The Organisation of Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers in Norway

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About the European Migration Network and its Norwegian Contact Point
The European Migration Network provides the main hub for gathering and spreading information in the region. The Network is supported and coordinated by the European Commission. Norway has been a member of EMN since 2010 as the only non-EU member country. The Norwegian EMN contact point (NO EMN NCP) consists of representatives of the *Ministry of Justice and Public Protection*, the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration* and the *Institute for Social Research*. In addition to providing and spreading comparable information on migration and asylum in Europe, it is the ambition of NO EMN NCP to bring attention to the link between Norway and the EU in these politically sensitive areas.

Contents

Executive summary

1 Types of reception facilities and actors
2 Factors determining access to facilities
3 Material reception conditions
4 Flexibility of the reception system
5 Efficiency
6 Conclusions

Executive summary

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible both for the processing of the asylum claims and the provision of accommodation to asylum seekers.

The use of competitive tendering and different service providers gives flexibility in the capacity and operation of reception facilities, and the experience has demonstrated that it has been possible to obtain at least 85 per cent capacity utilization and adjust capacity to large variations in the number of asylum seekers over a short period of time. The challenge with this type of procurement is that rigid procedures may sometimes limit management possibilities and that it is time consuming and labour intensive.

It is an ideal to have three different types of operators represented in this activity: the non-governmental (NGOs)/humanitarian organisations, the municipalities and the private, commercial actors. It is a challenge, however, to achieve this mix when the procurement regulations have proven to suit the private actors best. That said, there is no proof that the quality and standard of the operation of the centres differ between the types of operator.

The municipalities in Norway are autonomous. It is voluntary for the municipalities to settle refugees and determine when and how many to settle. There is currently an accumulation of former asylum seekers in the reception centres who have been granted protection/residence and are waiting to be settled in an apartment in a municipality. In many municipalities the hosting of a reception centre is controversial and UDI has often experienced that municipalities find ways to delay and even obstruct the establishment of centres.

The standard and quality of the accommodation provided in a reception centre is based on the premise of a relatively short stay. The duration of the stays in the centres have, however, been prolonged over the years. The time for the municipalities to settle refugees, i.e. persons who have been granted a residence permit, is long and increasing, the appeal system when an asylum application has been rejected is such that it often takes a long time to reach the final decision, and finally the time it takes for people with rejected applications to leave the country or get transported out by the police varies a lot.

It is a principle that reception centres are to be located all over the country. Asylum seekers live in open centres and form an integral part of the local communities. They have access to the same services as most Norwegians. The principle of sector responsibility is strong in Norway and applies also in this area. The hosting of asylum seekers is seen as national concern and thus a responsibility of the state. From this follows that the provision of accommodation in a reception centre is open to all asylum seekers during the processing of their claims and for asylum seekers with processed cases[1] in order to shield the municipalitiesfrom the consequences of asylum seekers not having (the means for) adequate living quarters. This is also the reason why the government finances all activities relating to the reception of asylum seekers.

Ordinary reception centres are not institutions. Basically the residents are regarded as resourceful adults. This is, however, not the case for everyone at all times, thus there is a need for a certain degree of differentiation among reception facilities; with protected places for victims of trafficking, as well as reinforced departments for people with special needs related to physical handicaps, illnesses and/or mental issues: persons who need a more appropriate and adjusted accommodation and follow up than is available in an ordinary centre. Furthermore there are special places reserved for people who are not able to live in a

[1] With some exceptions. See answer to Q 7.

reception centre and who pose a danger to themselves and/or others. These persons are taken care of by a private actor that works on a contract with UDI.

Presently in Norway there is no formalized procedure for identifying vulnerable persons with special needs. The system in place is “when detected, special needs are being handled”. This does not secure the identification of all vulnerable individuals, in particular in situations where the vulnerability is not obvious and visible. As a follow-up of recommendations from researchers and practitioners on the need to improve identification and follow-up of persons with special needs, the UDI together with the Directorate of Health is currently carrying out a pilot project in the so called arrival transit reception centre where all asylum seekers (except unaccompanied minors) stay the first weeks upon their arrival. The aim of the project is to gain experience and give input to the establishing of a systematic identification mechanism for early identification of vulnerable asylum seekers with special needs. The pilot will submit recommendations both regarding the identification mechanism and how to ensure a systematic exchange of information, to ensure adequate follow-up of the individuals when it comes to health issues and specific needs to be considered in the reception centres as well as data that could be of importance to the asylum case.

This issue of safeguarding vulnerable groups, including families with children and unaccompanied minors, also form part of an ongoing discussion between UDI and the parent ministry for a further strategy for the Norwegian reception system as a whole, a discussion which will cover all aspects, from general, overall themes to detailed, specific requirements on the standard and quality in the reception centres.

1 Types of reception facilities and actors

Table 1: Different types of reception facilities 2008 – 2012

Type of accommodation	Type of facility in use	Number at the end of 2012	Maximum number of applicants the facilities could accommodate	Number of applicants accommodated in per year during 2008-2012
Collective initial/transit reception centres	Yes	8 (including 2 for unaccompanied minors)	2070 (including 220 for unaccompanied minors)	2008: 1 596 2009: 1 903 2010: 1 341 2011: 1 192 2012: 1 440
Collective open reception centres[2]	Yes	96	15 484	2008: 8 131 2009: 13 908 2010: 15 353 2011: 14 613 2012: 13 957
Special reception centres or facilities for vulnerable groups (e.g. victims of torture or specific vulnerable female applicants)	Yes. Designated *reinforced reception facilities.* See next row for unaccompanied minors and last row in this table for victims of human trafficking	5 divisions á 20 places/beds[3]	100 places/beds[4]	2008: 74[5] 2009: 77[6] 2010: 94 2011: 93 2012: 93
Special separate reception centres for unaccompanied minors	Yes. Valid for both collective *transit* (see first row) reception centres and the so called *ordinary* reception centres	6 divisions[7]	165	2008: 192 2009: 1 146 2010: 1 143 2011: 488 2012: 136
Private houses or flats: arranged and paid for by competent	Yes. *Alternative accommodations*[8]	No statistics available on number of	No statistics available	200–250 persons registered each

[2] Open centres means that applicants are free to enter and leave the centre whenever they want.
[3] Both capacity and occupancy for these beds are included in the category in the row above (collective open reception centres)
[4] Both capacity and occupancy for these beds are included in the category in the row above (collective open reception centres)
[5] The scheme was expanded with 1 additional division/ 20 places mid 2009
[6] The scheme was expanded with 1 additional division/ 20 places mid 2009
[7] Not separate centres but divisions affiliated with the ordinary centres
[8] Asylum seekers may apply to the UDI for *alternative accommodation*. The condition for granting the asylum

authorities		houses/flats. However 236 persons were registered in such accommodations at the end of 2012.		year 2008-2012.
Private hotels: arranged and paid for by competent authorities	No	-	-	-
Individually arranged accommodation such as houses, flats, hotels and/or possibilities of staying with friends and/or family	No	-	-	-
Other types of premises arranged and paid for by the competent authorities	Yes, for victims of trafficking and abuse in shelters provided by the municipalities.	48 shelters around the country	No statistics available, but max 53 places approximately	2008: 44 2009: 51 2010: 42 2011: 44 2012: 42

Government authorities have the overall financial responsibility for the reception facilities for asylum seekers. The daily operation of the centres is by operators on behalf of the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (/UDI)*. NGOs, municipalities and private commercial actors are operators that run the centres based on a contract awarded on the basis of a public tender. Included in the contract is the requirements specified in circulars issued by UDI. The same requirements apply to all operators.

Most municipalities provide places in shelters for victims of trafficking.[9]

The reception facilities are centrally coordinated by UDI as it has the overall responsibility for the accommodation of applicants, but no formal coordination mechanisms for the reception facilities are in place. The municipalities hosting reception centres are responsible for providing services (medical, child welfare, education and kindergarten, as well as protective shelters) to all asylum seekers residing in the reception centres equivalent to all residents in the municipality. The municipality is compensated by UDI for estimated expenses. The compensation consists of a fixed rate per centre in addition to a fixed rate per place/capacity of the centre. The compensation also varies according to the kind of centre the municipality is hosting. The compensation is higher for the so called *reinforced divisions* mentioned above and even higher for centres with *unaccompanied minors*. The

seeker *alternative accommodation* is that UDI find it unreasonable for various reasons to refer the person to an ordinary reception centre. In the case where *alternative accommodation* is being used, it is the municipality that undertakes overall responsibility for the following up of the person. An agreement is signed between the municipality and UDI. The municipality gets compensated for the services with a fixed monthly rate supposed to cover the municipality's average total expenses (as of today 11992 NOK per person per month).

[9] The practices vary somewhat, some shelters charge the asylum seeker around 100 NOK. In these cases UDI reimburses the municipalities and accounts for the financial allowances supposed to cover all of the asylum seekers` regular current expenses including food if staying at a self-catering shelter

municipalities get reimbursed from another scheme for expenses related to offering Norwegian classes for the asylum seekers.

See also the row in table 1 about *alternative accommodations.*

2 Factors determining access to facilities

Table 2 Categories of applicants entitled to reception facilities

Different categories of applicants depending on *type/stage of procedure*	**Entitled to reception facilities**	**Entitlement to standard or specific reception facilities[10]?**
Applicants under Dublin II[11]	Yes	Accommodated in transit centres. Children are entitled and obliged to attend school and their families are accommodated in ordinary reception centres.
Applicants in admissibility procedures[12]	Yes	Accommodated in transit centres.
Applicants subject to accelerated procedures	Yes	Accommodated in transit centres
Vulnerable groups of applicants (with specific psychological/medical assistance needs)	Yes	See table 1. Keywords: victims of trafficking; unaccompanied minors; reinforced reception facilities; alternative accommodation
Unaccompanied minors awaiting decision for international protection	Yes	Accommodated in separate reception divisions attached to ordinary reception centres (both in transit and ordinary)
Unaccompanied minors who have exhausted the procedure for international protection and are awaiting return	Yes	Accommodated in separate reception divisions attached to ordinary reception centres
Applicants who have lodged an appeal procedure	Yes	Standard reception facilities
Applicants who have lodged a	Yes	Standard reception

[10] Specific reception facilities refer to facilities which divert from mainstream reception facilities, e.g. depending on the type of applicant, or stage/procedure.

[11] Applicants under Dublin II means those applicants for which a Dublin procedure has been initiated and who are awaiting a Dublin decision determining the responsible country for examining the asylum claim.

[12] Admissibility procedures refer to the stage of the application in which (Member) States determine whether an application will or will not be considered in substance based on the criteria laid down in Article 25 of Directive 2005/85/EC (the Asylum Procedures Directive) which stipulates circumstances in which Member States are allowed to declare application as inadmissible and are subsequently not required to examine the application.

subsequent application		facilities
Applicants who have received a positive decision on their international protection application	Yes	Standard reception facilities
Applicants who have exhausted the procedure for international protection and who are awaiting return	Yes	Standard reception facilities
Other (e.g. applicants from other EU Member States, families with children with an irregular migrant status, applicants from safe third countries of origin etc.	Yes	Accommodated in transit centres

The only reason for exclusion from the right to stay in a reception centre is when the applicant has been granted protection and given a specific date for moving to an apartment reserved for him/her in a municipality, and refuses to move.

Norway does not conduct a routine assessment of vulnerability, but there are routines for assessing vulnerability when staff at UDI and/or at a reception centre suspect that a person may be a victim of human trafficking.[13]

UDI is responsible for allocating applicants for international protection to the different reception facilities. Its six regional offices are responsible for supervising the reception centres in their respective regions. In addition to these offices, there is one section (TRA), located in Oslo, responsible for managing the transit centres. One of the regional units (RKM) has been given an overall responsibility for transferring residents from the transit centres to the ordinary centres, a task they conduct in close collaboration with TRA. TRA provides RKM weekly information about residents who are ready for transfer to the ordinary centres. RKM is continuously updated on vacant beds in all ordinary centres, and send the asylum seekers to an appropriate, available place. In doing so, any known special needs are taken in to consideration.

In allocating applicants to the different centres UDI is considering

- Capacity
- Type of asylum procedure (as described in table 2 above: applicants who fall under the Dublin procedure or under accelerated procedures are assigned to transit centres)
- Stage of asylum procedure (transit centre for Dublin examination; ordinary centres for other stages)

In certain cases nationality may be taken into consideration together with other factors. UDI is continuously updated on the number and type of places available in all the centres nationwide, and does individual assessments and consider family compositions, physical handicap, etc to allocate people to appropriate facilities. The decisions are often based on inputs from staff at transit centres and/or UDI, from guardians, etc. When special needs have been discovered applicants are assigned to special facilities as described in table 2 and below.

[13] See the Norwegian contribution to the EMN study on victims of trafficking, to be found on http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/studies/results/trafficking-human-beings/index_en.htm

The process for assignment of applicants (and former applicants) to different reception facilities is not laid down in legislation, but is described in various soft law guidelines and follows established practices. The applicants cannot themself choose a reception centre and they can be moved from one centre to another based on consideration of optimal capacity utilization as well as changes to the family profile (e.g. the birth of a child) and medical consideration, as well as in cases of unrest, fires etc..

3 Material reception conditions

The entitlement to the following basic material reception conditions is conditional on the applicant staying at a reception centre. These conditions are not laid down in national legislation:

- **Food**: the applicants staying at a reception centre without a catering service receive a financial allowance which takes into account that they have to buy their own food)
- **Clothing**: applicants receive clothes according to season
- **Financial allowance**: the amount varies according to type of accommodation (with lower amounts at transit centres), family composition (older children receive a higher amount than younger ones) and whether the centre has catering facilities or not.

Table 3 Quality criteria for reception facilities

Type of accommodation	***Available surface per applicant***	***Supervision rate (number of staff per applicant)***	***Possibility of leisure activities?***
Collective initial/transit reception centres	*No minimum standards*	*No minimum standards*	There are requirements for recreational activities, in terms of offering varied activities, motivating for involvement and participation and finally adapting them to the persons who are staying at the centres at any given time, with stronger requirements for children and adolescents. Participation in these activities is voluntary.
Collective open reception centres	*No minimum standards*	*No minimum standards*	There are requirements for recreational

			activities, in terms of offering varied activities, motivating for involvement and participation and finally adapting them to the persons who are staying at the centres at any given time, with stronger requirements for children and adolescents. Participation in these activities is voluntary.
Special reception centres or facilities for vulnerable groups (e.g. victims of torture or specific vulnerable female applicants)	*No minimum standards*	*No minimum standards*	*Yes*
Special separate reception centres for unaccompanied minors	*No minimum standards*	*No minimum standards*	*Yes: stronger requirements than for adults*
Private houses or flats: arranged and paid for by competent authorities	*No information on square metre per person. Persons included in the program are often sharing flats with family members who have a permanent residence in Norway.*	*Basically no supervision but it depends on the individual's needs*	*Not specified in the agreement between UDI and the responsible municipality.*
Private hotels: arranged and paid for by competent authorities	*Not applicable*	*Not applicable*	*Not applicable*
Individually arranged accommodation such as houses, flats, hotels and/or possibilities of staying with friends and/or family	*Not applicable*	*Not applicable*	*Not applicable*
Other premises	*No minimum standards*	*No minimum standards*	*Yes*[14]

[14] Rights also granted to victims of trafficking (in addition to asylum seekers)

The standard and quality of the accommodations provided by the operators are specified in the circulars which are part of their contracts, including requirements for material and non material conditions, e.g cash, kitchen utensils, bed linens, clothing, leisure activities, information classes, access to internet, televisions, washing machines, playgrounds, access to a contemplation room, etc. In addition to these *management documents* we have prepared guidelines and handbooks on various topics and made them accessible for the operators/staff at the reception centres as a help to better fulfil the authorities` requirements and attain the goals set out by the authorities for the running of the centres.

The Norwegian reception system is not regulated by any primary or secondary legislation; it is governed by requirements/instructions from UDI, and UDI controls their quality.

Procurement of reception centres is subject to competition. As there is no regulation by law, potential providers compete on the basis of instructions set by UDI. The contracts oblige the service providers to maintain the given quality for the price offered, and it obliges UDI to regular payments, guidance and training for the operator's staff. The contract gives UDI the right to inspect the **service** provided by the operators.

Each reception centre is subject to annual inspection by UDI, bi-annually for centres with unaccompanied minors and persons with special needs (reinforced divisions). Today's inspection system is based on a three year cycle which means that all requirements/instructions given by the UDI are controlled at least once during a period of three years. The inspections may be announced or unannounced, but currently the majority of the inspections are announced. An inspection focuses on the services UDI is paying for according to contract with the operator, and not on the external services (health, education etc.) that others are responsible for providing. However, in cooperation with the reception centres and the actors responsible for external services (eg the host municipalities) UDI reports to the proper authorities if the services to the residents are found to be inadequate. In addition to the formal inspections, UDI is in contact with the reception centres almost on a daily basis to provide guidance and assistance relating to the daily operation of the centres and the handling of individual residents.

- *Quality control – step 1*
    - Evaluation forms used in evaluation process prior to awarding a contract, giving points for different aspects and weighting of the different aspects
- *Quality control – step 2*
    - Standardized inspection protocols determining which aspects to control – and how
    - Standardized inspection reports – made public on the net
    - Sanctions if the service is considered inadequate
- **Step 1**: Evaluation of the potential operator`s description of service offered – he may not be able to deliver according to what he's offering.
- **Step 2**: Evaluation of the services actually delivered

In addition to the above UDI demands that each reception centre submit an annual self declaration form covering most of the requirements that UDI sets for the operation of the reception centre, UDI also demands annual plans/budgets and annual reports/accounts. Furthermore, the residents, the local municipality and the local police are invited to give their view on the centres and their operation. UDI also considers any complaints from residents and others.

Most aspects of an asylum seeker's life in Norway are regulated by law and regulations (primary and secondary legislation). With regulation by law comes an independent quality control conducted by special supervisory units (eg for fire prevention, health, etc). Most rights, like entitlement to health services, are the same for asylum seekers as for other residents in Norway.

Public debate about the quality of reception facilities

Parts of the political opposition have advocated to keep asylum seekers locked up or to monitor them electronically. They argue that this is necessary for security reasons, including preventing asylum seekers from disappearing pending their return. The government claims that keeping asylum seekers locked up is a violation of the international conventions Norway has ratified.

Several NGOs demand that unaccompanied minors between 16-18 years old, who currently are being taken care of by the immigration authorities should be treated equivalent to children below 15 years of age who are under the care of the State child welfare agency, as all other children in Norway without parents or persons who can serve *in loco parentis* are treated. It is claimed that the current policy entails discrimination towards these children. It is also claimed that persons belonging to certain vulnerable groups, e.g. those traumatized, need to be better identified and cared for.

A committee appointed by the government has reported on the organisation and the conditions of accommodation for asylum seekers in Norway, cf. Norway's public reports, NOU 2011:10 *In the waiting room of the welfare state* (http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/jd/documents-and-publications/nouer/2011/nou-2011-10.html?id=645250. Recommendations from the committee included:

- Strengthen health-screening procedures to improve procedures for identifying vulnerable groups of asylum seekers
- Finalise work on a legal framework to define confidentiality
- Finalise work on a law regulating economic benefits for asylum seekers
- Consider establishing a core of reception centres with long-term contracts
- Consider increasing compensation given to host-municipalities
- Consider initiatives that will enhance activities provided in the reception centres and increase participation
- Assess the pros and cons of using tender-procedures in the procurement of reception facilities

Lately the public debate about the quality of the reception facilities has focused on i) the hygienic and cleanliness issues in particular for common areas as the residents themselves are responsible for cleaning their own quarters and ii) that an extended stay in a reception centre results in passivity and possibly (increased) mental problems.

Much of the public debate locally has been about i) the consequences for local communities of establishing and closing a reception center and ii) security issues at the centers.

Reports and research evaluating the quality of reception facilities?

Source	Title
Institute for Social Research	*Living conditions for unaccompanied minors in reception centres*, 2013 (Summary in English) Hilde Lidén, Ketil Eide, Knut Hidle, Ann-Christin Nilsen, Randi Wærdahl http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2013/2013-003
NTNU – Trondheim Norwegian University of Science and Technology	*Double vulnerable: Disabled children and young people in reception centres*, 2012 (Summary in English) Anna Margareth Kittelsaa og Berit Berg http://samforsk.no/Sider/Publikasjoner/Dobbelt-s%C3%A5rbar.aspx
Institute for Social Research	*Accompanied children in reception centres – life situation and coping measures*, 2011 (Summary in English) Hilde Lidén, Marie Louise Seeberg, Ada Engebrigtsen http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2011/2011-001
Institute for Social Research	*Leisure activities for children in reception centres*, 2011 (Summary in English) Idunn Seland, Hilde Lidén http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2011/2011-002
NTNU – Trondheim Norwegian University of Science and Technology	*Asylum seekers right to work*, 2011 (Summary in English) Gry Mette Dalseng Haugen, Kristin Thorshaug, Kurt Idar Løkke Elvegård and Marko Valenta http://samforsk.no/Sider/Publikasjoner/Asyls%C3%B8keres-rett-til-%C3%A5-ta-arbeid.aspx
Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research	*No way in, no way out?* *A study of living conditions of irregular migrants in Norway*, 2011 Cecilie Øien and Silje Sønsterudbråten http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20194/index.html
Institute for Social Research	*Vulnerable asylum seekers in Norway and EU - Identification, organization and handling*, 2010 (Summary in English) Jan-Paul Brekke, Nora Sveaass and Vigdis Vevstad http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2010/2010-014
Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional	*Settling refugees from desentralized reception centres*, 2010 (Summary in English) Susanne Søholt

Research	http://www.nibr.no/prosjekt/72
Agder Research and Centre for Urban Ecology	*Reception centres and local communities*, 2010 Kari Anne Drangsland, Winfried Ellingsen, Knut Hidle, Marry-Anne Karlsen
Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies and Centre for Child and Adolescents` Mental Health	*Reception of asylum seeking and refugee children in the Nordic countries: The Norwegian report* (2010) Lutine de Wal Pastoor, Ketil Eide, Leoul Mekonen *Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children* http://www.nkvts.no/fu/Sider/prosjektinfo.aspx?prosjektid=1293
Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research	*The way forward – evaluation of the training and qualification programme offered to unaccompanied minors with residence permits with limited benefits*, 2010 Silje Sønsterudbråten http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20190/
Agency for Public Management and eGovernment	*While waiting …… - a mapping of information given to residents in reception centres*, 2009 http://www.difi.no/filearchive/difirapport-2009-07-mens-de-venter...en-kartlegging-av-informasjon-til-beboere-i-asylmottak.pdf
AGENDA Utredning & Utvikling AS	*Evaluation of reinforced divisions*, 2007 http://www.udi.no/Global/upload/Publikasjoner/FOU/FoU.rapport.%20Evaluering%20forsterket%20avdeling.mottak.07.pdf

Evaluation of the economic benefits to residents in reception centres
Internal report prepared in cooperation between the Ministry and UDI, September 2012

Ongoing research (report to be published in 2014): *What Buildings Do - The Effects of the Physical Environment on Quality of Life of Asylum Seekers*
http://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?c=Prosjekt&cid=1253976841457&pagename=ForskningsradetNorsk/Hovedsidemal&p=1181730334233

4 Flexibility of the reception system

The pressure experienced is related to the fluctuations in the influx of applicants over the years and within a year. The reception system is also pressured from missing outflow from the centres. The reception system was originally supposed to only accommodate asylum seekers when the processing of their claim was pending, but these only accounted for approximately 1/3 of the residents at the end of 2013, with 1/3 of residents having a rejected claim, many of whom having an obligation to leave the country, and approximately 1/3 of residents having a residence permit but waiting to move into an apartment in a municipality. The average occupation rates in the reception facilities in the years 2008 – 2012 indicate a good handling of these pressures and fluctuations.

Table 4 Statistics illustrating flexibility

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total number of applicants entitled to accommodation at a reception centre	14 431	19 226	10 064	9 053	9 785
Total number of applicants accommodated in a reception facility	9 992	17 035	17 932	16 387	15 749
Maximum number of applicants that could be accommodated in reception facilities	11 499	19 152	21 997	18 959	18 794
Average occupation rate in reception facilities	87%	89%	82%	86%	84%

Table 5 Flexibility Mechanisms

Type of mechanism	Existence (Yes/No)	Description	Use
Early warning mechanism[15] (including any software programmes monitoring capacity and occupancy in reception facilities)	Yes	A forecasting and coordination mechanism has been established to ensure (i) early warnings and long to medium term projections; and (ii) consistent operational planning and budgeting by all agencies that will be affected by variations in the number of asylum seekers, asylum decisions and residents in the reception centres. This mechanism starts with an analysis of current trends in the number of asylum seekers to Europe, to selected countries and to Norway. This forms the basis for numerical projections of the number of asylum seekers, decisions, outcomes persons to be settled and to be returned, and residents in the centres, These projections are used as basis for operational planning and budgeting by all affected agencies.	This mechanism is being used continuously, with regular updates of projections and budgeting assessments four times each year.
Additional reception centres acting as buffer capacity	Yes	The contract with each reception centre operator specifies that there should be	Yes

[15] An early warning mechanism refers to a monitoring system, e.g. a mechanism that monitors the inflow of applicants for international protection, evaluating in particular whether the (Member) State possesses the necessary capacity to deal with increased (or decreased) pressure. Such a monitoring system would enable identification of possible shortcomings (or excess capacity) at an early stage. An early warning mechanism could for example include a.o. any software programmes monitoring capacity and occupancy rate in reception facilities.

		an extra capacity for which the operator will be paid on a per head basis if activated.[16] If/when this extra capacity has been exhausted the regular procedure for public procurement must be used to acquire additional centres. According to the provisions of the procurement regulations there is a possibility within the contract to increase the capacity with 20 per cent following a negotiation with the operator, ie without having to go through the award procedure. This measure is limited to a one time action though.	
Emergency plans	Yes	The plan contains of two different documents: 1) planning guide and 2) planning tool (MS, EXCEL) covering three phases i) preparation and planning, ii) implementation of actions and measures and iii) follow up	
Budget flexibility (to in- or decrease the budget when necessary)	Yes	An overall requirement of 85 per cent capacity utilization of the reception centres results in a continuous process of capacity adjustment	

[16] Each contract is based on a 80/20 per cent principle where 20 per cent of the capacity has a per person per day-rate.

Fast-tracking procedures[17]	Not applicable		
Application of different standards/modalities of reception conditions in emergency situations	No[18]		
Provision of financial vouchers/allowance to cover costs of private accommodation	No		
Review for specific categories of applicants who obtain priority access to reception	No		
The use of excess space for other purposes	No		
Other	Yes	The erection of barrack tents linked to already existing reception centres. A season dependant measure and with limited duration.	Yes, in two instances of high unexpected influx and once when a fire dramatically and suddenly reduced the available capacity.[19]

The flexibility mechanisms that exist and are being used (see above) are integrated into the daily operation and monitoring of the operators and reception centres. This means that it is not possible to isolate, extract and estimate cost only for the flexibility mechanisms.

[17] (e.g. by contracting more case-workers to decide on applications to create or close reception facilities)
[18] UDI is currently reviewing its emergency plan and it is likely that it will be revised on this point in a way that this measure will be introduced.
[19] UDI is about to incorporate this as one measure in the emergency plan and thus formalize it. UDI will do this by concluding a framework agreement with a supplier of barrack tents.

5 Efficiency

Table 6 National Statistics illustrating costs [Million NOK]

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total government budget allocated to the reception of applicants for international protection	1 124	1 853	3 020	2 489	2 490
Total costs of reception	1 078	1 955	2 895	2 430	2 280
Total direct costs[20]	945	1 711	1 901	1 434	1 336
Total indirect costs[21]	133	244	994	996	944
Total costs of reception including Dublin cases	1 078	1 955	2 8895	2 430	2 280
Total costs of reception excluding Dublin cases	911	1 460	2 458	1 993	1 824
New applicants to reception facilities	14 070	16 588	9 434	8 782	9 542
Inflow/return of applicants who have temporarily left a reception facility	1 495	1 971	2 675	3 000	2 724
Outflow from reception facilities, who did not return	4 189	5 889	7 236	6 517	6 367
Share of applicants in reception facilities who had received a final decision on their application	8 %	12 %	18 %	24 %	29 %
Tolerance time for extended stay in reception facilities followeing a final decision on their application	Not applicable				
Median[22] **range of an applicant's stay**	235 days	272 days	328 days	404 days	356 days
Interquartile[23] **ranges of an applicant's stay**	521 days	261 days	363 days	589 days	745 days

[20] Direct costs refer to explicitly defined costs and budgets for the reception of applicants for international protection in each (Member) State.

[21] Indirect costs refer to costs that are not directly measurable (as costs are borne by a wide range of stakeholders and further relate to the applicant's access to general public services).

[22] The median is the numerical value separating the higher half of the distribution of the lower half (middle value).

[23] The interquartile ranges refer to the value of the first quartile (25 percentile) and the third quartile (75

Conclusions

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is inter alia responsible for the processing of the asylum claims and the provision of accommodation to asylum seekers. This facilitates the communication between the two functions and responsible departments and contributes to an effective asylum procedure at all times.

The use of competitive tendering in procuring reception centres helps to limit the costs and ensures transparency in the process and prevents corruption. The fact that UDI uses service providers gives the Norwegian state more flexibility and a simpler process when increasing and decreasing the capacity than if UDI itself was operating the centres, especially when it comes to the employer role. However, it is a disadvantage that much valuable experience may disappear when the contract with a service provider is terminated, e.g. in times of capacity reduction. The biggest challenge with this type of procurement is that it entails a rigid and time consuming tender procedure that limits the management possibilities. This applies also to contract management which includes the inspections and the development and revision of the many policy and guidance documents.

It has been an agreement across political party lines to have all three types of operators involved in this activity; the non governmental (NGOs)/humanitarian organisations, the municipalities and the private, commercial actors. More potential operators increase the competition in the market; the reception of asylum seekers becomes a more integral part of the Norwegian society that better safeguards a societal commitment. Experience has shown us that a variety in operators results in access to a greater variety of housing and more flexible and creative problem solving and last, but not least, develops the field. The share of the different operators has, however, varied somewhat over the years, and the proportion of municipalities and NGOs has decreased significantly. It is a challenge to achieve the ideal mix when the procurement regulations have proven to suit the private actors best. That said, there is no proof that the quality and standard of the operation of the centres differ systematically with the type of operator.

Norwegian authorities have recently legally defined the operation of reception centres as health and social services, and regulations on public procurement have been modified to allow UDI to have competitive tenders that are open only to NGOs. Possibilities (exceptions) in order to strengthen the municipalities´ share are being considered.

The municipalities in Norway are autonomous and have a very independent role in the provision of certain services, including the settling of refugees and the hosting of reception centres. It is voluntarily for the municipalities to settle refugees: how many and when. Hosting a reception centre is a controversial activity and UDI has often experienced that municipalities find ways to delay and even obstruct the establishment of centres through the use of different means.

Asylum seekers live in open centres and form an integral part of the local communities and

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percentile) in a distribution.

enjoy for the most part the same services as most Norwegians; this is especially true when it comes to basic services like education -, health and child welfare services. The principle of sector responsibility is strong in Norway.

The standard and quality of the accommodation is based on the premise of a relatively short stay. However, the duration of the stays in the centres have become longer over the years, and not necessarily because the processing time of the asylum in UDI has increased: on the contrary UDI is continually working to reduce it. Hence long stays in the centres are in most cases due to other causes such as: The time it takes for the municipalities to settle refugees, i.e. persons who have been granted a residence permit, is long and increasing; the appeal system is such that it often takes a long time to get a final decision; and finally the time it takes for people to leave the country or get transported out by the police varies a lot. The provision of accommodation in a reception centre is valid for all during all this time, and there is nothing a person can do that will deprive him/her of this right.[24]

It is a principle in the operation of the ordinary reception centres that they are not institutions. An ordinary reception centre shall be "as much of a normal residence as possible in an abnormal life situation", and this has consequences on how the operation of the centres are organized and how the residents are looked upon. Basically the residents are seen as resourceful adults. This is, however, not the case for everyone, thus there exist other kinds of housing for persons with special needs and for vulnerable people: protected places for victims of trafficking, reinforced departments for people with special needs related to physical handicaps, illnesses and/or mental problems, people that need a more appropriate and adjusted accommodation and follow up. Furthermore there are special places reserved for people who are not able to live in a reception centre and who pose a danger to themselves and/or others. These people are taken care of by a private actor that works on a contract with UDI.

Through the requirement that 85 per cent of the reception center capacity should be utilized at all times there is continuous pressure on the UDI and the operators to adjust that capacity to the size of inflows and outflows. The inflow is determined by the number of new asylum seekers as well as the as the number of persons who return after a temporary absence (including Dublin transfers). The outflow is determined by (i) the number who leaves voluntarily to an announced or unannounced new address; (ii) the pace by which those who have received a residence permit are settled in a local municipality; and (iii) the pace by which persons with a Dublin decision or a rejected application are leaving, forcibly or with government support. Factors (ii) and (iii) are mostly influenced by the capacity of the responsible agencies and municipalities (in the case of settlement) and only to a limited extent by the duration of the processing time of applications, including the time needed to decide appeals. However, over the last 15 months to July 2013 the average first instance processing time has fluctuated between 64 and 98 days, between 22 and 40 days for the 10 percent fastest decisions, and between 110 and 246 days for the 90 percent decile. In 2012 the average processing time was 72 days and in 2013 (up to and including July) 85 days.

The reception centre organization and the methods of procuring the centres areonsidered to constitute a sufficiently flexible system that doesn't compromise quality. The system in place is strict and detailed, and together with the monitoring and early warning schemes applied, allow UDI to use the procurement method consistently and in that way control costs and ensure quality.

[24] Except if the person granted a resident permit refuses to move to the assigned municipality.

The providers must in their tenders describe how they intend to meet the requirements and at what price. UDI assess the tenders based on the provider's account, where the most economically advantageous tender among those satisfying the operational quality requirements, is selected.

A major point in this context is that the responsible ministry has delegated to UDI the authorization to enter into agreements with operators for temporary accommodation for asylum seekers lasting beyond a current budget year. If the demand for reception capacity gets higher than expected, the ministry consents to UDI increasing the capacity, including a guarantee for budget coverage which allows UDI to pursue normal procedures that ensures quality