

Press release

New EMN inform outlines how EMN Member and Observer Countries manage housing capacity in the context of international protection

Between 2017 and 2021, many EMN Member and Observer Countries experienced a high degree of volatility in the number of applicants for international protection, which in some countries led to tensions in the reception systems. This inform aims to gather information that can help policymakers better organise their reception systems in a flexible manner, whilst anticipating further changing inflows in the future.

Brussels, 20 January 2023

Although not reaching the 2015-2016 levels, the number of asylum applications in the EU in 2021 increased by almost 34% in comparison to the previous year, returning to pre-COVID-19 levels. The reasons for this vary and may include the Belarus border crisis and the fall of Afghanistan's government, as well as the relaxation and removal of COVID-19 restrictions, and more recently the war in Ukraine. These trends highlighted the need for EMN Member and Observer Countries to implement flexible approaches to manage housing capacity.

The [Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU](#) serves as the legal framework for EU Member States for ensuring harmonised standards for the reception of applicants for international protection in the EU Member States. In the event of a shortage of housing and reception, the Directive also foresees the possibility of activating exceptional measures for temporary emergency housing. The EMN Member and Observer Countries indeed have applied different modalities of reception conditions in emergency situations such as housing in tents, containers, or gyms.

This shortage was exacerbated by the low outflow of international protection beneficiaries from reception centres to private housing, and the high demand for affordable rental housing on the private market, combined with the reluctance of some landlords to rent to third-country nationals.

To manage sudden changes in the demand for housing, EMN Member States and Observer Countries created additional capacity in existing reception centres or established new reception facilities. Related to this, EMN Member and Observer Countries also introduced a higher level of flexibility from a budgetary perspective, increasing the financial resources allocated to reception and housing when required, and some engaged in regional and local redistribution of international protection seekers on the territory. In general, EMN Member and Observer Countries had all factored in some margin or buffer capacity to respond to fluctuations in migration flows, which are anticipated through periodic forecasting and analysis. Such exercises are mostly based on data on projected migration flows, housing trends, as well as other internal and external factors.

Furthermore, housing in private settings and with host families was considered a key measure to address insufficient housing capacity by most EMN Member and Observer Countries. This was particularly the case as the large number of people fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to high demand for immediate support, including accommodation.

Inform

- Title: "Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection"
- Period covered: 2017 - 2021
- Subject: Most EMN Member and Observer Countries reported on pressures and challenges in housing applicants for international protection between 2017 and 2021. This inform highlights the challenges encountered and best practices for responding to the emergency.

The EMN

The European Migration Network (EMN) is a Europe-wide network consisting of [National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#) in the EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM), the European Commission and the EMN Service Provider (ICF), providing information on migration and asylum. The EMN was set up in 2008 by the European Commission on behalf of the European Council in order to satisfy the need for a regular exchange of reliable information on migration and asylum related issues on a European level.

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