

Asylum in Europe: the situation of applicants for international protection in 2024

The [Asylum information Database \(AIDA\)](#) is a database managed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) containing detailed information on asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention, and the content of international protection in 25 countries. The country reports are written by national experts in cooperation with a variety of stakeholders, ranging from civil society organisations and lawyers to national authorities. The reports are edited and verified by ECRE. The database is widely used by European and national policy makers, legal practitioners, and courts.

This briefing provides key examples of the general trends that can be observed across asylum systems in Europe in 2024 as documented in AIDA.¹ It demonstrates that, while asylum systems are in place and functioning across Europe, the rights of people in need of international protection are still regularly violated and significant gaps in national asylum systems continue to be reported. This is the case despite a continued overall positive response of states to the displacement from Ukraine, which created additional challenges but also demonstrated that prolonged management of large-scale displacement is possible.² Access to asylum remains a particular concern, as do the quality and length of asylum procedures. Reception systems came under pressure in an increasing number of countries, often due to a lack of sufficiently robust contingency planning, and detention of asylum applicants remained commonplace, rather than being a limited exception.

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum entered into force in June 2024. The Pact is composed of ten legislative texts which reform the European Union (EU) asylum and migration system. As a result, significant changes to national asylum systems, and within them reception systems, are to be expected in the coming year, as all Pact files will be applicable by June 2026. In the meantime, it is crucial that information regarding long-standing shortcomings is used to inform the development of national implementation plans and strategies, to ensure stronger and fairer asylum and reception systems.

1. Applications for international protection decrease for the first time since 2020

- **Asylum applications in the EU**

In 2024, for the first time since 2020, applications for international protection presented in EU Member States decreased (-11.8%, compared to a +17.7% in 2023). According to Eurostat,³ 996,955 people applied for international protection in the EU in 2024, of which 911,375 were first time applicants and 84,020 were subsequent applicants. The decrease in the total number of applications was mostly linked to first time applicants (-13.2% compared to 2023), as subsequent applications increased by 10.3%. The number of total applications was 28.7% lower in 2024 than in 2015. Over half of all applicants were nationals of 8 countries: Syria (153,425), Afghanistan (80,450), Venezuela (73,695), Türkiye (52,315), Colombia (51,150), Bangladesh (43,310), Peru (27,225) and Ukraine (26,425). Applications by Syrian nationals decreased in 2024 (-18%), as did those of Afghan (-26%), Turkish (-45%) and Colombian (19%) nationals, while applications increased for Ukrainian (+95%), Peruvian (+17%), Venezuelan

¹ Information presented in this overview was extracted and compiled from the 2024 Updates to the AIDA Country Reports, where further information, details and sources can be found [here](#).

² All AIDA updates on the year 2024 included annexes focusing on the country's implementation of temporary protection or similar national regimes. However, this overview focuses on key developments regarding international protection and will not cover key trends regarding the implementation of temporary protection.

³ Eurostat, 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data', data as of 31 July 2025, available [here](#).

(+9%) and Bangladeshi (+7%) nationals. 78% of asylum applications in the EU were received in just 5 Member States, namely: Germany, Spain, Italy, France and Greece.⁴

The situation in EU Member States and AIDA countries varied in terms of the number of asylum applications received. Almost 75% of EU Member States (20 out of 27) witnessed a decrease in asylum applications in 2024.⁵ Similarly, 15 out of 24 AIDA countries⁶ experienced a decrease in asylum applications, with significant decreased rates in Romania (-76%), Austria (-57%), Türkiye (53%), Bulgaria (-46%), Croatia (-36%), Sweden (-35%), Germany (-29%), Cyprus (-23%), Slovenia (-22%), Ukraine (-18%), Malta (-18%), the Netherlands (-16%), Switzerland (-8%), and France (-6%). Germany saw the biggest decrease in absolute numbers, with over 100,000 less applications than in 2023, followed by Austria (-33,880), Bulgaria (-10,250) and Türkiye (-10,008). Some decreases appear significant in percentage terms but are less so in absolute terms, given the relatively small total number of applications. This applies, for instance, to Malta (-155 applications) and Croatia (-635 applications).

In contrast, a limited number of countries witnessed moderate to significant increases in the number of asylum applications.⁷ The most significant increases in comparative terms were noted in Poland (+78%), Ireland (+40%), followed by the United Kingdom (UK) (+28%), Italy (+17%), Greece (+15%), Belgium (+12%) and Serbia (+12%). In the EU, Italy saw the biggest increase in absolute numbers (22,785 more applications than in 2023, out of a total of 158,605), followed by Greece (+9,455), Poland (+7,420) and Ireland (+5,290). Out of the AIDA countries,⁸ the UK witnessed the biggest increase in absolute numbers, with 23,713 more applications in 2024 than in 2023. A noteworthy case is Serbia: although it recorded a slight increase in applications in 2024 (+23), the number of arrivals fell sharply, decreasing by 82% compared to 2023 (from 108,808 to 19,603).

Three AIDA countries reported a relatively stable number of applications for international protection in 2024 compared to 2023: Spain (+2%), Hungary (+0%), and Portugal (-0.2%).⁹

Overall, the number of applications under-represents the number of persons attempting to access protection in Europe – and the need for international protection – given the widespread practices of denial of access to territory and/or to asylum procedures, documented under [point 2](#) below. In this sense, in almost half of the 15 AIDA countries where the number of asylum applications decreased in 2024, there were reports of pushbacks and/or lack of rescue at sea. This was the case in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Malta, Romania, and Türkiye.

- **Recognition rates and protection needs**

The protection needs of those applying for international protection in the EU remained high, as evidenced by the 51.39% overall protection rate at first instance (42.48% when taking into account only international protection under EU law). This remained quite stable with respect to 2023 (corresponding to a 0.9 percentage points decrease from 52.86%), year in which the highest protection rate since 2016

⁴ EUAA, 'Asylum Report 2025', 12 June 2025, available [here](#).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Data for Serbia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and Ukraine are not reported in Eurostat and, therefore, have been obtained from the figures reported in the relevant AIDA 2024 report updates.

⁷ Eurostat, 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data', data as of 31 July 2025, available [here](#).

⁸ Data for Serbia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and Ukraine are not reported in Eurostat and, therefore, have been obtained from the figures reported in the relevant AIDA 2024 report updates.

⁹ Eurostat, 'Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data', data as of 31 July 2025, available [here](#).

(61.64%) was registered. At first instance, refugee status continued to be the main form of protection granted (21.85% out of the total first instance decisions), closely followed by subsidiary protection (20.63%) and then humanitarian protection (8.92%). The proportion of humanitarian status granted at first instance decreased by 2.3 percentage points from 2023 to 2024 and that of subsidiary protection increased by 1.44 percentage points.¹⁰ In addition, 50,360 protection decisions were delivered upon appeal or review by EU Member States in 2024 (i.e., 27% of appealed first instance decisions were overturned in favour of the applicant with the granting of international or national protection at that stage).¹¹ This proportion remained stable with respect to 2023 data.

In absolute figures, in 2024 EU Member States granted protection status to 438,000 asylum seekers,¹² which represents almost a 7% increase with respect to 2023 (409,535). Among the total number of persons receiving protection in the EU in 2024, 42.4% were granted refugee status, 38.8% subsidiary protection and 18.8% humanitarian status. Syrian (32.3%), Afghan (16.5%) and Venezuelan (7.9%) nationals were the main beneficiaries of protection in the EU in 2024.¹³ The nationalities with the highest first-instance recognition rates for international protection were Palestinians (91%), Syrians (90%), Burkinabe (85%), Malians (84%), Eritreans (82%), and Ukrainians (80%).¹⁴

With over half of applicants granted protection at first instance and more than a quarter succeeding on appeal - patterns consistent with most of the past decade - it is evident that the majority of people applying for protection in the EU have genuine protection needs.

Moreover, these figures likely underrepresent actual protection needs. First, as ECRE has documented extensively,¹⁵ a person's chance of obtaining protection in the EU varies dramatically depending on the country examining their claim, likely due to gaps in the quality of decision-making. For instance, while the overall protection rate for Afghan nationals at first instance in the EU (including national humanitarian protection) remained high (81%) in 2024, the rates varied significantly across Member States: in Bulgaria, Afghan nationals were granted protection in only 11% of first-instance decisions, whereas in Greece, they were granted protection in 98% of cases.¹⁶ Similarly, the overall first instance protection rate (including national humanitarian protection) of Syrian nationals at EU level stood at 91% in 2024, but varied from 97% recognition rate in Austria to only 50% in Romania. Another example is that of Venezuelan applicants, who had an overall recognition rate of 89% in 2024. However, recognition rates varied widely across Member States: in Germany, only 20% of Venezuelan applicants were granted a form of protection (including humanitarian protection) at first instance, compared with 99% in

¹⁰ Eurostat, 'First instance decisions on applications by type of decision, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data', data as of 28 August 2025, available [here](#).

¹¹ Eurostat, 'Final decisions in appeal or review on applications by citizenship, age and sex - annual data', data as of 27 August 2025, available [here](#).

¹² This figure is calculated by adding all positive decisions at first instance and the appealed first instance decisions that were overturned in favour of the applicant on appeal. It should be noted that this could slightly overrepresent the total figure of positive final decisions, as it could be that some of the appealed decisions were positive already at first instance (e.g., a first instance decision granting humanitarian status that is appealed and overturned on appeal to grant refugee status).

¹³ Calculated as the share of positive first instance positive decisions and positive decisions after appeal in the EU. Eurostat, 'Final decisions in appeal or review on applications by citizenship, age and sex - annual data', data as of 27 August 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁴ EUAA, 'Asylum Report 2025', 12 June 2025, available [here](#), page 68.

¹⁵ ECRE, *Asylum statistics and the need for protection in Europe*, December 2022, available [here](#); ECRE, *Asylum statistics in Europe: Factsheet*, June 2020, available [here](#).

¹⁶ See also Ciaran King (Commissioned by ECRE), *Assessing Legal Grounds for Protecting Afghan Asylum Seekers in Europe*, March 2023, available [here](#); ECRE, *Afghans Seeking Protection in Europe*, December 2021, available [here](#); ECRE, *EU Support to Afghanistan: Scoring High on Humanitarian Assistance and Low on Protection in Europe?*, December 2021, available [here](#).

Spain.¹⁷ Second, Eurostat data runs together inadmissibility decisions and in-merit negative decisions, even though the former do not usually include an assessment of protection needs. For example, in 2024 in Belgium, 7,763 inadmissibility decisions were taken (representing 47% of the total number of rejection decisions (16,445)), and the Secretary of State issued an instruction according to which applications by persons who had already been granted international protection in another EU Member State should automatically be considered as ‘subsequent applications’, even if it is their first application in Belgium.

2. Access to asylum in Europe: denial of access to the territory and to asylum procedures

Access to asylum remained a serious cause for concern also in 2024. Across Europe, unlawful border practices, violence and failures to provide assistance to people in distress at sea were reported, hindering the possibility to access protection in Europe for people in need. Such practices were reported in over half of the countries covered by AIDA. National authorities used a wide array of measures: direct pushbacks at land or sea borders; (informal) readmission agreements; delayed or refused maritime assistance; reintroduction or tightening of border controls; and denial of access to the territory and/or to the asylum procedure. These measures violate the right to asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement*, as enshrined in EU and international law.

- **Pushbacks and other violent practices at land borders**

In Cyprus, in addition to reports of pushbacks at sea (see below), the situation at the green line drew significant attention in 2024. From May to November, approximately 70 people were not permitted to enter the areas under effective control of the Republic of Cyprus and were thus forced to remain in the buffer zone for a prolonged period, in very harsh living conditions. This drew international condemnation from UNHCR and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.¹⁸

In the context of internal border controls at all French borders throughout 2024, consistent reports of pushbacks at France’s land borders with Italy and Spain continued in 2024. In April, the French Ombudsperson published a key decision regarding respect for the rights of people stopped and questioned at the French-Italian internal border by French security forces, revealing serious and massive violations of the rights of asylum seekers who are stopped there, including pushbacks after expressions of will to apply for asylum, lack of information provision, denial of access to asylum at the border, *de facto* deprivation of liberty, etc.¹⁹ In 2024, Eurostat reported an estimated 10,235 third-country nationals that had been refused entry at France’s external borders (including 1,295 at land borders).²⁰

In 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) condemned Hungary in a case concerning collective expulsions (*M.D. and Others v. Hungary*). More so, while there was a significant decrease in the number of reported pushbacks, it has been reported that this is likely not due to the changes in the Hungarian legislation or practice, but rather due to a police operation in Serbia that took place in the end of 2023 and increased police presence in Northern Serbia. In any case, reports on pushbacks from neighbouring EU states continued, with 5,713 persons having been informally sent to Serbia from Hungary in 2024.

¹⁷ Eurostat, ‘First instance decisions on applications by type of decision, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data’, data as of 28 August 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁸ Council of Europe, available [here](#); UNHCR, available [here](#).

¹⁹ Défenseur des droits, ‘Décision-cadre n°2024-061 relative au respect des droits des personnes migrantes à la frontière intérieure franco-italienne, 23 April 2024, available in French [here](#).

²⁰ Eurostat, ‘Third country nationals refused entry at the external borders - annual data (rounded)’, updated 14 August 2025, checked 8 September 2025, available [here](#).

Asylum seekers arriving to Serbia from North Macedonia and Bulgaria have also faced significant difficulties to access the territory and the asylum procedure in 2024, including through the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, ill-treatment, expulsion without examination of individual circumstances and risks of *refoulement* and chain *refoulement*.

In April 2024, the ECtHR condemned Poland for the repeated pushback of a group of migrants towards Ukraine (*Sherov and Others v. Poland*). Domestic courts also repeatedly found the authorities' pushbacks practices to be unlawful, but this did not stop this practice from continuing systematically in 2024.

At the eastern border of Türkiye with Iran, pushback practices continued in 2024, particularly targeting single men coming from Afghanistan. In some cases, people were held for months before being subjected to pushbacks without being taken to removal centres or having been given the possibility of applying for protection. Moreover, until December 2024, the Turkish border with Syria was closed, and crossings were only allowed for individuals who required specific medical treatments and their attendants for the duration of the treatment period.

In 2024, the national border monitoring mechanism in Bulgaria registered 3,548 alleged pushbacks affecting 43,282 persons (-75% from 2023 figures).

Although in 2024 a further decrease in the number of complaints on pushbacks to the Croatian Ombudsperson was recorded, civil society organisations reported that pushback practices persisted throughout the year.

- **Pushbacks and other violent practices at sea borders**

In Cyprus, there were multiple reports of pushbacks at sea in 2024, notably the interception and subsequent pushback of boats carrying asylum-seekers attempting to reach Cypriot shores with the risk of returnees being forcibly returned to Syria from Lebanon. In fact, in 2024, the ECtHR found that Cyprus violated the European Convention on Human Rights when it returned to Lebanon two Syrian citizens who wanted to apply for asylum (*M.A. and Z.R. v. Cyprus*).

Throughout 2023 and 2024, it was reported on several occasions that Malta continued its policy of preventing access to its territory for persons arriving by sea. Malta has consistently denied these allegations on pushbacks.

In 2024, Eurostat statistics reported an estimated 1,145 third-country nationals that had been refused entry at France's external sea borders.²¹

Allegations of pushbacks from Greece continued to be reported in 2024. In January 2025, the ECtHR published a landmark judgment condemning Greece for the '*systematic practice of pushbacks by the Greek authorities of third-country nationals from the Evros region to Türkiye*' (*A.R.E. v. Greece*). In another 2025 case, the ECtHR concluded that there were strong indications of a systematic pushback practice from the Greek islands to Türkiye, but the applicant in the case had failed to provide *prima facie* evidence of his individual pushback (*G.R.J. v. Greece*).

²¹ Eurostat, 'Third country nationals refused entry at the external borders - annual data (rounded)', updated 14 August 2025, checked 8 September 2025, available [here](#).

Reports on deaths at sea and delayed or refused maritime assistance continued in a number of countries in 2024. At least 82 people died at sea trying to cross the Channel attempting to reach the UK (compared to 12 in 2023). UNHCR reported that during the first seven months of 2024, at least 702 persons had died in the Canary Islands migratory route. According to IOM's figures, 1,166 persons died in the Atlantic route. NGOs have reported substantially higher numbers. In its 2024 Concluding Observations on Malta,²² the UN Human Rights Committee expressed severe concern about reports of activities potentially resulting in 'unlawful deprivations of life that have not been investigated' and referred to reports of Malta's failure to respond to distress situations at sea (in its SAR zone) and Malta's instructions to private vessels not to respond. The Committee also raised concern on the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Libya, which presents risks of illegal returns of asylum applicants. NGOs working in the Mediterranean repeatedly reported in 2024 that Malta, aided by Frontex, systemically outsourced rescue operations to the Libyan Coast Guard. Moreover, the implementation of an Italian law of 2023 continued to severely restrict NGO search and rescue operations in 2024, with systematic administrative detentions imposed on humanitarian vessels, though several courts suspended these measures as illegitimate. Regarding Greece, as reported by UNHCR, 125 persons were reported as having gone dead or missing during 2024 in the Eastern Mediterranean route.²³

- **Reintroduction or intensification of border controls**

Temporarily reintroduced border controls at internal borders remained commonplace in 2024, with 14 of the 27 EU Member States introducing or renewing borders controls for at least part of 2024. Despite the obligation for these to be a last resort measure for exceptional situations, except for those notified by Malta and Norway, these almost always spanned several months and oftentimes covered multiple borders. France, Germany, Denmark and Sweden operated border controls at all their internal borders during at least part of the year. Bulgaria became a full member of the Schengen area on 1 January 2025 and immediately introduced six months of temporary border controls with Romania, which joined the Schengen area on the same date.

The reintroduction of border controls of Italy with Slovenia - initially justified citing security concerns - was extended multiple times through June 2025.

Internal border controls in France have been renewed since 2015, including in 2024 and early 2025 with internal border controls covering all land, sea and air internal borders. In February 2024, following a 2023 CJEU decision,²⁴ the Council of State cancelled the article of the French law which allowed refusals of entry to be issued in all circumstances and without any distinction in the context of the reestablishment of internal border controls.

The impact of such controls is difficult to assess as refusals of entry at internal borders are not reported to Eurostat. However, in Germany for example, expanded border controls faced substantial criticism, as the data showed increasing border rejections throughout 2023 and 2024, in line with the border controls, and a significant drop in the share of intercepted individuals applying for asylum which dropped

²² United Nations Human Rights Committee, 'Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of Malta', 26 August 2024, available [here](#).

²³ UNHCR, *Greece Sea arrivals Dashboard - December 2024*, available [here](#).

²⁴ In September 2023, the CJEU stated that where a Member State has reintroduced controls at its internal borders, it may adopt, in respect of a third-country national who presents themselves at an authorised border crossing point situated on its territory and where such controls are carried out, a decision refusing entry, provided that the common standards and procedures laid down in the Return Directive are applied to that national in view of their removal (CJEU, Case C-143/22 *ADDE and Others*, 21 September 2023, available [here](#)).

from 45% in 2023 to 23% in the first half of 2024, affecting many people from countries with high asylum recognition rates like Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

In 2024, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) re-instated its presence in Bulgaria by deploying new staff, largely to participate in mixed border patrols along the border with Türkiye. The operation coincided with measures of intensified external control applied by the Turkish authorities on their side of the border, following extensive bilateral meetings that took place between the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. Bulgaria also intensified its cross-border cooperation with the border agencies of Türkiye and Greece.

- **Restrictions of access to the asylum procedure**

Asylum seekers in Bulgaria continued to be deprived of direct access to the asylum procedure when apprehended at the border. Just 2% of those who were apprehended on the entry border with Türkiye and within the so called Kapikule-Ormenion-Svilengrad border triangle received direct access to registration and accommodation in a SAR reception centre without first being detained in a deportation centre.

In Hungary, around 30 people managed to apply for asylum (with authorities immediately issuing a 'refusal decision', which were then quashed on appeal), and no recommendation on the approval of entry was issued in the embassy procedure in 2024. The asylum authority continues to issue these 'refusal decisions' to those who entered Hungary legally and try to apply for asylum, as according to the legislative framework in place they should submit an intent at the Hungarian Embassy prior to being allowed to apply for asylum in Hungary, despite clear judgements of domestic courts to conduct an in-merit procedure.

In Malta, newly arrived applicants faced growing obstacles in accessing fair asylum procedures. Those held in detention were denied any contact with NGOs or independent support, with detention centre telephones reportedly switched off.

The amended Polish Law on Protection entered into force in March 2025 and, on its basis, the right to apply for international protection at the Belarusian border was suspended for 60 days. Immediately afterwards, the ECtHR granted several interim measures ordering those persons not be returned to Belarus; however, at least one of these interim measures was ignored by the Polish Border Guard.

In 2024, 1,757 people were refused entry into Serbia at the Belgrade airport. This leads to the automatic serving of a refusal of entry decision and the arbitrary detention, both of which cannot be legally challenged. Two requests for interim measures were adopted at Belgrade airport in 2024, preventing the forcible removal of people fleeing political persecution in Türkiye.

In Greece, access to asylum on the mainland remained problematic in 2024, for reasons including issues with the online platform for booking appointments, *de facto* detention of applicants for up to 25 days upon presenting themselves at registration facilities, or the discontinuation of interpretation services from mid-2024.

- **Challenges in the registration of asylum applications**

In several countries, access to registration posed an additional obstacle due to restrictive practices, severe delays, and persistent structural capacity issues, leaving many applicants without protection or reception rights for extended periods. Issues were reported in several countries, namely: Belgium,

Bulgaria, France, Portugal, Spain, and Türkiye. In France, although overall registration occurs within the legally prescribed 3 days, waiting times reached approximately 2 months in Isère and up to 18 months in French Guiana. In Belgium, limited capacity at the registration centre remained an issue also throughout 2024 and led to the systematic violation of the legally prescribed registration deadline and the consequent hinderance of access to reception conditions. In Portugal, it was reported in 2024 that applications could not be registered outside Lisbon, Porto, and Coimbra. In Spain, systemic shortages led around 100 asylum seekers and 20 NGOs to lodge a joint complaint with the national Ombudsperson. In Türkiye, registration continued to be one of the main barriers to protection: it was generally unavailable in over 1,100 neighbourhoods where the foreign population exceeded 20% of the Turkish citizen population (closed to new registrations from 2023 and 2024) and was described as almost impossible in many other locations.

3. Shrinking safe pathways to Europe

Legal pathways to Europe for people in need of protection remain scarce and unevenly implemented. Since 2020, EU member states have consistently fallen short of their collective resettlement commitments - at times suspending them altogether - while other available pathways, where they exist, remain extremely restricted.²⁵ In 2024, 15 Member States did not carry out resettlements (compared to 14 in 2023). Fewer than 14,000 people were resettled - the lowest number since 2017, excluding 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic imposed extraordinary constraints.²⁶ Belgium paused its resettlement programme in March 2025, citing reception shortages as the motivation behind the decision; Sweden lowered its intake from 5,000 in 2022 to under 1,000 in 2024. Switzerland, while extending its resettlement programme until 2027, reduced its annual commitment from 800 to 400 places. In practice, however, the programme remained on hold throughout 2024 and into early 2025, as has been the case since December 2022.

In Germany, the Federal Admission Programme for Afghanistan was hindered by significant administrative delays, low admission commitments, and even lower actual arrivals. In July 2024, previously granted entry approvals were abruptly withdrawn to introduce controversial screening measures, followed by a suspension of new admission commitments later in the summer. This suspension remains in effect, prompting NGOs to fear that the programme may be terminated in 2025, as foreseen by the May 2025 coalition agreement. As of August 2025, approx. 2,400 Afghans whose applications had been approved by Germany were stuck in Pakistan. Of those, over 200 were deported by Pakistan back to Afghanistan mid-August; dozens of others took to court to request their effective admission to Germany, leading to a first group of 47 Afghans finally being flown into Germany on September 1. On 2 September 2025, the German government reaffirmed its intention to honour the legally binding commitments given by previous governments under the humanitarian admission programmes.²⁷

²⁵ See ECRE, *Pathways to Protection: Mapping visa schemes and other practices enabling people in need of international protection to reach Europe safely*, March 2024, available [here](#).

²⁶ Eurostat, 'Resettled persons by age, sex and citizenship - annual data', data as of 4 September 2024, available [here](#).

²⁷ Natasha Mellersh, 'Germany and Netherlands face court pressure over Afghan admissions' (3 September 2025, *Infomigrants*), available [here](#); Matt Ford and Wesley Rahn, 'Pakistan deports Afghans with German resettlement rights' (18 August 2025, *Deutsche Welle*), available [here](#).

4. The use of special procedures

Border procedures continued not to be applied uniformly across AIDA countries in 2024. Conversely, the use of accelerated and inadmissibility procedures appears to have increased in the past years, often leading to judicial challenges.

- **Border procedures**

8 AIDA countries do not have a border procedure provided in law (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Sweden, Türkiye and the UK). Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia have legal provisions regarding a border procedure but do not implement them in practice.

In March 2024, the Dutch Council of State ruled that that third country nationals with visa-free travel to the Netherlands that wish to apply for asylum can also be subject to the border procedure;²⁸ conversely, in October it highlighted that Ukrainian asylum applicants may not be subject to the border procedure in the Netherlands.²⁹

In Portugal, the border procedure has been systematically applied since November 2023 and problematic practices continued to be highlighted by NGOs in 2024: significant gaps in the provision of information regarding legal assistance, at times incorrect information provided regarding the deadlines to file appeals by the authorities, concerns regarding the quality of procedures conducted, severe issue in detention conditions.

- **Use of accelerated and inadmissibility procedures**

Belgium, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal either introduced or expanded the use of accelerated procedures in 2024. While states justify them as tools to efficiently reduce backlogs in cases deemed unlikely to succeed, NGOs and legal practitioners report serious shortcomings. These include the impossibility of securing effective legal representation within such short timeframes; applications being processed while applicants are homeless due to lack of state-provided reception conditions, leaving them unable to adequately participate; and inconsistencies in case handling that raise grave concerns about the overall fairness and accuracy of decisions.

In Germany, 44% of cases involving applicants who had already been recognised as beneficiaries of protection in Greece were deemed inadmissible, compared to 11% in 2023. The Federal Administrative Court further ruled that single, employable, non-vulnerable beneficiaries of international protection could be returned to Italy and Greece.³⁰ In Malta, lawyers raised concerns about inadmissibility decisions in cases where protection in another Member State was ineffective in practice, having been revoked or withdrawn by the authorities.

- **Use of safe country concepts**

Several countries amended their safe country lists, adding and/or withdrawing countries. Ireland undertook legislative reform to designate the United Kingdom as a safe third country, following a High

²⁸ Dutch Council of State, ECLI:NL:RVS:2024:1228, 26 March 2024, available in Dutch [here](#).

²⁹ Dutch Council of State, ECLI:NL:RVS:2024:4292, 30 October 2024, available in Dutch at: <https://bit.ly/4abBftr>.

³⁰ Regarding Italy: German Federal Administrative Court (BVerwG), Az. 1 C 24.23, 21 November 2024, available in German [here](#); regarding Greece: German Federal Administrative Court (BVerwG), 1 C 18.24 and 1 C 19.24, 16 April 2025, available [here](#).

Court ruling which considered the legal basis for the previous designation flawed.³¹ Among other changes, the Netherlands withdrew 2 designations following the CJEU judgment of October 2024 clarifying that, under the currently applicable rules, a country can only be designated as safe if that is the case for the entire territory, without geographical exceptions.³² Italy also amended its list after the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) decision, withdrawing 3 countries, and amended the definition of safe countries of origin in Italian law to comply with the ruling; however, Italian law still foresaw that designations could occur with exceptions as to the personal scope, which has since also been ruled in non-compliance with EU law by the CJEU.³³ These geographic and personal exceptions will be possible under the Asylum Procedure Regulation, which will become applicable from July 2026 and which some countries have sought to apply earlier (see point 9). 2024 also saw the operationalization of the Italy-Albania Protocol, establishing extraterritorial processing centres in Albania, but under Italian jurisdiction. These faced immediate judicial challenges when Italian courts consistently refused to validate migrant detentions, citing case law of the CJEU on safe country designations.

In Portugal, although there are no national lists of safe countries of origin or safe third countries, the concepts are increasingly used in practice, and the decisions on safe third countries do not always include the necessary legal analysis and individual assessment.

Greece continued to issue safe third country inadmissibility decisions for applicants who had transited through Türkiye, despite the absence of transfer prospects. On 4 October 2024, the CJEU ruled that although a country may be designated as safe even where returns are generally suspended, individual asylum applications cannot be rejected as inadmissible on safe third country grounds if the applicant will not be admitted to that country.³⁴ In February 2025, following this ruling, the Greek Council of State annulled the Joint Ministerial Decision designating Türkiye as a safe third country, finding that it merely summarised international sources without sufficiently engaging with the applicable legal criteria.³⁵ However, in April the government reissued the designation, updating its analysis – although largely based on sources favourable to its position while disregarding other key reports and evidence - and argued that Türkiye's inclusion remained pertinent and legally sound, as returns might become possible again in the future. This prompted new legal challenges in June 2025.

³¹ Irish High Court, *A v. Minister for Justice & Ors, B v. International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors* [2024] IEHC 183, available: [here](#).

³² CJEU, C-406/22, *CV v Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, Odbor azylové a migrační politiky*, Judgment of 4 October 2024, available [here](#).

³³ CJEU, C-758/24 and C-759/24, *LC and CP v Commissione territoriale per il riconoscimento della protezione internazionale di Roma – sezione procedure alla frontiera II*, Judgment of 1 August 2025, available [here](#).

³⁴ CJEU, C-134/23 *Elliniko Symvoulío gia tous Prosfyges and Ypostirixi Prosfygon sto Aigaio*, judgment of 4 October 2024, available [here](#).

³⁵ Greek Council of State, Decision No. A1048/2025, 27 February 2025, published 6 June 2025 available in Greek [here](#).

5. Quality of asylum procedures and procedural safeguards

Access to quality procedures and adequate procedural safeguards – essential to ensure effective protection from *refoulement* - remained a serious concern in 2024. A few examples include:

- **Legal assistance and appeals**

As extensively documented in ECRE's legal note analysing the right to legal aid and legal counselling for asylum applicants under the new Asylum Procedures Regulation,³⁶ access to legal aid and assistance has been a persistent challenge across Europe in the past years.

Concerns in 2024 included limited funding and difficulties regarding remuneration conditions for legal aid providers (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the UK), lack of access to a lawyer in remote areas and other territorial inequalities or inequalities linked to the reception status (Belgium, France, Germany, Spain), difficult working conditions and caseloads for legal aid providers (Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain), lack of quality, specialisation and training of legal assistance and aid providers (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain (at the border), Ukraine), the application of the merits test for accessing free legal aid at the appeals stage (Austria, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Türkiye, the UK). Austria explicitly enshrined in national law the independence of the state agency providing legal counselling, to comply with a 2023 Constitutional court ruling on the matter,³⁷ but fundamental concerns persist regarding the structural ability of the state agency to be a neutral legal advisory body, given that its role is to assist refugees in challenging decisions made by the very authority to which it is institutionally subordinate.

Accessibility obstacles and misconceptions regarding the provision of legal assistance—stemming from, or compounded by, arbitrary access and a lack of information about legal aid—have been reported in Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Romania,³⁸ Slovenia and Spain. In Malta, difficulties in accessing legal assistance have been reported for applicants in detention, while similar challenges have been noted for applicants in border or accelerated procedures in Austria, Cyprus, France, and Poland. In Belgium, lawyers are not permitted to be present during the making, registering, or lodging of the application, nor during the Dublin interviews. Furthermore, in many countries, state-funded legal assistance is still not provided in first-instance procedures.³⁹

The appeals system was restructured in France by the January 2024 law creating territorial chambers in 4 cities and reversing the long-standing principle of access to a 3-judge panel in appeals; now, by default, all cases are ruled upon by single judges, regularly without a hearing.

³⁶ ECRE, 'The Guarantees of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in respect of legal counselling, assistance and representation in asylum procedures', June 2024, available [here](#).

³⁷ Austrian Constitutional Court (VfGH), G 328/2022, 22 December 2023.

³⁸ While it is a possibility, asylum seekers often do not access legal representation in the administrative phase. See ECRE, 'Preparing for reform: Romania's asylum system ahead of the EU Pact', August 2025, available [here](#), page 19.

³⁹ Such support is foreseen in Austria (see however problems highlighted earlier in the text), Belgium, Croatia (with interruptions in support in practice), Hungary (however see point 2 on lack of access to the territory and to the asylum procedure), the Netherlands, Portugal, Ireland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.

- **Quality of decision making**

The quality of the decision-making process in the asylum procedure remained a problem in a number of countries, in particular Portugal, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and Sweden. The Netherlands introduced a new credibility assessment which raised concerns among NGOs, due to the exaggerated burden placed on asylum applicants and potential non-compliance with EU and international law. In Sweden, a government-commissioned review highlighted clear signs of deficiencies in the Migration Agency's decision-making process. In Portugal, numerous concerns regarding the quality of procedures were raised, especially in the first half of the year, notably regarding inadequate practices in personal interviews and the quality of the analysis conducted in the 'temporarily accelerated procedures'. In Belgium, there are no institutional mechanisms to control the quality of decisions relating to Dublin cases. Moreover, repeated problems regarding the quality and/or availability of interpretation services were reported in most AIDA countries, namely: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye. Some occasional problems with the quality of interpretation services have also been reported in Sweden and Switzerland. The code of conduct for interpreters in the UK was revised in 2024.

Conversely, there were improvements in the standards and quality of the asylum procedure in Bulgaria. In the United Kingdom, while examination of asylum cases had almost completely stopped under the previous government, creating a significant backlog, processing resumed on 23 July 2024 per regulations laid by the new government. In Austria, quality assurance and control mechanisms have been established.

- **Length of procedures**

Lengthy asylum procedures remained a structural challenge across several European states in 2024, with significant backlogs and prolonged decision-making times. Lengthy procedures continued to be reported in Austria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Serbia, and the UK; in Slovenia, delays can reach two years at first instance and up to five years at second instance. In Malta, the excessive length of the second instance procedures may discourage lawyers and rejected asylum seekers from appealing.

6. Suspension of the examination of asylum applications

EU law⁴⁰ allows for a temporary suspension in decision-making 'due to an uncertain situation in the country of origin which is expected to be temporary'. Many countries implemented a suspension of assessment of cases of Syrian nationals following the fall of the Al-Assad regime in December 2024:⁴¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland. Across the EU27, this concerned a great number of applicants, as 130,575 Syrian nationals had pending applications in the EU at the end of December 2024.⁴² Cyprus also suspended decision-making regarding Syrian applicants but did so as early as April 2024, and based on the increase in arrivals of Syrian nationals, a ground not foreseen in EU or international law as a legal basis for suspending the examination of asylum claims. Some countries, such as Sweden, announced a dual suspension of decisions of asylum applications and deportations. To the contrary, Spain explicitly stated they would not suspend decision making. Türkiye, which in 2024 hosted over 2.9 million refugees from Syria under

⁴⁰ Article 31(4) Procedures Directive.

⁴¹ This information was largely collected from the AIDA country reports as well as, regarding NL and PL, from EUAA, *Asylum Report 2025*, 12 June 2025, available [here](#).

⁴² Eurostat, 'Asylum applicants by type, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data', data as of 15 August 2024, available [here](#).

its national temporary protection regime, did not make any formal announcements about lifting protection, but registered 250,000 returns to Syria as of June 2025. In Bulgaria, the suspension was very brief, and the authorities determined they had sufficient information to resume individual assessments at the end of January 2025. Other countries such as Belgium and Sweden prolonged the suspension in the spring of 2025. In France, during the suspension, the asylum authority has continued to grant protection to Syrians whose grounds for protection were not directly related to the country's political situation.

A few Member States implemented other suspensions of the examination of asylum cases regarding the national of other countries. Belgium, for instance, suspended decisions on applications from Russia (until 1 February 2024), Sudan (until 26 February 2024), and Lebanon (since October 2024). As of March 2025, Germany had not been deciding on asylum applications from individuals from the Gaza Strip for over a year; as of 28 February 2025, this concerned 1,218 procedures. Several administrative courts in 2024, however, ruled that the situation could no longer be considered sufficiently uncertain to justify such suspensions, despite the “dramatic situation and widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip”.

Several countries also maintained a freeze on the examination of applications by displaced people from Ukraine, including Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. In Bulgaria, such procedures are discontinued and may be re-opened upon the end of temporary protection. Lastly, in Switzerland, people holding status S have no possibility to apply for asylum.

7. Treatment of vulnerable applicants including unaccompanied children

While progress was made in some countries on specific issues, vulnerable applicants, including unaccompanied children, continued to be particularly affected by shortcomings in the asylum system in 2024.

- **Identification of vulnerabilities**

Shortcomings in identification procedures continue to result in vulnerabilities going undetected, leaving many individuals' special needs unaddressed. This issue was reported in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom, Türkiye, and Switzerland. In Malta, responsibility for vulnerability assessments was transferred to the detention authority in 2024, leading to increased detention of vulnerable persons. In Ireland, after an eight-month suspension of assessments due to capacity constraints, the process was outsourced to a private operator, which has since cleared the backlog by conducting over 2,000 assessments. In Belgium, the asylum authority issued recommendations in July 2024 on the use of medical evidence in asylum procedures and subsequently held several online information sessions for professionals.

- **Unaccompanied children**

The number of arrivals of unaccompanied children decreased significantly in 2024, with approx. 33,160 applying for asylum in the EU27 compared to 40,400 in 2023, with nevertheless significant relative increases in Greece and Spain. Most other countries experienced decreases, especially Austria, the Netherlands, Cyprus and Switzerland. Similarly to 2021 and 2022, of the 40,420 unaccompanied

children who applied for asylum in the EU, the majority were Syrian and Afghan, although their number was smaller than in previous years.⁴³

Age assessment procedures continued to raise concerns in several national contexts: problems were reported in 2024 in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom. In March 2025, the ECtHR ruled that the Belgian age assessment procedure was in violation of Article 8 ECHR due to its intrusive methods and the lack of sufficient procedural safeguards.⁴⁴ Similarly, in May 2024 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticised Switzerland's age assessment process for placing an undue burden of proof on the applicants, instead of implementing a presumption of minority.⁴⁵

Unaccompanied children in Cyprus remained without adequate guardianship in 2024, exposing them to various risks such as trafficking, sexual or labour exploitation. In Romania, lack of national AMIF funding for over 6 months limited training opportunities for guardians. Conversely, in Belgium, in November 2024, for the first time in three years there was no waiting list to have a guardian appointed, a result of both a decrease in arrivals and successful campaigns by the Guardianship Service to find more guardians. Other improvements were noted in Belgium with regards to the procedure and court setting in appeals processes.

- **Reception**

Vulnerable asylum applicants have a right to reception conditions tailored to their specific needs to ensure a dignified standard of living. In July 2024, the increase in the financial fees provide for vulnerable individuals was finally implemented in Austria, although conditions remain inadequate in practice. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, reports published in 2024 again highlighted the severe inadequacy of current reception conditions for vulnerable applicants. The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, in its latest report on Switzerland, also raised serious concerns in this respect.

Structural shortages and gaps in reception also affected unaccompanied children, undermining their possibility to access effective protection. In 2024, overcrowding persisted at the Dutch registration centre of Ter Apel, where unaccompanied children are made to stay for prolonged periods of time due ongoing shortage in suitable dedicated facilities for longer term placement. In Poland, children were at times denied access by crisis shelters or placed in unsuitable accommodation. In Spain, in the absence of a compulsory distribution mechanism across the territory, and despite calls by UNHCR, the Spanish Ombudsperson and NGOs, political disagreement prevented the transfer of 2,500 unaccompanied children from the Canary Islands - where the majority of arrivals take place and living conditions are particularly difficult - to other autonomous communities. After months of negotiations between the central Government and the Autonomous Communities, the plan was not approved by Congress. In October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Greece for violations of article 3 ECHR with regards to the treatment of 7 unaccompanied minors in Samos, due to the extremely inadequate reception conditions, and again issued interim measures in early 2025 regarding Samos and Leros.

On the contrary, the situation improved in 2024 in Bulgaria and Slovenia with increased specialised reception capacity, while in France, as of 2024 unaccompanied children can no longer be

⁴³ Eurostat, 'Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors by citizenship, age and sex - annual data', data as of 15 August 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁴ ECtHR, Decision n° 47836/21 of 6 March 2025, available in French [here](#).

⁴⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Communication 80/2019, 21 May 2024, doc CRC/C/96/D/80/2019, available [here](#).

accommodated in hotels, a situation long denounced by stakeholders due to its fundamental inadequacies.

8. Access to reception and reception conditions: key challenges remain

In 2024, persistent shortages in reception systems and insufficient capacity continued to affect many EU countries. One of the most significant challenges remained the limited accommodation available for asylum seekers, which led to an ongoing reliance on emergency facilities. In addition, 2024 saw an increased use of conditioned access to reception conditions in several countries, including requirements to attend courses or to remain in assigned accommodation facilities.

- **Reception capacity and the use of emergency accommodation**

Serious reception capacity issues were reported in multiple AIDA countries, in particular Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia. The ‘reception crisis’ continued in Belgium, with single male applicants - without identified vulnerabilities - being systematically denied access to a reception place (10,191 single male applicants were denied their right to reception in 2024). National and European courts have condemned Belgium for this practice.⁴⁶ In France, it is estimated that more than 50,000 asylum seekers did not have access to reception conditions at the end of 2024. Due to these shortages in reception, people have also had to turn to informal camps (which are regularly dismantled by authorities, for example in Calais). While some German states dropped their occupancy rate (e.g., to 64% in Thuringia), municipalities continue to report being overburdened and lacking infrastructure for long-term accommodation. In Italy, where a shortage of reception places persisted, a new law was introduced allowing for the possible exclusion from reception measures of individuals who, without a justified reason, entered Italy irregularly for more than 90 days without applying for international protection. In the Netherlands, reception shelters remained persistently above their intended capacity, with applicants in Ter Apel at times accommodated in container cabins or on mattresses on the floor. Authorities also expressed concern about the lack of sufficient structural reception places for unaccompanied minors.

Many countries continued to resort to the use of emergency accommodation sites. Due to the lack of reception places in Belgium, different types of emergency shelters were opened to ensure the reception of families, although their quality remained below standards. Despite the continued use of emergency shelters, Ireland still also systematically excluded single males without vulnerabilities from access to accommodation in 2024 due to a lack of reception places. In 2024, there was a continued shift away from the traditional use of hotels and guesthouses towards greater reliance on so-called ‘emergency centres’ and tented accommodation. In Germany, many states maintained the use of emergency shelters - such as the former Berlin Tegel airport - due to insufficient long-term housing. Likewise, the Netherlands continued its systematic use of emergency and crisis locations, including for the accommodation of vulnerable people whose medical needs could not be adequately met there.

⁴⁶ See, *inter alia*, the judgment of the ECtHR in case *Camara v. Belgium* (of 18 July 2023, available [here](#)), in which the ECtHR found that Belgium violated Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights and observed ‘a systemic failure on the part of the Belgian authorities to enforce final court decisions relating to the reception of applicants for international protection’. Moreover, before the federal elections of June 2024, the Constitutional Court, the Court of Cassation and the Council of state published an unprecedented collective memorandum, expressing their serious concern on the state of the rule of law in the context of the reception crisis: ‘Such a situation is a serious erosion of the rule of law, in a context where numerous citizens are increasingly questioning the legitimacy of our institutions. The three Supreme Courts express their strong concern and urge future political leaders to respect all judicial decisions and, consequently, all litigants’ (Constitutional Court, Council of State and Court of Cassation, ‘Common Memorandum’, July 2024, available in French [here](#), 7-8).

In France, while 1,000 new reception places were to be opened for asylum seekers in 2024, it was announced during the year that they would not open due to budgetary constraints, and that for 2025 it is planned to cut the budget allocated to housing asylum seekers by 69 million euros. In Serbia, most of the reception facilities were closed in 2024. Malta also saw the closure of one initial reception centre in 2024. In Switzerland, authorities announced that 9 temporary asylum centres would be closed at the end of 2024 as the numbers of asylum application were lower than expected.

Delays in accessing reception continued to be reported in Greece in 2024, due to the chronic delays in accessing the asylum procedure on the mainland.

In Austria, however, only 14,000 asylum applicants were accommodated in the Basic Care System in 2024, which represents the lowest number in the last 10 years. The distribution across the country, however, remained heavily unbalanced (e.g., while Vienna overfulfilled its quota by 207%, other provinces such as Carinthia or Salzburg only reached 50% of their quota). In Croatia, due to a lower number of asylum applicants, reception capacity was not as strained as in 2023. In 2024, Ireland announced an agreement for a new Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection applicants, supporting moving away from full State reliance on private accommodation providers, and towards a core of State-owned accommodation, albeit still supporting the commissioning of emergency commercial accommodation in the short to medium term. In the Netherlands, a situation in which asylum seekers would have had to sleep outdoors was narrowly avoided thanks to a neighbouring municipality offering a sports hall for one night and the Red Cross providing stretchers for sleeping. In Romania, the accommodation capacity was expanded substantially and some centres refurbished. Moreover, the transfers between reception centres continued throughout 2024 (with a particular focus on relocating vulnerable applicants).

- **Substandard reception conditions**

Reception conditions remained concerning and fell short of the standards required by European and national legislation in many countries. In Bulgaria, conditions in all national reception centres continued to deteriorate, with persistent issues related to the infrastructure and living conditions failing to provide even the most essential services (including adequate nutrition, access to healthcare and sanitation). In Bulgaria, the main concern regarding reception conditions related to the lack of safety and security for asylum seekers accommodated in reception centres. In Hungary, limited access for civil society organisations to reception facilities was again reported in 2024. Reception standards also continued to deteriorate in Ireland, including through the use of tented accommodation. Despite the very low number of applicants arriving in Malta in 2024, living conditions in the open reception centres remained difficult; for example, the largest centre, Hal Far Tent Village, consists of rows of metal containers and shared facilities, underscoring the temporary nature of this accommodation. In the Netherlands, inadequate conditions at (crisis) emergency locations were especially alarming given that stays often extended up to one and a half years. Reported issues included lack of privacy and suitable nutrition, as well as inadequate and unhygienic sanitary facilities. Problems with healthcare accessibility were reported in nearly half of the (crisis) shelters, and large differences in living standards across facilities persisted in 2024. In Switzerland, living conditions in temporary asylum centres were also criticised, including for limited space, lack of natural light, absence of clear separation between sleeping, eating and communal areas, lack of privacy, poor ventilation, and insufficient measures to prevent violence. Reports for 2024 noted overall described a trend of a “worrying deterioration in safety” across all the immigration removal centres in the UK.

Greece saw the provision of cash assistance interrupted for most part of 2024 and again as of 30 June 2025, without it being expected to resume within 2025, which leaves most asylum applicants unable to cover basic living expenses, including medicine and transportation. Living conditions in camps continued to be cause for concern throughout 2024 and into 2025, characterised by detention-like environments, critical gaps in essential services, isolation due to their remote location, and staffing shortages in medical and psychosocial services.

- **Restriction, withdrawal or conditioned access to reception conditions**

The conditioned provision of reception conditions was a prevalent issue in a number of countries in 2024. In Bulgaria, asylum seekers who decide to live outside reception centres at their own expenses are not entitled to social benefits. The German Federal Constitutional Court's 2022 ruling, which equalised benefits for single adults inside and outside accommodation centres, has still not been implemented legislatively. However, this can be addressed through legal action in individual cases. In Austria, mandatory basic courses (focused on democracy, the rule of law and freedoms, equal rights, culture and manners, rights and duties as well as sensitisation to forms of antisemitism) were introduced for asylum seekers in federal accommodation centres, with the penalty of receiving only half of the pocket money established for failure to attend. Finally, in Sweden, a bill was passed proposing, among other things, that asylum seekers are only entitled to financial assistance if they reside in the asylum accommodation assigned to them by the Swedish Migration Agency. The Swedish Migration Agency is granted additional authority to verify that asylum seekers reside at the designated accommodation and to withdraw the right to accommodation and financial assistance from individuals who fail to maintain contact with the authorities. Additionally, a statutory obligation is introduced for asylum seekers to participate in a societal introduction program.

The Belgian Secretary of State issued an instruction in 2024 according to which beneficiaries of international protection in other EU countries who applied for asylum in Belgium would see a limitation of their reception conditions. Moreover, legislative changes made it so that the right to reception conditions would end after the final negative decision on the asylum application, and not the return decision, was issued.

In Belgium, a legislative reform introduced a new contribution scheme for professionally active applicants benefiting from the reception network and broadened the authority's competences to verify the income of residents. Ireland also introduced an income for the daily expense allowance (i.e., the social welfare payment for individuals in the international protection process, living in living or awaiting accommodation in state-provided accommodation).

In France, a legislative reform made it so that a person who leaves their accommodation without legitimate reason, in addition to losing their reception conditions as foreseen before, will see their asylum application "closed" (*cloturée*).

Several countries also maintained or expanded restrictions on access to reception conditions once accommodation had already been provided for a period of time. In Malta, the policy of withdrawing material reception conditions for all applicants - except the most vulnerable - after six months in reception centres remained in place in 2024. In Italy, beneficiaries of international protection are now required to leave accommodation only a few days after being granted status.

- **Positive trends and developments**

In Austria, several positive developments occurred in 2024. First, following a decrease in the reception needs, several Federal Basic Care facilities were decommissioned, rather than closed, to be able to open them back up more easily in case of an increase in applications in the future. Second, there was an agreement to increase the maximum cost rates for vulnerable groups. Third, there was also an extension of the scope of activities for charitable work that is available to asylum applicants.

Poland introduced the possibility for schools to hire an intercultural assistant to support foreign students' contact within the school environment and cooperation with their teachers and parents.

Since 2024, the Health Information and Quality Authority assumed the responsibility for monitoring and inspecting the accommodation centres against the legally binding national standards in Ireland.

The UK saw the closure of the Bibby Stockholm (a barge used as asylum accommodation) in January 2025, and the proposal to stop the use of repurposed military barracks at Napier as asylum accommodation.

An improvement in conditions in reception centres was instead observed in Cyprus in 2023 and 2024.

In Bulgaria, the two safe zones for unaccompanied children at the Sofia reception centre continued to be maintained under an IOM project funded by AMIF.

Finally, the European Commission and the Government of Türkiye signed a EUR 781 million contract to fund a social safety net for vulnerable refugees, marking the largest EU contract with Ankara to date. The main focus areas are humanitarian assistance, education, health, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support.

7. Detention of asylum seekers continues to be a common practice across Europe

Despite strict EU law requirements and limits imposed by the ECtHR regarding the use of detention as a measure of last resort, the detention of asylum applicants and migrants continued to be a widespread practice in European countries in 2024. Moreover, a limited use of alternatives to detention, inadequate detention conditions, the detention of unaccompanied minors and a lack of effective access to legal remedies continued.

In both France and Germany, there was an expansion of the grounds for detention in 2024. France now allows for the detention of asylum seekers (a) presenting a threat to public order (at any time during the asylum procedure), and (b) expressing their wish to request asylum in another place than in the prefecture (e.g., during an arrest) and presenting a risk of absconding. Moreover, the grounds for detention of asylum seekers under the Dublin procedure have also been extended, including, among others, the refusal to submit to fingerprinting and their voluntary alteration due to crossing or irregular presence in the territory. After the legislative reform in Germany, key changes were introduced regarding the detention in the asylum context, including the fact that applicants can now be detained if grounds for detention existed when they lodged their application; that the time limit regarding the feasibility of a removal that would allow the ordering of pre-removal detention has increased from 3 to 6 months; or the extension of the maximum period for custody pending removal from 10 to 28 days.

In Austria, if a person applies for asylum while in detention, they may be detained during the admissibility procedure. In Malta, several applicants spontaneously approaching authorities to apply for asylum were

immediately arrested and detained (including persons who were regularly staying in Malta). Finally, while detention during the asylum decision-making process is not usual in the UK, those who have arrived via the Channel are likely to be detained on arrival at the Manston asylum processing centre while their asylum claim is registered and accommodation found for them.

- **Border detention and detention in the Dublin procedure**

Cases of *de facto* detention at land, air or sea borders continued to be reported in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Serbia and Switzerland. In Malta, all newly-arrived asylum seekers – save vulnerable persons – are detained for around two months upon arrival on public health grounds.

In Austria, applicants with Dublin transfer decisions to Italy were kept in detention also in 2024, despite the refusal of Italy to effectively take back applicants. However, as in 2023, these applicants were released after a short time as Italy did not change its policy in 2024. Similarly, Hungary imposed detention measures quasi-automatically for people awaiting a Dublin transfer.

Positively, in 2024 Bulgaria ultimately ended the practice of registering asylum seekers in police pre-removal (detention) centres to meet registration deadlines, as well as conducting proceedings and issuing decisions within these centres.

- **Detention conditions**

Concerns over poor and inadequate conditions in detention remained widespread in 2024. In Malta, among other human rights bodies, the ECtHR⁴⁷ and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment⁴⁸ confirmed that living conditions in the detention centres remained extremely poor, particularly for vulnerable persons. In Serbia, the National Preventive Mechanism reported issues in detention facilities regarding their carceral structure, and lack of interpreters, health care screening, vulnerability assessment upon arrival and access to meaningful activities. The Bar Association of Madrid warned the Spanish Minister of Interior about the serious structural deficiencies (i.e., the lack of qualified interpreters, the overloading of the police professionals, the lack of basic tools such as the asylum forms, etc.), which rendered it impossible to guarantee proper legal assistance in the asylum rooms at the Madrid Airport. In 2024, several reports highlighted serious concerns regarding unlawful deportations and ill-treatment in removal centres in Türkiye, including allegations of instances of physical violence and the use of so-called “cold chambers” as a form of punishment or coercion. In Cyprus, applicants continue to be detained in holding cells in police stations and in airports across the country in sub-standard conditions. In the same line, in France, detention in undignified conditions, leading to several violations of fundamental rights, continued to be observed in 2024. The ECtHR also issued seven more judgements finding breaches of the ECHR with regard to detention in the transit zone in Hungary.⁴⁹ A shortage of staff in the detention centres in the Netherlands often led to detainees having to stay more hours in their cells. The National Preventive Mechanism has also condemned detention conditions in Portugal.

⁴⁷ ECtHR, *A.D. v. Malta*, App. no 12427/22, 17 January 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁸ Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ‘Report to the Maltese Government on the visit to Malta carried out by the CPT from 26 September to 5 October 2023’, 10 July 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁹ ECtHR, *F.O. and others v. Hungary*, App. No. 9203/18, 20 June 2024; *S.H. v. Hungary*, App. No. 47321/19, 20 June 2024; *H.L. v. Hungary*, App. No. 37641/19, 20 June 2024; *Z.L. and Others v. Hungary*, App. No. 13899/19, 12 September 2024; *M. H. v. Hungary*, App. No. 652/18, 3 October 2024; *A.P. v. Hungary*, App. No. 18581/19, 3 October 2024; and *M.D.A. and Others v. Hungary*, App. No. 16217/19, 19 December 2024.

However, in 2024, conditions in Bavarian pre-removal centres improved following a ruling by the German Federal Court of Justice,⁵⁰ introducing new rules to better distinguish detention conditions from those of the penal system (e.g., allowing for more freedom of movement within the centre, daily outdoor access, or lifting limits on visiting times). Moreover, while poor conditions persisted in parts of the Otopeni detention centre in Romania (including lack of access to outdoor spaces, worn-out walls, and outdated tiling), the Arad detention centre's capacity increased to 400 places with the addition of a new EU-funded wing offering improved material conditions, including air conditioning, gender-separated rooms, and recreational areas.

- **Safeguards for detained asylum seekers (judicial review, legal assistance and access of organizations)**

A recent legal amendment in Italy revoked the jurisdiction of the specialised sections of Courts on validations of the detention of applicants for international protection, now providing jurisdiction to the Court of Appeal. Until now, jurisdiction had established specialised sections at the ordinary Courts, with the aim of having magistrates with specific expertise. In Malta, an ECtHR ruling found that the Maltese Immigration Appeals Board (IAB), with jurisdiction over appeals regarding detention decisions and age assessments, does not fulfil the basic requirements of impartiality and independence from the Executive and can, therefore, not be considered an effective remedy.⁵¹ Despite this judgement, no changes were made to the IAB in 2024 and early 2025. Difficulties in accessing judicial review of detention orders continue in Cyprus and Slovenia, including due to short deadlines.

Limited access for civil society organizations to detention facilities was identified as a key challenge in several AIDA countries. In Hungary and Malta, access was particularly restricted, with UNHCR in Malta reportedly unable to contact newly-arrived applicants. In Italy, access to repatriation centres and hotspots remains problematic in practice, often resulting in litigation. In Poland, NGOs must obtain the consent of detention centre managers to meet specific asylum applicants, and those providing psychological support encounter obstacles. In France, limited access occurs notably in *de facto* detention areas such as the police station in Menton, which the Council of State has upheld as lawful for the period necessary to examine the situation of persons crossing the border, subject to judicial oversight. Lack of information provision remained a structural and longstanding issue in Greece's immigration detention also in 2024.

- **Detention of vulnerable people**

The detention of a variety of vulnerable groups continued to be a practice across Europe in 2024. Unaccompanied children continued to be detained in at least 11 AIDA countries, namely Austria, Bulgaria (despite a prohibition to that effect being enshrined in law), Croatia, Germany (for Dublin transfers), Greece, Italy (following wrong age assessments or *de facto* detention in hotspots, despite a prohibition being established by law), Malta, Poland (among others, when accompanied by unrelated adults or when in doubt about their minority), Switzerland, Türkiye (following a wrong age determination), and the UK (pending removal). Moreover, the express possibility of detaining (certain) unaccompanied minors was enshrined in law in 2024 in Malta and Hungary. Conversely, the prohibition of the detention of minor children was legally enshrined in Belgian and French law in 2024. In Poland,

⁵⁰ Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration, Bundesgerichtshof, Beschluss vom 26. März 2024 – XIII ZB 85/22, available [here](#).

⁵¹ ECtHR, *J.B. and Others v. Malta*, Application 1766/23, 22 October 2024, available [here](#).

there is no identification system for victims of violence in place, so victims of torture are still in practice placed in detention centres despite legislation prohibiting detention in these cases.

8. Content of protection: access to rights

Structural problems also persist regarding recognised beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs)' access to rights which are provided under law and necessary to support inclusion in European societies.

- **Residence permits**

Access to a residence permit is essential to prove regularity of stay and to access many other rights and services. Delays as to the issuance or renewal of residence permits were reported in Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, and Poland, with sometimes severe consequences on the livelihoods of BIPs, including lack of access to basic services, loss of employment, homelessness. For instance, in France, the average waiting time for BIPs to receive their birth certificates by the asylum authorities, which in turn allow to receive their residence permit, was 10.5 months. This still constituted an improvement, as the timing in 2023 was of 14.5 months.

- **Right to housing**

In 2024, BIPs continued to face limited access to adequate and affordable housing in almost all AIDA countries. Although national contexts vary and some good practices were reported regarding 2024 developments, common challenges persist. These include global housing shortages, burdensome administrative procedures, restrictive policies, and insufficient support measures, leaving BIPs in precarious situations. In Flanders, Belgium, the European Committee of Social Rights highlighted the inadequacy of housing for BIPs, while the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights raised similar concerns in Poland. In Bulgaria, years of advocacy led to a legal resolution of the 'catch-22' problem regarding registered addresses, though practical implementation still requires monitoring. In the UK, a 2023 policy that had caused a 223% increase in rough sleeping among people leaving asylum housing was reversed in 2024, resulting in measurable improvements. No significant problems were reported in Croatia, Sweden, Switzerland.⁵²

- **Right to education**

National education systems continued to lack sufficient capacity to provide tailored education to all non-native children, including beneficiaries of protection. In 2024, this was the case in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Türkiye, and Ukraine. Tailored projects can greatly improve young BIPs' meaningful long-term inclusion into society: in 2024, the city of Vienna and the Austrian labour market service launched the youth college, an educational opportunity for young people and young adults aged 15-25 primarily aimed at supporting those who are no longer subject to compulsory schooling.

- **Naturalisation**

Serbia took a significant step towards naturalisation by introducing the right for people granted asylum to apply for permanent residency, a requirement to apply for citizenship. Germany reduced the standard waiting period for naturalisation from eight to five years, or three in cases of exceptional integration.

⁵² No problems are reported in Hungary; however, it should be noted that there has not been effective access to asylum in Hungary for several years, meaning the number of BIPs is extremely limited.

Conversely, Malta increased the residence requirement for refugees from 10 to 15 years, while subsidiary protection holders still have to reside in the country for 20 years before applying for citizenship.

- **Cessation and withdrawal**

Austria initiated over 6,000 withdrawal procedures as of March 2025, mostly against Syrians, while the UK suspended examination of applications for settlement by Syrian refugees. The situation was particularly concerning in Türkiye, with increasing reports of arbitrary and unpredictable cancellation and deactivation of temporary protection decisions, along with inconsistent judicial protection. Malta continued its policy of rendering dependent refugee family members undocumented upon turning 18, as the authorities don't recognise derivative protection status; concerns have also been raised in Portugal following changes in the practice of the authorities regarding extended protection, with cessation decisions being taken without an adversarial hearing or right to judicial review.

- **Family reunification**

Beneficiaries continue to face long and demanding procedures for family reunification, with significant waiting times and complex procedures with strict requirements, hindering their effective exercise of the right to family reunification.

Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands introduced new restrictions to family reunification procedures. In Austria, the government also revoked and re-assessed all entry visas in April, halting visa granting until August/September; revoked visas for families of Syrian BIPs after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024; and, in March 2025, suspended all family reunifications, a move criticised by NGOs as unlawful and counterproductive. Subsidiary protection holders still cannot access family reunification in Cyprus, Greece, Malta; and refugee children still cannot sponsor parents and siblings in the United Kingdom. Conversely, in May 2024 the Swiss Federal Council suggested shortening the waiting time for family reunification from 3 down to 2 years.

Delays remained widespread across Europe, notably reaching over two years in the Netherlands and Ireland. Italian courts intervened to address the extreme delays, by ordering urgent appointments and awarding compensation to a BIP and their family due to the forced family separation. A 2024 report on the UK found that children were being put in dangerous situations such as using smugglers to cross the Channel because of the delays in processing family reunion applications.

- **Inclusion policies**

Comprehensive inclusion policies continued to be lacking in many countries, including Bulgaria (making it the 11th anniversary of the national “zero integration” policy), Cyprus, Croatia, Hungary, and Poland. Local administrations in some cases seek to step in at their level, such as the city of Zagreb, which, with UNHCR's support, opened in September 2024 a ‘one stop shop’ welcome centre for BIPs, the first service of this kind in Croatia.

In France, the comprehensive integration programme AGIR, launched in 2022 and which was set to be deployed across the entire national territory, faced funding cuts and has seen its scope of beneficiaries restricted for 2025. In Romania, a national funding gap forced NGO to suspend integration projects for 6 to 7 months, affecting availability of key services. In Greece, HELIOS bridge program ended on 30 November 2024. Project services such as integration monitoring, job counselling, integration courses, house search support, accommodation workshops were discontinued as of 1 September 2024.

- **Racism, xenophobia and violence against migrants**

Violence against migrants continued in Cyprus in 2024, including frequent racist attacks, hate speech or police profiling. In Spain, numerous organizations have expressed concerns regarding the increase of cases of hate crimes and discrimination, with many cases of discriminatory practices and racism registered being related to institutional racism. Racism and discrimination also continued to be reported and pervasive in Türkiye in 2024.

In Ireland, there were some extremely concerning reports of alleged violence perpetrated by security officers of residents in reception accommodation and of harassment by far-right agitators, including verbal harassment. Violence was also reported at the Polish border. In Switzerland, alleged cases of violence have been poorly documented and insufficiently investigated.

9. Looking ahead to the Pact

The European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which envisions significant changes to national asylum and reception systems, was adopted in June 2024. Although it will take effect in June 2026, preparations for its implementation were already underway in 2024. On the basis of the Commission's Common Implementation Plan,⁵³ Member States were expected to send in national implementation plans by December 2024. At the national level, the development of these plans did not systematically include meaningful NGO participation, despite their central role in the functioning of asylum systems.

- **Who's in, who's out**

Hungary and Poland stated throughout 2024/early 2025 that they would not implement the Pact as a whole regarding Hungary and any element of the Pact that would include mandatory quotas and relocations regarding Poland. Conversely, on 27 June 2024 Ireland officially opted into the Pact and will thus be expected to implement it in full, whereas it had only partially participated in the previous CEAS system.⁵⁴ Switzerland will implement partially or in full 5 of the 10 instruments of the Pact⁵⁵ which expand on Dublin/Schengen acquis. NGOs highlighted the Pact opportunity for Switzerland to align itself onto EU asylum law on other more protective aspects, such as the adoption of the EU status of subsidiary protection.

- **Frontloading the Pact**

Some Member States sought permission to partially implement the Pact before 2026. Belgium attempted to frontload elements of the Pact related to reception as soon as 2024, by excluding applicants who have received international protection in another EU Member State from reception,

⁵³ European Commission, *Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum*, COM/2024/251 final, 12 June 2024, available [here](#).

⁵⁴ Ireland is one of the two countries with an opt-in/opt-out clause in the areas of freedom, security and justice, along with Denmark (and previously the UK). Until the Pact, Ireland had opted in to all iterations of the Dublin regulation, the 2004 Qualification Directive but not the 2011 recast, the 2005 Procedures Directive but not the 2013 recast, and the 2013 recast Reception Conditions Directive to which Ireland opted in in 2018.

⁵⁵ The Screening regulation, the Eurodac regulation, the Crisis and force majeure regulation, the Asylum and Migration Management regulation (Switzerland is not bound by the solidarity mechanism foreseen in the AMMR, although it may contribute voluntarily), and the Return Border Procedure Regulation (which Switzerland is set to adopt but not apply as it is not part of the EU's external border).

deciding that these were subsequent applicants and justifying this practice by stating they had received permission to frontload certain elements of the Pact by the Commission. In December 2024, the Council of State suspended the instruction on procedural grounds, not ruling on the substance; in March 2025, the Brussels Labour Court explicitly considered that this interpretation of subsequent applications finds no grounds in the currently applicable law. Italy also sought to frontload elements of the Pact related to safe countries of origin, and the ability to designate countries as safe with exceptions for certain parts of the territory, which is not currently allowed under EU law, as recalled by courts in appeals on the matter and the CJEU in August 2025.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ CJEU, Joined Cases C-758/24 *Alace* and C-759/24 *Canpelli*, judgment of 1 August 2025, available [here](#).

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