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Distribution of international protection accommodation centres and relationship management with local communities

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Explanatory note

This inform was prepared on the basis of national contributions from [23] EMN NCPs (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS) collected via an AHQ developed by the EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. The information contained in this inform refers to the situation in the abovementioned EMN Member Countries and Observer Countries up to February 2025.

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1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- The design and application of criteria for distributing international protection applicants differ across countries, taking into consideration individual needs and characteristics, the number and capacity of accommodation centres, and the demographic, economic and social characteristics of the receiving regions.
- Seventeen EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents) strive for a balanced distribution of accommodation centres across their territories. New centres are typically established based on multiple criteria, including migratory pressure, transport infrastructure and proximity to basic services.
- Five EMN Member Countries (out of 23 respondents) have developed communication plans – either at national or regional level, depending on how the country is governed – to promote timely and transparent communication with local authorities, service providers and communities.
- Despite the lack of dedicated communication plans in most responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia, there is generally engagement and exchange of information with local authorities, elected representatives and communities before, upon and/or after the opening of an accommodation centre. The format, frequency and flexibility of communication mechanisms and public outreach activities vary by country.
- Additional resources for local services are reportedly allocated in relation to reception capacity, compensation or reimbursement systems, complementary national and EU funds, and initiatives to supplement local service provision. Additional resources for NGOs are typically allocated through compensation systems, EU funds and open calls for proposals. Ireland has created three dedicated funds to provide financial support to NGOs and community groups.
- The majority of responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia have experienced challenges in engaging with local communities and interest groups in relation to the opening of accommodation centres. Reactions may include reluctance, anxiety, opposition and, in rare cases, even acts of violence.
- Key good practices highlighted by responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia include accompanying measures to: support the opening of accommodation centres (e.g. roadmaps, monitoring indicators and committees), foster community engagement (e.g. cultural events, training and recruitment of local staff), and provide financial support to hosting municipalities. Fourteen EMN Member Countries (out of 23 respondents) regarded communication and coordination with local stakeholders as critical to achieving positive integration outcomes.



2. CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE INFORM

Many countries respond to concerns about the distribution of applicants for international protection across their territory, and the disproportionate burden on certain local areas, by implementing distribution policies. These policies aim to spread international protection applicants and refugees across the country's territory,¹ and approaches vary, with different criteria and governance models² being applied.

Distribution policies can play a crucial role in managing the reception of international protection applicants, supporting processing, service provision and integration.³ However, they can be politically contentious, with varying degrees of acceptance or resistance from local communities and authorities.

Distribution can lead to strong or weak integration outcomes, depending on how it is managed and structured.⁴ Distribution often directs international protection applicants and refugees away from larger urban areas to smaller, more rural areas, which can present additional challenges in terms of services and integration.⁵ The preparation and management of distribution, as well as the allocation of resources and services to specific locations, are therefore critical aspects of distribution governance.

The responses of local actors and community attitudes have a significant impact on the policies adopted, and the subsequent integration outcomes.⁶ These responses can vary widely, ranging from acceptance to opposition, making it essential to understand how relationships with local communities are managed. That includes counteracting increasing anti-immigration narratives, which may be fuelled

1 See Robinson, Anderson and Musterd (2003), 'Spreading the 'burden': A review of policies to disperse asylum seekers and refugees' (The Policy Press) (last accessed on 26 March 2025); EMN (2024), 'Governing the accommodation of international protection applicants' (last accessed on 24 April 2025); EUAA (2022), 'Overview of the organisation of reception systems in EU+ countries' (Situational Update No. 8) (last accessed on 27 March 2025).

2 EMN Member Countries and one Observer Country typically manage the accommodation of applicants for international protection through centralised, decentralised and mixed models. For a more comprehensive overview, see EMN (2024), 'Governing the accommodation of international protection applicants' (last accessed on 24 April 2025).

3 See, for example, Katsiaficas, C. (2023), 'Asylum seeker dispersal policies – setting the stage for successful integration?' (ICMPD Commentary) (last accessed on 27 March 2025).

4 See Robinson, V., R. Anderson and S. Musterd (2003), *Spreading the 'burden': A review of policies to disperse asylum seekers and refugees* (The Policy Press) (last accessed on 26 March 2025); Stewart, E. and M. Shaffer (2015), 'Moving on? Dispersal policy, onward migration and integration of refugees in the UK' (last accessed on 26 March 2025); Hagström, M. (2009), 'Winners and losers? The outcome of the dispersal policy in Sweden' in P. Bevelander, M. Hagström and S. Rönnqvist (eds) *Resettled and included? The employment integration of resettled refugees in Sweden* (Malmö University) (last accessed on 26 March 2025); Larsen, B. (2011), 'Becoming part of welfare Scandinavia: Integration through the spatial dispersal of newly arrived refugees in Denmark', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37(2), 333–350 (last accessed on 26 March 2025); Zetter, R., Griffiths, D. and Sigona, N. (2005), 'Social capital or social exclusion? The impact of asylum-seeker dispersal on UK refugee community organizations', *Community Development Journal* 40(2), 169–181 (last accessed on 26 March 2025); outputs of the 'Whole-COMM' project; EUAA (2018), 'Guidance on contingency planning in the context of reception' (Practical Guides Series) (last accessed on 23 April 2025).

5 Katsiaficas, C. (2023), 'Asylum seeker dispersal policies – setting the stage for successful integration?' (ICMPD Commentary) (last accessed on 27 March 2025).

6 Caponio, T. and A. Pettrachin (2024), 'Explaining integration policies and processes of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRA in Europe. A Whole of Community approach' (Whole-COMM Working Paper) (last accessed on 23 April 2025).

by local discontent.⁷ Distribution quotas may be based on factors such as population, tax revenues, unemployment rates and reception capacity.⁸ Some countries also consider the profile of the applicant, including specific needs and vulnerabilities, when deciding on their allocation.⁹ However, when the reception system is under pressure, the availability of places becomes a significant factor in all countries.¹⁰

Other innovative distribution practices include the use of algorithms and matching tools to improve integration outcomes for refugees.¹¹

This inform aims to complement previous work with a more detailed analysis of how distribution is governed and managed, including through specific criteria and mechanisms. It provides a comparative overview of how relevant stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, elected representatives, service providers and the broader public) are informed and engaged before and after a reception centre opens in their community. It also presents challenges and good practices in this area, with a view to identifying opportunities for further collaboration between policymakers and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. local organised groups, NGOs and international organisations).



3. DISTRIBUTION CRITERIA

Fourteen EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents) distribute international protection applicants according to defined criteria,¹² while 17 EMN Member Countries and Serbia distribute accommodation centres within their territory.¹³

3.1. Distribution of international protection applicants

Although design and application differ across countries, the prevalent criteria for distributing international protection applicants can be summarised as follows.

- **Individual needs of international protection applicants.** Nine EMN Member Countries and Serbia conduct an individual needs assessment prior to distributing international protection applicants to accommodation centres.¹⁴ This information is then used to identify the most suitable accommodation for the specific needs and circumstances of the applicant. Criteria include: health conditions;¹⁵ family status;¹⁶ age;¹⁷ sex;¹⁸ origin;¹⁹ ethnicity;²⁰ nationality;²¹ religious affiliation;²² special needs;²³ vulnerability²⁴ (e.g. unaccompanied minors, women travelling alone or single parents);²⁵ spoken language;²⁶ labour profile;²⁷ and personal preferences (whenever possible).²⁸
- **Number and capacity of accommodation centres.** The number and capacity of accommodation centres (i.e. the occupancy rate and beds available) are

a determining factor.²⁹ Two EMN Member Countries explicitly acknowledged this as their main distribution criterion.³⁰

- **The demographic, economic and social characteristics of regions.** Three EMN Member Countries have developed distribution criteria based on the characteristics of the receiving regions to ensure a balanced distribution of international protection applicants within their territories (see Box 1).³¹

Box 1. Distribution keys based on the demographic, economic and social characteristics of regions

In France, the National Reception and Integration Plan for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (*Schéma national d'accueil des demandeurs d'asile et d'intégration des réfugiés* – SNADAR) 2021-2023 aims to rebalance migratory flows within the national territory and address the high concentration of asylum applicants in Paris and its surrounding areas. It uses a distribution key based on the demographic, economic and social characteristics of each region. The underlying criteria encompass population size, gross domestic product per capita, unemployment rate and regional reception capacities within the national reception system (excluding temporary accommodation centres). Regional targets are then set to determine the number of asylum seekers who may be allocated to each region on a monthly basis.

7 Ibidem.

8 EUAA (2022), 'Overview of the organisation of reception systems in EU+ countries' (Situational Update No. 8) (last accessed on 27 March 2025).

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Katsiaficas, C. (2023), 'Asylum seeker dispersal policies – setting the stage for successful integration?' (ICMPD Commentary) (last accessed on 27 March 2025).

12 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

13 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

14 BE, BG, ES, HR, LU, LV, NL, PL, RS, SI, SK, and RS.

15 AT, BE, BG, ES, HR, LU, PL, SE, and RS.

16 AT, BE, BG, ES, HR, LV, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

17 HR, LV, and RS.

18 SE, SI, SK, and RS.

19 BG.

20 BG.

21 SE and RS.

22 BG, SE.

23 BE, ES, HR, LU, LV, PL, SK.

24 AT, BE, BG, FI, HR, LU, LV, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

25 Vulnerability criteria also include: sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC); disabilities; survivors of rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence; and survivors of torture.

26 BE.

27 ES.

28 ES.

29 BE, CZ, ES, FI, HR, NL, PL, SE.

30 BE, CZ.

31 DE, FR, NL.

Germany uses the Königsteiner Key to determine federal admission quotas, which are calculated based on two thirds of the tax revenue and one third of the population of each federal state (*Länder*). The 'EASY' algorithm then distributes international protection applicants, considering current reception quotas, their fulfilment, and responsibilities related to country of origin. The EASY system is administered by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).

3.2. Distribution of accommodation centres

Seventeen EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents) reported that the authorities responsible for the reception of international protection applicants are also in charge of defining the criteria for distributing international protection accommodation centres within their territory.³²

In nine EMN Member Countries with either a centralised³³ or mixed³⁴ governance model, the Ministry of the Interior performs these functions, either directly through its directorates and offices³⁵ or through a specialised executive agency or service.³⁶ In Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden these competences fall under the partial or full responsibility of other line ministries (the Ministry of Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living Together and the Reception of Refugees in Luxembourg; the Ministry of Asylum and Migration in the Netherlands; and the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration in Spain; the Ministry of

Justice in Sweden). In Bulgaria and Slovenia, special offices, which are under direct responsibility of the Government, are responsible for the reception system (the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, and the Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants in Slovenia). In Germany, which has a fully decentralised governance model, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) has developed the 'EASY' distribution system in collaboration with the federal states (*Länder*), which operate the initial reception centres (see Box 1).

The Netherlands, Spain and Serbia consider **multiple factors** to achieve a balanced geographical distribution of accommodation centres within their respective territories. In the Netherlands, the government estimates what the accommodation needs will be over the next two years. An indicative distribution is then calculated based on population size and a socioeconomic status score (SES-WOA) that assesses prosperity, education level and labour market participation in the municipality. This is laid down in the Dispersal Act. The higher the socioeconomic score, the more applicants a municipality will have to accommodate. However, the Minister for Asylum and Migration has announced the intention to withdraw the Dispersal Act, with preparations starting in the first quarter of 2025. Spain looks at the number of inhabitants; the availability of living spaces that meet habitability standards; migratory pressure; transport infrastructure; and proximity to basic services, such as healthcare and education. Similarly, Serbia prioritises areas based on migratory pressure, while keeping the best interests of both international protection applicants and local communities, as well as the balanced development of the country, as guiding principles.



4. ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE OPENING OF ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

4.1. Communication plans

Five EMN Member Countries reported having dedicated communication plans at either national or regional level, depending on how the country is governed, to accompany the opening of an accommodation centre (as illustrated in Figure 1).³⁷

Centralised agencies responsible for the reception of international protection applicants in the Netherlands and Sweden assume a leading role in developing communication plans. Austria, Luxembourg and Poland develop

their respective communication plans through multi-level coordination, including with line ministries and their offices, centralised agencies, provinces and municipalities. Communication plans in Luxembourg, Poland and Sweden are developed case by case, based on needs at national and local levels. For example, Poland's communication plans are part of the National Crisis Management Plan, which is designed to respond to emergency situations such as a mass influx of international protection applicants. The Swedish Migration Agency tailors its communication plans to each accommodation centre.

32 AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

33 BE, CZ, HR, FI, LV, PL, SK.

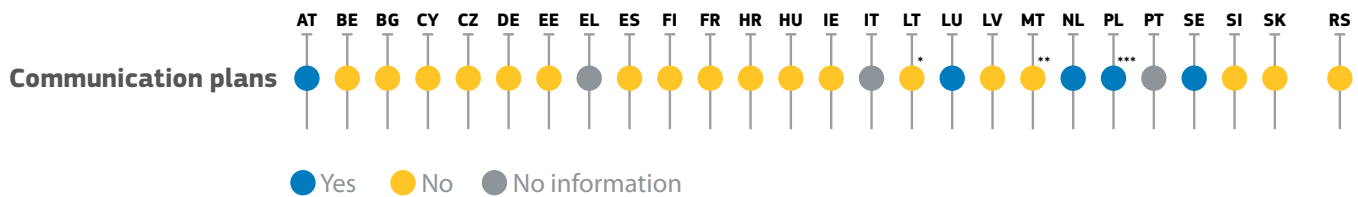
34 AT, FR.

35 AT, CZ, FR, HR, LV, PL, SK.

36 BE, FI.

37 AT, LU (case by case), NL, PL, SE.

Figure 1. Overview of communication plans (at either national or regional level) to accompany the opening of an accommodation centre in 22 EMN Member Countries and Serbia



* LT does not implement distribution policies and therefore considers communication plans not applicable.

** MT does not implement distribution policies and therefore considers communication plans not applicable.

*** In emergency situations, communication with the public is conducted in accordance with procedure SPO-3, as part of the National Crisis Management Plan (KPZK) and procedure SPO-9 on mass influx of foreigners.

Fifteen EMN Member Countries and Serbia do not have communication plans (at either national or regional level) to accompany the opening of an accommodation centre.³⁸ In addition, two EMN Member Countries do not apply distribution policies and therefore reported that communication plans are not applicable to their reception systems.³⁹ However, Belgium, Finland, Germany and Ireland reported having guidance in place. In Belgium, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) has an internal communication plan that informs outreach activities. The Communication Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) adheres to the Ministry of the Interior's communication strategy, with Migri taking responsibility for communicating at national level (e.g. media releases upon the opening or closure of reception centres) and providing guidance to service providers that operate in reception centres. In Ireland, the Community Engagement Team at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has agreed on the process to be followed when an accommodation centre opens. In Germany, no national communication plan is needed, as there are no federal-level accommodation centres – local authorities may develop tailored communication plans, based on specific circumstances.

4.2. Engagement of local authorities and elected representatives

In 15 EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents), **local authorities and elected representatives are engaged either before⁴⁰ or upon the opening⁴¹ of an accommodation centre in an area (or on both occasions)⁴².**

The authorities responsible for planning and opening international protection accommodation centres in 14 EMN Member Countries⁴³ and Serbia are usually tasked with notifying the relevant local authorities and/or elected representatives of any decisions in that regard. Discussions generally revolve around the nature of the centre, the services provided, the potential impact on service provision

in the municipality, and how further cooperation with local authorities could be organised.⁴⁴

In Germany, the law establishes that the Federal State and local governments operate the initial reception centres and accommodation centres, respectively. Responsibility for communicating plans to municipalities and the public therefore lies with the level of government that will be operating the centre. Similarly, in Austria, the provincial authorities are responsible for the administration of provincial care centres (after the admission procedure), and therefore also any engagement with municipalities.

Box 2. Collaboration between central and local government structures in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a structured process for consultations with municipalities about new accommodation centres. The Central Agency for Asylum Seekers (COA) and the municipality agree on the number of applicants that can be accommodated and for how long, as well as arrangements for education, healthcare, public order, security and finance. This is all laid down in a management agreement.

The city council oversees the process, often forming an official project group led by a project leader (external or internal). The group usually includes municipal employees involved in spatial planning, healthcare, safety, legal matters and communication. Several municipalities have also invited a COA employee to join the group, with the aim of enhancing cooperation.

The reception systems in Finland, France and Spain **allow for a certain degree of flexibility and/or lack binding requirements for consultations with municipalities.**

In Finland, the service providers who open a new reception centre have a signed responsibility to collaborate with and inform local authorities. In France, Prefectures issue calls for projects to open facilities within the National Reception System. Although this process does not systematically

38 BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LV, SI, SK, and RS.

39 LT, MT.

40 BG, CZ, EE, ES, FR, LV, LU, PL, SE.

41 DE, FI, IE.

42 BE, NL, SI, and RS.

43 Notifications are issued to provinces in NL; municipalities in AT, BE, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FR, IE, NL, LU, PL, SE; elected officials in BE and IE; and municipal mayors in BG.

44 BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, IE, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, and RS.

require elected officials to be informed, information is very often provided. In Spain, regional and local authorities are engaged before large accommodation centres are opened. For small facilities such as individual/single flats, which do not have a significant impact on the local community, regional and local authorities may not need to be notified before the opening.

4.3. Engagement of local communities

In 15 EMN Member Countries and Serbia, **the local community is engaged before⁴⁵ or upon the opening⁴⁶ of an accommodation centre in an area (or on both occasions).**⁴⁷ These processes aim to foster effective cooperation with municipality residents, local organised groups, community representatives and other relevant stakeholders active in the area.

The authorities responsible for planning and opening international protection accommodation centres in 10 EMN Member Countries are tasked with organising public outreach activities.⁴⁸ In 13 EMN Member Countries, local communities and other relevant stakeholders are usually engaged with in meetings that provide information on the new centre's purpose and function, as well as an opportunity to raise questions and concerns.⁴⁹ In seven EMN Member Countries, these meetings happen before an accommodation centre opens.⁵⁰ Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Spain allow for a certain degree of flexibility in the format and timeline of public outreach activities. In Finland, the service providers operating the reception centres decide themselves how they engage with local communities. They may organise specific neighbourhood meetings and share information with the local community beforehand. In Ireland, community engagement may sometimes involve simple information sharing, and at other times more detailed meetings with local community groups, officials, public representatives and other stakeholders. Estonia allows for a certain degree of flexibility in information sessions held with local communities in case of time pressure. Similarly, in Spain, the opening of small reception centres may not require prior communication with local communities. In several EMN Member Countries, the provision of information may be supplemented by public outreach tools and events, including press releases,⁵¹ flyers,⁵² newsletters,⁵³ website posts,⁵⁴ presentations⁵⁵ and 'open house days'.⁵⁶

Box 3. Structured engagement of local communities before the opening of an accommodation centre in Belgium, Ireland and the Netherlands

In Belgium, once a decision has been made to open an accommodation centre, Fedasil initiates a sequence of consultations with local authorities and community outreach activities. Three weeks before the centre opens, Fedasil produces flyers and distributes them to the local community (ideally, in collaboration with the municipality). Two weeks before the opening, Fedasil holds an information session for the mayor, municipality/neighbourhood residents, police, social security and welfare institutions, and other local stakeholders. A contact person is appointed to handle community enquiries, and voluntary work in the reception centre may begin if deemed appropriate.

In Ireland, once a contract for a new accommodation centre has been signed, the Community Engagement Team (part of DCEDIY) connects with representatives of the local community and government bodies. Outreach activities can include regular emails, posts on a government website, and meetings with community groups, elected officials and other stakeholders. These meetings are often organised in collaboration with Community Integration Forums, which bring together all public, community and voluntary organisations to coordinate a community-led response and support international protection applicants and other migrants to settle.

The Association of Netherlands' Municipalities has issued guidelines to help municipalities engage with the local community when an accommodation centre is opened. These guidelines recommend: being transparent about the purpose of public information meetings; anticipating and preparing for security risks; monitoring social media for community reactions; forming an advisory group with local stakeholders; and recruiting local volunteers for various activities in the centre.

4.4. Engagement of local service providers

Ten EMN Member Countries and Serbia have **a structured mechanism or procedure in place for informing local service providers** (e.g. health, education and transport) of plans to open an accommodation centre.⁵⁷ Centralised agencies responsible for the reception of international protection applicants tend to assume coordination roles wherever they exist. This is the case with the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) in Belgium, the National Reception Office (ONA) in Luxembourg, and the Central Agency for Asylum Seekers (COA) in the Netherlands.

45 AT, BE, BG, CZ, EE, ES, FR, LU, LV, PL.

46 IE and RS.

47 CY, DE, NL, SI.

48 AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, HR, IE, NL, PL, SI.

49 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, SI.

50 AT, BE, CZ, FR, LU, LV, NL.

51 FI.

52 BE.

53 NL.

54 IE, LV.

55 LV, SI.

56 CZ, PL.

57 AT, BE, ES, FI, IE, LV, LU, NL, PL, SI, and RS. However, in AT, such information is provided after the opening of a federal reception centre.

In five EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents), the authorities responsible for the reception of international protection applicants **notify local service providers directly**.⁵⁸ These include healthcare,⁵⁹ education⁶⁰ and social protection⁶¹ service providers, as well as the local police⁶² and the department of population services within the municipality.⁶³ For example, in Belgium, Fedasil starts a consultation process with local service providers four weeks before a new accommodation centre opens.

In Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden, the authorities responsible for the reception of international protection applicants **delegate responsibility for notifying local service providers to municipalities**. In addition, in Luxembourg, the ONA involves the Ministry of Education in supporting local authorities to set up initial classes for children.

In Finland and Spain, which have delegated the provision of local services (either entirely or partially) to reception centres and accommodation centres respectively, there is no need for government authorities to initiate formal communication and engagement with local service providers.⁶⁴ For example, in Finland, reception centres are mainly responsible for social services and some health services provided to international protection applicants.⁶⁵ In Spain, language learning and training for employment are organised using the resources available at accommodation centres, with the aim of supplementing the provision already available locally. Transport services may be organised independently by larger accommodation centres in Spain, which may have vehicles available, depending on the number of residents.



5. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE PLANNING FOR ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

5.1. Additional resources for local services

Six EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents) have **a specific mechanism or procedure in place to provide additional resources for local services** (e.g. healthcare, education, employment and language support, and transportation) when an accommodation centre opens.⁶⁶ Financial (and other) resources are allocated based on different principles, criteria and funding streams, which can be summarised as follows.

- **Allocation based on capacity or per capita.** In Belgium, local authorities receive funds based on the number and types of centres available in their territory, to support local police services and administration. Schools also receive additional funding based on the number of new students enrolled. Similarly, in Latvia, there is a specific mechanism (set out in Cabinet Regulations) that guarantees additional financial resources to local schools providing education to asylum seekers. In the Czech Republic, additional funding for the local government is calculated based on the number of applicants accommodated at the centre per day. In the Netherlands, municipalities receive compensation for funding the provision of education, healthcare and security services (based on the number of beneficiaries).
- **Compensation/reimbursement system.** In Sweden, municipalities can apply for reimbursement for the education services (pre-school, primary and secondary) that they provide to asylum-seeking children, while regional authorities receive a flatrate of compensation for

healthcare services provided to international protection applicants. The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for receiving and processing applications, as well as paying out reimbursements.

- **Supplementary provision of services.** The Spanish reception system has a mechanism to finance and manage a series of initiatives to supplement the provision of services already available at local level, including psychological assistance, language and employment support, and social and educational assistance. These initiatives may entail hiring specialised staff, reinforcing the training offer in a specific subject area, issuing guidance, and supporting international protection applicants to find housing or participate in cultural activities to facilitate their integration.
- **Complementarity between national and EU funds.** In Serbia, both national and EU funds are allocated to municipalities (for the provision of local services) through the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, as the reception authority.

Emergency response. In Spain, in unforeseen and exceptional circumstances such as mass influx of international protection applicants, financial mechanisms are activated, mainly at national level, to supplement the regular allocation of resources for local services.

5.2. Additional resources for non-governmental groups

Croatia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Serbia and the Slovak Republic have **a mechanism or procedure in place to provide additional resources for**

58 AT, BE, IE, LV, PL, and RS. However, in RS, line ministries take the lead in communication for services that fall under the responsibility of central authorities (e.g. healthcare, education, social protection).

59 AT, BE, IE, LV, PL, and RS.

60 AT, BE, IE, LV, PL, and RS.

61 IE and RS.

62 BE, IE, LV.

63 BE.

64 In FI, there are only specific negotiations about locations for the accommodation of unaccompanied minors (i.e. a group home or supported housing unit).

65 In FI, some of the healthcare services offered to international protection applicants are outsourced to external (private and public) service providers.

66 BE, CZ, ES, LV, NL, SE, and RS.

non-governmental groups (e.g. NGOs or community groups in the area) when an accommodation centre opens.

- In Croatia and the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of the Interior provides NGOs with resources to implement activities that benefit international protection applicants through projects funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).
- In the Netherlands, municipalities can apply for financial compensation from the government for the subsidies they provide to volunteer groups that work in and/or for accommodation centres (in line with Article 6 of the Accommodation Centre Facilities Decree).
- In Serbia, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration provides resources for different project activities through an open call for proposals for funding for projects run by civil society organisations.

Box 4. Additional resources for NGOs and community groups in Ireland

In Ireland, the government has recently established a number of funds to support NGOs and community groups in integrating international protection applicants, enhancing community infrastructure and facilities, and fostering engagement with local communities to build resilience against misinformation and prejudice.

The **International Protection Integration Fund**, launched in 2022, supports projects aimed at integrating international protection applicants across 10 thematic areas, including employment, education, language and health. In 2024, €1.5 million was made available for the entire country (depending on applications).

The **Community Recognition Fund**, launched in 2023, allocates €50 million annually to support community infrastructure and facilities in areas hosting beneficiaries of temporary protection and international protection applicants. Funding is allocated based on the number of arrivals in each county, and community needs.

The **Community Connection Project**, starting in 2025, will support the recruitment of up to 30 Community Link Workers for 18 months, who will engage with local communities to build resilience against misinformation and prejudice. Since 2023, additional funding for the recruitment of community support workers has been provided through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Ten EMN Member Countries do not provide additional contributions to NGOs.⁶⁷ For example, Spain allocates additional resources for the care of international protection applicants exclusively to reception centres, in line with the principle that services should be provided equally across the country's territory. In Germany, NGOs operate under legally binding tender specifications, which only allow the allocation of additional contributions within the limitations of the tender specifications. In Estonia and Luxembourg, NGOs can apply to national or EU funding streams, such as AMIF, to obtain additional contributions. In Belgium, Fedasil collaborates with NGOs as reception partners, even though there is no formalised mechanism or procedure in place to provide them with additional contributions. Similarly, in Bulgaria and Poland, the authorities responsible for the reception of international protection applicants cooperate with NGOs to provide, among other things, free legal assistance and educational activities.



6. ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS FOLLOWING THE OPENING OF ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

6.1. Communication and exchange with local authorities and service providers

Nine EMN Member Countries and Serbia (out of 23 respondents) hold **structured meetings with local authorities and service providers** after an accommodation centre opens.⁶⁸ These consultations generally involve a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, police, healthcare providers, educational institutions and NGOs. The overall objective is to align efforts, resolve challenges, and enhance communication and collaboration.

The **frequency of these meetings with local authorities and service providers** varies from country to country. In Belgium, for example, Fedasil hosts a structured consultation involving the mayor, the municipal services and the police at least once a year. Hospitals and pharmacies are also consulted once a year, and schools twice a year. In Serbia, mandatory monthly coordination meetings are held at each accommodation centre, involving

representatives of local authorities, service providers, local school authorities, the community health centre, and local centres for social work.

Austria, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Poland and Sweden have established **flexible consultation mechanisms** that can be adjusted based on municipalities' needs and interests. In Austria, for example, the Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services offers various on-demand formats for exchange with local authorities and service providers, including boards of education, and child and welfare authorities. Similarly, the Swedish Migration Agency holds meetings with the County Administrative Board, municipalities, other authorities and NGOs on a monthly or as-needed basis. In Estonia, the need for and frequency of consultations is agreed with the local municipalities. In Finland, the service providers that open a new reception centre have a signed responsibility to collaborate with local authorities. In Poland, regular quarterly meetings of the Local Interaction Teams (including accommodation centre employees, police, border guards and NGOs) can be supplemented with ad hoc meetings to respond to emergency

⁶⁷ BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, LU, LV, PL.

⁶⁸ AT, BE, IE, LV, LU (case by case), NL, PL, SE, SI, and RS.

situations, such as a mass influx of international protection applicants.

Box 5. Specialised bodies to facilitate communication and exchange with local stakeholders in Ireland and Luxembourg

In Ireland, the Community Integration Forum enables communication among stakeholders in local communities (see Box 3). In 2023, local authorities began setting up Local Authority Integration Teams (LAITs), funded by DCEDIY. LAITs coordinate ongoing integration support, information, advice and guidance for international protection applicants, beneficiaries of international protection, and other refugees. There are formal reporting lines between LAITs and DCEDIY, and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) organises in-person events and online information sessions, including dedicated sessions with DCEDIY.

In Luxembourg, monitoring committees can be established at municipalities' discretion to enable regular discussions on accommodation centre operations, address concerns, and support the integration of international protection applicants with the local community.

Migrants exchange information with local community representatives on a monthly or weekly basis through emails and meetings. Similarly, the Croatian Ministry of the Interior maintains regular communication with its partners from local communities. Austria, as well as Estonia, applies a **flexible consultation mechanism** to local communities (as described in Section 5.1).

The **communication and exchange formats** chosen by the responding EMN Member Countries vary. For example, the Netherlands has developed a comprehensive consultation mechanism that brings local communities together with reception agency management and representatives of the municipality, local police and service providers. They convene regularly to discuss accommodation centre operations, monitor the situation, and provide advice to the relevant municipality. In Belgium, accommodation centres organise events such as 'neighbourhood initiatives' and 'open house days' to foster communication and integration between residents and local communities, as well as quarterly newsletters and dedicated web pages. In Finland, the service providers responsible for opening a new reception centre decide themselves how they engage with local communities. Service providers take part in various local and regional migration and stakeholder networks following the opening of accommodation centres. Migri has public and internal feedback channels in place following the opening of accommodation centres.

Ireland has established, and Luxembourg can establish, **specialised bodies** to engage with local stakeholders, including local communities (as described in Boxes 4 and 5, respectively).

6.2. Communication and exchange with local communities

Eight EMN Member Countries promote **communication and exchange with local communities** after an accommodation centre opens.⁶⁹ In Slovenia, for example, the Government Office for the Support and Integration of



7. CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN ENGAGING WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE OPENING OF ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

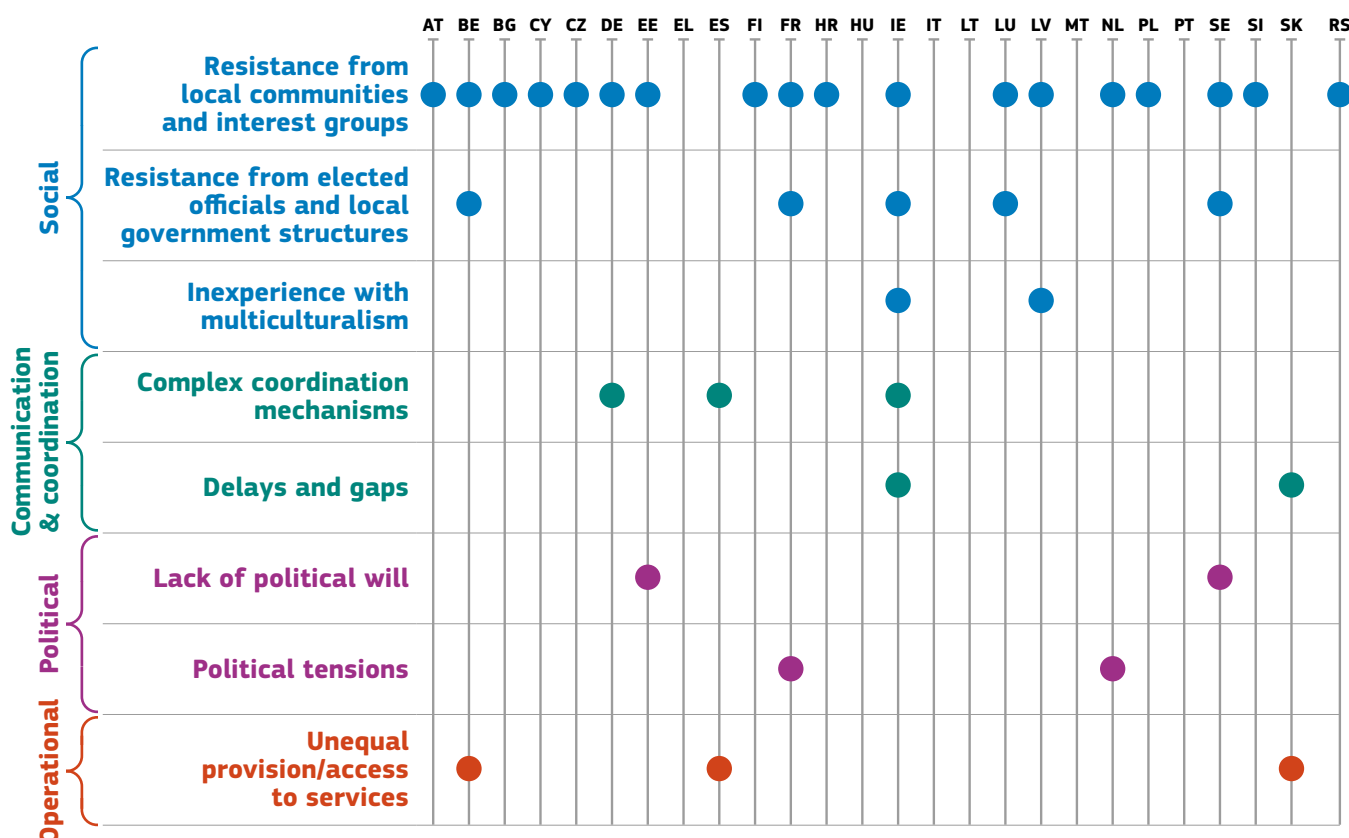
7.1. Key challenges

The majority of responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia described challenges in engaging with local

stakeholders such as local communities, interest groups, elected officials and local government structures, especially before a new accommodation centre opens.⁷⁰ Figure 2 provides an overview of the key challenges.

⁶⁹ AT, BE, EE, FI, HR, IE, LU, NL, SI.

⁷⁰ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK, and RS.

Figure 2. Key challenges in relation to the opening of accommodation centres

Key challenges include the following:

- **Resistance from local communities and interest groups** before or when accommodation centres open, ranging from anxiety based on negative perceptions to violent opposition.⁷¹
- **Resistance from elected officials and local government structures** (i.e. municipalities) before or when accommodation centres open, as a result of concerns about potential negative reactions from constituents and residents, respectively.⁷²
- **Lack of political will** on the part of municipalities to open new accommodation centres.⁷³
- **Political tensions**, potentially culminating in instances of violence against elected and public officials.⁷⁴
- **Delays and gaps in communication**, which may lead to rumours, protests and lack of coordination among relevant stakeholders.⁷⁵
- **Complex mechanisms for coordination** (or a lack of coordination) between stakeholders involved in opening

and managing accommodation centres (e.g. central and local government structures, communities, NGOs and service providers), which may result from conflicting interests and/or lead to an uncoordinated and ineffective response.⁷⁶

- **Unequal provision of, or lack of access to, services** tailored to international protection applicants, including healthcare, social services, and schooling for children who do not yet speak the local language.⁷⁷
- **Inexperience with multiculturalism**, especially in rural communities that do not have previous experience with international migrants.⁷⁸

7.2. Key good practices

The responding EMN Member Countries and Serbia also highlighted good practices that have supported the opening of accommodation centres and counteracted initial resistance from local stakeholders, as illustrated in Figure 3.

71 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, HR, IE, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, and RS.

72 BE, FR, IE, LU, SE.

73 EE, SE.

74 FR, NL.

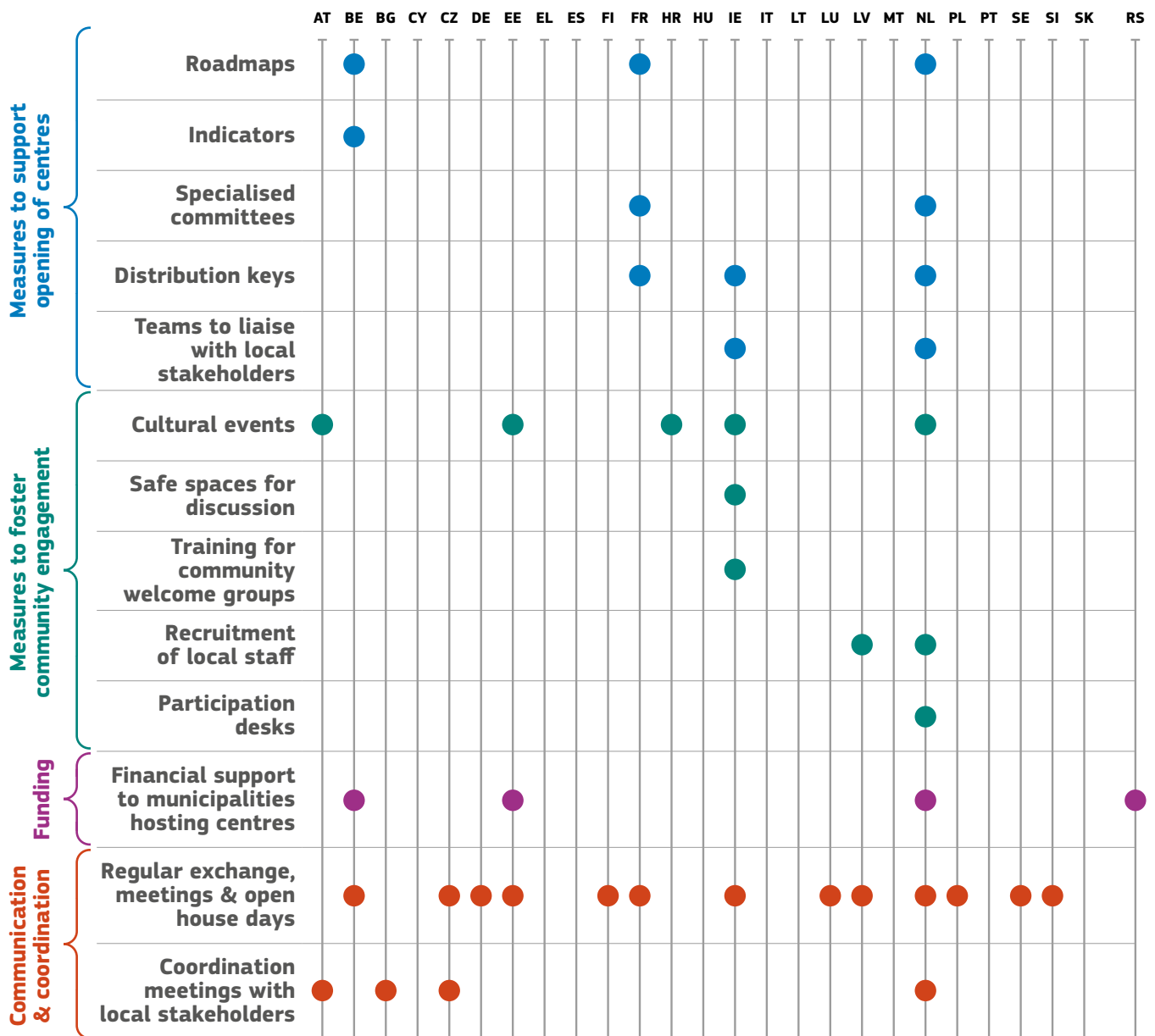
75 IE, SK.

76 DE, ES, IE.

77 BE, ES, SK.

78 IE, LV.

Figure 3. Key good practices in relation to the opening of accommodation centres



Key good practices include the following:

- Measures to **support the opening of accommodation centres**, including (but not limited to): roadmaps to ensure that relevant stakeholders are engaged in a timely way, both before and after an accommodation centre opens;⁷⁹ centrally developed indicators to monitor engagement between the centre and local stakeholders (see Box 6);⁸⁰ specialised committees to monitor, discuss and address relevant issues;⁸¹ distribution

keys (see Box 1) developed in consultation with local authorities;⁸² and dedicated teams that can build strong relationships with local authorities, community groups, service providers and NGOs.⁸³

- Measures to **foster community engagement and integrate accommodation centres harmoniously into municipal life**, including (but not limited to): (cultural) events;⁸⁴ safe spaces for communities to discuss issues;⁸⁵ training and support for community welcome

79 BE, FR, NL. In France, there are regular exchanges with state representatives at regional and departmental level, as well as local elected representatives and operators – especially during the project assessment phase and during the design of regional plans for the reception of asylum seekers and integration of refugees. However, this is not uniform across the country.

80 BE.

81 FR, NL.

82 FR, IE, NL. In Ireland, distribution keys are currently used for resettled refugees only.

83 IE, NL.

84 AT, EE, HR, IE, NL.

85 IE.

groups;⁸⁶ the recruitment of local staff;⁸⁷ and ‘participation desks’ supporting asylum seekers to access volunteer work, sports, leisure activities and, sometimes, paid work.⁸⁸

- **Financial support to municipalities** that host accommodation centres to improve their services, support the centres’ operational capacities, and implement social cohesion measures.⁸⁹
- **Clear, transparent and proactive communication** with local stakeholders (i.e. elected officials, communities, NGOs and service providers) through regular exchange, meetings and ‘open house days’ at accommodation centres.⁹⁰
- **Coordination mechanisms after opening**, including regular meetings with relevant stakeholders at local level.⁹¹

Box 6. Indicators to monitor engagement between accommodation centres and local stakeholders in Belgium

In Belgium, Fedasil employs a set of centrally developed indicators to monitor and assess cooperation between reception centres and local stakeholders and communities. The design of these indicators is a joint effort between Fedasil’s headquarters and the Regions (Region North and Region South), which act as intermediaries between the national agency and the reception centres.

The Regions are responsible for monitoring implementation of the indicators annually. The purpose of this monitoring process is twofold: it ensures that all reception centres achieve a consistent standard of community engagement; and it promotes continuous improvement by identifying good practices, encouraging their exchange, and providing feedback on effective strategies.

86 IE.

87 LV, NL.

88 NL.

89 BE, EE, NL and RS.

90 BE, CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI.

91 AT, BG, CZ, NL.



For more information

EMN website: <http://ec.europa.eu/emn>

EMN LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network>

EMN X account: <https://x.com/emnmigration>

EMN YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@EMNMigration>

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Cyprus www.emncyprus.mip.gov.cy

The Czech Republic www.emncz.eu/

Estonia www.emn.ee/

Finland emn.fi/en/

France www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Europe-et-International/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM3/Le-reseau-europeen-des-migrations-REM2

Germany www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/EMN/emn-node.html

Greece <https://migration.gov.gr/emn/>

Hungary www.emnhungary.hu/en

Ireland www.emn.ie/

Italy www.emnitalyncp.it/

Latvia www.emn.lv

Lithuania www.emn.lt/

Luxembourg emnluxembourg.uni.lu/

Malta emn.gov.mt/

The Netherlands www.emnnetherlands.nl/

Poland www.gov.pl/web/european-migration-network

Portugal rem.sef.pt/en/

Romania www.mai.gov.ro/

Spain www.emnspain.gob.es/en/home

The Slovak Republic www.emn.sk/en

Slovenia emnslovenia.si

Sweden www.emnsweden.se/

Norway www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway#

Georgia migration.commission.ge/

The Republic of Moldova bma.gov.md/en

Ukraine dmsu.gov.ua/en-home.html

Montenegro www.gov.me/mup

Armenia migration.am/?lang=en

Serbia kirs.gov.rs/eng

The Republic of North Macedonia
<https://mvr.gov.mk/>