

New EMN inform examines alternatives to providing housing in-kind for applicants for international protection

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Overview

The European Migration Network (EMN) has published the inform 'Alternatives to providing housing in-kind for applicants for international protection'. Based on contributions from 22 EMN Member Countries as well as Norway and Serbia, the inform maps national approaches between January 2020 and October 2025.

Reception systems for applicants for international protection traditionally rely on in-kind housing such as reception centres, shared facilities, or decentralised housing units.

Alternatives to in-kind housing refer to measures where governments provide financial allowances or vouchers instead of in-kind accommodation, enabling applicants to secure housing independently while still ensuring adequate living conditions in line with EU standards.

These alternatives aim to fulfil legal obligations under the recast Reception Conditions Directive 2013 and may allow greater flexibility and autonomy for applicants. They could also support early integration by allowing individuals and families, particularly those likely to receive protection, to live more independently within local communities.

This inform provides comparative information on how financial allowances used in some EMN Member Countries complement reception systems while safeguarding access to services and adequate living standards.

Key findings

Five EMN Member Countries reported implementing financial allowances as alternatives to in-kind housing as part of their national reception systems during the reporting period. Austria and Poland operate continuous allowance schemes, while Cyprus, France and Ireland mainly use financial support when reception capacity is constrained. In addition to these five EMN Member Countries, Germany reported using financial allowances to cover housing in exceptional cases depending on individual needs and at the discretion of federal states.

Eligibility and rates

Eligibility for financial allowance schemes is generally tied to administrative requirements or lack of available in-kind places. Two approaches to setting housing support were identified: nationally fixed rates, typically by regulation, and locally determined amounts that reflect housing costs or individual needs.

Services and monitoring

The provision of essential services such as legal support, psychological assistance, and healthcare remains integral to the reception systems of countries using alternatives to in-kind housing, though approaches differ to reflect national frameworks and applicant needs. While some countries, like France and Ireland, ensure continuity of support regardless of accommodation type, others tailor their systems towards greater independence or specific mechanisms. Austria encourages self-sufficiency for those outside reception centres but maintains equal entitlements, and Poland delivers medical and psychological services via contracted providers and dedicated facilities. These variations arise from differing national regulations, integration strategies, and the balance between centralised and decentralised service provision.

Monitoring approaches vary across countries. Some operate centralised national databases that record personal details and track the payment of financial allowances, combined with periodic appointments to confirm continued eligibility and current residence. Others rely primarily on applicants' obligation to register changes of address, or on oversight by the local authority responsible for administering benefits. For the full comparative analysis and findings, please read the complete inform.