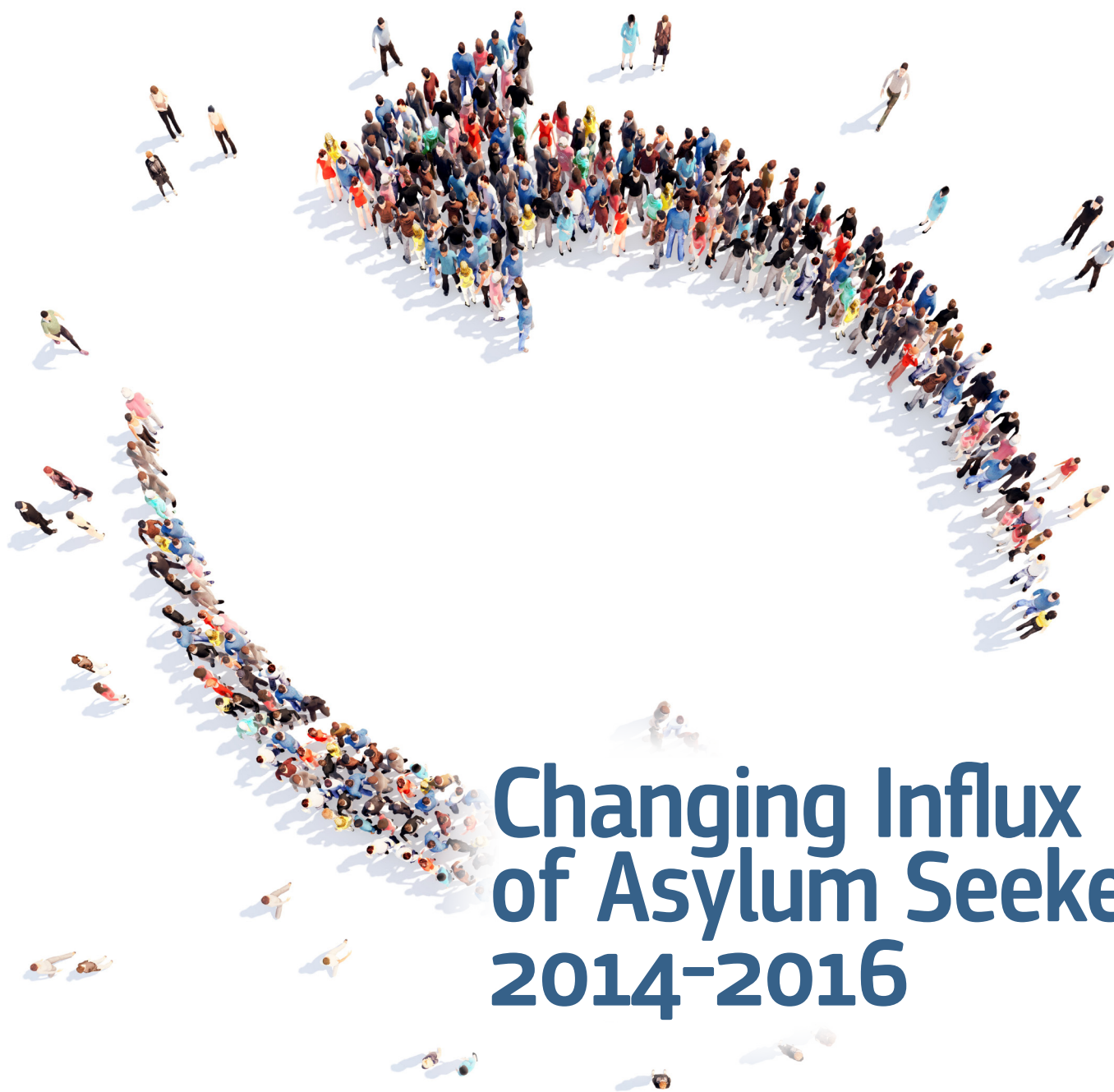




Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers 2014-2016

Synthesis Report for
the EMN Study

August 2018

Disclaimer

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The Study was part of the 2017 Work Programme for the EMN.

Explanatory Note

This Synthesis Report was prepared on the basis of national contributions from 25 EMN NCPs (**Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway**) based on a common template developed by the EMN and completed by EMN NCPs to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability.

National contributions were largely based secondary on research. Sources included existing legislation, policy documents, academic literature, internet-based resources and reports and other information collected from national authorities. Statistics were sourced from Eurostat, national authorities and other (national) sources.

It is important to note that the information contained in this synthesis report refers to the situation in the 25 contributing Member States and Norway from 2014 to 2016, and specifically the contributions made by their EMN National Contact Point. Where the same phenomenon is observed in a number of (Member) States¹, these are listed using the respective country acronym. It is strongly recommended that the national reports are also consulted, as they contain more in depth information at the national level than is available in this synthesis report.

Throughout this study the term ‘applicants for international protection’ was employed instead of ‘asylum seekers’ as it was considered more neutral by the members of the study’s Advisory Group² which oversaw the study.

EMN NCPs from other (Member) States could not, for various reasons, participate on this occasion in this Study, but have done so for other EMN activities and reports.

¹ The use of “Member” between brackets is chosen due to the participation of Norway as non-EU Member State in the study.

² Each EMN Study is overseen by an Advisory Group. This is typically made up of the EMN NCP(s) that proposed the study, other interested NCPs, the EMN Service Provider plus a subject expert from the Odysseus academic network.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All (Member) States have historically experienced changes in the influx of applicants for international protection and other migrants, typically coinciding with conflicts worldwide and changes to migratory routes into the EU. However, in 2014-2016 (Member) States experienced an unprecedented influx of incoming applicants for international protection: the number of applications lodged rose to 1 320 000 million in 2015 and 1 260 000 million in 2016, though the scale and peak moments differed greatly between (Member) States. The mass influx led to backlogs of registrations of international protection applications, pressures on reception centres, and other operational and organisational challenges. (Member) States took numerous measures across different areas to deal with this unprecedented influx.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- The **2014-2016 influx of applicants for international protection and other migrants had a profound impact on the EU** as a whole, but **affected (Member) States in different ways**, including: in the scale of the phenomenon, peak moments and characteristics of the influx.
- **(Member) States' authorities have responded in different ways by taking different measures** across key areas that can be grouped into the following main categories: border control and law enforcement, (wider) reception services, registration and asylum procedures, and integration measures.
- **Some measures taken were similar** across different (Member) States, in particular those enhancing law enforcement and border control and those increasing reception places, immigration service staff and financial resources, while **other measures specifically responded to the individual challenges faced by a (Member) State** based on its type of influx (and the phenomenon of secondary movements),³ geographical location and policy preferences.
- Certain measures had **collateral or knock-on effects on neighbouring countries** as they (partially) diverted the influxes to and through the EU;
- Following the general decrease in the influx of arrivals due to national and EU-wide measures taken, (Member) States responded by **dismantling or scaling down some of the measures taken** (such as closing reception centres or reducing reception places), reassigning staff elsewhere and re-allocating other resources. This required a degree of **flexibility**;
- (Member) States also considered themselves **better prepared for future peaks and troughs in influxes** because of the experience gained during 2014-2016 and the emergency and contingency plans put in place as a result;
- **Coordination at different levels of government improved the relevance and effectiveness of measures**:
 - between national, regional and local authorities;
 - between government and relevant third parties; and
 - between (Member) States bilaterally and multilaterally (EU-level).
- Defining **clear mandates and responsibilities for all stakeholders** involved also improved the effectiveness of measures;
- Timely **sharing** of strategic documentation and communication of decisions on measures taken by (Member) States, with the public and media, improved transparency and understanding of the choices made.

NATIONAL RESPONSES

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

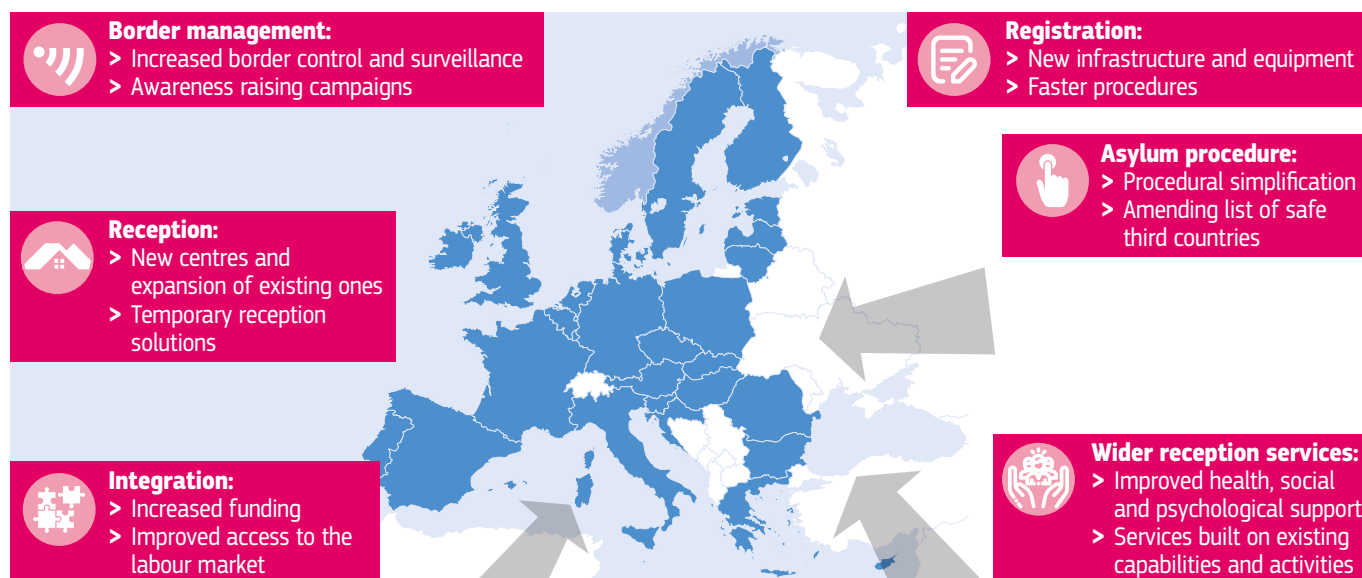
The increased migratory flows over the period 2014-2016 gave rise to significant legislative and policy amendments in a majority of the (Member) States.⁴ This included enacting or amending legislation to better control

³ The phenomenon of migrants, including refugees and applicants for international protection, who for different reasons move from the country in which they first arrived to seek protection or permanent resettlement elsewhere. (EMN Glossary: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/secondary-movement-migrants_en).

⁴ AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO.

Dealing with the changing influx of asylum seekers

Key measures taken by Member States



the migratory flows at the borders,⁵ changes to migration and asylum laws,⁶ institutional changes⁷ and enhanced cooperation⁸ amongst relevant stakeholders.

Cooperation at national and international levels

All (Member) States, including those that did not experience an increased influx of applicants for international protection or other migrants, reported to have strengthened cooperation among relevant stakeholders at national level. More specifically, in the vast majority of the (Member) States, lead ministries (e.g. Interior) developed new synergies with other relevant ministries (e.g. Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and relevant departments, as well as international organisations (e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The majority of (Member) States enhanced cooperation with other (Member) States at bilateral, multilateral, regional and European levels. Not only did the (Member) States make increased use of the existing platforms of cooperation (such as Council configurations / working bodies and Agencies' Management Boards) to exchange views and good practices, but they also developed new forms of cooperation in border management, law enforcement, the fight against smuggling, reception capacity and asylum procedures. At bilateral level, the majority of (Member) States developed stronger relations with law enforcement authorities in neighbouring countries and assisted each other in the management of the migratory flows.⁹

NATIONAL MEASURES

In response to the major fluctuations in the number of persons crossing the EU internal and external borders to seek asylum or another form of protection,¹⁰ (Member) States launched measures in six main areas. These main areas are outlined below:

Border control and law enforcement

Border control and law enforcement measures included organisational and operational interventions to manage inflows of persons at internal or external (land or sea) border crossings. Actions undertaken by the (Member) States¹¹ in this area mostly focussed on scaling up control and surveillance, including: the (temporary) reintroduction of internal border controls, limiting the number of border crossings at official checkpoints, increasing capacity by deploying army and additional police forces, and intensifying control and surveillance operations at airports, ports, rail stations and motorways. These measures were often accompanied by changes and/or an expansion of the role of certain authorities in managing the inflow of third-country nationals at the internal or external border crossings and by changes to the functions of law enforcement authorities in patrolling and surveillance operations.

Reception services

In the area of reception services, measures mostly focussed on increasing (Member) States' reception capacities, with new centres being opened or existing ones being enlarged,¹² which in some cases came along with legal amendments to

⁵ BE, FI, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, SE, SI, NO.

⁶ BE, DE, FI, FR, SE, SI, UK.

⁷ DE, AT, BE, EL, FI, SI.

⁸ BE, CZ, DE, FI, LV, SI.

⁹ AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, SK, SI, NO.

¹⁰ On the basis of indications from the National Reports, whereas the increasing fluctuation for the majority of the (Member) States was related to the situation in Middle East and North Africa, for Slovak Republic and Poland it was also linked to the political situation in Ukraine. Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia received applicants for international protection as consequence of both the situation in Ukraine and the Middle East. Finland and Norway received migrants through Russia, but in relation to the situation in other geographical areas (e.g. Middle East, among other areas).

¹¹ AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO.

¹² AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, PL, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, NO.

construction regulations in order to facilitate the new construction of reception facilities, to open up new places in cities and to rededicate existing buildings for the purpose of easier accommodation. Most of these measures were temporary in nature, generally taken to deal with the sudden peaks in the number of arrivals.

For example, a few (Member) States¹³ introduced pre-registration centres to accommodate those who were waiting to be registered. Other (Member) States created centres to accommodate specific categories of migrants, including transit migrants,¹⁴ families,¹⁵ vulnerable people and minors.¹⁶

Wider reception services

Wider reception services refer to basic and immediate short-term needs of applicants for international protection and irrespective of the outcome of their application. Measures mostly focussed on facilitating access to health care, social services and cultural and linguistic orientation services. In the majority of cases, the measures taken by (Member) States were not new, but rather built on existing capabilities and activities, in particular in relation to health, social and psychological support.¹⁷ Other (Member) States sought to better define and clarify available reception services by, for example, adopting guidelines.¹⁸

Registration procedures

In a context of mass arrivals and a fast-growing backlog, the most common objective of the measures taken by (Member) States with regard to registration procedures was to speed up the identification and registration of third-country nationals, by introducing new procedures and tools, as well as building new infrastructures. (Member) States took a set of different practical measures to better manage registration and reception, ranging from introducing a pre-registration procedure¹⁹ to developing new management and information systems or tools.²⁰

Asylum procedures

Asylum procedures cover the moment from which an application is lodged to the final decision on the application (granting an international protection status or a final rejection). In most (Member) States, national procedures and related processing capacity came under pressure as a result of the high influx during 2014–2016. Therefore, measures taken primarily focussed on making procedures more efficient, reduce waiting times and bring down costs. This was done by introducing procedural simplification and efficiencies, such as pooling similar

applications,²¹ using new technologies,²² limiting procedural requirements for specific nationalities²³ or developing stricter key performance indicators for officers.²⁴

Integration measures

Several (Member) States introduced changes to integration programmes and activities offered to applicants for international protection, as these were often also impacted by the higher influx, as well as by the fluctuations in the number of newcomers.²⁵ Four main sub-areas within the integration efforts were identified:

- Increased capacity and funding to existing integration measures;²⁶
- Measures to improve access to the labour market;²⁷
- Measures to improve language skills and cultural orientation of adults;²⁸
- Measures to facilitate access to education of children/adolescents.²⁹

The events of the period 2014–2016 also impacted on national policies on other types of migration in all (Member) States that participated in the study with the exception of eight Member States (excluding Norway).³⁰ The changes introduced frequently related to a restriction of **family reunification** policies. Measures taken by (Member) States included most often amendments to national legislation which tightened the rules and time limits within which the applicant could apply for family reunification.³¹

DOWNSCALING AND PREPAREDNESS

As a result of national and EU-wide measures and wider international developments, all (Member) States which faced high increase in applications for international protection, experienced at different points in time, a decrease in the influx.

Consequently countries had to dismantle, scale down or adjust the measures taken during the period of high inflows. Seven (Member) States confronted with a lower number of applications for international protection reduced reception capacities from mid-2016 onwards.³² Next to reducing reception capacities, four (Member) States decreased the number of staff in national asylum authorities.³³ The decrease in numbers also gave rise to political and / or organisational re-prioritisation of

13 BE, DE, FI (registration centre), SE.

14 HR, LT, LU, SI.

15 MT.

16 DE, FR, LU, SI, NL.

17 AT, BE, DE, FI, LV, LU, NL, SE, SI, NO.

18 FI, IE, MT, SI, NO.

19 BE, NO.

20 AT, DE, EL, ES, FI, SI.

21 BE, DE, FR.

22 BE, DE, FR. Finland developed automatization, intended as automated functions within the data processing system.

23 DE.

24 DE.

25 Due to the comprehensive and often indirect nature of such measures the study focused on new and directly impacted measures.

26 AT, BE, DE, FI, IE, LU, NL, SE.

27 AT, BE, DE, FI, LV, SE (e.g., with internships and “fast tracks” to shortage occupations), NO (although only at proposal stage).

28 AT, BE, DE, FI, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE.

29 BE, ES, NL, SE, LU.

30 EE, EL, FR, HR, LT, LU, MT, PL.

31 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, IE, NL, SE, NO.

32 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, NL, SE, NO.

33 BE, FI, NL, SE.

measures taken in (Member) States,³⁴ placing more emphasis on return³⁵ and integration.³⁶

Together with the downscaling of measures, (Member) States also focussed on **ensuring better future preparedness** for similar mass influxes. In the area of reception, for example, several (Member) States reported to have maintained parts of their reception facilities in order to be prepared for possible high inflows of applicants for international protection in the future.³⁷

According to all (Member) States, the increased number of applicants for international protection over 2014-2016 served in many respects as a useful experience. Lessons learnt showed, for example, the **need for continuous and**

constructive cooperation in different areas (see National measures mentioned previously) and at different levels of governance.

The events of 2014-2016 also inevitably revealed existing gaps in reception and asylum systems and led to improve, adjust or refresh existing policies. In terms of long-term preparedness for handling similar situations in the future, the vast majority of (Member) States have either already planned or are considering the adoption of additional measures. While also focusing on increasing the reception capacity, accommodation facilities and integration, some (Member) States³⁸ are also developing long-term strategies and plans, as well as legislative amendments.

34 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, LU, NL, SI, NO.

35 AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, SE, SI.

36 AT, DE, FI, LU, NL, SE, SI NO.

37 AT, BE, DE, HU, SI.

38 CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, MT, NL, PL, SE, SI ,NO.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. STUDY AIMS

This EMN study provides an overview of the changes to national strategies, approaches and measures in response to the unprecedented migratory movements to EU Member States and Norway between 2014 and 2016. The significant increase and subsequent decrease in the influx of applicants for international protection impacted on different (Member) States in different ways. In particular, the study examines the changes made in the processing of applications for international protection; reception services; registration procedures; asylum procedures (including rights afforded to applicants) and the content/legal consequences of the protection granted; border control and law enforcement; integration measures; plus other areas impacted by these policies. The study will enable the reader to understand the ways in which EU Member States and Norway responded to the migration crisis in their country, and the consequences thereof. It draws out key challenges, good practices and lessons learnt during this period. Finally, the study shows the extent to which the (Member) States included in this study are operationally and organisationally prepared for potentially similar situations in the future.

1.2. STUDY RATIONALE

Migratory movements worldwide have become a phenomenon of increasing significance in recent years. At the end of 2014, the number of refugees, applicants for international protection and internally displaced persons worldwide had, for the first time in the post-World War II era, exceeded 60 million people.³⁹ In 2016, the number of forcibly displaced persons hit 65.6 million.⁴⁰ According to the UNHCR, of these, 2.8 million were applicants for international protection (1 million more compared to the end of 2014), 22.5 million refugees, with the vast majority (40.3 million) being internally displaced persons.⁴¹

The impacts of global migratory movements were felt acutely in Europe during the period 2014-2016. According to Eurostat, in 2014 more than 600 000 asylum-seekers⁴² applied for asylum in the EU and Norway, and this more than doubled to 1.32 million in 2015, a level broadly sustained throughout 2016 (1.26 million applications). The influx created significant

operational pressure on EU Border systems and on the mobility rules of the Schengen area. The Dublin Regulation also came under significant operational pressure. (Member) States most affected faced notable challenges in their ability to cope with the significant increase in numbers of applicants for international protection entering their territory, especially with large variations also in monthly arrivals. The human toll was substantial, with many migrants embarking on perilous journeys to arrive in the EU. In fact, recorded deaths or missing migrants in the Mediterranean region (Central, Eastern and Western Mediterranean routes) reached a peak of 12 209 between 2014 and 2016, increasing from 3 283 in 2014 to 3 783 in 2015 and to 5 143 in 2016.

Following the 2016 peak, the numbers of applicants for international protection had decreased to 705 705 in 2017. However, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2017 the number of dead or missing migrants along these routes was still tragically high, reaching 3 116.⁴³

Against this backdrop, a comparative analysis of policies aimed at managing recent fluctuations in numbers of applications for international protection enhances understanding of the different approaches adopted across the EU (both national and regional) and the interplay between the various measures taken by (Member) States and has the potential to contribute to more sustainable policy and practice measures in the future.



1.3. SCOPE AND APPROACH OF THE STUDY

This study specifically examines the policies and practices of (Member) States in response to the recent significant changes in the number of applicants for international protection arriving in the EU and Norway. The following points should be noted:

- The temporal scope includes the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. Whilst these years cover the main peaks in arrivals of applicants for international protection in the EU, troughs can also be identified as having taken place over this period in (Member) States;

39 UNHCR, Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase, <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>.

40 UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5943e8a34/global-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html>.

41 Ibidem.

42 According to the definition of applicants for international protection adopted by Eurostat (i.e. including but not limited to first time applicants).

43 IOM, Missing Migrants project, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean>.

- The study focuses on policy changes and operational measures taken by state and non-state entities acting on behalf of the responsible authorities in response to changing influxes. These include border control and law enforcement, reception services, registration procedures, asylum procedures, integration⁴⁴ and family reunification, financing and staffing for the implementation of such measures, and crisis governance measures (both ad-hoc and structural);⁴⁵
- To avoid duplication of the findings in the EMN 2017 Study on “The effectiveness of return in EU Member States: challenges and good practices linked to EU rules and standards”, return is outside the scope of the study.⁴⁶

This study presents and compares organisational structures, policies and approaches on asylum in (Member) States, discusses relevant evidence on how these policies have been evaluated and draws lessons learnt from the implementation of new approaches and measures. (Member) States that did not experience significant changes to the influx of applicants for international protection were also invited to contribute to the study, especially regarding their preparedness and forward-looking measures for 2017 and beyond, as well as the extent to which there has been a spill-over of effects from one country into another.

(Member) States were provided with a common template which broadly follows the main headings of this study, including several questions on specific issues related to the changing influx of applicants for international protection between 2014 and 2016. To provide more detailed information on the measures introduced, (Member) States were required to fill in three tables, organised by the six main areas mentioned above. The first one asked general information on the measures introduced in response to fluctuations in demand. The second one required in-depth information on each new measure mentioned in the first table (e.g. typology of the measure, rationale behind the introduction of the measure, features and key elements and general aim of the measure). Finally, the third table aimed to gain insights on the effectiveness of the measures introduced.

In addition to information gathered through the common template, and compiled as national reports, the study supports arguments underpinned by Eurostat data, where possible, on the changing influx of applicants for international protection,

in order to provide a clear snapshot of the peaks and troughs over the period 2014-2016 and to better understand the national context of (Member) States' responses.



1.4. EU LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

At EU level, important developments took place in 2015 concerning the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The recast Eurodac Regulation (603/2013/EU)⁴⁷ came into effect as of 20 July 2015 and those Member States bound by the recast Asylum Procedures (2013/32/EU)⁴⁸ and Reception Conditions (2013/33/EU)⁴⁹ Directives (both adopted in 2013) were required to transpose them into their national law by the same date.⁵⁰ In 2015, the European Commission continued to stimulate practical co-operation among Member States in the field of international protection in collaboration with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). Activities conducted in that regard included the organisation of meetings and workshops with national experts.

In 2015 the European Council committed to take decisive action in the area of migration.⁵¹ In response, on 13 May 2015, the European Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration. This contained policy proposals for immediate measures to save lives at sea, combat criminal smuggling networks, respond to high volumes of arrivals within the EU with relocation activities and develop a common approach to resettlement, as well as initiatives to strengthen the CEAS and implement a long term migration strategy.⁵² It also included the ‘Hotspot’⁵³ approaches for Italy and Greece.

On 18 March 2016, and following the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan activated on 29 November 2015 and the EU-Turkey statement (7 March 2016), the EU and Turkey agreed to work towards curbing irregular migration from Turkey to the EU.⁵⁴

On 13 July 2016 the European Commission presented a set of proposals to complete the reform of the CEAS to move towards a more efficient, fair and humane asylum policy, specifically also in regard to its functioning in times of high migratory pressure. This concerned simplifying and shortening the asylum procedure, ensuring common guarantees, stricter rules against abuse, and harmonising rules on safe

44 Integration measures are generally excluded from this study because they have been covered substantially in other EMN studies, except measures facilitating immediate support upon arrival, and integration measures that have been implemented or cut back in direct response to the influx of applicants for international protection.

45 Structural measures are long-term measures, adopted to cope with a specific situation also in the future. Ad-hoc measures are those measures adopted in view of a time-limited emergency situation and could be dismantled once the emergency is over.

46 EMN, ‘The effectiveness of return in EU Member States’, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_eu_synthesis_report_return_study_en.pdf.

47 Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the establishment of ‘Eurodac’ for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States’ law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes, and amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 establishing a European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (recast), OJ L 180, 29.6.2013.

48 Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, OJ L 180, 29.6.2013.

49 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, OJ L 180, 29.6.2013.

50 With the exception of some provisions of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, which have a later deadline for implementation (20 July 2018).

51 European Council, Special Meeting of the European Council, Statement, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2015/04/23/special-eu-co-statement/>.

52 European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A European Agenda on Migration, COM(2015) 240 final, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.

53 EASO Hotspot Operating Plan <https://www.easo.europa.eu/operational-support/hotspot-relocation>.

54 European Commission, Factsheet on the EU-Turkey Statement, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_en.htm.

countries. It also included harmonising protection standards and rights and ensuring dignified and harmonised reception conditions throughout the EU.⁵⁵



1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Following this introduction (Section 1), this EMN study is divided into a further seven sections (Sections 2-8):

- Section 2 on national contexts;
- Section 3 on national responses to fluctuations in the period 2014-2016;
- Section 4 on the financing and staffing of the implemented measures;
- Section 5 on scaling down or dismantling measures following a decrease;
- Section 6 on future preparedness of (Member) States;
- Section 7 on challenges, good practices and lessons learnt; and
- Section 8 sets out the main conclusions.

⁵⁵ European Commission, Completing the reform of the Common European Asylum System: towards an efficient, fair and humane asylum policy.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXTS



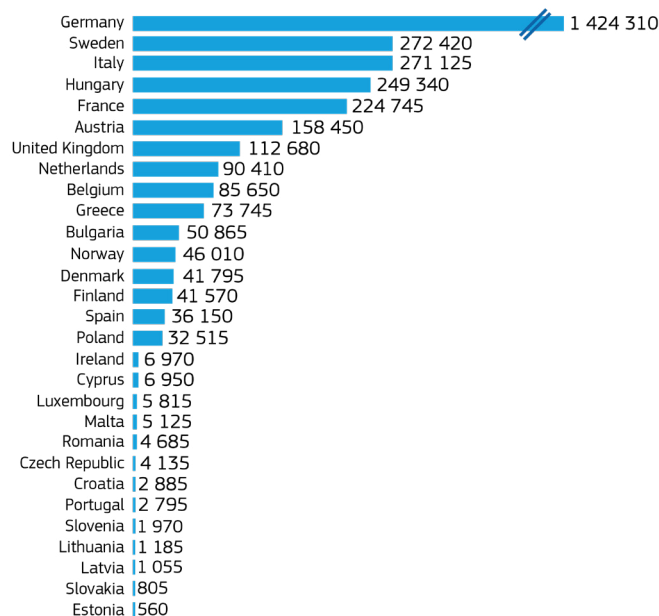
2.1. FLUCTUATIONS IN 2014-2016

All (Member) States⁵⁶ have historically experienced changes in the influx of applicants for international protection, usually coinciding with conflicts worldwide and changes to migratory routes into the EU. Twelve (Member) States⁵⁷ experienced a significant increase in the number of applications for international protection following the wars in former Yugoslavia. Another peak reported by many (Member) States⁵⁸ was experienced in and after 2011, mostly linked to the escalation of conflicts in certain countries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.⁵⁹

In total, the number of applications for international protection⁶⁰ lodged in the EU and Norway increased by 111% between 2014 and 2015 and slightly decreased by 7% between 2015 and 2016. However, the influx varied greatly across (Member) States.

Figure 1 shows the total number of applications for international protection over the period 2014-2016, while Figure 2 presents the share of applications for international protection per 1 million inhabitants over the same period, thereby expressing total applications in relative terms. The numbers do not reflect the fluctuations due to secondary movements.

Figure 1: Total number of applications for international protection over the period 2014-2016



⁵⁶ Except for EL.

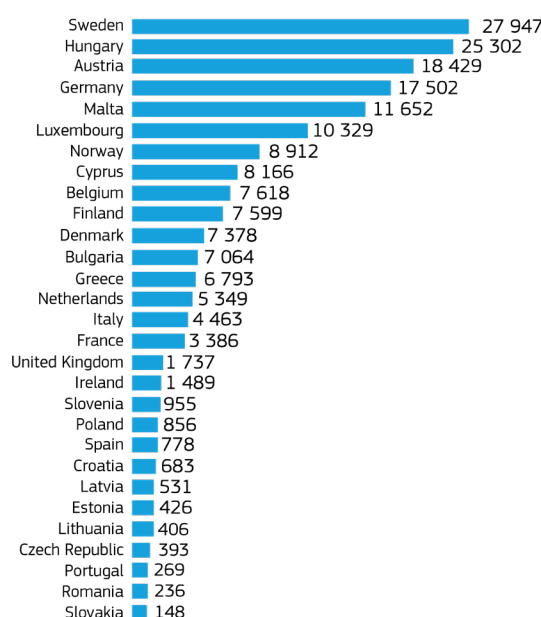
⁵⁷ AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, FR, HU, LU, NL, SE, SI, SK, UK, NO. The exact period of the peak following the war in ex-Yugoslavia was different in (Member) States: some experienced it between 2000 and 2002, while other (Member) States earlier or later than that.

⁵⁸ BE, ES, FR, LV, LU.

⁵⁹ Some (Member) States reported instead that the peak was mainly due to visa liberalisation (LU).

⁶⁰ According to the definition of Eurostat, 'Asylum applicant' means a person having submitted an application for international protection or having been included in such application as a family member during the reference period.[...] Applications submitted by persons who are subsequently found to be a subject of a Dublin procedure (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013) are included in the number of asylum applications. Persons who are transferred to another Member State in application of the Dublin Regulation are reported as applicants for international protection also in the Member State that they are transferred to. Within the same reference period every person being a subject of asylum application is counted only once, therefore repeat applications are not recorded if the first application has been lodged in the same reference period. However, such a repeat application will be recorded if lodged in a different reference month. It means that the aggregation of the monthly figures may overestimate the number of persons applying for international protection within the aggregated period (year).

Figure 2: Share of applications for international protection per 1 million inhabitants over the period 2014 – 2016



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctzm), extracted 29 June 2018.
Note: Figures refer to total number of applications for international protection

2.2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CHANGES IN 2014-2016

The increased migratory flows in the period under review have led to significant legislative and policy amendments in a majority of the (Member) States.⁶¹ Several⁶² amended their national legislation or adopted strategic policy documents or internal regulations⁶³ to better adjust to the new challenges. Changes focused predominantly on the structural and organisational standing of the responsible authorities and/or on improving the efficiency of the asylum procedure.

A number of (Member) States developed legislation to better control the migratory flows⁶⁴ and enhance cooperation⁶⁵ amongst relevant stakeholders. These included:

- **Hungary** and **Greece** introduced a number of border laws as well as accelerated border procedures for applications for international protection. Likewise, **Norway** amended the Immigration Act, to “gain greater control over the flow of applicants for international protection”, by introducing an accelerated procedure for persons who have entered the country from Russia.⁶⁶
- **France** adapted its asylum policy through a three-fold reform based on the law of 29 July 2015 on the reform of the right of asylum, the Migrant Plan Responding to Migration Challenges, Respecting Rights and Ensuring

Respect for the Law and comprehensive measures in Calais.

- The **United Kingdom** passed legislation in 2016 establishing a National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied children seeking international protection, a voluntary scheme designed to ease the pressure on local authorities experiencing sharp increases of unaccompanied minors (UAM).
- **Slovenia**, among others, amended the Alien Act⁶⁷ which addressed the changed migration situation that could threaten public order and internal security, and provided a legal basis for adoption of temporary and territorially limited measures in the event of irregular mass migration.
- Finally, **Sweden** concluded a multiparty political agreement on migration and asylum in October 2015, which included a number of changes to Swedish laws regarding immigration and asylum. These changes included, for example, the introduction of temporary residence permits for refugees and persons in need of protection (instead of permanent permits), and stricter rules on family reunification. A month later, the Swedish government followed up on the multiparty agreement with a number of concrete measures aiming to “adjust the [Swedish] asylum regulations to the minimum level in the EU”.⁶⁸ For example, restrictions were introduced to circumstances that qualified for residence permits on humanitarian grounds.

⁶¹ AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, LU, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK, NO.

⁶² AT, BE, DE, EL, HR, HU, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, NO.

⁶³ SK.

⁶⁴ DE, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, PT, SE, SI, NO.

⁶⁵ CZ, DE, FI, LV, SI.

⁶⁶ The Norwegian Immigration Act provides the option of refusing to process the application for international protection of a person who already has protection in another country or has stayed in a country where the person was not subject to persecution. Norway has a return agreement with Russia dating back to 2007. This measure signalled the desire to make use of the agreement, requesting that Russian authorities take back persons who already had a legal stay in Russia.

⁶⁷ Article 10b of the Alien Act is still under constitutional review upon request of the Human Rights Ombudsman.

⁶⁸ Swedish National Report, p. 14.

Box 1: Defining the scale of the influx

In Poland, the law provided for three scenarios that can be activated according to the magnitude of the situation, each requiring a different threshold of applications for international protection to be reached. However, in at least twelve (Member) States⁶⁹ national legislation does not specify a specific threshold, but rather refers to concepts such as 'significant change' or 'significant influx'. In Norway, other indicators have been set in the legislation to qualify different levels of a crisis,⁷⁰ ranging from a light scaled-up situation to a full national crisis. Notably, many (Member) States⁷¹ have transposed in their national legislation the definition of 'mass influx', as envisaged in Directive 2001/55/EC.⁷² Other (Member) States also developed contingency levels, although not via legislative instruments.⁷³



Many of the (Member) States⁷⁴ that received a high number of asylum applications in the period 2014-2016 adopted legislation that introduced an emergency plan, for implementation in case a certain pre-set threshold of applications for international protection was reached. For instance, in **Austria** article 36 of the Asylum Act allowed for an emergency regulation to be adopted if the maintenance of public order and the protection of internal security were jeopardised as a result of the high number of applications for international protection.⁷⁵

In terms of policy developments, all (Member) States – regardless of whether they experienced an increase in the number of applications for international protection received or not – developed short-term plans and/or long-term strategies, focusing mostly on border controls, registration of applications, reception conditions and integration of refugees. These were often accompanied by an increase of human and financial resources in the respective focus areas. For example, in 2015, **Latvia** developed the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who are in Need for International Protection. **Slovak Republic** also developed measures focusing on internal structures, capacity building and provision of training in crisis management, cooperation with the

non-profit sector, as well as development and humanitarian aid. In response to the increased number of refugees and migrants in June 2015 **Slovenia** adopted a Contingency Plan for Provision of Accommodation and Care in Case of an Increased Number of International Protection Applicants. The Police prepared the contingency plan related to management of massive irregular migration.

(Member) States introduced changes to their institutional set-up, mostly creating new bodies which would allow for a greater focus on certain aspects of the influx. For instance, **Austria** had established a new Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum already in 2014⁷⁶ with the aim to be able to respond more rapidly to increasing migration flows. In **Finland**, the establishment of identity and travel route within the asylum process was transferred from the Police and the Finnish Border Guard to the Finnish Immigration Service. In **Portugal**, a working group was established on the European Agenda for Migration with the mission of assessing installed capacity and preparing a plan of action and response on resettlement, relocation and integration of immigrants. A similar working group was set up in **Spain**, tasked with the analysis of the overall national situation of migration and asylum. **Slovenia** established a new Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants, as a separate Government service for meeting the need for targeted and supervised action in the field of care for migrants entering the territory; the new office became fully operational in 2017. **Greece** strengthened the operations of first-line staff, i.e. the Reception and Identification Service of the Ministry for Migration Policy and the General Secretariat for Reception.



2.3. COOPERATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

All (Member) States, including those that did not experience an increase in the number of applications for international protection, reported that cooperation among the relevant stakeholders at national level was strengthened over the period considered. More specifically, in the vast majority of the (Member) States,⁷⁷ the ministries in charge of immigration and asylum (Interior, Home Affairs or Justice etc.) developed new synergies with other relevant ministries (i.e. Ministry of Social Security, Ministry of Social Affairs), national organisations, international organisations (e.g. UNHCR) and NGOs.

In the case of **Sweden**, coordination within and between ministries was strengthened, while the standard structure for dealing with crises was used.⁷⁸ In **Luxembourg**, cooperation between the responsible ministries, administrations and organisations became more systematic from 2015 onwards

69 BE, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, MT, NL, SK, NO.

70 Substantial deviation from the projected number of arrivals (prognosis); high number of applicants for international protection arriving in one single location (other than Oslo); a steep increase in unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, coinciding with a rising total number of applicants for international protection.

71 BE, DE, ES, IE, LU, SK.

72 Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between (Member) States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.

73 SE.

74 AT, CZ, EL, HU, LT, PL, SE, SI.

75 The plan called for the number of refugees admitted to asylum procedures to be limited to a maximum target level of 1.5 per cent of the population – corresponding to 127 500 persons – for a planning period of four years. The corresponding number for 2016 was 37 500 (AT EMN NCP, 2017:19).

76 This was before the peak of the influx of applicants for international protection in Austria.

77 AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LU, NL, SE, SI, UK, NO.

78 This means that in crisis situations, the various government ministries remain responsible for their respective areas of responsibility, while the "Crisis Management Coordination Secretariat" assumes responsibility for coordination and support, assesses the situation at hand, and makes a joint overall analysis.

(see under 3.1.2). Several (Member) States⁷⁹ stated that the governmental departments that deal with migration and asylum policy developed or strengthened cooperation practices with the police services.

In the **Czech Republic**, the Permanent Interagency Analytical Unit (ANACEN) served as a platform for the establishment of close cooperation and information exchange of all bodies (not only on the senior officer level) involved in the management of border control and international migration.

In the **Netherlands** the response to the increased influx can be characterised as ‘crisis management’. On a national level, crisis management has been implemented for organisations dealing with the asylum procedure including liaisons and partnerships between authorities at various levels. In **Slovenia**, an interdepartmental analytical group was activated, operating within the National Centre for Crisis Management. It aimed to coordinate civil society and the response to potential humanitarian needs, to provide assistance to refugees in the field, to create stronger systemic initiatives, to implement joint activities (in synergy and without duplication), and to have a greater impact on the development of Government response and policy.⁸⁰ The Administration of Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, and the Civil Protection State Agency have also been engaged in management of the locations where significant migratory movements happened, which was led by the police.

Norway highlighted the substantial contribution of NGOs on different fronts that supplemented State and municipality services as well as other local initiatives at asylum reception facilities, including integration facilities over 2014-2016. Similarly, **Austria, France, Germany** and **Luxembourg** noted a significant contribution of several associations and volunteers in dealing with the influx. In **Belgium**, cooperation at national level took place at different levels of governance (federal, regional, local), also with the help of newly introduced working-groups aiming to improve the channels for information sharing between law enforcement authorities. Similar multi-level cooperation was developed in **Austria**,⁸¹ **Luxembourg** and **Germany**.

2.4. COOPERATION AT TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL

During 2014-2016, the majority of the (Member) States enhanced cooperation with other (Member) States at bilateral, multilateral, regional and European levels. Not only did the (Member) States make increased use of the existing platforms of cooperation (such as Council configurations / working bodies and Agencies' Management Boards) to exchange views and good practices, but they also developed new forms of cooperation. At regional level there were at least two examples. First, **Hungary, Poland** and the **Slovak Republic** enhanced their cooperation through the creation of a working group with the aim to cooperate in detection and investigation of organised irregular migration from the Western Balkan countries. Second, **Sweden, Finland** and **Norway**

cooperated closely during the three years, through formal and informal cooperation channels.

The **main areas of cooperation** concerned border controls, law enforcement and the fight against smuggling, as well as the increase of reception capacity and improvement of asylum procedures. At a bilateral level, most (Member) States⁸² worked more closely with the law enforcement authorities of neighbouring countries, consulted with ministerial and other bodies to exchange good practices and assisted each other in the management of the migratory flows:

- **Lithuania** drew from the practical experience of others (**Sweden**), in regard to integration practices for refugees;
- Based on the two-year Memorandum of Understanding signed between **Austria** and the **Slovak Republic** on 21 July 2015, the Slovak Republic provided applicants for international protection from Austria with accommodation in its facility in Gabčíkovo, with maximum 500 accommodated persons at any given time. Between September 2015 and the end of 2016, the Slovak Republic provided temporary accommodation to approx. 1 220 applicants (from the Traiskirchen reception centre in Austria), during their asylum procedure which continued to be managed by Austrian authorities;
- In addition, in September 2015, a trilateral agreement was concluded between **Austria, Germany** and **Hungary** on the entry and onward movement of applicants for international protection;
- The **Czech Republic** concluded a number of bilateral agreements with police services in neighbouring countries (Austria, Germany and Poland) and with countries on the Balkan Route. The agreements focused on combatting crime and strengthening the protection of public order through exchange of information and experience, on collaboration in implementing various measures, and on cooperation in education;
- **France** and the **United Kingdom** cooperated in managing irregular migration in the Calais area and in identifying and supporting victims of human trafficking. Both countries also ran communication campaigns together;
- **Slovenia** established regular bilateral and multilateral cooperation with representatives of Western Balkan authorities and neighbouring Member States (especially Austria and Croatia) at different levels of authority (e.g. governmental, diplomatic and operational) in order to agree on the practical implementation of measures adopted for effective management of the asylum influx at the EU external border.

The majority of (Member) States also cooperated at EU level, following the recommendations included in the European Agenda on Migration. Besides the EU relocation programme, numerous (Member) States also deployed experts to the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency's (Frontex)** joint operations and to the Agency's newly established intervention pool, as well as to support the implementation of EASO's operational activities.

⁷⁹ AT, BE, CZ, EL, FI, HU, LU.

⁸⁰ All groups were established in 2015 and 2016. Additional police, military and financial department staffs was recruited as well to help managing migration influx, which crossed Slovenian border. Cooperation between the Slovenian Police Force and the Slovenian Army is ongoing, however is a much lesser volume.

⁸¹ However, under the Federal Constitutional Act, the Federal State was permitted to bypass municipalities when establishing accommodation facilities, even where provinces, districts or municipalities opposed such plans.

⁸² AT, BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, SI, SK, NO.

In relation to spill-over effects from neighbouring countries, the majority of the (Member) States⁸³ reported that the policies and approaches adopted in neighbouring countries – and beyond⁸⁴ – had a direct impact on their own policies and approaches. Some of them introduced temporary border controls.⁸⁵ For example, **Finland** was significantly affected by the strict legislative amendments in **Sweden**, while at the

turn of 2015 the **Slovak Republic** experienced a higher pressure on the capacity of its detention centres because of the **Hungarian** decision to suspend transfers of applicants for international protection within the Dublin Regulation. **Slovenia** felt knock-on effects from the adoption of the stricter asylum legislation in Hungary, the closure of the **Croatian-Hungarian** border and reception decisions by **Austria** and **Germany**.

83 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, MT, NL, SE, SI, SK, NO.

84 E.g. (Member) States at EU external borders.

85 AT, BE, DE, HU, SE, SI, SK.

3. NATIONAL RESPONSES TO INFLUXES IN 2014-2016



3.1. MAIN AREAS OF INTERVENTION TO COPE WITH INFLUXES

In response to the major influxes in the number of persons crossing the EU internal and external borders to seek asylum or another form of protection, (Member) States launched multiple measures. On the basis of indications from the National Reports, the increasing fluctuation for the majority of the (Member) States was related to the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. The **Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Slovak Republic** received applicants for international protection as a consequence of the situation in the Middle East as well as the political situation in Ukraine. **Finland and Norway** received migrants through Russia, but in relation to the situation in other geographical areas (e.g. the Middle East, among others).

Measures adopted by (Member) States have been organised into the following six main areas:⁸⁶

- **Border control and law enforcement** included organisational and operational measures to manage inflows of persons at the internal or external border crossings (whether via land or sea), as well as temporary border controls, patrols and surveillance operations;
- **Reception services** included measures undertaken by (Member) States to improve their reception capabilities in the immediate aftermath of the arrival of the applicant for international protection;
- **Wider reception services** included measures responding to basic, immediate needs of applicants for international protection, once the accommodation is arranged and irrespective of the outcome of their application;
- **Registration procedures** refer to the phase that immediately follows the arrival of applicants for international protection, to record their entry and establish their identity;
- **Asylum procedures** cover the moment from which an application is lodged to the final decision on the

application (granting an international protection status or a final rejection);

- **Integration measures** were relevant insofar as they were also directly or indirectly impacted by fluctuations in the numbers of arrivals. Due to the comprehensive and often indirect nature of such measures the study focused on new and directly impacted measures.

This report does not present the total number of reported measures per type or (Member) State due to the different approaches used in counting them. However, based on the information received the areas of border control and law enforcement seemed to record overall the highest concentration of measures, followed by reception services, asylum and integration measures.

In terms of types of measures adopted in each area, legislative instruments were the preferred type of measure in border control and law enforcement, asylum procedures and integration measures. The majority of (Member) States introduced both legislative measures and national action plans in reception services. Finally, (Member) States also introduced soft measures, such as handbooks, circulars and policy guidance documents.

The following sub-sections present an overview of the measures taken across the (Member) States in each main area. Each subsection starts with a short analysis of the main types of measures undertaken, followed by considerations on the effectiveness of the measures (where possible identifying the immediate results and longer-term effects), including examples of interesting and good practices where such were identified.

3.1.1. Border control and law enforcement

Border control and law enforcement measures undertaken by some (Member) States⁸⁷ mostly focussed on scaling up controls at both the internal and external borders, including: the (temporary) reintroduction of internal border controls; identity-checks on cross-border travellers;⁸⁸ limiting the number of border crossings at official checkpoints; increasing control capacity by deploying army and additional

⁸⁶ The categories listed in this synthesis report do not precisely match the categories used in the common template for the national reports, as some have been merged to better present the responses received. For example, the areas of 'Border controls' and 'Law enforcement' have been merged and 'Others' was merged with the area that best fitted the single measure.

⁸⁷ AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, NL, PL, SE, SI, NO. In France border controls, initially implemented during the organisation of the COP 21, were strengthened and prolonged following the terror attacks in November 2015 and July 2016 and the large-scale sporting events in 2016.

⁸⁸ Finland did not introduce border control at internal EU borders. The Police and the Finnish Border Guard carried out intensified monitoring of foreign nationals on internal borders.

police forces; and intensifying control and surveillance operations at airports, ports, rail stations and motorways.

These measures were often accompanied by changes in and/or an expansion of the role of certain authorities in managing the inflow of third-country nationals at the internal or external border crossings and by changes to the functions of law enforcement authorities in patrolling and surveillance operations.

Austria, Hungary and Slovenia⁸⁹ introduced new infrastructure and tools to control the borders or added to existing ones. This included, in certain cases, measures such as the construction of a fence along the borders. In other cases, (Member) States sought to make identification processes more efficient at the border.⁹⁰ **Italy** for example introduced new identification measures at hotspots to speed up identification and cooperate systematically with EU entities. **Belgium** and **Norway** started to systematically register biometric data,

such as fingerprints and photos, to enable a better monitoring of the flows and the overall scale of the phenomenon. **Slovenia** started with the registration of persons to ensure national security and combating terrorism, and family reunification.

Belgium also developed a new awareness-raising campaign that specifically targeted truck drivers (see Box 2).

(Member) States⁹¹ also engaged in cooperation with other (Member) States and third countries to improve border control. For instance, **Finland** increased cooperation with **Sweden, Estonia and Germany**. **Germany** assisted through its Federal Police the Serbian, Albanian and Slovenian border police in managing the rise in applicants for international protection across the Balkan Route and also participated in European border management operations led by Frontex. The **United Kingdom** and **France** worked in close cooperation to resolve the situation in the Calais region by further securing the ports and the channel tunnel area. The **Slovak Republic** and **Hungary** agreed to post 50 police force members for monitoring of the border between Hungary and Serbia.

In **Slovenia** regular migration monitoring has been established through the exchange of information and statistical data between Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia, and through cooperation within the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders.

Border control measures were tightly linked to law enforcement measures, as the latter focussed predominantly on increasing capacity at the border and on introducing legal consequences to support the effectiveness of controls. For instance, **Hungary** proceeded with the criminalisation of certain acts, such as climbing the fence at the border. It also declared a state of national emergency, allowing for the use of non-lethal force against migrants with a view to protect its borders.

Most (Member) States that implemented measures to strengthen the control of their borders noted an immediate effect, for example an increase in the detection of migrants irregularly present at the border,⁹² and a decrease of irregular crossings and entries.

The graph below presents the monthly number of detections of migrants irregularly present at borders during 2015 and 2016. Data on detections along the Western Balkans, Eastern Mediterranean and Central Mediterranean routes show a strong overall decrease after 2015, possibly as a result of the measures taken along the other routes.

The measures introduced in the areas of border control and law enforcement had positive medium and longer-term effects as well.⁹³ **Finland** for example had a greater capacity to register all migrants before their placement in reception centres, following the establishment of a registration centre at the border with northern Sweden.

Some of the measures had unexpected or collateral effects, whereby migrant flows diverted to alternative routes, such as from **Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia** to other (Member) States. In **Sweden**, the new border and ID checks introduced at the borders with Denmark had a collateral effect on all travellers and commuters in terms of increasing their journey time (see below). In the **Netherlands**, as some irregularly

Box 2: Awareness raising campaign (Belgium)

A campaign called “Give smugglers of people no chance” was implemented by the Immigration Office in cooperation with the Belgium Transport Federation (Febetra) and with the Federal Police. It targeted truck drivers, as authorities had noted a strong rise in the number of migrants seeking to board trucks stopped at parking areas along motorways. Most of these migrants wanted to reach the United Kingdom.



The main aim of the campaign was to provide truck drivers (and transport companies) with information about the sanctions associated with being involved in human smuggling; how to reduce the risk of irregularly staying migrants entering their trucks; and what to do when they suspected irregularly staying migrants had already entered their trucks.

The campaign used different channels, such as multilingual posters and flyers (distributed in the service and parking areas of motorways), dedicated pages on the website of Febetra (which provided updated information on methods, trends and places where migrants were hiding), and articles and advertisements (published in magazines related to the transport industry). A logo was also designed to flag and raise awareness of the issue amongst all truck drivers.

89 Slovenia installed technical barriers at the border with Croatia.

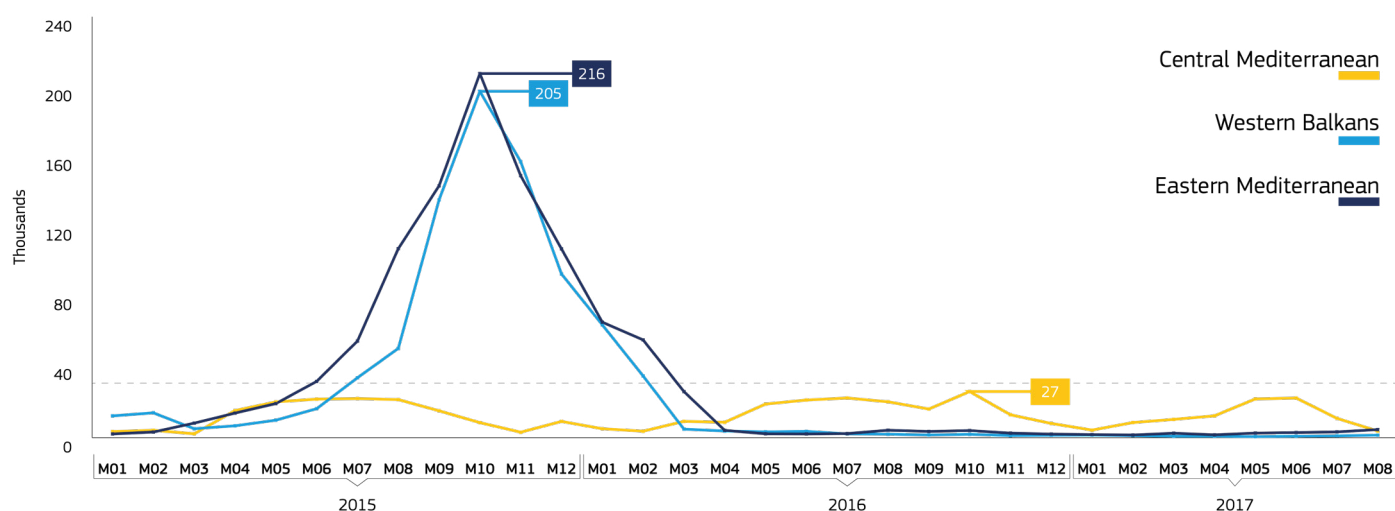
90 AT, DE, EL, FI, HR, HU, LT, LV, NL, SE, SI.

91 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, LV, SI, SK, UK.

92 HU, NL, MT, SK, NO.

93 BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, NL, MT, SE.

Figure 3: Detections of migrants irregularly present at borders along the three main EU entry routes per month during 2015 and 2016



Source: Eurostat migration statistics (migr_asyappctzm), extracted 29 June 2018.

present migrants applied for international protection only once detected, this contributed to an unexpected slight increase in the number of applications for international protection.

Tightened law enforcement measures at border areas were formally evaluated in **Belgium** (by the police), **Greece** (by the LIBE Committee), **Finland** (by the government, the police and the Finnish Border Guard), **Sweden** (by Swedish National Audit Office and other public and private bodies), and in the **Netherlands** (by Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice and Security and the Royal Marechaussee). The evaluations identified the following impacts of the measures: more effective management of the influx⁹⁴ and a need to follow up on the implementation of measures (**Greece**).

Other effects of the border control and law enforcement measures as reported in national evaluations included the withdrawal of protection statuses in 47 cases in **Belgium**,⁹⁵ improvements to coordination and cooperation in **Finland**, better identification of smuggling and trafficking cases in the **Netherlands** and closer monitoring of third-country nationals overall.⁹⁶ In **Sweden**, the more controlled management of arrivals resulted in longer travelling times of EU citizens and other legal residents travelling from Denmark by train, reducing the number of people using the train to commute between the two countries.⁹⁷ This evaluation focussed also on the economic impact resulting from the temporary border

controls and concluded that the border and ID-checks slowed down economic growth in the region (i.e. Öresund region).

3.1.2. Reception services

Measures taken concerning reception services mostly focussed on increasing (Member) States' reception capacities to better respond to the increase in the influx of applicants for international protection in 2014-2016, with new centres being opened or existing ones being enlarged in about half of the (Member) States.⁹⁸ A few (Member) States also moved to downscaling their reception capacity when numbers started dropping in 2016,⁹⁹ by closing and downsizing reception facilities (as further explained in [Section 5](#)).

The measures taken were mostly temporary in nature, to deal with sudden peaks in the number of arrivals. For example, a few (Member) States¹⁰⁰ introduced **pre-registration** centres to accommodate those who were waiting to be registered or moved to a reception centre (further explained in [Section 3.1.4](#)).

Other (Member) States created centres to accommodate specific categories of migrants, including transit migrants,¹⁰¹ families,¹⁰² vulnerable people¹⁰³ and minors.¹⁰⁴ In **France** a day care centre¹⁰⁵ for irregularly present migrants living in Calais was created to protect vulnerable people living there. Furthermore, migrants were moved to safety by dismantling

94 EL, FI, NL, SE.

95 Since 2016 (until September 2017), 123 cases of international protection granted by Belgium have been investigated, of which 47 resulted in a withdrawal of the protection status, and 51 cases were still investigated.

96 FI, HU, NL.

97 Sweden reported that once the controls were abandoned, the number of train passengers increased again.

98 AT, BE, DE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, PL, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, NO.

99 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, NL, SE, NO.

100 BE, DE, FI, SE.

101 HR, LU, SI.

102 MT, LT.

103 DE, FR (see note below on "day care").

104 DE, FR, LU, NL, SI.

105 A day care centre which is only accessible for the day and ensures access to basic necessities (shower, food, medical and legal consultation etc.).

camps (e.g. Calais) and housing them in newly established Reception and Orientation Centres (CAOs or CAOMIs for unaccompanied minors) so that they could consider their migration plans and start their asylum procedures. **Ireland** also committed to bringing up to 200 unaccompanied minors previously living at the Calais camps to Ireland under the Calais Special Project.

Luxembourg set up an emergency plan for the reception of applicants for international protection, which included the establishment of primary reception centres in a first phase and modular housing structures in a second phase. **Germany** and the **Netherlands** adopted measures to facilitate access to housing and other forms of accommodation for applicants for international protection and those who had been granted international protection or another status. Similarly, in **Sweden**, to reduce the number of people staying in reception centres, as of June 2016, a person who had applied for international protection and received a refusal of entry or expulsion order was no longer entitled to accommodation or daily allowances provided by the Swedish Migration Agency when the deadline for voluntary departure had expired. **Lithuania** decided to accommodate resettled and relocated applicants for international protection in the Refugee reception centre (social institution) immediately for the time period while their applications were being examined. In **Germany**, online platforms were developed by non-state actors, with the support of Federal and/or Länder funding, to help applicants for international protection and those allowed to stay find a housing solution (see Box 4).

Measures taken also included several organisational changes, particularly with regard to the division of responsibilities between national and local authorities, with (Member) States often taking a more centralised approach to better coordinate activities in the area of reception.¹⁰⁶

In **Austria**, for example, if regional-level authorities refused to accept applicants for international protection, the Federal State could override their decision and mandate the distribution of migrants in that region. Organisational changes in other (Member) States included, as example, the temporary redeployment of staff from other areas to screening and reception services to meet the increased numbers.¹⁰⁷

The higher influx across many (Member) States also provided the impetus to improving coordination among key stakeholders. In the context of its emergency plan, **Luxembourg** set up various coordination and information groups involving responsible ministries, administrations and organisations, with the High Commission on National Protection playing a significant coordinating role in this regard. Moreover, further groups were established for the implementation of the emergency plan,¹⁰⁸ and on a bilateral basis. It was found that in particular the use of a common terminology resulting from these coordination activities facilitated communication between administrations, civil society and the public. In October 2015, the **Austrian** Federal Government appointed a Refugee Coordinator, to act as a central coordination point for assessing accommodation needs and allocate available spaces throughout the country. The aim of the appointment was to allow for a distribution of applicants for international protection in a uniform and fair manner and in accordance with the principles of human dignity and solidarity. **Finland** established a similar accommodation

Box 3: Flexible Intervention Teams (Netherlands)

In December 2015, four Flexible Intervention Teams (FIT) of the national police department were fully deployed to combat human smuggling and trafficking. The measure was taken because the high influx of refugees from Syria and Eritrea meant there was an increase in crime rates in the field of human smuggling and trafficking.



FIT had already been established in 2011 to enable the police department to react quickly and efficiently when crime occurs on transport flows (road, water, rail and air) and are, in addition to the afore mentioned, also the upscaling capacity within de National police department.

The deployment of these special teams focused specifically on the area around certain reception centres for applicants for international protection. The members of the teams monitored in uniform and in civilian clothes on and around the reception areas in order to receive and follow up on indications of human smuggling and even trafficking. Surveillance was also carried out on the roads near the centres. The deployment of the teams was not only intended to create more efficiency in reacting to these forms of crime but was also meant also to lead to important information for criminal investigations.

FIT teams were deployed as an ad-hoc measure. After the influx of refugees decreased, the specific deployment of the FIT teams in the field of combatting human smuggling and trafficking ended and is now part of the regular duties of the national police department once more.

coordination service (called a Situation Centre) within the Reception Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service with the additional task of compiling up-to-date statistics.

The measures taken had immediate results, with (Member) States being able to accommodate higher numbers of applicants for international protection (reception capacity in **Belgium** and **France** doubled in comparison with previous years), as well as some positive intermediate outcomes, as (Member) States were able to offer better reception standards

¹⁰⁶ AT, HR, LU, NL, SI.

¹⁰⁷ DE, UK.

¹⁰⁸ In the framework of the emergency plan for reception of applicants for international protection the following groups were formed: a) the logistical cell b) the comité de suivi, c) an evaluation unit and d) a coordination group.

and quality reception services.¹¹⁰ **Malta** for example focussed on improving standards for family groups, while the **Netherlands** strived to offer continuity in the reception, counselling and education of migrant youth. In **Norway**, arrival centres with co-located services proved to be effective.

In a few (Member) States¹¹¹ reception measures were evaluated. These evaluations were mostly carried out by immigration authorities, national audit and government enquiries or as part of studies on the reception of applicants for international protection.

In **Finland**, **France** and **Sweden**, evaluations found that reception capacity had been successfully scaled up, in a timely manner: in Sweden, however, this did not automatically imply that this effort was sufficient to accommodate all applicants for international protection at all times.

In **Finland**, it was found that despite a lack of experience of some stakeholders in running reception operations, good coordination between stakeholders and a flexible approach had helped to adequately address any problems which had arisen. Similarly, in the **Netherlands** the cooperation of relevant stakeholders helped to provide tailor-made solutions for the reception of applicants for international protection and the housing of residence permit holders. An evaluation of the reception system in **Norway** recommended to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation and improve coordination between national, regional and local levels of government. It also found that the dissemination of information on service provision and rights could be improved.

3.1.3. Wider reception services

Measures within this specific area address basic, immediate needs beyond accommodation and include (mental) health care, social services and initial orientation services. In the majority of cases, the measures taken by (Member) States were not new, but rather built on existing capabilities and activities, in particular on improving the provision of **health, social and psychological support**.¹¹² **Belgium**, for example, provided all reception centres with a medical kit for urgent medication (see box 5) and dedicated special efforts to (traumatised) minors¹¹³ were deployed at school level. The **United Kingdom** also focused on the sharp increase of UAMs experienced by some local authorities. In order to ensure an equitable distribution of UAMs, the government passed a legislation to establish a National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for UAMs.

Finally, for a limited period of two years, **Germany** allowed applicants for international protection who could prove they had undergone medical training, to provide temporary medical care to other applicants for international protection at initial reception facilities and communal accommodation facilities if it was not possible otherwise to guarantee medical care.

For ensuring adequate wider reception services (medical care and education) in view of the increased pressure, **Sweden** increased the resources and funding available to county councils, municipalities and education infrastructures.

Box 4: Online platform to facilitate housing allocation (Germany)

The creation of several online platforms by non-state actors, which were financially supported by Federal or Länder funding to help find private housing in Germany, were part of a wider set of measures taken to facilitate accommodation in view of the increase in number of applicants for international protection:



- Creation of new emergency facilities;
- Nationwide initiatives launched to organise follow-up accommodation in local communities (de-centralisation);
- Housing advisory centres for refugees were established by local authorities and charitable organisations;
- Creation of online platforms.

One online platform¹⁰⁹ which operates in German, English and Arabic offers the possibility to register for flat-shares or apartment rentals. The platform allows applicants and beneficiaries of international protection to register and indicate their accommodation needs, and a platform team then matches these needs with landlords offering suitable accommodation, putting both sides in touch with each other. Furthermore, the platform also provides information on options for financing the costs of the accommodation (e.g. support funds by the Länder or by micro-donations etc.) Last but not least, the platform team also follows up later on with those registered and if required can provide counselling.

Other (Member) States sought to better define and clarify available reception services. **Finland**, **Slovenia** and **Norway** developed guidelines for first-line practitioners at municipality level to better equip third-country nationals to access the various health and social services available to them. In **Finland** and **Malta**, guidelines served to better define the division of tasks and responsibilities between the various authorities, services and other stakeholders involved in the delivery of reception services. In **Luxembourg**, NGOs managing reception facilities developed guidelines for their staff in the facilities due to the large increase in staff and facilities.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. www.fluechtlinge-willkommen.de/en

¹¹⁰ According to the findings of evaluations reported in the National Reports.

¹¹¹ BE, FI, FR, NL, SE, NO.

¹¹² AT, BE, DE, FI, LV, LU, NL, SE, SI, NO.

¹¹³ 'Traumatised refugee children' are children who fled their country, regardless their actual status in Belgium (applicants or beneficiary of international protection) and their family composition.

In a view to also better manage reception, **Spain** introduced in 2015 a flexible system of reporting to the Autonomous Communities on the reception of applicants/beneficiaries of international protection. Each Autonomous Community appointed a focal point in this matter, who was required to coordinate the implementation of general services for these individuals (schooling, health insurance card, registration, etc.), in collaboration with the managers of the resources of the National System concerned. To structure this offer, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security created an electronic system which was directly incorporated into the Map of Resources of the National Reception System for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

The measures introduced by the (Member) States had an immediate result in terms of the services reaching a higher number of people.¹¹⁴ Longer term effects included a more tailored offer and higher quality services.¹¹⁵ In **Belgium** and **Malta**, for example, the measures taken helped to improve social and health services provided to applicants for international protection. Unexpected effects were also reported, for example, an increased demand for specific healthcare services such as dental care in **Ireland** and **Luxembourg**.

Measures concerning wider reception services were evaluated internally in **Norway**, whereas they were undertaken by a specific authority in **Belgium**.¹¹⁶ In **Belgium**, the evaluation underlined that the demand for services exceeded government forecasts, showing a great need for specialised mental health care for refugee children, but also the need of specific support to welfare organisations counselling refugee children.

3.1.4. Registration procedures

In a context of mass arrivals and a fast-growing backlog, the most common objective of the measures taken by (Member) States with regard to registration procedures was to speed up the **identification** and **registration** of third-country nationals. This was achieved by introducing new procedures and tools, as well as building new infrastructures and other practical steps.

At least two (Member) States¹¹⁷ introduced a new **pre-registration procedure**. In **Belgium**, this consisted of the collection of fingerprints, ID checks and security screening of all applicants against databases of intelligence services, to filter those who might pose a security threat. In **Norway**, a 'mini-registration' process was introduced to at least record essential information on newcomers before they were transferred to a reception centre, so that their full registration could be completed at a later stage. Instead of creating a new procedure, **Spain** changed organisational responsibilities among authorities by decentralising the registration process to local units of the National Police. The **Netherlands** made use of a newly implemented automated identification method during the period of high influx. This measure was pre-planned but aided in accelerating the identification and registration process by enabling the collection of fingerprints and photographs of applicants electronically. **Sweden** prioritised the registration of new applicants over the processing of their

Box 5: Medical support at reception centres level (Belgium)

Belgium appointed seven trauma psychologists to support welfare organisations, teachers and the Centres for Pupil Guidance (CLB) in dealing with traumatised refugee children and developed specific training for teachers to recognise trauma in children. In terms of medical screening and health provisions for new applicants for international protection, Belgium introduced three measures:



- A medical screening procedure (July 2015) to identify persons with special needs, facilitated by the reinforced staff of the medical unit at the dispatching service of the Federal Reception Agency (Fedasil), consisting of a general practitioner and 2.5 full time equivalent (FTE) nurses;
- A programme of vaccinations (February 2016) to protect newcomers against infectious diseases and avoid their further spreading.
- The distribution of medical kits (2015) to facilitate the start-up of the medical services in the new reception centres. These kits consist of emergency medication, wound care material, etc. and medical equipment, such as an examination table and a blood pressure monitor.

applications, extended opening hours of asylum application units and opening new ones.

Austria, Finland and **Slovenia** further developed their management and information systems to speed up registration processes. In **Austria**, this included the deployment of temporary units at the border to register every new entry. In **Slovenia**, the system was developed to systematically obtain photographs, fingerprints and personal data of migrants, including verification against different databases and data entry into the database. A similar temporary system was also put in place in **Greece**, which used mobile registration and identification units to pre-register applicants for international protection. Another three (Member) States¹¹⁸ created temporary registration centres at border crossings.

Hungary introduced 'transit zones', which constituted the only places where third-country nationals were allowed to

¹¹⁴ LU, SI, NO.

¹¹⁵ BE, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, NO.

¹¹⁶ Department of the Flemish Minister of Well-being, Public Health and Family.

¹¹⁷ BE, NO.

¹¹⁸ EL, FI, HU.

cross the border and register, and where they had to remain until their application for international protection was processed. **France** set up a system of 'one-stop-shops'¹¹⁹ where applications for international protection could be recorded to reduce the time to access the asylum procedure. Finally, **Germany** introduced an integrated identity management database which fully digitalised the registration procedure (see box 6). In addition to the core data system, integrated identity management included the introduction of proof of arrival issued by reception facilities (a paper-based document containing forgery-proof elements). The proof of arrival and registration also worked as proof of allocation to the specific reception centre that issued the document. Social security benefits (e.g. allowances) could directly be linked to the proof of arrival.

Some (Member) States rolled out a set of practical measures to better manage registration and reception. For example, **Hungary** set a legal limit on the maximum number of applicants for international protection which could enter the country per day, expressed as a share of the total population of the country. **Norway** and **Luxembourg** organised bus services between the primary reception centre and the Immigration Office for completing registration. While this service was reserved for unaccompanied minors in **Norway**, it was used for all applicants for international protection in **Luxembourg**. To reduce the number of claims by pseudo Syrians, the **Netherlands** made use of language analysts, who, after having listened to a 'language indication' (a short voice recording of 5-10 minutes of the applicant) either confirmed that the person was from Syria or recommended a more extensive language analysis.

The measures outlined above had several immediate and longer-term positive effects. For instance, **Spain** reduced the number of applicants for international protection who were waiting for their asylum claim to be formally registered, allowing them to enter the reception system. In **Finland**, the government measures helped to show the public that the influx was managed systematically. In **Germany**, the new integrated identity management database helped to better manage the challenges posed by the sharp rise in the number of applicants for international protection, while the **Netherlands** reported an improvement in the quality of the identification process.

However, some countries also highlighted some collateral effects. In **Hungary**, the measures introduced to better control borders and register people arriving at the 'transit zones' resulted in increased waiting time for access to the asylum system. The measures to improve the registration also enhanced cooperation between asylum and migration authorities, the police and security services in **Belgium**. Only **Finland** evaluated registration measures as such; however, the evaluation focused not exclusively on new measures, but on the overall resources, operations and effectiveness of the registration system overall. The evaluation found that all applicants for international protections were registered in a controlled manner before placement in reception centres, and the number of irregularly present migrants in **Finland** did not increase.

3.1.5. Asylum procedures

In most (Member) States, national procedures and related processing capacity came under pressure because of the high influx during 2014-2016. Therefore, measures taken primarily were focussed on making procedures less lengthy and costly, and more efficient.

At least six (Member) States¹²⁰ amended their list of safe countries of origin, allowing them to fast-track applicants originating from these countries or to implement more restrictive time limits to leave the country or to appeal the asylum decision. However, in some cases (e.g. **Belgium**) there was no direct link between the countries added to the list and

Box 6: Integrated identity management database (Germany)

Germany introduced an integrated identity management database. At its central part, a so-called core data system was created to fully digitise the asylum procedure, improve the registration of newly arrived applicants for international protection and enhance inter-agency cooperation, as well as avoid multiple registrations. The main steps for the development and use of the database were set out in October 2015 in the coordination project Digitisation of Asylum Procedures.



First, the new core data system was created based on the existing Central Register of Foreigners (AZR), after which the Data Exchange Improvement Act (5 February 2016) created the legal foundation enabling numerous authorities (approximately 6 700) to use the database. PIK stations (personalisation infrastructure components) were installed at all reception facilities (including waiting centres and processing lines), branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees several foreigners' offices and the Federal and Länder police, to register new applicants for international protections in the database (by May 2016). A PIK station included digital fingerprinting, a passport scanner, a high-res camera and a document printer, all connected to the new core data system.

The first of its kind in the Federal Republic, the system allowed the exchange of personal data between federal, regional and local public authorities.

¹¹⁹ Under this measure appointments could be spread across the one-stop-shops in the Île de France area. When an application for international protection was made with a first reception structure, the applicant was given the next available appointment in one of the eight one-stop-shops in the region, if the nearest one-stop-shop was fully booked.

¹²⁰ AT, BE, DE, HU, NL, SI.

the influx of applicants for international protection of different nationalities. At least six (Member) States sought to speed up asylum procedures by introducing procedural simplification and efficiencies. These included:

- Intelligent case management, such as the clustering of similar cases to be dealt with by the same officer or teams,¹²¹ processing cases by priority, and increasing automatization;¹²²
- Using new technologies, such as the introduction of video transmissions in asylum procedures.¹²³ In **Germany**, video interpreting and video interpreter hubs were introduced at several locations each, providing infrastructure for up to 30 interpreters: they could be connected with asylum interviews nationwide with no physical attendance required;
- Limiting procedural requirements (e.g. no need for interviews) for citizens of countries with high acceptance rates;¹²⁴
- Determining the duration of asylum procedures¹²⁵ and appeal periods for decisions on international protection¹²⁶ to a maximum period of time (days or weeks);
- Developing stricter performance indicators for officers (how many interviews and how many decisions within a given time period);¹²⁷
- Pooling of applications for international protection.¹²⁸

Some (Member) States decentralised their asylum procedures. As previously mentioned, **Hungary** created 'transit zones' at borders where applications for international protection were processed. In addition, **Hungary** limited the admissibility decision period to eight days, which made it possible to immediately return those whose claims were considered to be inadmissible. **Malta** created mobile teams and offices, who were responsible for both recording and processing of applications for international protection. In **Finland**, at the start of the influx, police resources were allocated to the registration of applications of international protection and conducting asylum investigation, i.e. establishment of identity and travel route of the applicant. In 2016, responsibility for the asylum investigation was transferred from the police and the Finnish Border Guard to the Finnish Immigration Service Guard.¹²⁹ **Finland** also introduced a reportedly rather controversial revision of the criteria for residence permits issued on the basis of international protection, which led to the effective removal of humanitarian protection¹³⁰ as a national residence permit category in the Aliens Act on 16 May 2016. Along

with the updated country guidelines concerning the security situation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, the 'internal flight alternative' (i.e. the possibility for the person to relocate in a safe area of the home country) was applied to more cases than before.

The measures taken led to several positive immediate results and longer-term outcomes. They led to a shorter asylum procedure, with increased number of interviews in **Belgium**, quicker decisions on international protection in **Estonia** and **Germany**, more decisions taken in **Luxembourg**, improved efficiency of the appeals process in **Finland** and decreased administrative burden in **Estonia**.

In **Germany**, the use of video interpretation helped to shorten processing times, while interviewers were still in the same room as the applicant and could thus get a good personal impression of her/him. Video interpretation was also considered to ensure the impartiality of interpreters. In **Sweden**, despite increased funding for the Swedish Migration Agency for shortening the length of asylum procedures, the processing time continued to increase in 2016 (and 2017) due to a significant backlog in claims from 2015. It could be assumed that without the extra funding, the processing time would have increased even more.

Few (Member) States evaluated the measures taken in this area.¹³¹ In **Belgium**, an evaluation was carried out in the framework of the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)¹³² and in the **Netherlands** by an external evaluator (see Section 7 for further details). **Belgium** reported that the low number of applicants for international protection from safe countries of origin during the period 2014-2016 showed the effectiveness of having a safe country list. Faster decision-making processes were also highlighted as a result of the measures taken in **Germany** and **Spain** with the latter in particular noting faster decisions on certain clear-cut cases of subsidiary protection (Syria).

Among unforeseen effects, the average rate of positive decisions increased in **Belgium** for the year 2016, whereas the **Finnish** Immigration Service was criticised by civil society for tightening its international protection policies, which would have the potential effect of an increasing number of negative decisions and subsequent appeals. Eurostat data confirmed these effects: while the rate of positive decision of Belgium rose from 40% to 60% due to the high number of decisions for applicants from war torn countries between 2014 and 2016, in **Finland** the rate of positive decision decreased from 54% to 34% in that same year.¹³³

121 BE, DE, FR, LU, SE.

122 BE, DE, FI, LU.

123 DE, FR.

124 DE, NL. From November 2014 until December 2015 Germany introduced so-called simplified asylum procedures. The aim was to speed up the asylum procedure by abolishing the requirement for personal interviews for applicants for international protection from countries of origin with a particularly high protection rate. Instead of having to attend a personal interview, applicants for international protection were given a ten-page questionnaire containing relevant questions for determining their refugee status. From December 2015 onwards, case-by-case examinations with an interview were gradually restored owing to, amongst other things, security concerns associated with the simplified procedure.

125 AT, HU. While in Austria the period was extended (from 6 to 15 months), in Hungary it was shortened.

126 FI.

127 BE, DE, FI.

128 The pooling of appointments in the eight one-stop-shops in the Île de France area has made it possible to increase the number of appointments available and helped to unclog the one-stop-shop located in Paris.

129 The legislative amendment regarding the transfer of responsibility was already pending before the influx.

130 A residence permit on the basis of humanitarian protection was granted if the requirements for asylum or subsidiary protection were not met, but the applicant for international protection could not return to his or her home country as a result of a security situation or an environmental catastrophe.

131 BE, FI, NL.

132 The Belgian evaluation concluded that objectives had been met and that the training component (on the use of EASO training tools) for newly recruited staff at the Immigration Office was fully operational.

133 Data for Belgium and Finland are reported to support information contained in the National Reports of these countries. Other (Member) States were not included as they did not provide related information in the National Report. This does not mean that rate of positive decisions did not increase or decreased

3.1.6. Integration measures

Several (Member) States¹³⁴ introduced changes to integration programmes and activities offered to applicants for international protection, as these were often also impacted by the higher influx, as well as the fluctuations in the number of newcomers. The study only focussed on integration measures which were new, or existing ones which were changed, *as a direct result* of the influx. These can broadly be divided into the following main categories:

- Increased capacity and funding to existing integration measures.¹³⁵

In **Belgium**, dedicated additional funding was provided to reinforce the specific schooling system for newly arrived children. In **Austria**, an integration funding pool was set up in September 2015 to bolster programmes and structures already established for the integration of individuals granted international protection as well as for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. In **Ireland**, 20 projects were funded in 2016, 12 related to integration and eight related to the reception activities targeted at applicants for international protection.¹³⁶ In **Germany**, a new Act was introduced in December 2016 on participation of the Federal Government in the cost of integration and to further ease the burden of the Länder and local communities. In **Latvia** the capacity of stakeholders was increased in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.

- Measures to improve access to the labour market.¹³⁷

Belgium reduced the waiting period between the lodging of the application of international protection and access to the labour market from six to four months, while **Latvia** reduced this period from nine to six months. In **Germany**, the Integration Act (entered into force on 6 August 2016) foresaw the creation of 100 000 work opportunities for applicants for international protection to bridge the long waiting period of several months between the lodging of a claim and the decision on the status. **Austria** and **Sweden** focussed on better matching qualifications with employment and, alongside **Belgium**, introduced measures for a swifter recognition of applicants' qualifications. Belgium offered an alternative to the recognition of a diploma, namely a trajectory which could include, depending on the profession / field of study, participation in a limited number of courses on a related master discipline, attending one or more seminars, practical training sessions, or authoring a paper.

With the aim of better matching applicants' qualifications with available jobs, **Sweden** introduced a fast-track scheme.¹³⁸ Finally, **Finland** piloted a prepaid debit card on which the employer could transfer the salary to overcome the obstacle posed by the fact that applicants for international protection were not allowed to open a bank account.

- Measures to improve language skills and cultural orientation of adults.¹³⁹

In 2015 and 2016, **Germany** gave access to its integration courses, the Migration Advice Service and its programmes

offering German for professional purposes and for vocational German language promotion to applicants for international protection with a good prospect to remain. Furthermore, **Germany** implemented a new programme of initial orientation courses to applicants for international protection with an unclear prospect to remain (other than support measures for applicants for international protection with a good prospect to remain and a cut back of support measures for applicants for international protection with little prospect to remain/ from safe countries of origin), which covered eleven subject areas ranging from everyday life in Germany (work, shopping, national customs and habits, etc.) to engaging and living with others, combined with basic language training. Similar to Germany, **Finland** introduced integration courses, these provided applicants for international protection with basic information about the rules of Finnish society and working life. It allowed reception centres also to financially support language courses taken by applicants for international protection outside the centre. The **Netherlands** nearly tripled its capacity of Dutch as a second language (NT2) courses for applicants for international protection with high chances of being granted international protection, as well as the number of certified NT2 teachers. Similarly, **Belgium** and **Luxembourg** reinforced their language classes for children and adults. **Sweden** expanded its municipality-run language tuition programme (Swedish for Immigrants) for newly arrived beneficiaries of protection and supported private sector initiatives to offer language tuition even to applicants for international protection who had not yet received a decision on their application. Internships and other integration-related activities were also offered.

- Measures to facilitate access to education.¹⁴⁰

The **Netherlands** expanded its education capacity to accommodate high volume of school-aged children applying for international protection at and in the vicinity of reception centres, which meant that in a short space of time, the Member State succeeded in organising courses for applicants for international protection in many places throughout the country.

In **Sweden**, a new regulation entered into force in 2016, which foresaw an obligatory mapping/assessment of newly arrived students' knowledge and previous education. It also prescribed regulations on the organisational form of 'introductory classes' and on the number of teaching hours for newly arrived students. In **Luxembourg**, a Refugee Task Force was established to coordinate the Ministry of National Education's different initiatives for children. **Spain** agreed to support the possible participation of refugees enrolled in Spanish higher education institutions who wish to participate in any of the actions in the 2016 Call for Proposals for the mobility of students and staff between countries of the Erasmus+ programme. Thus, an additional monthly aid of € 100, financed by the Spanish service for the internationalisation of education (SEPIE), was granted to students with refugee status or the right to subsidiary protection for those who have filed an application for international protection in Spain.

for them in the same period.

134 AT, BE, CZ, DE, FI, IE, LU, LV, LT, NL, SE, NO.

135 AT, BE, DE, FI, IE, LU, LV, NL, SE.

136 Under AMIF.

137 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, LV, SE (with internships), NO (although only at proposal stage).

138 Government Offices of Sweden, Fact sheet: Fast track - a quicker introduction of newly arrived immigrants, October 2016.

139 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE.

140 BE, EL, LU, NL, SE

■ Integration into the **local community**.¹⁴¹

Latvia developed a mentoring programme to facilitate the integration of entire families into their new community, attaching a mentor to each family and refugee.¹⁴² Similar initiatives were promoted in **Sweden**, where the municipalities and other actors received government funding for local integration projects and opportunities for applicants for international protection to meet Swedish residents. A similar mentoring figure was created also in **Germany** in 2016: around 450 positions were introduced at the local level for so-called education coordinators until 2020. Their task was to interlink and coordinate the educational offers of the various actors on behalf of the municipalities, focusing in particular on refugee children and adolescents.

Touching upon all the above-mentioned categories, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) (2014-2020) in **Greece** introduced actions of social integration of marginalised communities. This included immigrants, applicants for international protection and refugees among others. The actions are based on four pillars: housing, employment, education and health. In relation to employment, this action includes the provision of vocational and business counselling and training and the strengthening of the community service and social entrepreneurship. Specifically, NSRF included the development by prefecture/region at local level, of actions via the European Social Fund (ESF) and in synergy with actions under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD).

In a number of Member States, integration measures were evaluated. In **Norway** five new integration reception facilities¹⁴³ were subject to an evaluation at the time of writing of this report. In the **Netherlands**, an evaluation demonstrated that the authorities managed to successfully establish language courses for children applying for international protection, in various areas of the country, within a short period of time, thanks to the expansion of national educational capacities.

In **Germany**, an external evaluation¹⁴⁴ highlighted the usefulness of initial orientation programmes for applicants for international protection with unclear prospects to remain, as they met a real demand. The small size of the courses, their flexibility and their focus on everyday language were considered as important factors of success. Challenges identified included “tight time constraints, fluctuating group compositions and sizes and, in some places, a lack of childcare facilities”.¹⁴⁵

The courses were considered to offer applicants for international protection with a regular and meaningful activity which helped to prepare them for more advanced courses.

The courses also provided participants with the opportunity to create social relationships and share positive experiences with other applicants for international protection, therefore helping to prevent conflict at reception centres.¹⁴⁶

Conversely, to discourage irregular stay, **Hungary** took measures which reduced a few benefits which were previously granted to beneficiaries of international protection, including the integration support scheme. The status of refugee was also shortened from ten to three years.

3.1.7. Impact of the influx on adjacent policy areas: family reunification

The changing influx of applications for international protection also impacted on national policies concerning other types of migration in all, with the exception of nine (Member) States.¹⁴⁷ The changes introduced most often related to a tightening of **family reunification** policies to some extent, as a number of (Member) States noted that the increase in the number of international protection statuses granted was accompanied or followed by a similar increase in the number of applications for family reunification.¹⁴⁸

Measures taken by (Member) States included most often amendments to national legislation which tightened the rules and time limits within which the applicant could apply for family reunification.¹⁴⁹ For instance, **Austria** and **Hungary** reduced significantly the time limits for application,¹⁵⁰ while **Germany** limited the application of family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to hardship cases only until end of July 2018.¹⁵¹ **Sweden** also restricted family reunification rights of persons with subsidiary protection status and introduced stricter maintenance requirements not only for beneficiaries of international protection but for all residents, including Swedish nationals.

Finally, **Ireland** limited the scope of national legislation on family reunification to nuclear family only, thus restricting eligibility to spouses, parents of minors and unmarried children below the age of 18.¹⁵²

141 DE, FI, LV, SE.

142 Social worker and social mentor services for applicants for international protection were provided for 3 months or until the moment when the final decision on granting or refusing refugee or alternative status has entered into force and could no longer be contested. Social worker and social mentor services for persons holding refugee or alternative status were provided for a period not exceeding 12 months after the day when the aforementioned status has been acquired. Mainly, social workers and social mentors have provided the following assistance to the target group: support addressing daily life issues, ensuring cooperation with the administration of accommodation centre, accompanying to various institutions and organisations, organizing visits to receive consultation, assistance settling formalities, search for potential accommodation. Services were provided by professional social workers and social mentors. Further information available on <http://www.patverums-dm.lv/en/evaluation-report-on-provision-of-services-of-the-social-worker-and-social-mentor/857>.

143 Following the issuance of the White Paper “From reception centre to the labour market – an effective integration policy” that recognised that lengthy stays in reception centres can be harmful, lead to passivity and harm the integration process for those who are resettled, the government proposed the planning of integration reception centres with full-time qualifications programmes, and waiving the required completion of the Asylum Interview for a temporary work permit.

144 An evaluation of the courses by Syspons GmbH, a consultancy for societal innovation, which had been commissioned by Johanniter International Assistance, was published in late June 2017.

145 *Ibid.*

146 *Ibid.*

147 CZ, EE, EL, FR, HR, LT, LU, MT, PL.

148 AT, DE, IE, HU, SE.

149 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, IE, NL, SE, NO.

150 For instance, Hungary reduced the time limits from six to three months after the day the sponsor had been granted international protection.

151 Persons who were granted a residence permit after 17 March 2016 on the grounds that they are entitled to subsidiary protection were no longer allowed to bring their families to Germany until 31 July 2018 except in hardship cases (Section 104 subs. 13 of the Residence Act).

152 Previously, the legislation provided for ‘dependent members of the family’ of a refugee to be permitted to enter and reside in the State at the discretion of the Minister: any grandparent, parent, brother, sister, child, grandchild, ward or guardian of the refugee who is dependent on the refugee or was suffering from

Box 7: Task Force to facilitate labour integration (Belgium)

In response to the requests of numerous companies and sectors, the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB) established a Refugee crisis Task Force, bringing together members of sectoral federations, employers and experts from organisations or associations, and public institutions.



The Task Force had three essential objectives:

- To facilitate the integration of people in society and in the labour market;
- To contribute to the elaboration of measures to address challenges such as education and training, employment, housing, funding and support;
- To coordinate efforts in a long-term perspective.

The Task Force adopted a clustered approach, with a focus on financial and material support on one side, and education and employment, on the other side. In the latter domain, for example, a practical guide was published for employers who wanted to hire refugees or applicants for international protection, with explanations of common measures and procedures.

In **Greece**, *Médecins du Monde* was involved in medical screening and the identification of vulnerable people at the borders. For measures related to reception centres or other accommodation arrangements, at least eleven (Member) States involved non-state actors.¹⁵⁴ These entities were usually NGOs, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, Caritas and Save the Children. Following the adoption of the Council Decision on relocation in 2015, UNHCR implemented a project in **Greece** on housing of candidates for relocation. In **Lithuania** a pilot project was launched for the accommodation of relocated persons, directly in the territory of a municipality (bypassing accommodation at the Refugee Reception Centre). The project was supported by non-governmental organisations.

In **Luxembourg**, non-governmental organisations were mandated with the management of a number of reception facilities and the provision of social follow-up of their residents. In **Belgium, Germany, Finland** and **Norway**, private commercial operators also opened and managed additional reception centres. In **Germany**, thousands of volunteers from civil society supported the efforts to establish emergency accommodation facilities, with funding provided by the German state, as well as charitable organisations.

NGOs were also involved in the provision of wider reception services in at least ten (Member) States.¹⁵⁵ In general, these NGOs complemented the work of the competent services and included interpretation services,¹⁵⁶ targeted support for minors,¹⁵⁷ as well as healthcare.¹⁵⁸ In **Germany**, physicians provided healthcare services on a voluntary basis, and local associations assisted with the initial care of applicants for international protection. These efforts were often supported by material donations from companies operating locally or nationwide. The **Finnish** Immigration Service worked with private health service providers to ensure the health examinations, and the Artemiszio Foundation in **Hungary** organised intercultural trainings for healthcare professionals, educators and law enforcement. In the **Netherlands**, the Red Cross offered tracing services for family members, while in **Spain** it was involved in a wider range of reception service.

Non-state actors also became involved in providing immediate integration measures for applicants for international protection in eleven (Member) States.¹⁵⁹ In **Luxembourg**, their involvement was scaled up. Such integration measures mostly related to education, which were carried out by NGOs in **Greece** and **Hungary**, and by private operators in **Finland** in the latter case specifically for adults. In **Germany**, a wide range of entities were involved, such as local associations, religious communities and private companies.

Belgium also mandated non-state entities, such as local NGOs and IOM, to carry out information campaigns in third countries of origin. In the context of resettlement, staff from community organisations in **Ireland** could fulfil the state-funded role of the resettlement support worker.

In **Ireland**, the **Netherlands, Slovenia** and **Poland**, NGOs and legal services supported applicants for international



3.2. INVOLVEMENT OF NON-STATE ENTITIES

Among (Member) States that experienced an influx in the number of applicants for international protection, the majority mandated **non-state entities** to implement a variety of the measures mentioned above.¹⁵³ However, the type of tasks non-state entities carried out and the extent to which they were involved depended on the area.

Belgium and **Greece** involved non-state entities in border control measures. In **Belgium**, the Transport Federation (Febetra) facilitated the awareness-raising campaign “Give smugglers of people no chance”, with the aim of informing truck drivers on how to avoid transit migrants from using trucks to reach their destination (mostly the United Kingdom).

a mental or physical disability to such extent that it was not reasonable for him or her to maintain himself or herself fully' (section of The Act of 2015 limiting family reunification to nuclear family members).

153 AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SI, NO.

154 BE, DE, EL, FI, FR, HR, HU, LU, NL, SE, NO.

155 DE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, LT, LU, NL, PL, SI, NO.

156 EL, HU, LU, SI.

157 EL, HU, LT, SI.

158 EL, LU, NL, SI.

159 DE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, LT, LV, NO, PL, SE, SI.

protection during the asylum procedure by providing legal support. The Dutch Council for Refugees, for instance, used mobile information teams to inform applicants for international protection in good time about their procedure. In **Greece**, EASO supported the national asylum procedure, reception activities and, from 2016, the border procedure (i.e. the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement) with the deployment of experts from other EU (Member) States. The work of these experts was supported by interpreters, interim caseworkers and other interim staff. In **Italy**, Member State experts helped with the Dublin procedure, information provision and registration and were supported by cultural mediators. Starting in 2015, EASO deployed experts in both **Greece** and **Italy** to support the relocation process and introduced several tools to assist in the various steps of relocation.

In **Spain**, IOM collaborated in the implementation of the Refugee Resettlement Programme and the National Action Plan launched in mid-2015 to improve the management of international protection procedures. The aim was to shorten the timeframe before the applicant could be interviewed and could submit its application.



3.3. THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Measures taken by the national government or authorities responsible for responding to a changing influx directly impacted **local authorities** in many (Member) States.¹⁶⁰ This was particularly the case for **reception centres and other accommodation arrangements**,¹⁶¹ as municipalities needed to expand their reception capacities quite significantly or accept the establishment of reception centres by third parties in their territory. In **France**, a Prefect was appointed with the task of developing relations with local authorities to ensure sufficient accommodation for resettled persons. In the **United Kingdom**, the establishment of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) allowed to ease some pressure on local authorities, which experienced a sharp increase in numbers of UAMs.

Belgium noted a significant financial impact on local authorities in this context, specifically as a consequence of the drop in the number of applicants for international protection in spring 2016 (see box 8).

Despite such significant impact, local authorities generally only had a limited influence on the process of establishing reception centres, particularly when these were run by private operators. In the case of **Finland, Latvia and Malta**, for instance, local governments had no voice in decisions on where centres within their municipalities would be located. In **Sweden**, a newly-introduced law aimed at creating an effective and solidarity-based refugee reception system required all municipalities to accept beneficiaries of international protection for permanent settlement. In the **Netherlands**, the government sought to involve local authorities as much as possible in matters related to reception and housing, by establishing intensive and permanent forms of cooperation.

Similarly, in **Norway**, the municipality of Råde was involved throughout the entire process through the construction of a large reception centre. In **Greece**, welfare programmes and staff became available for various municipalities.

Responsibilities were attributed to local authorities in at least nine (Member) States.¹⁶² Such responsibilities often obliged

Box 8: Impact of the changing influx of applicants for international protection on local authorities (Belgium)

In September 2015, when the number of applicants for international protection in Belgium reached its peak, Fedasil asked the Public Social Welfare Centres (PSWC) to create additional capacity in existing local reception initiatives (LOI) or to open new local reception initiatives in their municipalities. Furthermore, because of the constant large influx of applicants for international protection, the Belgian government approved a mandatory distribution plan on 27 November 2015 for 5 000 additional reception places (local reception initiatives) to be spread equally across the municipalities. However, in spring 2016, the number of applications for international protection dropped sharply, causing the Council of Ministers to decide not to activate the mandatory distribution plan on 3 June 2016. In the meantime, the municipalities had already created nearly 2 000 additional reception places in LOI. Many of these LOI-places were empty for several months, with significant financial consequences for the PCSWs. For an empty LOI place, the PSWC received only 40% of the subsidy to pay the fixed costs, which did not cover the costs incurred by PCSWs in the long-term. Although the government later confirmed that all the commitments and financial efforts already made by the PCSWs within the framework of the distribution plan would be honoured, 36% of respondents of a survey carried out by the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities stated that they would not be prepared to provide additional reception places in the future.



local authorities to ensure the provision of certain social and healthcare services, such as the initial health examinations and education to applicants for international protection children.

160 AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, NO.

161 AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI, NO.

162 DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, LV, NL, SE, NO.

As reported in [Section 3.1.2](#), in **Spain**, each Autonomous Community appointed a focal point for reception services, who was required to coordinate the implementation of general services for these individuals (schooling, health insurance card, registration, etc.), in collaboration with the managers of the resource of the National System concerned. **Finland** noted that particularly those local authorities with no prior experience in hosting applicants for international protection were impacted and there was great variation between the services provided by different municipalities. Similarly, municipalities in **Norway** in which reception facilities were built for the first time had to recruit additional teachers and nurses to deliver the required wider reception services. Both the **Netherlands** and **Sweden** particularly noted the budgetary implications of the changing influx. The local authorities in the **Netherlands** received an increased budget for the social counselling of beneficiaries of international protection, for which new requirements were set by the government on how this should be spent. In **Hungary**, the municipality of Budapest was impacted in this area as a result of the establishment of the temporary transit zones, for which the municipality provided basic hygiene services.

As the responsibilities related to wider reception services were usually laid down in national law, local authorities in (Member) States were not able to influence operational decisions or new legislation of the government in this context to a great extent. However, **Germany**, the **Netherlands**, **Slovenia** and **Norway** noted that the responsible government bodies and local authorities closely cooperated to ensure the provision of reception services across municipalities.

Local authorities in at least eight (Member) States were also impacted by the changing influx in the area of infrastructure and personnel.¹⁶³ Local authorities primarily hired additional staff¹⁶⁴ or provided targeted training to existing staff¹⁶⁵ to be able to provide the required services.

In **Latvia**, the municipalities with reception facilities made efforts to attract funding to improve public infrastructure, including building playgrounds and improving lighting.

In **Hungary**, the municipality of Budapest provided transport services between the three major railway stations when the number of arrivals peaked in August 2015.

Another area in which local authorities were impacted is that of integration measures for applicants for international protection.¹⁶⁶ Municipalities in these seven (Member) States were responsible for implementing various integration measures, such as school education for children applying for international protection in **Finland** and courses to teach applicants for international protection how to read and write using the Roman alphabet in **Germany**. In the latter case, other actors, such as religious communities, education providers and volunteers carried out these courses on behalf of municipalities using funding from federal programmes.¹⁶⁷ Local authorities received additional funding for such integration measures and were also able to influence the process of the allocation of funds.

¹⁶³ DE, EL, HU, IE, LV, MT, SE, NO. In Slovenia, local authorities provided for infrastructure which was rented by the governmental institutions.

¹⁶⁴ DE, EL, FR, IE, SE.

¹⁶⁵ MT, SE.

¹⁶⁶ BE, DE, EL, FI, IE, LU, LV, SE.

¹⁶⁷ E.g. via the programme Local Coordination of Education Services for New Migrants launched by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Technology.

4. FINANCING AND STAFFING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES



4.1. METHODS OF FINANCING

All (Member) States¹⁶⁸ financed the (implemented) measures by making available additional national budget and/or EU funds. **Hungary** and **Norway** passed emergency budgets in Parliament, while in some other (Member) States¹⁶⁹ the responsible ministries were allocated additional funds by the State budget under the normal annual budgetary procedure. In some (Member) States,¹⁷⁰ the respective authorities dealing with migrants and applicants for international protection received additional budgetary funds directly from the government. Eleven (Member) States also financed measures through EU funds: AMIF and Internal Security Fund (ISF).¹⁷¹

In most of the (Member) States ad-hoc measures were financed differently from existing and structural measures.¹⁷² Various (Member) States¹⁷³ financed the ad-hoc measures through EU funds. **Hungary** reported that it financed them within the national budgetary reserve in 2015 and through additional budget allocations to the Ministry of Interior. In **Sweden**, as the need for additional financial resources was greater than expected, the need for budgetary adjustments was greater than usual.



4.2. IMPACT ON STAFF AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

In most (Member) States¹⁷⁴ national authorities responsible for the processing of applications for international protection and the hosting of applicants witnessed an increase in workload. The vast majority had to recruit additional staff to deal with the significant rise in numbers.¹⁷⁵

Belgium increased its personnel to assist with the integration of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. In **Austria**, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum

increased to almost three times its original size, while the personnel of the **Finnish** Immigration Service increased by 2.3 times in 2016 compared to the previous year. In **Luxembourg**, several authorities dealing with applicants for international protection in different capacities (processing of applications, reception, health, education etc.) and their partner organisations had to significantly enhance their human resources. **Norway** also reported a strong increase of its personnel, predominantly in Directorate for Immigration (UDI) and National Police Immigration Service (PU), as well as in social services (teachers, nurses etc.). In **Greece**, at ministerial level, contract staff with open-ended contracts was hired, while in **Spain** increases in the number of employed staff regarded both the National System of Reception and Integration and Asylum and Refuge Office. With such increases in staff numbers, most (Member) States offered additional training courses for their (new) employees.¹⁷⁶ In the **Netherlands**, expansion of the workforce (hiring external employees and internal transfers of personnel) had been necessary in view of the implementation of tasks at the National Police Force, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers during the increased influx of applicants for international protection.

At a more structural level, significant organisational changes followed in several government departments, such as it was the case in **Austria** and **Finland**. With a view to reduce the administrative burden, **Hungary** introduced the accelerated border procedure applicable in the transit zones of maximum 15 days.¹⁷⁷ **Malta** experienced a decrease in the administrative burden related to the detention facilities, due to the elimination of automatic detention of irregularly present migrants.

¹⁶⁸ Except for EE.

¹⁶⁹ DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, LU, NL, SI.

¹⁷⁰ BE, DE, ES, MT, PL, SI, NO.

¹⁷¹ AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, FR, IE, LT, LV, SE, SI.

¹⁷² DE, EL, FI, HU, IE, LT, LV, NO.

¹⁷³ ES, FI, FR, LT, LV.

¹⁷⁴ AT, BE, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LV, LU, MT, NL, SE, NO.

¹⁷⁵ AT, BE, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, LU, MT, NL, SE, NO.

¹⁷⁶ AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, FI, NO.

¹⁷⁷ 'Transit zones' are explained in Section 3.

Box 9: Significant growths of Immigration Agencies in (Member) States

In **Germany**, as of 1 January 2014, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees counted a 56% increase of staff to over 3 300 FTE (full time equivalent) by 2 January 2016, with further staff increases being approved in the budget for 2016. Until December 2016 staff numbers rose to more than 7 000 employees plus more than 3 000 transferred or seconded temporary staff from other ministries, public authorities and former state-owned companies. Moreover, the Federal Government announced plans to hire 3 000 new cadets for the Federal Police (by 2018). In addition, in 2015, 33 000 new positions were created at private security firms in Germany, a large number of which accounted for tasks pertaining to refugees.



In **Sweden**, the Swedish Migration Agency also saw its budget and personnel number significantly increase due to the extraordinary situation. The annual budgets of the Migration Agency were increased twice, both in 2015 and in 2016. In total, in 2015 the Migration Agency spent 44%

more than in 2014. In 2016, the budget spent increased further to roughly 5.3 billion EUR, which represented an increase by almost 50%. While reception-related payments represented the largest share of the Agency's budgets over the period 2013-2016, with roughly 46% in 2015 and 64% in 2016, the most significant growth occurred in the share for payments to applicants for international protection and accommodation, which increased from SEK 12 405 million in 2015 to above SEK 33 000 million in 2016 (by 166%). As regards the personnel of the Migration Agency, in 2014 the equivalent of 1087 full-time employees was needed to process and decide on asylum cases. In 2015, the equivalent of 1 456 full-time employees were needed, and 1 986 in 2016. The number of full-time employees managing and operating the reception system for applicants for international protection increased from 1 810 full-time employees in 2014 to 2 172 in 2015 and 3 057 in 2016. Overall, the total number of employees of the Agency grew from 5 351 at the end of the year 2014, to 7 623 at the end of 2015, and to 8 432 at the end of 2016.

5. SCALING DOWN OR DISMANTLING MEASURES FOLLOWING A DECREASE IN NUMBERS

After the peak in the number of applications for international protection, some (Member) States experienced a subsequent decrease in numbers, and took various actions to scale down the measures implemented during the period of high influx. Seven (Member) States adjusted measures coherently to a lower number of applications for international protection by reducing reception capacities from mid-2016 onwards.¹⁷⁸ Contracts with entities which provided ad-hoc accommodation in the period of high influx were terminated,¹⁷⁹ or former reception centres re-purposed.¹⁸⁰ In the latter case, some emergency reception facilities or facilities used for the temporary accommodation of unaccompanied minors were transformed into regular residential units for unaccompanied refugees. Next to reducing reception capacities, four Member States decreased the number of staff in national asylum authorities.¹⁸¹ In **Belgium**, however, this was only done gradually, considering the large backlog of applications for international protection. (Member) States also noted that some of the temporary measures implemented in 2015 to increase efficiency in processing applications were partly or fully terminated in 2017. For example, in 2017, **Estonia** discontinued the measure adopted in 2015 which aimed to accelerate the asylum procedure for vulnerable groups from East Ukraine.

Other (Member) States reported that no changes to measures were made, either because they did not experience such a decrease in applications for international protection¹⁸² or because the decrease was not considered significant enough to warrant any changes in measures.¹⁸³

The decrease in numbers also gave rise to political and/or organisational re-prioritisation of measures taken in (Member) States,¹⁸⁴ placing more emphasis on return¹⁸⁵ and integration.¹⁸⁶ **Germany** and **Sweden** shifted resources from registering new applications to processing these, while **Finland** streamlined the placement into municipalities of those granted a residence permit as well as accelerated the decision-making process of pending applications for international protection. **Sweden** maintained legislation that was adopted

following the increased influx of applicants for international protection, such as the law on a solidarity-based settlement system and the temporary act restricting the possibility of being granted a residence permit for protection purposes in Sweden.¹⁸⁷ **Belgium** and **Austria** also maintained certain integration measures, focussing on education and access to the labour market. (Member) States made efforts to preserve gained expertise and to build on lessons learned during the high influx of applicants for international protection, for instance by (partly) maintaining newly-recruited staff even in light of a decrease in numbers.¹⁸⁸ **Austria** maintained the additional number of staff hired during the period of influx, to address the backlog of outstanding asylum cases. In **Finland** some staff from the Asylum Unit moved to other units or supported EASO operations, while the **Netherlands** and **Norway** redirected their staff to work on backlogs in other areas, such as family reunification and auditing decisions in asylum cases.¹⁸⁹ In **Luxembourg**, the expertise gained as a result of pilot projects carried out in periods of high influx in the area of integration was used to develop a new obligatory integration scheme, the Guided Integration Trail. Moreover, **Luxembourg** continued to provide training to teachers of children applying for international protection. Similarly, **Germany** also put new-found experiences and expertise to systematic use in the form of standardising procedures and improving training plans.

In the area of reception, several (Member) States reported to have maintained parts of their reception facilities in order to be prepared for possible high influxes of applicants for international protection in the future.¹⁹⁰ (See [Section 6](#)).

178 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, NL, SE, NO.

179 AT, BE, DE, SE, NO.

180 DE.

181 BE, FI, NL, SE.

182 EL, ES, IE, HR, LT, LV, MT, SI, UK.

183 HU, LU, NO (In the case of Norway, this applied to measures in all areas except for the number of staff in asylum authorities).

184 AT, BE, DE, FI, HU, LU, NL, SI, NO.

185 AT, BE, DE, FI, NL, SI.

186 AT, DE, FI, LU, NL, SI, NO.

187 The latter entered into force in July 2016 and is scheduled to expire in July 2019.

188 AT, FI, LU, NL, NO.

189 NO.

190 AT, BE, DE, HU, SI.

6. FUTURE PREPAREDNESS

According to all (Member) States, the increased number of applicants for international protection over 2014-2016 served in many aspects as a fruitful experience in relation to future preparedness. First, the experience exposed the **need for continuous and constructive cooperation** in different areas and at different levels of governance. Thus, the vast majority of (Member) States¹⁹¹ reported that they established cooperation methods between governmental authorities and other stakeholders (i.e. NGOs, international organisations) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices and to increase the preparedness for future challenges. Moreover, the events of 2014-2016 served as an opportunity to identify the existing gaps in the reception and asylum systems and update related policies. Most of the (Member) States focused on restructuring and reorganising the authorities involved,¹⁹² increasing their administrative capacity¹⁹³ and strengthening their security practices.¹⁹⁴ Finally, (Member) States (see [Section 7.2](#)) realised the need to have in place **contingency plans** to be activated in case of emergency (i.e. high number of applications for international applications received), in order to ensure a more coordinated and managed approach to any potential similar future situations.

While also focusing on increasing reception capacity, accommodation facilities and integration, some (Member) States¹⁹⁵ were also developing long-term strategies and plans, as well as legislative amendments. Apart from **Latvia** and **Slovak Republic**, which did not have any concrete measures in the pipeline, all other (Member) States have either already planned or were considering the adoption of additional measures.

In [Section 3.1.2](#) an overview was presented of the efforts adopted by (Member) States to increase their capacities for accommodating applicants for international protection. Some (Member) States¹⁹⁶ maintained parts of their extensions to reception facilities in view of future preparedness. Due to the shortage of places in 2015, the Federal Reception Agency of **Belgium** had the intention to create extra 'buffer' places that can be swiftly activated in case of a sudden influx of applicants for international protection. **Belgium** was also in the process of establishing a single centre for pre-reception and pre-registration, based on its experience during the high influx. In a similar vein, **Germany** decided to maintain one of

its 'waiting centres', set-up in autumn 2015 to accommodate and register newly arrived migrants. As of September 2016, this was repurposed to provide for the regular admission of relocated refugees from **Greece** and **Italy**. **France** also planned to further increase the accommodation capacity for applicants for international protection over the next two years (2018-2019).

In **Sweden**, although no contingency plan was put in place, structural changes aimed at reducing the number of applicants for international protection arriving in the country, have been introduced by lowering certain standards.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the focus for some (Member) States¹⁹⁸ was on law enforcement, optimising transfers and returns. **Luxembourg** put in place a semi-open return structure, intended for people to be transferred to states applying the Dublin Regulation.

Germany introduced the concept of 'flexible authority' in view of future preparedness. This required some employees to undergo advanced training alongside their current jobs and qualifications with a view to be prepared for a second field of tasks at the Federal Office. In addition, the Federal Office was planning to give employees seconded to the Federal Office the opportunity to participate in upskilling measures, as well. **Hungary** maintained the transit zones for applicants for international protection, despite a decrease in asylum applications.

191 BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, HR, FI, FR, HU, IE, LV, LU, NL, SE, SI, SK, NO.

192 AT, DE, EL, LU, SE, SI.

193 CZ, DE, HU, LT, LU, MT, NL, SE, SI.

194 CZ, DE, HU, FI, SI.

195 CZ, DE, EE, FI, FR, IE, MT, NL, PL, SE, NO.

196 BE, DE, HU, SI.

197 E.g., temporary instead of permanent residence permit for beneficiaries, obstacles to family reunification.

198 AT, BE, FI, SE, SI.

7. CHALLENGES, GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT



7.1. CHALLENGES

The years 2014 to 2016 evidently presented (Member) States with numerous challenges in (emergency) response as well as in ensuring effectiveness of the measures taken. The challenges that (Member) States reported were mostly related to managing the flows of migrants, refugees and applicants for international protection who arrived in the EU. Difficulties in the ability to foresee the number of arrivals to their (Member) States made planning of measures and their accompanying staff numbers and infrastructures particularly challenging.

Among the most common challenges identified were:

- Setting-up and arranging reception and accommodation facilities at very short notice for variable composition and size of groups,¹⁹⁹ which might include persons with special needs such as children or other vulnerable groups;
- Dealing with the backlog of applications for international protection, while at the same time maintaining due process;²⁰⁰
- Recruiting qualified personnel at very short notice and providing training to the new hires;²⁰¹ and
- Managing the delicate balance between the changing influx of applicants for international protection and public opinion.²⁰²

In **Luxembourg**, the Reception and Integration Agency had to face challenges resulting from the temporary nature of a few reception structures such as expiring contracts, health and hygiene reasons, or other risks. In **Ireland**, the general housing crisis made it difficult to secure additional emergency reception and orientation centres, and to facilitate beneficiaries accessing long-term housing at local level. In some (Member) States challenges were related to local communities.²⁰³ For example, in **Finland**, the establishment of reception centres and their operations evoked criticism and opposition in some municipalities. In **Germany**, similar experiences were made at local level. Other challenges encountered by some (Member) States included differences in the type of accommodations provided (**Ireland**) or integration challenges faced

by beneficiaries of international protection (**Hungary**).



7.2. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

The effects of measures could be identified not only in quantitative terms (e.g. the number of applications received, the number of persons hosted) but also in qualitative terms, as they led to higher quality facilities and services, organisational improvements and behavioural changes (see Sections from 3.1.1 to 3.1.7). They also impacted on the way influxes were managed both in terms of quantity and quality. In several cases, some unforeseen effects were also reported, but most (Member) States²⁰⁴ considered that they were generally more prepared than before the influx.

Evaluating the effectiveness of measures taken and identifying those that worked well (good practices) was challenging as the timeframe (2014-2016) is still relatively recent. Nonetheless, a number of (Member) States carried out a national evaluation of (some of) the policies and measures implemented over those years.²⁰⁵ While **Austria**, the **Netherlands** and **Belgium** did not undertake an official evaluation of all the measures adopted in the course of those years, they made unofficial assessments of some measures.

For instance, in **Austria**, estimates by the Federal Ministry of the Interior exposed the need for combined efforts on a European level and confirmed that the measures adopted did indeed enhance preparedness. Similarly, in the **Netherlands** research in sub-areas such as reception and administrative cooperation showed that despite certain shortcomings²⁰⁶ the reception system of the country was functioning relatively well.

In **Belgium**, the Federal Reception Agency, convinced of its usefulness, calculated the need for a buffer capacity of ideally 7 500 places, in order to “absorb” a future inflow of applicants for international protection in the reception network for the period of time required to allow for the opening of new reception centres.

199 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, NL, PT, SE, SI, NO.

200 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, IE, DE, IE, LT, NL, LU, SE.

201 BE, DE, EE, FI, LV, LU, NL, PT, SE, SI, NO.

202 CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, LT, SI.

203 DE, FI, IE.

204 AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, FI, HU, IT, LU, PL, PT, SI, SK, NO.

205 BE, CZ, EE, FI, ES, HU, LV, MT, SE, NO.

206 Such as: operational bottlenecks related to inflow and outflow of people at reception centres.

The **Netherlands** also highlighted points for improvement in relation to the quality of the processes in place for the identification of applicants for international protection, and for the rapid integration of residence permit holders.

Greece regarded the decline in shipwrecks and fatalities of people trying to reach the Greek shores at the sea border with Turkey and the effective registering of the new arrivals in the Greek islands²⁰⁷ as encouraging outcomes of the policies developed. In **Belgium**, a formal evaluation was planned to start in October 2017 on the reception of applicants for international protection, in particular focusing on best practices and lessons learnt. In addition, the Belgian Court of Auditors published a report in October 2017, which presented the main findings of an assessment of whether Fedasil provided efficient and qualitative reception during the 'asylum crisis'. It concluded that Fedasil and its reception partners did manage to provide sufficient reception places by increasing reception capacity, but some challenges were noted, such as difficulties associated with collaborating with private operators.

More specifically, in the **Czech Republic** general migration trends as well as the measures taken were continuously monitored, analysed and evaluated.²⁰⁸ In **Finland**, the evaluation presented in the Government Annual Report showed that the objectives on migration and asylum policies had overall been reached. In the case of **Sweden**, an evaluation highlighted the importance of cooperation between different agencies due to the strong interdependency, while another evaluation concluded that the existing crisis management structures were not adapted to deal with the length, intensity and complexity of the situation in hand.²⁰⁹ Finally, in **Germany** an evaluation highlighted other developments that were noted as positive; these included offering regular and meaningful activities to applicants for international protection and preparing them for more advanced courses as well as providing them an opportunity to create social relationships and share positive experiences with other applicants for international protection and therefore helping to prevent conflict at reception centres.²¹⁰

Almost all (Member) States²¹¹ identified several **good practices** developed to counter the challenges stemming from the high influx with more flexibility and adaptability. The key principle underlining all good practices was closer cooperation and exchange of information between the involved stakeholders. For instance:

- **Austria** established coordination boards composed of representatives from different authorities and a close partnership with one bordering (Member) State.
- **France** cooperated closely with the United Kingdom for the evacuation of the Calais camp.
- **Germany**, amongst other things, benefitted from innovation in view of process optimisation. In particular, within the Digitalisation Agenda 2020 launched in the summer 2016, Germany aimed to establish an electronic data storage, gradually reduce the manual input within the individual work processes and introduce the automated interpretation of data in support of staff (e.g. automated

plausibility checks of the spelling of names). Furthermore, the experience of funding full-time coordinators amongst the tens of thousands of volunteers at local and regional level and establishing more tailor-made and target-group specific integration courses (e.g. more job-related language courses, courses to teach the Roman alphabet) and allowing access to these courses as well as to the labour market at an earlier stage (e.g. during the procedure for applicants for international protection with a good prospect to remain) were all considered positive.

- **Norway** and **Finland** co-located all the services needed for the newly arrived applicants for international protection in the so-called 'arrival centre' (NO) and registration centre (FI) located at the borders. For Norway, this was one of the new forms of shelter accommodations for applicants for international protection. Finland noted that the seamless cooperation between the registration centre and the situation centre of the Finnish Immigration Service enabled the smooth and managed reception of applicants for international protection in different parts of the country. In addition, **Germany** also benefitted from establishing so-called arrival centres, integrating the federal and regional processes as well as all public agencies and authorities involved in the asylum process in a single location.
- **The Netherlands** benefited from the 'one-status' system²¹² which deterred the creation of backlogs in respect to additional follow-up and appeal proceedings.
- **Greece** highlighted the pre-registration process as an example of good practice and flexibility by the public sector with the UNHCR and EASO.
- **Luxembourg, Malta, Sweden** and the **United Kingdom** benefitted from shifting deployed staff in different capacities and roles, according to the needs of the moment, and **France** from developing an expertise among staff and processing methods in relation to application procedures.
- The state wide 'Coordination of Non-Governmental and Humanitarian Organisations' has been seen as a positive development in **Slovenia** to improve coordination of the response of civil society.
- **Sweden** highlighted that civil society, to a much greater degree than in the past, was mobilised and contributed to managing the challenges that arose from the mass arrival of applicants for international protection in autumn 2015. Sweden also stressed the government's and Parliament's willingness to make more additional financing available, e.g. for the procurement of additional reception spaces and the recruitment of additional staff to the Migration Agency.
- **Latvia** implemented a 'Plan for measures for coordinated action of institutions in relation to possible arrival of applicants for international protection from crisis-affected countries to Latvia'. The Plan implementation facilitated cooperation with the authorities involved and revealed the strengths and weaknesses in reception of applicants for

²⁰⁷ In 2015 the recording rate of the new arrivals in the Greek islands was below 20%, while it has gradually developed to more than 90%.

²⁰⁸ Within the Analytic Centre for Migration and Border Protection (ANACEN).

²⁰⁹ Sweden National Report on EMN Study Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers.

²¹⁰ Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe (2017): Evaluation des Modellprojektes Erstorientierung und Wertevermittlung für Asylbewerberinnen und Asylbewerber, Abschlussbericht vom 20.6.2017. Syspons: Berlin, p. 21.

²¹¹ Except for LV and SK.

²¹² The 'one-status' system means that the same rights are granted to beneficiaries of international protection who benefit from protection based on the Geneva Convention and on subsidiary protection grounds.

international protection and socio-economical inclusion measures of persons receiving international protection.

As mentioned above, the need for close cooperation and coordination among relevant stakeholders was the **main lesson learnt** during the changing influx of applicants for international protection in 2014-2016. More specifically (Member) States stressed the need for:

- Coordination at different levels of governance, between the ministries and the regional authorities and municipalities,

as well as with other partners, and clarity on mandate and competencies;²¹³

- Future preparedness through early-warning systems and contingency plans for early action, but at the same time allowing for flexibility to adapt to the changing migratory situation;²¹⁴
- Strategic documentation and communication of decisions to the public and media.²¹⁵

213 AT, BE, DE, EL, FI, LU, NL, SE, SI, NO.

214 AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, IE, LT, LV, MT, NL, SE, SI, NO intend to or have already started taking actions to establish a contingency plan. In some cases, e.g. Germany, there is no overall contingency plan, but there are several area-related contingency plans.

215 CZ, LU, NO, SI.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Historically, fluctuations in the influx of applicants for international protection and mixed flows of migrants and refugees have coincided with conflicts and unrest in third countries, such as the war in former Yugoslavia, conflict escalation in Afghanistan and Iraq and more recently the exacerbation of the conflict in Syria, which contributed to the unprecedented influx of migrants to the EU in 2014-2016.

The main challenge faced by (Member) States in 2014-2016 was the unpredictability of the flows, in terms of anticipating the number of arrivals, both for increases and decreases. The EU acted by launching the European Agenda on Migration, a comprehensive set of activities based on mutual trust and solidarity among EU Member States and institutions, particularly focusing on managing flows in an orderly fashion, capacity-building and burden-sharing. However, actions taken by (Member) States varied widely in scope and nature in part because of the different degrees to which (Member) States were affected (in itself influenced by many different geopolitical and economic factors) and priorities set at national level. In certain cases, such **variation in approaches also led to spill-over or collateral effects**, particularly for measures taken in areas such as law enforcement and border control, but also asylum procedures.

While (Member) States generally did not take measures in anticipation of the peaks in arrivals, where a high influx did occur, they responded by implementing a plethora of different actions. Almost all (Member) States took some measures in response to increases in the number of applicants for international protection. The nature of these measures varied greatly, and typically included legislative actions, organisational and procedural changes and contingency plans. In particular, (Member) States took measures in the areas of border control and law enforcement as well as the organisation of reception services, closely followed by measures to enhance asylum procedures and integration.

Overall, **the measures taken by (Member) States were evaluated positively**, in terms of improving the effectiveness of (Member) State actions particularly with respect to registration procedures. While (Member) States reported some difficulties in developing new measures, they considered that most achieved the desired results as well as having longer-term effects, leading overall to a better management of flows and higher quality services offered to newcomers.

Once the influx of migrants began to decrease, a number of (Member) States took specific measures to adjust to this change. (Member) States mostly proceeded to downscale rather than dismantle activities. In downscaling, the main focus was on reducing reception capacities, or limiting the

scope of some services, for example, by adapting the facilities for other purposes. The process of downscaling sometimes meant a reduction of staff.

(Member) States overall sought to retain the expertise developed during the peak periods, for example by shifting staff to integration and return activities. Similarly, financial resources were re-allocated to integration and return measures. The retention of staff and expertise demonstrated a commitment to work on future preparedness. Indeed, a number of (Member) States highlighted the positive effects of having dealt with the peak periods, considering it a fruitful experience which enhanced their response capacity and preparedness. **This forward-looking approach also led to the elaboration of contingency plans in some (Member) States.** Overall, (Member) States appeared to be better prepared to manage future peaks and troughs, though downscaling of measures also highlighted certain risks in terms of maintaining operational and institutional memory that could be leveraged in the (near) future. While (Member) States have worked on enhancing their preparedness, most seem to place equal or more focus on being able to minimise such influxes in the future.

The influx in applicants for international protection not only affected asylum-related policies, legislation and practices, but also impacted on other legal migration instruments in particular family reunification. As **(Member) States tried to curb the number of third-country nationals applying for family reunification**, many introduced restrictions in their national legislation by, for example, shortening the time limits for lodging an application, changing residency requirements and reducing eligible categories.

Boosting preparedness did nonetheless highlight a number of relevant good practices and lessons learnt. (Member) States identified good practices with regard to improved internal coordination and cooperation and a clear definition of responsibilities and tasks; support from parliaments and civil society; digitalisation of processes, and the creation of a 'pre-registration' phases and/or centres where all necessary services were located together. Lessons learnt included the need to ensure effective coordination at every level (including a clear definition of roles, responsibilities and language), establishing contingency plans, and preparing strategic communications on adopted measures, aims and intended effects of these measures with the media and the wider public.

Several evaluations undertaken by the (Member) States in particular pointed to the benefits of co-operation mechanisms which engaged with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, involving them in delivery

of medical and health services, education, accommodation, material needs and, to a limited extent, information campaigns and legal support in asylum procedures. Local authorities were mainly involved in the area of reception centres and accommodation, with cooperation between national and local authorities taking different shapes in (Member) States, ranging from solidarity-based agreements to top-down decisions imposed on municipalities when the latter were possibly reluctant to receive applicants for international protection.

At international level, instead, cooperation was mostly operational, taking place at regional level between (Member) States and sometimes third countries to jointly work on managing the flows of applicants for international protection and migrants. At the same time, cooperation was also at times rather erratic, often in response to emergencies and ad-hoc as much as well-planned, a fact that also highlighted the volatile nature of events that took place over the period 2014-2016.



Keeping in touch with the EMN

EMN website www.ec.europa.eu/emn

EMN LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/company/european-migration-network/#EMN10years>

EMN National Contact Points

Austria www.emn.at

Belgium www.emnbelgium.be

Bulgaria www.mvr.bg

Croatia www.emn.hr

Cyprus www.moi.gov.cy

Czech Republic www.emncz.eu

Denmark https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/denmark_en

Estonia www.emn.ee

Finland www.emn.fi

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

Germany www.emn-germany.de

Greece www.immigration.gov.gr

Hungary www.emnhungary.hu

Ireland www.emn.ie

Italy www.emnitalyncp.it

Latvia www.emn.lv

Lithuania www.emn.lt

Luxembourg www.emnluxembourg.lu

Malta <https://homeaffairs.gov.mt/en/mhas-information/emn/pages/european-migration-network.aspx>

Netherlands www.emnnetherlands.nl

Poland www.emn.gov.pl

Portugal https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/portugal_en

Romania www.mai.gov.ro

Slovakia www.emn.sk

Slovenia www.emm.si

Spain <http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/en/redeuropeamigracion>

Sweden www.emnsweden.se

United Kingdom https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/authorities/united-kingdom_en

Norway www.emnnorway.no