



## The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

*Common Template of EMN Focussed Study 2017*

Fourth version: 16/06/2017

**Subject:** Common Template for the EMN Focussed Study 2017 on *"The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses"*

**Action:** EMN NCPs are invited to submit their completed Common Templates by **31 October 2017**.

If needed, further clarifications can be provided by directly contacting the EMN Service Provider (ICF) at [emn@icf.com](mailto:emn@icf.com) and directly to Maurice van der Velden ([Maurice.vandervelden@icf.com](mailto:Maurice.vandervelden@icf.com)) and Francesca Capano ([Francesca.capano@icf.com](mailto:Francesca.capano@icf.com)).

### 1 STUDY AIMS AND RATIONALE

#### 1.1 STUDY AIMS

This EMN study aims to offer an overview of the changes to national strategies, approaches and measures in response to increases or decreases to the influx of asylum seekers over the period 2014-2016. The study will provide an overview of (changes to) asylum policies and organisational measures introduced over this period, and will as such offer an overview of EU Member States' and Norway's managing strategies concerning these changing influxes. The study will therefore answer questions on policies and measures of the processing of asylum applications, reception conditions of asylum seekers (including rights afforded to applicants), the content/legal consequences of the protection granted, including the accommodation of asylum applicants, border control, information campaigns aimed both at the public and at asylum seekers. The aim of the study will make it possible for the target audience to learn about the ways in which EU Member States and Norway were able to respond to sudden or gradual changes to the number of asylum seekers arriving in their country, and the consequences thereof. It will help to draw lessons learnt and identify relevant approaches and practices deployed by EU Member States and Norway in this period.

#### 1.2 RATIONALE

According to Eurostat, in 2014 there were 560,000 asylum-seekers who applied for asylum in the EU, as opposed to 1.32 million in 2015, and again 1.26 million in 2016. At the end of 2014 the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide has, for the first time in the post-World War II era, exceeded 60 million people.<sup>1</sup> 1.8 million were asylum seekers, with the vast majority being internally displaced refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>

In the context of such increased migratory movements, the border and mobility rules of the Schengen area and the Dublin regulation came under significant pressures, and for many refugees, the journey to Europe meant extreme uncertainty, risks and dangers. It also became obvious that for many EU Member States it was challenging to cope with the significant numbers of asylum seekers onto their territory, especially with large variations in monthly arrivals.

The aim of this study is to compare policies set up to manage these fluctuations in numbers of asylum seekers across the EU, to better understand improve understanding of the variations in responses and highlight how these policies are interlinked. This study contributes, therefore, to the harmonisation of European cooperation regarding asylum-related migration and gives an overall picture of the preparedness of Member States and Norway to face similar situations in the future.

### 1.3 PRIMARY QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

The main question the Study will aim to address:

- ★ Which asylum policies, structural and ad-hoc measures were introduced or amended by the Member States to manage any fluctuations in numbers of asylum applicants between January 2014 and December 2016?

Specific questions include the following:

- ★ Which policies and measures aimed at managing the flow of asylum applications were introduced or amended? For example, border control, information campaigns, structuring of reception facilities, and the rights granted to asylum applicants.
- ★ Which policies and measures were introduced or amended to reduce the numbers of asylum applications?
- ★ Were such measures of a structural or ad-hoc nature?
- ★ How were these measures monitored and/or evaluated prior to and after their introduction or amendment?
- ★ What were the impacts of the measures introduced or amended?
- ★ Which policies aimed at processing asylum applications and arranging reception/accommodation were introduced or amended? For example, policies regarding the ways in which applications are processed (timeframe, order of processing, procedural safeguards) and the ways in which personnel is employed and trained.

## 2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will look into policies and practices of EU Member States and Norway following changes to the number of arriving asylum seekers. The temporal scope includes the years 2014, 2015 and 2016, as peaks and troughs can generally be identified to have taken place over this period for EU Member States and Norway, though at different moments in time. It is precisely because the fluctuations have taken place over a period spanning several years that the years, 2014, 2015 and 2016 are part of the scope of this study.

The study focuses on numerous aspects impacted by changing influxes, through policy changes and operational measures taken by state and non-state entities acting on behalf of the responsible authorities. This includes border control, the asylum application process, the contents of protection, financing of measures, and crisis governance measures (both ad-hoc and structural<sup>2</sup>).

The study also covers policies and practices on 'safe country of origin'. European commitments are also addressed (i.e. hot spot approach, relocation) in this study.

On the other hand, return is outside the scope of the study in view of there being another Study on this topic. Finally, integration measures are not covered in this study except in regards to measures facilitating immediate support upon arrival and if integration measures have been implemented or cut back in immediate response to the influx of

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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asylum seekers. Integration measures are generally excluded because they have been covered substantially in other EMN studies.

The study will briefly present, comment on, and compare the national political contexts for organisational structures, policies and approaches on asylum in EU Member States and Norway. This is based on information that EMN NCPs already provide in their contributions to the EMN and EASO Annual Policy Reports. It also seeks to cover possible evaluation and lessons learnt of the implementation of new approaches and measures. The study will also include aspects relevant for EU Member States that did not experience significant changes to the influx of asylum seekers, especially in regards to 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.

The study will present Eurostat data on the changing influx of asylum seekers in order to provide a clear snapshot of the peaks and troughs over the period 2014-2016 and better understanding of the national context of Member States.

### 3 EU LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The 1999 Tampere Summit laid down the general direction for the Justice & Home Affairs Area and produced agreement on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) entered into force in December 2009, giving the EU new powers to develop legislation on immigration matters (Article 79 – 80). Following the Tampere and Hague Programmes, the Stockholm Programme provided a roadmap for developing the EU's migration policy from 2009 to 2014. The Programme aimed to build a Europe of "responsibility, solidarity and partnership in migration and asylum" with a "dynamic and comprehensive immigration policy". The Programme defined the priorities of the EU in the area of migration, in particular the development of the EU Global Approach to Migration.

Important developments took place in 2015 concerning the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. The recast Eurodac Regulation (603/2013/EU)<sup>3</sup> came into effect as of 20th July 2015 and those Member States bound by the recast Asylum Procedures (2013/32/EU)<sup>4</sup> and Reception Conditions (2013/33/EU)<sup>5</sup> Directives (both adopted in 2013) were required to transpose them into their national law by the same date.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, the Commission continued to stimulate practical cooperation among Member States in the field of international protection in collaboration with 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.<sup>7</sup> In response, on 13th May 2015, the European Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration which contains 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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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

<sup>5</sup> 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

<sup>6</sup> With the exception of some provisions of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, which have a later deadline for implementation (20th July 2018).

<sup>7</sup> See: European Council, Special Meeting of the European Council, 23 April 2015 – Statement.

strengthen the Common European Asylum System and implement a long term migration strategy.<sup>8</sup> It also included the Hotspot approaches for Italy and Greece.

On 18 March 2016 and following the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan activated on 29 November 2015 and the 7 March EU-Turkey statement, the European Union and Turkey decided to end the irregular migration from Turkey to the EU via a new agreement.<sup>9</sup>

In 2016 the European Commission also adopted two packages (one in April and another in July) of legislative proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The Commission proposed the creation of a common procedure for international protection, uniform standards for the protection and the rights granted to beneficiaries of international protection, as well as the further harmonisation of reception conditions in the EU. The overall aim of the legislative proposals tabled is to simplify the asylum procedure and shorten the time required for decision-making, discourage secondary movements of asylum seekers within the EU and increase the integration prospects of those who are entitled to international protection. The proposed measures are currently being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

The year also witnessed important legislative developments in the area of asylum at the national level. In some Member States, changes in national legislation were underpinned by the requirements of the CEAS, in particular the transposition of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive (APD) and the recast Reception Conditions Directive (RCD). Other Member States passed legislation to align their – previously more generous - national policies to the (minimum) standards established at EU level.

#### 4 RELEVANT SOURCES AND LITERATURE

The relevant sources and literature below are indicative of the existing body of relevant information. The list below is by no means comprehensive and it suggested they are complemented with other sources and that synergies are sought with ongoing studies.

##### *Relevant studies*

There is a wide array of documents and studies at international level relevant for this study, such as:

- ★ UNHCR, 2015, Global Trends, Forced in Displacement, <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>;
- ★ European Commission, Ninth Report on Relocation and Resettlement, February 2017, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-218\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-218_en.htm)
- ★ Frans Willekens, Evidence-based monitoring of international migration flows in Europe, October 2016, Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI), The Hague. [http://socialstats2016.eu/sites/default/files/paper/Paper\\_Evidence-based%20monitoring%20of%20international%20migration%20flows%20in%20Europe.pdf](http://socialstats2016.eu/sites/default/files/paper/Paper_Evidence-based%20monitoring%20of%20international%20migration%20flows%20in%20Europe.pdf)
- ★ Migration Policy Institute, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Flows in the Mediterranean Adapt Rapidly to Changing Conditions, June 2016, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/asylum-seeker-and-migrant-flows-mediterranean-adapt-changing-conditions>
- ★ Frontex, 2016 Annual Risk Analysis, [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annula\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2016.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf)
- ★ Government of the Netherlands, The influx of asylum seekers is changing in terms of composition, March 2016, <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2016/03/14/the-influx-of-asylum-seekers-is-changing-in-terms-of-composition>
- ★ What Triggers Change in Asylum Policy? A comparative study of policy change, 2016, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8873210&fileId=8873211> The Refugee

<sup>8</sup> 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, 13.5.2015.

<sup>9</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-16-963\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_en.htm)

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Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges, January 2016,  
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>

- ★ EASO, Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2011-2015,  
<https://www.easo.europa.eu/information-analysis/annual-report>

### Infographics

- ★ Asylum Applicants, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/moving-europe-beyond-crisis?gclid=CKiUqPj6gNICFeiw7Qod0g8NUg>
- ★ Asylum Applications for Selected Countries, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/moving-europe-beyond-crisis?gclid=CKiUqPj6gNICFeiw7Qod0g8NUg>
- ★ Asylum Applications for Selected Nationalities, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/moving-europe-beyond-crisis?gclid=CKiUqPj6gNICFeiw7Qod0g8NUg>
- ★ Interactive map, IOM<sup>10</sup>

### Relevant EMN Outputs

The following examples of EMN outputs are also relevant:

#### Ad Hoc Queries

- ★ 1026. Changes in migration policy in situation of mass migration
- ★ 1024. Member States' policies to handle the influx of asylum seekers
- ★ EASO query on adopted measures to face massive influx (February 2016) – restricted use.

#### EMN Studies / Informs

- ★ Rejected Asylum Seekers: challenges and good practices EU, (2016)
- ★ Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?, (2016)
- ★ Integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market in Belgium and in the EU (2015)
- ★ Annual Policy Report 2015
- ★ Annual Policy Report 2016
- ★ Policy Brief: Full report accompanying the inform on migrants' movements through the Mediterranean - EU 2015
- ★ Inform: Migrants' movements through the Mediterranean - EU 2015

## 5 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As with all EMN Studies, the National Reports should be primarily based on secondary sources. In particular, information on national policies and approaches will be a key source of information, while available evaluations should provide evidence of the approaches and policies, good practices and lessons learnt of changes to the influx of asylum seekers.

## 6 AVAILABLE STATISTICS

Statistics on asylum are available in the Eurostat database, i.e. monthly numbers of asylum applicants by age, sex and citizenship for all EU Member States, as well as Norway, and through the EASO Early warning and preparedness system (EPS), i.e. number of decisions issued by type of special procedure used, number of pending cases, by

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<sup>10</sup> <https://migration.iom.int/europe>

duration (less/more than 6 months). In addition, the number of asylum decisions issued and the share of positive asylum applications by nationality are also included. These will form the backbone and starting point for this study. The synthesis report will also include statistics on relocation over 2015-2016.

If, following discussions within the advisory group for this study, Eurostat statistics are not considered sufficient, other national statistics may be used.

## 7 DEFINITIONS

The following key terms are used in the Common Template. The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary v3.0<sup>11</sup> unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

**Ad-hoc, temporary or emergency measure:** *measure taken prior, during or after a changing influx of asylum seekers to a Member State that is of a non-structural nature*

**Asylum:** *A form of protection given by a State on its territory, based on the principle of non-refoulement and internationally or nationally recognised refugee rights and which is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in their country of citizenship and / or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.*

**Asylum seeker:** *in the global context, a person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In the EU context, a person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Convention in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.*

**Applicant for international protection:** *a third-country national or a stateless person who has made an application for international protection in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.*

**Application for asylum:** *an application made by a foreigner or a stateless person which can be understood as a request for protection under the Geneva Convention of 1951 or national refugee law.*

**Application for international protection:** *A request made by a third-country national or a stateless person for protection from a Member State, who can be understood to seek refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and who does not explicitly request another kind of protection, outside the scope of Directive 2011/95/EU, that can be applied for separately.*

**Beneficiary of international protection:** *means a person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status*

**Integration:** *in the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.*

**International protection:** *In the global context, the actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. In the EU context, protection that encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status.*

**Refugee:** *In the global context, either a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being*

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<sup>11</sup> Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/docs/emn-glossary-en-version.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/docs/emn-glossary-en-version.pdf)

outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply.

**Refugee status:** The recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or stateless person as a refugee.

**Residence permit:** Any authorisation issued by the authorities of an EU Member State allowing a non-EU national to stay legally in its territory, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 265/2010 (Long Stay Visa Regulation).

**Structural measure:** measure taken prior, during or after a changing influx of asylum seekers to a Member State that is intended to be structural or at least non-temporary.

**Subsidiary protection status:** recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or a stateless person as a person eligible for subsidiary protection;

**Person eligible for subsidiary protection:** a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country;

**Third-country national:** means any person who is not a citizen of the Union (including stateless persons) within the meaning of Article 17 (1) of the Treaty and who is not a person enjoying the Community right of free movement, as defined in Article 2(5) of the Schengen Borders Code.

## 8 ADVISORY GROUP

For the purpose of providing support to EMN NCPs while undertaking this Focussed Study and for developing the Synthesis Report, an "Advisory Group" has been established. The members of the Advisory Group for this Study, in addition to COM and the EMN Service Provider (ICF), are (currently) NL (proposer), AT, DE, FR, LU, NO, PL, SE and UK EMN NCPs. EASO is also part of the Advisory Group. EMN NCPs are thus invited to send any requests for clarification or further information on the Study to the following "Advisory Group" members:

- ★ COM: Marcin Antoni PRUSS (HOME) [Marcin-Antoni.PRUSS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Marcin-Antoni.PRUSS@ec.europa.eu) and May Ann RAMSAY (HOME) [May-Ann.Ramsay@ec.europa.eu](mailto:May-Ann.Ramsay@ec.europa.eu)
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## 9 TIMETABLE

The following implementation timetable has been agreed for the Study:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
23 <sup>th</sup> February 2017	First meeting of the Advisory Group for the Study (NL)
23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2017	First draft of the Common Template for review by Advisory Group
26 April 2017	Second advisory group meeting
15 May 2017	Second draft of the Common Template for review by Advisory Group
26 May 2017	Third draft of the Common Template for review by all NCPs
12 June 2017	Final review by Advisory Group
16 June 2017	Launch of the Study
31 October 2017	Deadline for NCPs contributions

## 10 Target audiences

The main target audiences for this study are EU Member States, European Union, relevant national, international governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia and the general public.



## EMN FOCUSED STUDY 2017

### The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member States responses

#### TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This template outlines the information that should be included in the National Contributions to this focussed study. The indicative number of pages to be covered by each section is provided in the guidance note. For national contributions, the total number of pages should **not exceed 60 pages**, including the questions and excluding the statistical annex. A limit of **25 pages** will apply to the Synthesis Report, in order to ensure that it remains concise and accessible.

The study's outcomes will consist of national reports for every country participating in the EMN, an EU-level synthesis report, and one or more short "EMN Informs", summarising the main results. The study shall be disseminated to policy makers and practitioners through the regular dissemination channels of the EMN. Since the study is topical to policy development, the dissemination plan may also include EU-level and national Conferences. To discuss the study at an EMN Annual Conference could be one option.

#### Top-line "Factsheet" (National Contribution)

##### National contribution (one page only)

*Overview of the National Contribution – introducing the study and drawing out key facts and figures from across all sections of the Focussed Study, with a particular emphasis on elements that will be of relevance to (national) policymakers.*

There were no significant changes in the number of asylum seekers during 2014 – 2016 in Latvia, although both, the asylum seekers, who requested for asylum in Latvia, as well as the ones, who were resettled and relocated to Latvia, were received. Therefore there was no need in the country to implement measures that would settle the challenges caused by massive influx of asylum seekers.

Before the migration crisis the first legislation was developed in 2012, determining the way of acting of responsible authorities in the case if massive influx of asylum seekers to Latvia has been detected or expected. The responsible authorities had to develop a procedure for timely activities in relation to massive arrival of asylum seekers and had to submit the plan to the Ministry of the Interior, which was determined as the responsible one for updating of the plan of measures and control of enforcement of the tasks provided for in the plan.

Considering the massive influx of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016 in other European Union countries, as well as commitment of the state to admit relocated and resettled asylum seekers, the asylum system of Latvia was significantly improved by determining specific tasks for reception of asylum seekers and responsibility and cooperation of involved authorities. At the end of 2015 the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved. Implementation of the measures included in the Plan was commenced in 2016, therefore the Study will describe activities, which were performed since 2016.

In accordance with specification of the Study, only those Member States of the European Union, which have expected to have a massive influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016, are invited to provide information in Section 2. Although such changes in the number of asylum seekers in Latvia during this period of time were not observed, significant improvements in the asylum system were made, which are indicated in order to provide a summary on the measures implemented by the authorities involved in the asylum system. Therefore

information is not provided in Section 3 of the Study regarding the measures, which are related to problem solving caused by changes in the number of asylum seekers.

In 2016 improvements were made in the reception of asylum seekers, responsibility of authorities for certain stages of the asylum procedure was changed as well as new services were created for asylum seekers and persons, who have obtained international protection. That has created new challenges and additional burden to employees of both, the state as well as local government authorities.

Funding of the measures for improvement of the Latvian asylum system was performed by using means of the state budget and means of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The State Audit Office has evaluated the use of fund for implementation of measures in 2015 and 2016.

Measures implemented in 2016 and 2017 have facilitated cooperation between involved authorities and revealed the strengths and weaknesses in reception of asylum seekers and socio-economical inclusion measures of persons receiving international protection.

## [Section 1: Overview of national context](#)

*This section will briefly outline the developments in Member State policies adopted in the timeframe 2014-2016 to manage a changing influx of asylum applicants. NCPs are welcomed to add background information needed to provide a complete overview of the developments in their Member State during this period (e.g. existing asylum influx for 2009-2013 and/or organisational information of Asylum and Migration Policies).*

*Please note that information about actual measures taken (structural or ad-hoc) are covered in Section 2 instead.*

**Q1. Brief overview of legislative changes and policies announced and/or introduced to address or manage fluctuations in the number of asylum applications or better control of migration flows over 2014-2016. Please specify when these changes happened and what the goal of each change introduced) was.**

Although the number of asylum seekers, in comparison with other countries of the European Union, still remains low in Latvia, it has a trend to increase. Proportionally the biggest increase was experienced in 2011, when the number of asylum seekers increased from 60 persons per year to 340 on average. It was followed by reduction of the number for 2 year up to 200 persons per year on average. In 2014 the increase of the number of asylum seekers in the EU influenced also the number of asylum seekers in Latvia, increasing it up to 364 persons. In 2015 and 2016 the number of asylum seekers was around 350 each year, almost a half out of which in 2016 were relocated persons.

Preparation for the possible increase of the number of asylum seekers started already before 2014. Upon responding to the instable situation across the external EU borders and in order to determine the preventive and response measures of authorities involved in the asylum procedure in relation to massive arrival of asylum seekers to Latvia, in 2012 the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Plan of Measures for Coordinated Action of

Institutions in Relation to Possible Arrival of Asylum Seekers from Crisis-affected Countries to Latvia<sup>12</sup>.

In the Declaration on envisaged activities of the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>13</sup> in 2014 a task was determined to strictly control immigration from third countries, minimising the illegal immigration.

On 22 July 2015 pursuant to the Order No. 306 of the Prime Minister "Regarding the Working Group", a cross-institutional working group was established<sup>14</sup>, where the following ministries were represented - the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Welfare, as well as where other organisations were attracted - the Society Integration Foundation, Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and representatives of several non-governmental and religious organisations. The working group had to establish the reception system for persons in need of international protection, which would be the most appropriate for circumstances of Latvia, as well as sustainable integration model for refugees and persons obtaining the alternative status (subsidiary form of protection according to the Directive 2011/95/EU).

. At the same time it was assigned to the working group, pursuant to the Order No.2 of the President of 16 September 2016 "Regarding Solutions for Reception of Asylum Seekers", until 30 September 2015 to develop an action plan and solutions for reception of asylum seekers in the Republic of Latvia, including for expenses from the state budget, capacity of authorities, public safety, placement of asylum seekers, involvement on the labour market, teaching Latvian and other issues that are related to inclusion of asylum seekers in society on the basis of values stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.

In 2015 the Action plan for 2016 – 2017<sup>15</sup> was adopted, the purpose of which was to develop a system suitable for Latvia for reception of asylum seekers as well as socio-economical inclusion of persons obtaining the refugee and alternative status, which provided for certain tasks to be performed by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, in order to ensure provision of rights provided for in legal acts for asylum seekers and persons, to whom the international protection status is granted. Provisions of the Action plan were subject to all asylum seekers and persons receiving the international protection status, regardless of their type of arrival to Latvia.

At the end of 2016 the Working group on socio-economical inclusion of asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status was established in order to facilitate valuable socio-economical inclusion in Latvia of asylum seekers and persons receiving international protection and analysis and supervision of results thereof, developing operative solutions and promoting cooperation between the authorities represented in the working group.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Order No. 312 "Regarding Plan of Measures for Coordinated Action of Institutions in Relation to Possible Arrival of Asylum Seekers from Crisis-affected Countries to Latvia", came into force on 04.07.2012, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 106, 06.07.2012.

<sup>13</sup> Declaration on envisaged activities of the Cabinet of Ministers chaired by Mrs Laimdota Straujuma. Available at: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=272247>

<sup>14</sup> Order No.306 of the Prime Minister of 22 July 2015 "Regarding the Work Group", (Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/275505-par-darba-grupu>), (reviewed on 15.09.2017).

<sup>15</sup> Cabinet Order No. 750 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection", came into force on 02.12.2015, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 238, 04.12.2015.

<sup>16</sup> Order No. 90 of the Ministry of Welfare of 14 November 2016 regarding "Working Group on Socio-Economical Inclusion of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Persons with Alternative Status".

**Q2. To what extent is the concept of a change in asylum applications (either a significant increase or decrease) defined in your (Member) State (e.g. in legislation, policies and/or plans)? How is it determined what a significant influx is? Please also mention the responsible authority.**

The concept of massive influx of asylum seekers was defined in legal acts of Latvia for the first time in 2012, when the "Plan of Measures for Coordinated Action of Institutions in Relation to Possible Arrival of Asylum Seekers from Crisis-affected Countries to Latvia"<sup>17</sup> was approved. The Plan determined that the measures included therein shall be implemented if the number of asylum seekers in 1-5 days-and-nights exceeds the capacity of long-term accommodation of the State Border Guard and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs and the number of arriving asylum seekers reach 500-3000 people, as well as if 3000-20000 asylum seekers arrive to the country in 5-10 days.

The decision regarding the implementation of the plan of measures shall be adopted by the minister of the interior. In case of massive arrival of asylum seekers an Operative Management Centre for planning of measures for overcoming the threat and coordination of enforcement shall be created. The State Border Guard and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs shall be responsible for coordination of measures in relation to massive influx of asylum seekers until establishment of the Operative Management Centre.

**Q3. Did your (Member) State experience significant changes in the influx of asylum applicants before 2014 (2000 onwards e.g. the increased influx related to the war in former Yugoslavia)? If so, what measures were introduced to enhance the preparedness of your Member State as a response to these changes in the influx of asylum applicants? Please consider previous experiences of influx when defining the fluctuations over 2014-2016 and substantiate your answer below, giving also an overview of the baseline of your Member State in reference to migration flows and the definition of preparedness used in your Member State.**

The first biggest increase of the number of asylum seekers in Latvia was in 2011, when the number of asylum seekers increased by more than 5 times in comparison with the previous year, reaching 335<sup>18</sup> persons. In order to admit all asylum seekers in the asylum seekers accommodation centre, measures were performed, increasing the capacity of the asylum seekers accommodation centre<sup>19</sup> and possibilities and expenses for accommodation of asylum seekers outside of the asylum seekers accommodation centre were identified. The responsible authorities responded to the rapid increase of the number of asylum seekers with development of "Plan of Measures for Coordinated Action of Institutions in Relations to Possible Arrival of Asylums Seekers from Crisis-affected Countries to Latvia".<sup>20</sup>

Upon using the funding of the European Refugee Fund experts to the Asylum Affairs Division of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs were attracted: in 2011 one expert on the issues of countries of origin of

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(Available at:

<http://mail.lm.gov.lv/web/library.nsf/676cc2031c714bb2c2256ade00399623/03386da95b8b8175c225806b004c85bf?OpenDocument>), (skatīts 15.09.2017).

<sup>17</sup> Cabinet Order No. 750 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection", came into force on 02.12.2015, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 238, 04.12.2015.

<sup>18</sup> OCMA data

<sup>19</sup> In 2011 the number of places in the asylum seekers accommodation centre was increased in order up to 140 persons could stay there at the same time by replacing one floored beds with two floored beds.

<sup>20</sup> EMT Focused Study "Accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Latvia", 2013.

asylum seekers, in 2011 - 2012 - one expert of the Dublin Regulation and since 2012 - one expert on the issues of the asylum procedure.<sup>21</sup>

A group of 20 employees has been trained in the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs on the issues of review of asylum cases, and in case of need these employees may supplement the number of employees, who are regularly engaged in the review of asylum seekers cases, thus increasing the number of cases to be reviewed at the same time.<sup>22</sup>

In order to ensure sufficient resources for accommodation of asylum seekers, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs performed internal re-planning of funding means, transferring funds for payments to support asylum seekers.<sup>23</sup>

**Q4. Did your Member State experience a significant fluctuation in number of asylum applications (both increase and decrease) in the years 2014, 2015 and/or 2016? Could you please specify and explain the period(s) in which there was such a fluctuation, and the nature of the fluctuation (increase/decrease)? Please make a distinction between a fluctuation in the sense of an increase and a decrease of asylum seeker numbers.**

Please indicate: Yes / **No**

If **yes**, please fill out the field below and continue with question 6. If **no**, please go to question 5.

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**Q5. If your Member State did not experience a significant fluctuation over 2014-2016 in the number of asylum applications, please elaborate how and if the absence of such a fluctuation has impacted national policies and approaches.**

*Note: only to be filled out if the answer to question Q4 was no*

There has not been any massive influx of asylum seekers in Latvia. In 2014 the number of asylum seekers was almost two times bigger than in 2013, reaching 364 persons. In 2015 it decreased to 328 persons. The decrease in the number of asylum seekers would have continued also in 2016, however it remains stable within the range of 350 persons, as 163 relocated and 6 resettled persons arrived to Latvia.

Taking into account the influx of asylum seekers in other countries of the European Union, Latvia commenced work in 2015 on the promotion of cooperation between responsible institutions and developed the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.

**Q6. To what extent was cooperation at national level (i.e. between national organisations and authorities) strengthened over the period 2014-2016 in response to the changing influx in asylum applicants coming to your Member State? How was this achieved?**

Although the massive influx of asylum seekers did not reach Latvia, still measures were performed in order to admit bigger number of asylum seekers, which is promoted also by involvement in relocation and resettlement of asylum seekers from migration crisis-affected countries. At the end of 2015 the Cabinet issued an order

<sup>21</sup> EMT Focused Study "Accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Latvia", 2013.

<sup>22</sup> EMT Focused Study "Accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Latvia", 2013.

<sup>23</sup> EMT Focused Study "Accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Latvia", 2013.

“Regarding Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection”. The Plan determines tasks, which shall be performed by the responsible authorities during the certain period of time. Ministries and the appropriate subordinate authorities are involved in the implementation of the Plan:

- State Chancellery;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of the Interior: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, State Border Guard, Security Police, Economical Police, National Security Agency,
- Ministry of Education: Latvian Language Agency, Academic Information Centre;
- Ministry of Culture;
- Ministry of Welfare: State Employment Agency, State Social Insurance Agency;
- Ministry of Justice;
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development;

as well as the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Society Integration Foundation, non-governmental organisations and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR). The Plan determines cooperation of these organisations in such areas as selection and movement of persons, admission and accommodation of asylum seekers, socio-economical inclusion.

The Action plan has three areas of activities:

- 1) Selection and movement of persons - determination of criteria for selection of persons, experts visits to Italy and Greece, selection visits to Italy, Greece and Turkey, transfer of selected asylum seekers to Latvia. Activities are implemented by the Ministry of the Interior.
- 2) Admission and accommodation of asylum seekers - accommodation of persons in accordance with requirements of legislation, adjustment of the premises of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre Mucenieki for accommodation of the bigger number of persons, construction of additional new premises for asylum seekers and detained foreigners. These activities are implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health.
- 3) Socio-economical inclusion - teaching Latvian to asylum seekers, acquisition of education for minor asylum seekers, support in relation to employment - access to labour market, provision of social rehabilitation services. These activities are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Economics.

Coordination of actions of authorities was ensured by including certain measures in the Plan, specifying authorities responsible for the implementation thereof, providing funds from the state budget and EU funds for the implementation of measures.

**Q7. To what extent did your Member State consult with other Member States during the period 2014-2016 specifically in regards to dealing with a changing influx? If consultation was followed by cooperation approaches, please explain in which domains cooperation between Member States was most effective? Please elaborate on such cooperation and its impacts. If relevant, a reference to relocation agreement can be included.**

There has not been any need to directly consult with other Member States of the European Union.

**Q8. To what extent did measures taken in neighbouring Member States (or other EU Member States in general) have an effect on your Member State's policies and practices, even if your Member State did not experience a change in the influx? Please refer to both increase and decrease.**

In order to assess the changes necessary in the national legislation, for example, in relation to the amount of benefits for persons, to whom a status of international protection has been granted, practices of other Member States were evaluated (on the basis of the available information and performed EMN studies and ad-hoc queries).

## Section 2: Overview of the national responses over 2014-2016

The purpose of this second section is to provide a detailed overview of the responses of the Member States to the fluctuations of number of asylum applications over the period 2014 to 2016.

This Section should be completed only by Member States who experienced a change in the influx of asylum applications.

It first starts with a table where NCPs are asked to indicate the specific area where measures were taken and which was impacted as a result (Q9). This is a short overview of table to understand which areas were impacted by the various Member States. The question that follows (Q10) maps in detail the specific details of each of the measures taken.

**In 2014-2016 the number of asylum seekers in Latvia did not significantly change, however a number of measures were performed in order to get prepared for the possible increase of the number of asylum seekers.**

### 2.1 MEASURES TAKEN, THEIR IMPACT AND RESPONSES TO THE CHANGING INFLUX IN MEMBER STATES THAT EXPERIENCED A CHANGE IN THE INFLUX OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS

**Q9. Please indicate in the table below which specific areas were impacted by a change in the influx of asylum applicants in your (Member State) that your Member State identified. Please specify further in the column 'Explanation' whether information provided relate to an increased or to a decrease in the influx.**

Additional details on the measures are requested in the tables below under question 10. Therefore please only briefly highlight all measures taken.

Area	Directly impacted (yes/no)	Time period (when)	Very brief explanation on the basis of short titles (how and what the impact was, including whether it concerned an increase/decrease)

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1. Border control ( <i>please specify if it refers to external border control, temporary control at internal borders and/or police controls in border areas</i> )	No		
2. Reception centres / accommodation arrangements and other housing	No	2015 - 2016	Capacity of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre Mucenieki was increased.
3. Wider reception services (social services, health services), rights afforded to applicants	No	2015-2016	Standards for maintenance of asylum seekers were increased.
4. Registration process of the asylum seeker	No		
5. Asylum procedure (at first and second instance)	No	2015-2016	Review of applications from relocated and resettled persons within shortened terms at first instance.  Simplification of receipt of legal aid.
6. Infrastructure, personnel and competencies of the responsible authorities	No	2015-2016	Attraction of additional staff.  Change of functions between responsible authorities.
7. Law enforcement	No	2015-2016	Provision and coordination of removal measures  Establishment of the Detained foreigners accommodation centre in Mucenieki
8. Integration measures for asylum applicants	No	2016-2016	Measures for socio-economical inclusion



**Q10. Fill out the table below on specific elements of the measures indicated in the previous table. Note that numerous questions are simply to establish the typology of the measure, and only the selected options need to be indicated (such as rows a) and b)). Further details are provided from row c), with a general explanation in row e).**

Please copy the entire table below for to provide an overview of additional measures. There is no limit for numbers of measures to be included, as long as they are coherent with the requested information.

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Measure 2	<b>Please select the area</b> corresponding to those highlighted in Q9 by removing the lines that do not apply:	
	2. <u>Reception centres</u> / accommodation arrangements and other housing	
	a) Year and month the measure was established	2.12.2015.
	<b>b) Typology of measures</b> (please indicate which of the options apply)	
	Measure following an <u>increase</u> or <u>decrease</u> in numbers	N/A
	<u>New measure</u> or <u>change to an existing measure</u>	<u>change to an existing measure</u>
	<u>Structural</u> or <u>ad-hoc</u> (temporary) measure	<u>Structural</u>
	Type of measure: - <u>(National) Action plan</u> - <u>Legislative instruments</u> - Specific interinstitutional / multi-agency <u>working group</u> on the situation - <u>Soft measures</u> (handbooks, circulars, policy/staff guidance, employing new staff) - <u>Resources</u> (staff or financing) - <u>Emergency/contingency plan</u> - Other, please specify	<u>(National) Action plan</u> Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection <sup>24</sup>
<b>Other elements</b>		
c) General aim of the measure (what was intended?)	To ensure admission and accommodation of asylum seekers in accordance with requirements of regulatory enactments, as well as adjustment of the current asylum seekers accommodation centre Mucenieki for accommodation of the bigger number of persons and construction of additional new premises for asylum seekers.	

<sup>24</sup> Cabinet Order No. 750 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection", came into force on 02.12.2015, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 238, 04.12.2015.

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d) Intended and actual duration of the measure	2015-2016
e) Key elements of the measure (description of the measure)	<p>Increasing of the capacity of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre Mucenieki. Reconstruction of the current premises and construction of new premises has been performed as a result of which the capacity of the asylum seekers accommodation centre has been increased up to 450 places (previously - 200):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repair works and improvement have been performed in the current premises,</li> <li>• Immovable property has been acquired and place for accommodation of 250 asylum seekers have been built and equipped.</li> </ul>
f) Authorities involved in <u>drafting</u> the measure	Working group on development of the system adapted to Latvian conditions for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of alternative status in Latvia. <sup>25</sup>
g) Authorities involved in <u>proposing and approving</u> of each measure	Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
h) Authorities implementing measures	Ministry of the Interior (Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the National Security Agency)
i) Other	

<sup>25</sup> Working group includes the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economics.

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

<b>Measure 3</b>	<b>Please select the area</b> corresponding to those highlighted in Q9 by removing the lines that do not apply:	
	3. Wider reception services (social services, health services), rights afforded to applicants	
	a) Year and month the measure was established	2.12.2015.
	<b>b) Typology of measures</b> (please indicate which of the options apply)	
	Measure following an <u>increase</u> or <u>decrease</u> in numbers	N/A
	<u>New measure</u> or <u>change to an existing measure</u>	<u>change to an existing measure</u>
	<u>Structural</u> or <u>ad-hoc</u> (temporary) measure	<u>Structural</u>
Type of measure: - <u>(National) Action plan</u> - <u>Legislative instruments</u> - Specific interinstitutional / multi-agency <u>working group</u> on the situation - <u>Soft measures</u> (handbooks, circulars, policy/staff guidance, employing new staff) - <u>Resources</u> (staff or financing) - <u>Emergency/contingency plan</u> - Other, please specify	<u>(National) Action plan</u>  Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection <sup>26</sup>	

<sup>26</sup> Cabinet Order No. 750 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection", came into force on 02.12.2015, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 238, 04.12.2015.

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

Other elements	
c) General aim of the measure (what was intended?)	To ensure admission and accommodation of asylum seekers in accordance with requirements of legislation.
d) Intended and actual duration of the measure	2016-2016
e) Key elements of the measure (description of the measure)	<p><del>Patvēruma meklētāju uzturēšanas standartu paaugstināšana</del>. Raising the standards of asylum seekers reception</p> <p>On 12 July 2016 the amount for covering the subsistence and daily allowance of an asylum seeker was increased up to EUR 3.00/day.<sup>27</sup> From 2013, for food, hygiene and basic necessities, each asylum seeker was paid EUR 2.15 per day.</p> <p>Amendments to the Cabinet Regulation No. 1529 of 17 December 2013 "Organisation and Financing Arrangements for Health Care", adopted on 5 April 2016, provide that the following health care services shall be paid from funds of the state budget provided for health care for asylum seekers: emergency medical aid, maternity care, dental care in emergency cases, primary health care, psychiatric support and medical assistance for minor persons. The assistance is also provided for in the cases specified in the Epidemiological Safety Act, and the new procedure also provides for the granting of asylum seekers the necessary medicines for the treatment of tuberculosis..<sup>28</sup></p> <p>In 2016, in order to ensure the efficiency of the asylum procedure in the situation, when the number of asylum seekers is significantly growing, and to prevent its misuse, the special procedure for review of an application was determined in the Asylum Law<sup>29</sup>, if the application is submitted at the border crossing point or transit area and there are conditions existing for adoption of a decision regarding leaving the application without proceeding.</p>

<sup>27</sup> In accordance with the Cabinet Regulation No. 449 "Regulations Regarding the Amount of and Procedures for Covering the Subsistence and Daily Allowance of an Asylum Seeker", adopted on 12 July 2016 (Available at: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/283491-noteikumi-par-patveruma-mekletaju-uzturam-un-dienasnaudas-izmaksai-paredzeto-izdevumu-apmeru-un-segsanas-kartibu>).

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.v.m.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/preses\\_relizes/5033\\_veic\\_grozijumus-veselibas\\_aprupes\\_organizesanas\\_un\\_finansesa/](http://www.v.m.gov.lv/lv/aktualitates/preses_relizes/5033_veic_grozijumus-veselibas_aprupes_organizesanas_un_finansesa/) Source used on 03.09.2017.

<sup>29</sup> Asylum Law - *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, Ed. 2, 05.01.2016 - came into force on 19.01.2016.

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

		Use of a common template for request of an asylum seeker for state ensured legal aid demand. <sup>30</sup>
	f) Authorities involved in <u>drafting</u> the measure	Working group on development of the system adapted to Latvian conditions for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of alternative status in Latvia. <sup>31</sup>
	g) Authorities involved in <u>proposing and approving</u> of each measure	Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
	h) Authorities implementing measures	Ministry of the Interior (Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, State Border Guard), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice (Legal Aid Administration).
	i) Other	

<b>Measure 6</b>	<b>Please select the area corresponding to those highlighted in Q9 by removing the lines that do not apply:</b> <b>6. <u>Infrastructure</u>, personnel and competencies of the responsible authorities</b>	
	a) Year and month the measure was established	2.12.2015.
	b) Typology of measures ( <i>please indicate which of the options apply</i> )	
	Measure following an <u>increase</u> or <u>decrease</u> in numbers	N/A

<sup>30</sup> Cabinet Regulation No. 409 "Regulations Regarding Application of Asylum Seeker, Refugee, and Person who has been Granted Alternative Status for State Ensured Legal Aid Request", adopted on 28 June 2016 - Latvijas Vēstnesis, Ed. 124, 30.06.2016, came into force on 01.07.2016

<sup>31</sup> Working group includes the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economics.

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

<b><u>New measure or change to an existing measure</u></b>	<u>change to an existing measure</u>
<b><u>Structural or ad-hoc</u> (temporary) measure</b>	<b>Structural/ad-hoc</b>
<b>Type of measure:</b> - <b><u>(National) Action plan</u></b> - <b><u>Legislative instruments</u></b> - Specific interinstitutional / multi-agency <b><u>working group</u></b> on the situation - <b><u>Soft measures</u></b> (handbooks, circulars, policy/staff guidance, employing new staff) - <b><u>Resources</u></b> (staff or financing) - <b><u>Emergency/contingency plan</u></b> - <b><u>Other, please specify</u></b>	<b>(National) Action plan</b> <b>Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection</b>
<b>Other elements</b>	
<b>c) General aim of the measure (what was intended?)</b>	Increase of the capacity of authorities involved in the asylum procedure
<b>d) Intended and actual duration of the measure</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>e) Key elements of the measure (description of the measure)</b>	<p>In the beginning of 2016 the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs took over from the State Border Guard a personal interview with an asylum seeker, in order to assess the compliance of the application with the criteria for granting the refugee or alternative status. The State Border Guard performs the initial interview with an asylum seekers in order to obtain information, which is necessary in order to apply the Regulation No. 604/2013 as well as to take the decision regarding acceptance of the application for review or leaving without processing, as well as basic information on the motives for requesting for international protection.</p> <p>6 new work positions were created in the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs in 2016.</p> <p>25 new work positions has created in the State Border Guard.</p> <p>One new judge assistant position has been created for gathering information about certain circumstances in the country of origin of an asylum seeker, analysis of case law of other Member States of the EU etc. (1.04.2016 -31.12.2017)</p>

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

	<b>f) Authorities involved in <u>drafting</u> the measure</b>	Working group on development of the system adapted to Latvian conditions for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of alternative status in Latvia. <sup>32</sup>
	<b>g) Authorities involved in <u>proposing and approving</u> of each measure</b>	Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
	<b>h) Authorities implementing measures</b>	Ministry of the Interior (Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, State Border Guard), Administrative District Court.
	<b>i) Other</b>	

<b>Measure 7</b>	<b>Please select the area corresponding to those highlighted in Q9 by removing the lines that do not apply:</b> <b>7. Law enforcement</b>	
	<b>a) Year and month the measure was established</b>	2.12.2015.
	<b>b) Typology of measures (please indicate which of the options apply)</b>	
	<b>Measure following an <u>increase</u> or <u>decrease</u> in numbers</b>	N/A
	<b><u>New measure</u> or <u>change to an existing measure</u></b>	<u>change to an existing measure</u>
	<b><u>Structural</u> or <u>ad-hoc</u> (temporary) measure</b>	<u>Structural</u>

<sup>32</sup> Working group includes the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economics.



The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

<p><b>Type of measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>(National) Action plan</b></li> <li>- <b>Legislative instruments</b></li> <li>- <b>Specific interinstitutional / multi-agency working group on the situation</b></li> <li>- <b>Soft measures</b> (handbooks, circulars, policy/staff guidance, employing new staff)</li> <li>- <b>Resources</b> (staff or financing)</li> <li>- <b>Emergency/contingency plan</b></li> <li>- <b>Other, please specify</b></li> </ul>	<p><u>(National) Action plan</u> Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection<sup>33</sup></p>
<p><b>Other elements</b></p>	
<p><b>c) General aim of the measure (what was intended?)</b></p>	<p>To improve cooperation between authorities involved in the process of illegal migration, to minimise the administrative burden and financial resources. To ensure accommodation of detained foreigners.</p>
<p><b>d) Intended and actual duration of the measure</b></p>	<p><b>2015-2016</b></p>
<p><b>e) Key elements of the measure (description of the measure)</b></p>	<p>In 2016 the internal regulatory enactment was developed, determining the procedure, according to which officials of OCMA and State Border Guard, in accordance with the regulation stipulated by the Immigration Law, issue the expulsion decision or adopt a decision regarding removal of a foreigner and exchange with information in the Register of Removed Foreigners and Entry Bans regarding the adopted decisions. A possibility is provided for the foreigner, who illegally stays in the country, without having a valid visa or residence permit, to voluntary return to home country, except for cases, if the foreigner causes a risk of absconding or endangers the state or public order.<sup>34</sup></p> <p>Detained asylum seekers accommodation centre is established, where it is possible to accommodate 84 persons. The capacity of premises of the State Border Guard for admission of detained foreigners and detained asylum seekers is increased twice - from 84 places to 168 places.</p>
<p><b>f) Authorities involved in drafting the measure</b></p>	<p>Working group on development of the system adapted to Latvian conditions for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of alternative status in Latvia.<sup>35</sup></p>

<sup>33</sup> Cabinet Order No. 750 "Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection", came into force on 02.12.2015, *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 238, 04.12.2015.

<sup>34</sup> OCMA Public Review, page 10.

<sup>35</sup> Working group includes the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economics.

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	<b>g) Authorities involved in proposing and approving of each measure</b>	Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
	<b>h) Authorities implementing measures</b>	Ministry of the Interior (Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, State Border Guard, the National Security Agency)
	<b>i) Other</b>	

<b>Measure 8</b>	<b>Please select the area</b> corresponding to those highlighted in Q9 by removing the lines that do not apply: 8. <u>Integration measures for asylum applicants</u>	
	a) <b>Year and month the measure was established</b>	<b>2.12.2015.</b>
	<b>b) Typology of measures</b> (please indicate which of the options apply)	
	Measure following an <u>increase</u> or <u>decrease</u> in numbers	N/A
	<u>New measure</u> or <u>change to an existing measure</u>	<u>change to an existing measure</u>
	<u>Structural</u> or <u>ad-hoc</u> (temporary) measure	<b>Ad-hoc</b>
	Type of measure: - <u>(National) Action plan</u> - <u>Legislative instruments</u> - Specific interinstitutional / multi-agency <u>working group</u> on the situation - <u>Soft measures</u> (handbooks, circulars, policy/staff guidance, employing new staff) - <u>Resources</u> (staff or financing)	(National) Action plan Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection

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<p>- <u>Emergency/contingency plan</u> - Other, please specify</p>	
<p><b>Other elements</b></p>	
<p>c) General aim of the measure (what was intended?)</p>	<p>To ensure valuable socio-economical inclusion of asylum seekers in Latvia - teaching Latvian to all asylum seekers, providing acquisition of education for minor asylum seekers, support in relation to employment - access to labour market, provision of social rehabilitation services</p>
<p>d) Intended and actual duration of the measure</p>	<p>2015-2016</p>
<p>e) Key elements of the measure (description of the measure)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support measures for asylum seekers for successful integration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a social worker and social mentor is attracted to each refugee/family,</li> <li>• Asylum seekers are introduced with the basic information about life in Latvia,</li> <li>• Interpreters services are provided for recipients of international protection;</li> <li>• Training of Latvian in the amount of 120 h for families of asylum seekers and acquisition of education for minor asylum seekers and youth</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Informative events for involvement of civil society, trainings provided to specialists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultations provided to various specialists regarding the work with third-country nationals;</li> <li>• Informative days are organised in Riga and regions;</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Availability of employment services is ensured for persons, who have obtained the refugee or alternative status. The term is shortened from 9 to 6 months, after expiry of which the asylum seeker may start to work, if the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs has not taken a decision regarding granting the refugee or alternative status and it has not occurred due to the fault of the asylum seeker.</li> </ol>

The changing influx of asylum seekers in 2014-2016: Member State responses

★ Authorities involved in <u>drafting</u> the measure	Working group on development of the system adapted to Latvian conditions for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of alternative status in Latvia. <sup>36</sup>
★ Authorities involved in <u>proposing and approving</u> of each measure	Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
★ Authorities implementing measures	Ministry of Justice (the Society Integration Foundation, attracting the Latvian Red Cross and the union "Shelter "Safe Home""), Ministry of Welfare (State Employment Agency), Ministry of Education (Latvian Language Agency), Ministry of Culture
★ Other	

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<sup>36</sup> Working group includes the State Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economics.

**Q11. To what extent were any of the measures put in place by non-state entities mandated by a government authority via funding or project/by law/by measure? Please elaborate further.**

Area	Extent of involvement of non-state entities (if yes, to what extent)
Border control ( <i>please specify if it refers to external border control, temporary control at internal borders and/or police controls in border areas</i> )	-
Reception centres / accommodation arrangements and other housing	-
Wider reception services (social services, health services), rights afforded to applicants	-
Registration process of the asylum seeker	-
Asylum procedure (at first and second instance)	-
Infrastructure, personnel and competencies of the responsible authorities	-
Law enforcement	-
Immediate integration measures for asylum applicants	The associations, using EU funding, implemented a socio-economic inclusion introductory course program for Latvia and practical training for asylum seekers, provided mentor services. Measures are included in the Action Plan.

**Q12. In view of the impact of the fluctuations of the influx on local authorities, how and to what extent were local authorities impacted by measures taken by the national government/authorities responsible? To what extent local authorities were able to influence this process?**

*While it is beyond the scope of the study to be able to describe and analyse impacts on all different local authorities concerned, please elaborate on how national measures taken generally impacted on regional or local authorities.*

Information is prepared in cooperation with Ropazi region local government.

Area	Impact on local authorities	Influence on the process
Border control <i>(please specify if it refers to external border control, temporary control at internal borders and/or police controls in border areas)</i>	-	-
Reception centres / accommodation arrangements and other housing	<p>The only asylum seekers accommodation centre in Latvia is located in the territory of Ropazi region municipality.</p> <p>Upon expansion of the asylum seekers centre, premises were offered to the local government for opening of a multifunctional centre. Currently a multifunctional centre of Ropazi municipality is opened in the new building Bundulīši of the asylum seekers centre, offering local services and organising several activities for different groups of age.</p>	<p>Local government cannot affect the place of location of the accommodation centre.</p> <p>The local government may become a cooperation partner for organisation of the social inclusion events.</p>
Wider reception services (social services, health services), rights afforded to applicants	<p>Asylum seekers who are unaccompanied minors are in the competence and under the supervision of Ropazi Region Orphan's and Custody Court. That means that municipal employees need additional knowledge and skills for work with asylum seekers.</p> <p>Ropazi region municipality also undertakes liabilities to provide financial support to unaccompanied minors after acquisition of the refugee and alternative status and attaining the age of majority. As far as the municipality does not have any free residential areas, it is not possible to provide a person</p>	<p>Ropazi Region Orphan's and Custody Court is working in accordance with the legislation of Latvia. Municipality has a possibility to initiate changes in legislation in case of need.</p> <p>Municipality indicates on the needs of more specific cooperation mechanism between various public authorities and non-governmental organisations.</p>

	<p>with a place of residence in Ropazi region.</p> <p>Within the framework of the project of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Ropazi municipality educational institution Zaķumuiža Elementary School opened a pre-school education group in the premises of the Asylum Seekers Centre, where the accredited pre-school education is provided to asylum seekers.</p>	
Registration process of the asylum seeker	-	-
Asylum procedure (at first and second instance)	-	-
Infrastructure, personnel and competencies of the responsible authorities	<p>The number of asylum seekers affect the burden of public infrastructure and common life quality in Mucenieki village.</p> <p>That means that the municipality needs to attract co-funding for settlement of public infrastructure. Currently the funding for establishing of children playgrounds is attracted as a result of successful cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Also the support from government for reconstruction of lighting in Mucenieki village has been received.</p> <p>Ropazi regional multifunctional centre was established in the reconstructed building of the asylum seekers centre, having a separate entry, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Municipal services are provided in the centre (consultations of social worker, library and informal education). Asylum seekers are also involved therein, depending on the type of</p>	<p>Municipality cannot affect the asylum procedure.</p> <p>Municipality cannot perform measures for improvement of infrastructure within the framework of the municipal budget. It is possible to ensure only maintenance and minor repair works.</p>

	<p>activity. Municipality considers it as a successful cooperation model with the asylum seekers centre.</p> <p>Municipality indicated on the need to improve the sports infrastructure (stadium), which is planned to perform by attracting foreign funding.</p> <p>Municipality informs that it is necessary to improve the professional skills of the labour force, as well as to inform and educate local population.</p>	
Law enforcement	<p>Legislation did not precisely determine the procedure and responsibility of authorities on the issue of unaccompanied minors - asylum seekers, including sources of funding, which caused uncertainties in the work of Ropazi Region Social Service and Orphan's and Custody Court.</p> <p>In 2017 the detained foreigners' accommodation centre started its work in the territory of Ropazi region municipality. In 2015 and 2016 this intention initially caused extremely wide discussions and opposition from the local population.</p> <p>In 2017 the activity thereof does not directly affect the local government. There are no complaints anymore from inhabitants regarding the place of location thereof in Mucenieki.</p>	<p>It is possible to initiate changes in legislation in case of need.</p> <p>Local government cannot affect the process.</p>
Integration measures for asylum applicants	<p>Ropazi region municipality has been and is currently ready to cooperate by organising and participating in the integration events for asylum seekers. These can be both, thematic events for children and youth as well as sports activities and village days. Thanks to opening of the multifunctional</p>	<p>Robazi region municipality may offer its resources for organisation and implementation of integration events.</p>



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	<p>centre in Mucenieki, it is possible to organize events also there. The key aim of the municipality is to organise activities, where both, local inhabitants as well as asylum seekers participate, thus minimising the mutual prejudices and fair.</p>	
<p>Cooperation with local inhabitants</p>	<p>Taking into account the fact that asylum seekers are located in the territory of Ropazi region and the centre is in Mucenieki village, when organising the social inclusion activities for asylum seekers, it is necessary to consider also the position of local population.</p>	<p>Municipality may educate society by providing information and organising common events.</p>

## 2.2 SCALING DOWN OR DISMANTLING MEASURES FOLLOWING A DECREASE IN NUMBERS OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS

**Q13. Many Member States experienced a decrease in the influx of asylum applications in the third and fourth quarters of 2016, while several Member States experienced a more irregular decrease at certain intervals after the period 2014-2016. If your (Member) State experienced a decrease in asylum applications, were any changes made to (the scope of) previously adapted or introduced measures? This question seeks to understand if and how measures adopted during the previous increase were changed. Please elaborate on the process on how the assessment was made (by the government) to scale down the scope of measures.**

The number of asylum seekers is relatively stable in Latvia during the last 2 quarters of 2016 and 1 half-year of 2017.

**Q14. To what extent did the decrease result in adapting or abolishing/dismantling measures taken in periods of increase?**

N/A

**Q15. To what extent did the decrease lead to a shift in political and administrative prioritisation of measures taken (e.g. from asylum procedure to integration and or return)?**

N/A

**Q16. To what extent did the decrease lead to measures (and/or debate) about maintaining established admission, housing and integration capacities as well as preserving gained expertise (e.g. regularly training of former staff; maintaining infrastructure; increasing capacities within other admission procedures such as resettlement, relocation, humanitarian admission)?**

N/A

**Section 3: Effectiveness of the measures taken**

This phase concerns the period after the implementation of new practices and ad-hoc measures and their follow-up. Only Member State who implemented national measures in response to a fluctuation of the influx are required to reply. Please copy the entire table below for all the measures listed in Q10.

**Q17a. Please indicate the impacts and effectiveness of each measure mentioned above.**

N/A

<b>Measure 1</b>	<b>Immediate impact</b> (in the first days or weeks after its implementation)	
	<b>Medium or longer term effect</b> (a month or longer after its implementation)	
	<b>Collateral or side effect(s) and unexpected/unforeseen effects</b> (effects not initially considered when the measure was implemented)	
	<b>Was the measure evaluated for effectiveness? If so, by whom?</b>	
	<b>What was the outcome of the evaluation?</b>	

**Q17b. Did the changing influx of asylum applicants prompt changes in national approaches for other types of migration, e.g. economic migration or family reunification? The question seeks to establish whether the increased number of asylum applications brought about changes in other policy areas, such as for example a stricter approach to family reunification, or reduced labour immigration quotas.**

In relation to increase of the number of asylum seekers from Ukraine, the rejected asylum seekers were offered a possibility to receive residence permits, to use the economical migration for purpose of stay.

#### Section 4: Financing of the implemented measures, other resources, and administrative burden

**Q18a. How were the implemented national measures financed?** (i.e. on the basis of an emergency budget passed in parliament, additional budget allocation by the responsible ministry/authority, budgetary contributions from multiple authorities, a budgetary contribution key)

Funding of measures was performed from means of the state budget and EU Funds that were granted for implementation of the Action Plan.

Actual expenses, arising when providing material and financial support for admission of refugees and persons with alternative status and measures of socio-economical inclusion, as well as for provision of social services, social aid and support are compensated to municipalities from means of the state budget. Both, expenses of municipalities as well as expenses from the Ministry of Health, are compensated from the state budget programme "Funds for unpredicted events". Funding of the state budget for authorities financed from the state budget for implementation of the measures provided for in the Action Plan is planned in a decentralised manner in the relevant budget programmes or sub-programmes of the relevant departments and the EU policy instruments tool funding is planned in accordance with the uniform provisions with regards to planning of the foreign finance support in the state budget.<sup>37</sup>

**Q18b. Was the financing plan of ad-hoc measures different from the financing of already existing and structural measures for national asylum policies/national asylum system? How? Please elaborate.**

Implementation of ad-hoc measures included in the Action Plan was performed from the state budget funds and from the EU Funds projects, which were granted for implementation of the Action Plan.

**Q19. Did the fluctuation of the influx bring an increase/decrease in the administrative burden for national authorities responsible of asylum applicants? If yes, how did your Member State deal with that?** Please consider as administrative burden the recruitment of additional personnel, additional trainings, changes in procedures, etc.

In order to increase the capacity of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs for examination of asylum applications and admission of asylum seekers, 6 new employees were hired.

Administrative District Court and Legal Aid Administration is involved in adoption of the decision in order to ensure execution of the decision regarding refusal to grant a refugee or alternative status in the case if the decision is being appealed. For that purpose one position of the judge assistant is established in the Administrative District Court.

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<sup>37</sup> Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection. Source is available at <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40440003>

**Q20. To what extent did the adoption of additional measures directly result in an increase in staff/human resources at national (ministry, national services) or local level? You can report on one or two case studies if differences are significant among large numbers of local municipalities.**

For the purpose of practical implementation of measures provided for in the Action Plan in relation to relocation and resettlement of persons, the the Asylum Affairs Division of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs performed the functions of the national contact point (provision of circulation of information between all parties involved in the proceeding, including other EU Member States, performance of pre-examinations for selected asylum seekers). Asylum Affairs Division also is taking decisions regarding granting the refugee or alternative status within 3 months from the date, when persons are moved to the Republic of Latvia (twice reduced period of time, during which the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs shall make a decision regarding granting the international protection status or refusal to grant it).

In accordance with information provided by Ropazi region municipality, before the implementation of the measures included in the Action Plan, sufficient information was not provided regarding extension of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre, establishment of the Detained Foreigners Centre, admission of the bigger number of asylum seekers etc. Local population acquired information from mass media, promoting distribution of fear and negative attitude. The situation changed, when the responsible authorities started a dialogue with municipality and inhabitants. Upon expansion of the asylum seekers centre and opinion of the Multifunctional Centre and a kindergarten group, new work places were established. Pursuant to opinion of the municipality, the public infrastructure is being improved and the place become more attractive for living. Work volume of municipal workers in the administration, social service, orphan's and custody court, municipal police and pre-school education institution has increased. <sup>38</sup>

### [Section 5: The way forward - future preparedness](#)

This Section is relevant for all Member States and Norway, including those countries which did not experience significant fluctuations in the number of asylum applications.

**Q21. Following the fluctuations between 2014 and 2016, did your Member State put in place any new structural (emergency planning) mechanisms to adapt to the (possible) changing influx of asylum applicants in the future?**

Yes / No

*Please substantiate your answer below.*

In order to improve the asylum system, including in relation to situations that are related to increase of the number of asylum seekers, as of 1 September 2015 responsibility for examination of applications for asylum and accommodation of asylum seekers was separated within the framework of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, establishing accordingly the Asylum Affairs Division and the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Division.

In order to ensure admission of the bigger number of asylum seekers, the capacity of the asylum seekers accommodation centre was increased as well as a new detained foreigners accommodation centre was established.

<sup>38</sup> In accordance with the information provided by Ropazi municipality

**Q22a. Please elaborate to what extent the experience over 2014-2016 helped the government (national, regional, local level) to be prepared for any future changing influx in asylum applications, such as for 2017?**

*Please elaborate.*

Although there are no significant fluctuations in the number of asylum seekers observed in Latvia during the previous years, still the preparation of the Action Plan, approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 2 December 2015, and implementation thereof became as a good foundation for establishment of successful cooperation between involved public authorities and non-governmental organisations and formation of understanding of public awareness in general.

**Q22b. Have any potential future measures been planned? Are new measures under consideration?**

*Please elaborate.*

Significant changes were made in the asylum system in of Latvia in 2016 and 2017, therefore currently there are no new changes planned in the current structure of the asylum system or distribution of roles and responsibilities between the involved parties, because there are no significant fluctuations in the number of asylum seekers observed in Latvia.

Taking into account the opinions of institutions involved in the asylum procedure regarding the funding of measures included in the Action Plan and cooperation with the involved institutions, the Ministry of the Interior has prepared several funding models of measures for assessment.<sup>39</sup>

In 2018 it is planned to continue several measures included in the Action Plan, for the implementation of which additional funding is required, in general maintaining already established activities and structure for implementation thereof.

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<sup>39</sup> Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection. Source is available at <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40440003>

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## Section 6: Good practices and lessons learnt

Section 6.1 examines the existing challenges and obstacles for the design and implementation of specific policies to adapt to changing influx of asylum applications. EMN NCPs are kindly asked to justify their answers by identifying (a) for whom the issue identified constitutes a challenge, (b) specifying the sources of the information provided (e.g. existing studies/evaluations, information received from competent authorities or case law) and (c) why it is considered to be a challenge.

Section 6.2 aims to highlight any good practices of the (Member) States that have successfully implemented and managed fluctuations of influx of asylum applicants. This section can include also lessons learnt from the practical implementation of specific policies and measures. EMN NCPs are kindly asked to justify their answers by identifying (a) who considers it to be a good practice, (b) specify the sources of information provided and (c) why it is considered to be a good practice.

### 6.1. CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FOR THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIFIC POLICIES TO ADAPT TO CHANGING INFLUX OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS

**Q23. What are the main challenges and/or obstacles that your Member State had to overcome in designing strategies, structural mechanisms and measures to adapt to the influx of asylum applicants?**

Challenge	<i>for whom the issue identified constitutes a challenge</i>	<i>specifying the sources of the information provided</i>	<i>why it is considered to be a challenge</i>
Recipients of the international protection leave Latvia after granting of the refugee or alternative status and arrangement of personal identity and travel documents.	Social workers and social mentors have only minimum possibilities to provide support in finding a dwelling, because it is quite complicated to find a dwelling for a recipient of the international protection with the current amount of benefit. At the same time, in order to ensure fulfilment of provisions stipulated in the Asylum Law, persons have to leave the asylum seekers accommodation centre after granting the refugee or alternative status.	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	So far the government has not made a decision regarding granting of the necessary funding for settlement of the issue of availability of the dwelling for persons, to whom the refugee or alternative status has been granted. Latvia needs a solution for accommodation of persons acquiring the refugee and alternative status that would provide a temporary state budget programme, from which the expenses for lease apartments arising in the local government should be compensated.
Provision of translation services in rare languages.	NGO "Shelter "Safe Home"" provides translation services to third-country nationals for communication with medical treatment (and also	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission	

	other) institutions, but there is a risk that an interpreter is still not available in a very urgent case.	in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	
Information exchange between the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs and the National Health Service of the Ministry of Health	In order the National Health Service would ascertain, whether services are provided to asylum seekers and whether the medical treatment institutions have entered complete information in the Health Care Service Payment Settlement System, as well as would prepare a report in accordance with that for receipt of financial means from funds for unpredicted events, information about the persons, to whom the status of an asylum seekers have been granted in Latvia is necessary. As far as such information is not at the disposal of the National Health Service, it would be necessary to receive a list of persons, for whom the status of the asylum seeker was up-to-date during the relevant reporting period, from OCMA.	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	
Medical treatment institutions unwillingly provide dental services to asylum seekers.	Currently effective rates for services do not cover expenses, arising for tooth repair, in full.	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	
Difficulties of persons receiving international protection to become part of the labour market.	Lack of motivation, dissatisfaction with the work offered, inappropriate knowledge, low salary level, not available dwelling, without knowledge of foreign		



	languages, without knowledge of Latvian.		
Unequal situation in relation to the state benefits between the persons with the refugee and persons with the alternative status	A person, to whom the refugee status has been granted, has broader social guarantees, because, in accordance with Section 24, Paragraph one, Clause 9 of the Immigration Law, a permanent residence permit is granted to him or her, but for a person with alternative status - a temporary residence permit.	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	Social support system is currently subject to the type of the residence permit, therefore the person receiving alternative status is in an unequal position in comparison with the person, to whom a refugee status has been granted. As far as alternative status is mostly granted to moved persons, persons face difficulties to receive the social support services as a result of which they probably choose to depart from Latvia
Lack of coordination between public authorities and in the activities of municipalities and non-governmental sector.	Current legal acts do not provide for establishment of one coordinating authority for implementation of the Action Plan. Decentralised model of measures is being implemented in 2016-2017, because each institution separately shall implement the measures being under its competence and shall coordinate and control performance thereof as well as use of financial means granted to it.	Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection.	
The current number of employees of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs is insufficient, if the accommodation centre is completely full.		Information provided by experts of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs	

## 6.2. GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

**Q24. Did or will your Member State undertake a national evaluation of the policies and measures implemented over 2014-2016? If it already took place, please elaborate on the findings.**

In 2015 and 2016 the State Audit Office has studied, whether the funding granted for implementation of the Action Plan has reached its purpose, and what has changed in the admission of asylum seekers in the practice implemented in Latvia by using these funds. After the audit of 2015 it was concluded that measures have been performed for overtaking of the requirements of regulatory enactment of the European Union in the field of asylum in the Latvia legal acts, therefore the legal framework is sufficient for appropriate implementation thereof. In its turn, after the audit of 2016 the State Audit Office indicates on the lack of assessment of results of implementation of the Action Plan.<sup>40</sup>

In September 2017 the Ministry of the Interior has prepared a Report regarding the implementation of measures provided for in the Action Plan<sup>41</sup>, where the achieved results, shortfalls in the implementation of measures and recommendations for admission and socio-economical inclusion of asylum seekers and recipients of international protection after 2017 are identified.

**Q25. Could you identify good practices in your Member State with regards to ensuring flexibility and adaptability of the national asylum system and associated services in order to deal with a changing influx of asylum applicants? If yes, please elaborate.**

N/A - Latvia so far has not experienced significant fluctuations in the number of asylum seekers.

**Q26. What are the key lessons learnt by key national authorities involved over the period 2014-2016? Please elaborate and add as many rows as needed.**

Lesson learnt	Responsible authority/stakeholder
<p>Awareness raising on asylum issues, both in society as a whole, as well as among specialists and workers, is essential for successful implementation of the measures. It shall be based on true and fact-based information exchange between all involved parties. The above mentioned was approved, when improving the health care system, in order to ensure the availability thereof for asylum seekers, as well as when making changes in the benefit payment system with regards to persons, whom a status of international protection has been granted.</p>	<p>Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Welfare</p>

<sup>40</sup> Use of funds granted for Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection. Source available at: [www.lrvk.gov.lv/uploads/reviziju-zinojumi/vkontrolle-patvēruma-meklētāji-v06.pdf](http://www.lrvk.gov.lv/uploads/reviziju-zinojumi/vkontrolle-patvēruma-meklētāji-v06.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Informative report regarding performance of measures provided for in the Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia of Persons who Need International Protection. Source is available at <http://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40440003>

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Establishing close cooperation with the local municipality in which the asylum seekers' accommodation center is located.	Ministry of the Interior and Ropazi municipality
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## Section 7: Conclusions

*The Synthesis Report will outline the key findings, main observations of the Study, present conclusions relevant for policymakers at national and EU level and identify policy pointers for future actions. Specific conclusions drawn by (Member) State should be included in the Top Line Factsheet to prevent duplication of efforts.*

**Note: not to be drafted by NCPs.**

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