx decreased, there was a surplus in reception capacity and in 2017 the COA was requested to scale down.

In Spain, surplus in the housing capacity occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period during which the influx of applicants for international protection significantly reduced. However, the decrease in applications did not translate automatically to a reduction in occupation. Applicants who had remained for longer in the reception system, and those who had seen their applications denied, were allowed to remain in the accommodation, due to public health considerations.

In Norway, surplus housing was ensured by flexible agreements and contracts with service providers, in order to adjust capacity allowing to increase or reduce the number of beds in reception centres by 40% to adjust to changing needs for accommodation.

18 AT, DE (all measures except budget flexibility), LV, PL, PT.
19 CY, EL, FR, HU, IT, LV, LT, NL, NO.
20 CY, ES, HU, IT, LT, LU, NL.
21 EL, ES, FR, LV, LT, LU.
22 BE, BG, CZ, FI, HR, SK, SI, SE.
23 BE, BG, CZ, EE, FR, FI, HR, IE, LT, LV, LU, PT, SI, SK.
24 ES, HU, IT, NL, SE, NO.

6. OUTFLOW TO HOUSING ONCE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IS GRANTED

Organisation of outflow to housing and other accommodation

The organisation of outflow to housing and support services to persons granted international protection varies significantly across EMN Member and Observer Countries and is typically linked to the integration policies and services offered. In some countries, housing is arranged for beneficiaries of international protection by responsible authorities, for example by allocating them to a region or municipality.[25] In others, a higher degree of independence is expected, although typically, support services are available.[26]

Some EMN Member and Observer Countries[27] allow beneficiaries of international protection to continue their stay in a reception centre until a suitable accommodation is found. Some countries have a maximum period of prolonged stay in a reception centre and this differs across countries: 30 days in Hungary, two months in Poland, , up to a limit of three months in France[28], up to four months in Belgium and Estonia, six months in Italy and one year in Luxembourg. In Finland, the reception centre assists beneficiaries in finding accommodation and applying for social security benefits such as housing allowance. The reception centre will also contact the municipality's integration services with the aim that the person will move to independent accommodation within two months after receiving a positive decision. In Estonia, the accommodation centre provides support to the beneficiary of international protection in finding housing, entering into a lease agreement and paying expenses related to starting a lease relationship. In principle, beneficiaries of international protection can stay in the accommodation centre for up to 4 months as of the date of the issue of a residence permit. In Austria, the responsibility for providing material receptions conditions, including accommodation is passed from the Federal State to the Provinces once the applicant is admitted to the asylum procedure. Accommodation in the context of material reception conditions is provided to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and for persons who were granted asylum status in Austria within the first four months after the decision.

In some EMN Member and Observer Countries,[29] once international protection status is granted, municipalities are responsible for assistance with accommodation as part of integration programmes or services. In the Netherlands, for example, municipalities have the legal obligation to provide accommodation to beneficiaries.

In other countries,[30] housing assistance is organised at state/central level. In the Czech Republic, for example, beneficiaries of international protection can stay in an Integration Asylum Centre for up to 18 months (please see box below). In Slovenia, beneficiaries of international protection can stay in one of the two integration houses, whilst in Croatia, housing units are allocated for two years.

In France, beneficiaries of international protection can be supported by specific support and integration schemes for beneficiaries of international protection (at national, regional and departmental level) or by general social institutions and structures. As of 2022, a national programme[31] to support refugees in access to housing and employment has been progressively rolled out.

Box 2: Organisation of outflow in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, beneficiaries of international protection can apply for participation in the State Integration Programme. One of the key components is the right to stay in one of the four Integration Asylum Centres for up to 18 months. The support of social workers is provided and only a budget-friendly rent is paid by the beneficiary. The beneficiary has an obligation to attend free Czech language courses. After this stay or, alternatively, a stay in private accommodation, the beneficiary can (again, on the condition they are the Programme participants) gain support to start living on their own in a common rental apartment. This happens on the basis of an individual integration plan. They profit from a special individually approved budget enabling them to cover the first two months' rent and deposit, including two months' costs for electricity, gas and other related items.

In some EMN Member and Observer Countries,[32] counselling and support in searching for private accommodation is provided. In Germany, beneficiaries can access support options, such as the support of migration social workers, housing placement projects, special housing advisors on site, or through cooperation with housing associations. In Estonia, beneficiaries are provided counselling on possibilities of how to find housing in Estonia and their additional assistance needs are assessed.

Estonia and Spain also provide financial support for housing. In Estonia, the person is entitled to one-time rental agreement support (up 1 200 EUR) to cover the costs related to signing the agreement (deposit, one month's rent in advance etc). In Spain, financial assistance for house renting can be provided which varies according to the composition of the family unit. There is a complementary allowance for the deposit, to cover the services of a real estate agency and home insurance which will not exceed the equivalent of two months' rent.

25 BG, EE, ES, FI, FR, IT, LT, NL, SE, NO.
26 BE, CY, HU, IE, LV, PL, SI, SK.
27 DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SK.
28 from the end of the month in which the favourable decision was notified to them with a possibility of a further three months extension
29 BG, DE, FI, IT, LT, NL, SE, NO.
30 CZ, ES, LU.
31 This programme AGIR (global and individualised support for refugees) will benefit all refugees as soon as they obtain their status.
32 BE, DE, EE, ES, IE, LV, LT, SK.

Challenges and good practices in outflow to housing and other accommodation

The main challenge reported by some EMN Member and Observer Countries[33] is the availability of adequate housing, specifically for those beneficiaries of international protection staying in reception facilities that need to find independent accommodation, such as housing on the rental market. A slower pace of outflow can lead to pressure on the housing of applicants of international protection. France reported that the number of beneficiaries of international protection present in the national reception system was estimated as of February 2021 at more than 19 000 and almost 5 000 people were registered in general emergency accommodation facilities. Given the urgent need to accelerate the transition to housing for beneficiaries of international protection, the national housing mobilisation target has been set at 14 000 units. Similarly, Luxembourg reported that as of 31 December 2021, beneficiaries of international protection represented 41.2% of the population accommodated in accommodation facilities, although these facilities are in principle reserved for applicants.

Such outflow challenges reported are mainly due to high demand for affordable accommodation and housing on the private rental market. In Germany, for example, the number of "Fehlbeleger"[34] (i.e. persons who overstay in reception centres due to different reasons) is significant. In particular, in urban and metropolitan areas, due to the high demand for affordable housing on the housing market, beneficiaries for international protection cannot easily find accommodation. The main reason is a lack of available and affordable living space in the respective areas. Frequently, beneficiaries of international protection remain in temporary housing facilities despite the fact that they are no longer required to live there, which means that additional capacity must be created for further housing.

Italy reported that the main challenge during the outflow concerns the possibility of finding places in facilities properly equipped to care for vulnerable individuals. The number of places for vulnerable persons with mental and/or physical disabilities made available by local authorities at the national level remains limited. In Latvia and Lithuania, the reluctance of landlords to rent accommodation to third-country nationals was identified as a challenge.

Other countries[35] reported that outflow has not presented a challenge. In Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic, this is due to the low number of beneficiaries of international protection overall.

In terms of good practices related to outflow, Italy and Norway identified cooperation and coordination between different actors involved as a good practice. In Norway, for example, the close cooperation and coordination between the Directorate of Immigration, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, and the municipalities has been important in developing a more efficient and faster settlement process. In France, temporary accommodation has been successfully tested which offers temporary accommodation when beneficiaries of international protection leave reception centres, enabling them to start their integration process in the medium term (learning French, finding a job, obtaining rights) and thus access permanent accommodation. In addition, comprehensive support programmes, such as HOPE (accommodation, counselling, pathway to employment), which offer accommodation, French language training and vocational training in a job in demand, have demonstrated their relevance to the successful integration of beneficiaries of international protection. In Spain, having specialised teams to help beneficiaries find appropriate accommodation as part of the second stage of reception "preparation of autonomy" has been identified as a successful practice.

In Belgium, the preparation of beneficiaries of international protection to live independently and to participate in society during a two-months transition period in Local Reception Initiatives is seen as good system to promote their inclusion. Before moving to private housing, Local Reception Initiatives provide accommodation, financial support (social aid) and information on rights and responsibilities in a broad range of domains, such as employment, education, housing, health, and social security, for two months. However, given the saturation of the places in Local Reception Initiatives – caused by the high influx and low outflow to regular housing – this practice is currently under pressure as Local Reception Initiatives are not able to offer accommodation for a two-month stay.

The outflow of persons whose applications for international protection have been rejected was not considered a challenge impacting on the capacity to house applicants for international protection in most EMN Member and Observer Countries.[36] In the context of the Belarus border crisis in 2021, Lithuania experienced a challenge related to the sharp increase in the flow of irregular migrants and international protection applicants from Iraq whose applications were rejected. Without a signed readmission agreement with Iraq, Lithuania was unable to return most of them. In particular, families with small children represented a significant proportion of them and, as a result, they were allowed to continue living in the reception centres until they were returned.

7. FLEXIBILITY MEASURES FOR BENEFICIARIES OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION FROM UKRAINE

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine. As a result, the Temporary Protection Directive was activated with Council Decision (EU) 2022/382. The large number of persons fleeing the invasion of Ukraine resulted in high demand for immediate support, including housing and accommodation. In this

33 AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, SK, NO.
34 Persons who need to find accommodation on the regular rental market or who are obliged to leave Germany, e.g. Dublin cases, returns to country of origin, cases of secondary movements.
35 EE, FI, HR, LV, SE, SI, SK.
36 BE, BG, CZ, EE, ES, FI, HU, HR, LV, NL, PT, SE, SK, SI, NO.

context, ensuring housing and managing housing capacity for beneficiaries of temporary protection has become a key priority and remained a prominent challenge for reception systems across EMN Member and Observer Countries. This section specifically focuses on flexible measures provided. Please also see the EMN Inform on "Arrangements for accommodation and housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection".[37]

Article 13(1) of the Temporary Protection Directive requires Member States to ensure that persons enjoying temporary protection have access to suitable accommodation, or, if necessary receive the means to obtain housing. EMN Member and Observer Countries responded by adopting a number of flexible measures to ensure adequate housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection.

The most common measures applied in most EMN Member and Observer Countries was creating additional accommodation centres acting as buffer capacity or to be used immediately as well as application of different modalities/standards of reception (see Table 2 below). In Spain, for example, over 27 000 emergency places were created and four Reception, Care and Referral Centres were set up. In Poland, a range of public facilities were repurposed to provide emergency shelter, including hotels, hostels, guesthouses, student houses, parish houses, training centres, school halls, sports halls, communal flats, fire stations, village clubhouses, wedding halls and others. In Estonia, as an alternative housing measure, a ship was procured, which enabled the authorities to house more people at one place and thus also safeguard that relevant services could be provided in a more coherent and cost-effective manner (e.g. relevant information days).

Housing in private settings and with host families was also a key measure to address insufficient housing capacity in most EMN Member and Observer Countries (see Table 2 below). Some countries[38] highlighted the importance to call on the local population to provide accommodation. In Spain, for example, the Department of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations, in collaboration with "la Caixa" Foundation, has enabled a family placement programme that matches Ukrainian families with foster families. The family placement programme is a pilot programme that is taking place in Barcelona, Madrid, Málaga and Murcia, the areas where the arrival of displaced Ukrainians has been more significant. It is a temporary measure to offer Ukrainian families the best possible environment during their stay. In Germany, the provision of financial support to cover costs of private accommodation on the private rental market has helped alleviate pressure in housing beneficiaries in other types of accommodation. In the Netherlands, the NGO "RefugeeHomeNL" matches private households with beneficiaries of temporary protection. A list of practices in several Member States supporting the provision of private housing to displaced people is available in the Safe Homes guidance presented by the Commission on 6 July 2022.

The importance of regional distribution of beneficiaries of temporary protection throughout the territory of the country was emphasised by Belgium, France, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. In Finland, for example, beneficiaries of temporary protection have been accommodated through a "municipality model", in which municipalities are compensated for accommodating beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Table 2. Flexibility measures undertaken to address insufficient housing capacity to accommodate beneficiaries of temporary protection

Measures in place	EMN Member and Observer Countries
Additional accommodation centres acting as buffer capacity or to be used immediately	**AT, BE BG, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, LT, LU, PL, SE, SI, SK**
Budget flexibility (to increase the budget when necessary)	**AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, IE, LV, LU, LT, SE**
Housing in private settings / host families	**AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SK**
Application of different standards/modalities of reception conditions in emergency situations (e.g. housing in tents/containers/ gyms)	**BG, CZ, DE, EE, IE, LT, LU, NL, SE, SK**
Creating extra capacity within an active accommodation centre	**AT, DE, FI, IT, SE, SI**
Prearranged contracts with external service providers (e.g. private companies, NGOs, hotels)	**BG, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, SE**
Provision of financial vouchers/allowance to cover costs of private accommodation	**DE, EL, FR[39], IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, SK**
Regional/local distribution of applicants for international protection throughout the territory	**BE, ES, FI, FR, LV, NL**

37 EMN Inform 2022, Arrangements for accommodation and housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection, available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-informs_en , last accessed 16th December 2022.
38 BE, DE, ES, FR.
39 Implemented as from Autumn 2022 with retroactivity as from March 2022.

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France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2
Germany https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html
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