

Member State Reply on the 2025 AIDA country report on Cyprus

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA) is managed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). It aims to provide up-to date information which is accessible to researchers, advocates, legal practitioners and the general public through the dedicated website www.asylumineurope.org.

AIDA covers 27 countries, including 21 EU Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI and SK) and 6 non-EU countries (Egypt, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom). Each report documents asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and the content of international protection in the country concerned.

Based on the final draft for the AIDA country report on Cyprus, we would like to offer you the opportunity of a right of reply concerning the facts and legislative information presented in the report. ECRE will only be able to consider comments that are provided in the template below within two weeks from the date of receipt, to avoid delays in publication.

Upon the request of the Member State, the comments will be published in a separate annex to the country report on the AIDA website. Otherwise, they will be treated as confidential. The template reflects the chapters of the report.

Please ensure that responses remain within the scope of each section. Where possible, information provided should be sourced.

Reply

1. Statistics

Please note that the statistical information in the report is based on the response to the request for up-to-date statistical information presented by the Cyprus Refugee Council.

Reference to statistics extracted from the country report	Page and section	Comments, corrections, or additional statistical information and updates
<i>Add lines as required</i>		

Any additional remarks on the section on statistics:

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2. Asylum Procedure

Please comment using *either* the following structure *or* the table below.

Section, page number in the report

B. Access to the procedure and registration, 1. Access to the territory and push backs

Text in the report (extract)

“In March 2025, UNHCR expressed its concern as three boats with approximately 80 Syrians on board “were reportedly pushed back by Cypriot authorities, as a result of which the Syrian nationals were forcibly returned to Syria from where they had fled”. The UNHCR also repeated its call to states to “refrain from pushbacks and summary returns of individuals without legal and procedural safeguards” and reminded them that any “law enforcement operations” had to be conducted “with the respect of international law, including refugee and human rights law, and should not result in situations incompatible with the prohibition of refoulement”. 68 In response, the Cypriot government issued a statement in which it attempted to eliminate some of the “confusion” regarding the recent incidents. “We categorically deny that there were gunshots fired, water sprayed, or any pushbacks conducted, as reported in some media outlets,”. The statement also refuted accusations that Cypriot authorities were responsible for human rights violations and said that they had “never ignored a call for help” regarding SAR operations. 69” page 28

“Pushbacks have also taken place at land and specifically at the Green Line with a small number of incidents since 2021 as third country nationals are denied access to territories under the effective control of the Republic and to the asylum procedure when they try to cross from the official checkpoints. In December 2022, the Greek Cypriot police at the Ledra Palace checkpoint denied entry to two Turkish nationals of Kurdish origin seeking to apply for international protection. The two persons remained stranded in the buffer zone without support from the authorities; tents were supplied by UNHCR and food was supplied initially by foreign embassies and UNHCR and subsequently by UNFICYP. One of the persons remained in the buffer zone until September 2023 and was eventually given access to asylum procedures. In November 2023, an asylum seeker from Iran presented herself to the police at the Ledra Palace checkpoint, declaring her need for international protection and was denied access to asylum procedures. She remained stranded in the buffer zone for three days and was allowed entry to the areas not controlled by the RoC and returned to Türkiye.74” page 29

Comment

The Republic of Cyprus does not carry out pushbacks either at sea or land.

Section, page number in the report

D. Guarantees for Vulnerable groups, 1. Identification, 1.1. Screening of Vulnerability

Text in the report (extract)

“The Refugee Law provides for an identification mechanism. An individual assessment is to be carried out to determine whether a person has special reception needs and/or requires special procedural guarantees, and the nature of those needs.³³⁷ These individualised assessments should be performed within a reasonable time period during the early stages of the asylum procedure. Furthermore, the requirement to address special reception needs and/or special procedural guarantees applies at any time such needs are identified or ascertained.” (p. 71)

Comment

Cyprus has a legal obligation to conduct screening in a manner that is lawful, transparent, and respectful of human rights. Screening is designed to determine the individual's status, detect any urgent health needs, identify vulnerabilities etc. With this obligation Cyprus is preparing for the screening procedure that will start taking place in June 2026. In this screening procedure, which has a time limit of 7 days, the following key procedures will take place:

- Preliminary Health Check
- Preliminary vulnerability check
- Initial age assessment in case of doubts for third country nationals who report that they are minors
- Referral to the appropriate support service or competent authority

For all these functions, Cyprus Asylum Service has already prepared the appropriate templates and referral forms as well as the Standard Operating Procedure Manual for the Screening. Regarding the steps that are already in place, the Vulnerability Assessment and referral, the medical check and referral, the National mechanism for potential victims of trafficking and the referral mechanism on torture and domestic violence will continue as a part of the asylum procedure, with some adjustments and review of the SOPs and templates.

Text in the report (extract)

“No monitoring mechanism of the overall procedure is foreseen which could contribute to efficient and timely coordination among the involved agencies.” (p. 72)

Comment

In conformity with the new EU set of rules for migration and asylum (PACT), the Republic of Cyprus will designate a monitoring mechanism. The Ombudsman for Administration and Human Rights will take up this role.

Text in the report (extract)

“Specifically, there is no provision for training of the staff engaged in the identification and assessment procedure, and the role of Social Welfare and Health Services – the most competent State authorities in relation to evaluating the needs of vulnerable persons – is rather confined.” (p. 72)

Comment

According to the Cyprus Refugee Law all officers should receive the adequate trainings and there is a yearly schedule of trainings by EUAA, not only for Asylum officers but also for personnel hired by the administrating company operating in Pournara (currently CODECA). Additionally, all Vulnerability officers and referrals are now coordinated by a CAS trained officer in Pournara, whereas in the past this was done by EUAA expert.

Text in the report (extract)

“The new procedure also includes a referral procedure when special procedural and/or reception needs are identified. For this purpose, a new Referral Form has been introduced that is attached to the vulnerability assessment Form. This is to be completed when the vulnerability officer identifies such needs and can include procedural guarantees such as prioritization of an asylum interview or specific interpretation needs, specific reception needs (accommodation, disability mobility assistance) and other needs such as medical or psychological support. The time needed for the action is also indicated (i.e., urgent, medium urgency, etc).” (p. 73)

Comment

As of 2023 we are operating under the “Vulnerability Identification, Assessments And Referral Standard Operating Procedures” manual and all the templates are being regularly reviewed.

Section, page number in the report
D. Guarantees for vulnerable groups, 3. Use of medical reports

Text in the report (extract)

“Overall, there are inconsistencies in the way each officer/caseworker interprets medical reports and the way these are evaluated. Specifically, medical reports provided by private doctors in Cyprus or from the country of origin of the asylum applicant are often viewed as not credible and not taken into consideration by certain officers/caseworkers, whereas others may evaluate them and include them in the assessment.” (p. 81)

Comment

Medical reports from public hospital doctors or external public doctors (of State Health Services Organisation or the Ministry of Health) are considered credible, except where it is found to be counterfeited or falsified. Medical reports from private doctors in Cyprus are handled with due diligence and careful scrutiny to ensure their reliability and authenticity. Medical reports from the country of origin are examined as to their internal and external credibility, in accordance with the relevant legal provisions and they may be rejected as incredible or be accepted as credible.

Extract from the country report	Page and section	Comments
<i>Add lines as required.</i>		

Any additional remarks on the section on the asylum procedure:
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3. Reception Conditions

Please comment using *either* the following structure *or* the table below.

Section, page number in the report

Reception Conditions, Short overview of the reception system

Text in the report (extract)

“Access to reception conditions is provided at the Centre for the duration of stay. Upon exiting the Centre, asylum applicants have access to reception conditions in the community or in the Reception Centres (Kofinou, UASC shelters), whereas a limited number of persons are moved to the Reception/Pre-Removal Center, Limnes.” (p. 94)

Comment

Limnes is a two-pronged project in the same area. With respect to the part of the project that falls within the competence of the Asylum Service, it is a secondary reception center like Kofinou. The other part of the project is the new detention center of the Police.

Section, page number in the report

Reception Conditions, A. Access and forms of reception conditions, 3. Reduction of withdrawal of reception conditions

Text in the report (extract)

“In 2025, there was an increase in other nationalities of asylum applicants who have been issued a residency order designating Kofinou as their place of residency and are allowed to move out of the Centre but are not entitled to MRC regardless of any vulnerabilities.535” (p. 106)

Comment

Vulnerabilities are being considered, and there were cases that asylum seekers from Syria were exempted from the procedure of designation of residence of Kofinou and reduction of MRC. CAS has a number of cases recorded. Additionally, the footnote 535 does not explain that the general practice affected asylum seekers with vulnerabilities.

Section, page number in the report

Reception Conditions, B. Housing

Text in the report (extract)

“Duration of stay is approximately 20-40 days with some applicants including vulnerable persons exceeding this”. (p. 109)

Comment

Duration of stay currently spans from 10 to 44 days, depending on medical assessments, vulnerabilities, accelerated asylum procedure and housing options.

Text in the report (extract)

“There are no standards or conditions regulated for rented accommodation in Cyprus. Therefore, asylum applicants living in private accommodation may often be living in appalling conditions.561 Asylum applicants are expected to find accommodation on their own and there are no services available to refer persons to suitable accommodation or assist persons to identify and secure accommodation, including vulnerable persons and families with children, with the exception of an extremely few cases where the SWS assist.” (p.110)

Comment

In an effort to assist asylum applicants to have access to the community, CAS has initiated a small capacity project to accommodate certain individuals in five-day apartments in the community with good results. These applicants also receive their emergency (first) MRC allowance from the SWS on their way to these premises (as stated in page 118).

Text in the report (extract)

“Nursing staff is present on daily basis from 7.30 to 15.00.” (p. 113)

Comment

Nursing staff is present 24/7 including weekends to assess emergency incidents, provide first-aid and medication and referral applicants to the General Hospital.

Text in the report (extract)

“Reports of insects and snakes appearing on the premises, due to the location of the Centre, continue.” (p.120)

Comment

CAS continues to deal with insects and rodents management, by hiring a company that visits all centers on a monthly basis, disinfecting, spraying and placing anti-rodent mechanisms in WASH areas.

Text in the report (extract)

“Disruptions in employment due to the operation of “Ergani”, the online system managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance: As soon as an employed asylum seeker is rejected at first instance, the system notifies the employer that the particular employee is ineligible to work, which typically leads to dismissal. This process takes place routinely and uniformly for all asylum applicants in this situation, regardless of whether the legal requirements for receiving a final answer and lose the

residence status are met. The asylum seekers who file an appeal are allowed to be registered again in “Ergani”, provided that their employers still need them, only after the system is updated about the appeal submission, a process that may take weeks or even months to conclude.” (p. 132)

Comment

To facilitate issues relating to ERGANI flagging, CAS has designated an officer to inform both the Labor Department and employees regarding the status of their asylum application and the right to work.

Text in the report (extract)

“In 2025, there was an increase in other nationalities of asylum applicants who have been issued a residency order designating Kofinou as their place of residency and are allowed to move out of the Centre but are not entitled to MRC regardless of any vulnerabilities.” (p.140)

Comment

Vulnerabilities are being considered and there were cases that asylum seekers from Syria were exempted from the procedure of designation of residence of Kofinou and reduction of MRC. CAS has a number of cases recorded. Additionally, the footnote 683 does not explain that the general practice affected asylum seekers with vulnerabilities.

Extract from the country report	Page and section	Comments
<i>Add lines as required.</i>		

Any additional remarks on the section on reception conditions:

3. Detention of Asylum Seekers

Please comment using *either* the following structure *or* the table below:

Section, page number in the report

Text in the report (extract)

...

Comment

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Extract from the country report	Page and section	Comments
<i>Add lines as required.</i>		

Any additional remarks on the section on detention of asylum seekers:

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4. Content of International Protection

Please comment using *either* the following structure *or* the table below:

Section, page number in the report

Text in the report (extract)

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Comment

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Extract from the country report	Page and section	Comments
<i>Add lines as required.</i>		

Any additional remarks on the section on the content of international protection:

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5. Additional remarks