

Summary of the Ad Hoc Query on social assistance benefits for beneficiaries of international and temporary protection

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Responses: EMN NCP Belgium, EMN NCP Bulgaria, EMN NCP Croatia, EMN NCP Cyprus, EMN NCP Czech Republic, EMN NCP Estonia, EMN NCP Finland, EMN NCP France, EMN NCP Germany, EMN NCP Greece, EMN NCP Hungary, EMN NCP Ireland, EMN NCP Italy, EMN NCP Latvia, EMN NCP Lithuania, EMN NCP Luxembourg, EMN NCP Netherlands, EMN NCP Poland, EMN NCP Serbia, EMN NCP Slovakia, EMN NCP Slovenia, EMN NCP Spain, EMN NCP Sweden **(23 in total)**

Background

One of the announced objectives of the Belgian federal government in the coalition agreement (2025-2029) is to “enhance the value of citizenship” and “protect the social welfare system against abuse”. One of the proposed measures is to impose stricter conditions to access social assistance benefits (i.e. non-contributory, means-tested safety net of last resort for people who lack sufficient resources) and create incentives for newcomers to integrate (including by entering the labour market) as quickly as possible. To this end, the coalition agreement stipulates that future newcomers will now have to wait five years before they are entitled to social assistance benefits.

Recognised refugees who are entitled to social assistance benefits will have to follow a reinforced integration programme in cooperation with the federated entities (which are responsible for integration programmes in Belgium). If they fail to do so, their benefits will be reduced. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and temporary protection will be able to supplement their reduced social assistance benefit with bonuses based on their integration efforts (such as taking an integration and language course, actively looking for a job and following a training course).

To develop these new regulations, the Belgian government would like to learn more about the existing social assistance benefits for beneficiaries of international and temporary protection in other EMN Member and Observer Countries.

Main findings

This ad hoc query examines how EMN Member and Observer Countries organise the access to social assistance benefits for beneficiaries of international and temporary protection.

An analysis of the ad hoc query results shows that:

- **About half of the responding countries indicate to not differentiate** between beneficiaries of international and temporary protection, compared to other residents in their country, when it comes to accessing social assistance benefits. The other half of the responding countries indicate that there are differences in access to social assistance benefits for these groups of persons. In most of these countries, beneficiaries of international protection can receive the same benefits as other residents, but a different social assistance regime is applied to beneficiaries of temporary protection (e.g. **CZ**, **FI**¹, **FR**, **HU**, **LU**, **NL**, **RS** and **SE**).
- In countries where beneficiaries of temporary protection are subject to different social assistance benefits, such differences are **primarily justified by the temporariness of their residence status and the different applicable legal regime**. The temporariness of this protection status is seen as a reason to withhold these persons from entering the national social welfare system (**CZ**, **HU**). Additionally, **CZ** also highlight the fact that it is a group-based protection status as a reason to restrict social assistance benefits for this group of persons.
- Two countries (**LV** and **SK**) (partially) apply **different rules to refugees and/or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection**, when compared to other residents. These differences are justified by the (limited) duration of residence or different applicable legal regimes.

¹ In Finland, beneficiaries of temporary protection can usually apply to be a resident of a municipality only after residing in Finland for at least a year but after that they have the same access to social assistance benefits as any other resident.

- Differences in access to social assistance benefits include **differences in the amount granted, applicable waiting periods, maximum periods of receiving benefits as well as the types of social assistance benefits granted.**
- Only a few countries (**BE, DE, LV, PL**) indicate that there are plans or proposals to introduce (further) differentiation in the access to social assistance. As mentioned earlier, in **BE**, the Government is currently considering introducing a waiting time of five years before foreigners could access social assistance benefits. Additionally, refugees could have their social assistance benefits reduced if they do not comply with requirements imposed by their integration programme. For beneficiaries of subsidiary and temporary protection, their social assistance benefits may be reduced and could be increased with bonuses when making integration efforts (e.g. following a language or training course). In the other countries, the (potential) changes to legislation/policy only apply to beneficiaries of temporary protection: In **DE**, a draft bill is currently discussed in parliament, proposing that beneficiaries of temporary protection no longer receive social assistance benefits under the Social Code Book Two but that they will receive such benefits under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act instead. In **LV**, the 2026 budget and the Annual Action Plan for Providing Support to Ukrainian Civilians for 2026 introduce a reduction of various types of social support, to bring them closer to the conditions applicable to general residents. Lastly, in **PL**, the recent implementation (on 5 March 2026) of the Act of 23 January 2026 will make beneficiaries of temporary protection no longer eligible for social assistance benefits in the same way that Polish citizens and some other categories of foreigners do. Instead, the assistance that they can receive will be limited to shelter, meals, essential clothing and a specific allowance, as is applicable to other foreigners who reside in **PL** on humanitarian grounds or based on a tolerated stay.
- Some responses from countries indicate **concerns with regards to equal treatment.** **EL** highlights the European Commission's Reasoned Opinion (INFR(2022)2044/C(2025)2415/final), which found that the eligibility criteria of years of legal and permanent residence of uninsured elderly persons who are beneficiaries of international protection to qualify for Social Solidarity Benefit and Housing Assistance in **EL** amounts to direct and indirect discrimination. However, the Greek Government is of the opinion that the eligibility criteria are objective and that they represent overriding reasons of public interest, such as ensuring a sustainable social security system. In **SE**, plans for a differentiation in access to social security benefits were discussed in recent years but the Swedish Government did not proceed as a report (written in the context of these legislative plans) concluded that EU law on equal treatment restricts the Swedish Government from imposing such measures on third-country nationals and EU/EEA nationals.



Disclaimer: The responses regarding this ad-hoc query have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among the EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) in the framework of the EMN. The contributing NCPs have provided information that is (to the best of their knowledge) up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN Member or Observer Country. This summary has been produced by EMN Belgium.