



**The Social Protection Committee**

## 2016 SPPM THEMATIC REVIEWS

The role of social protection systems in  
facilitating the social inclusion of refugees and  
asylum-seekers

## I. Summary of policy discussion

Europe is facing a significant surge in the inflow of asylum seekers. While the number of refugees is small compared to the overall EU population, there is an uneven distribution between Member States. This inflow is challenging Member States' infrastructure, facilities and communities as well as the capacity of their social protection systems to respond in an appropriate manner and integrate the new arrivals. While in some Member States this is altogether a new challenge, in others it reinforces pre-existing integration challenges. However, assuming the right conditions for swift and successful integration are met, migration brings several opportunities to the hosting societies, notably on the demographic front and in terms of skills.

In 2015 over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the EU according to Eurostat data. Syria (29% of the total number of first time applicants) was the main country of citizenship of asylum seekers in the EU Member States, followed by Afghanistan (14%) and Iraq (10%). More than four in five (83 %) of the first time asylum seekers in the EU-28 in 2015 were less than 35 years old, while nearly 3 in 10 (29 %) applicants were minors aged less than 18 years old. This age distribution of asylum applicants was common in almost all of the EU Member States, with the largest share of applicants usually being those aged 18–34. There were 88.7 thousand applications in the EU-28 from unaccompanied minors and 23.1 % of minors were unaccompanied. Among minors who applied for asylum, the share that was unaccompanied was less than half in most EU Member States in 2015, the exceptions being in SE, PT and IT.

The distribution of first time asylum applicants by gender shows that more men than women were seeking asylum. Among the younger age groups, males accounted for 55 % of the total number of applicants in 2015. There was a greater degree of gender difference for asylum applicants who were 14–17 or 18–34 years old, where around 80 % of applicants were male, with this share dropping to two thirds for the age group 35–64. During the first quarter of 2016 (from January to March 2016), 287 100 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the EU, down by 33% compared with the fourth quarter of 2015 (when 426 000 first time applicants were registered). During the second quarter of 2016 (from April to June 2016), 305 700 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the EU, up by 6% compared with the first quarter of 2016. With nearly 90 500 first-time applicants between April and June 2016, Syrians remained the main group of citizens seeking international protection in the EU Member States, ahead of Afghans (50 300 first time applicants) and Iraqis (34 300).

In 2015, there were 593 000 first instance decisions in all EU Member States and more than half (52 %) of these resulted in granting international protection, that is grants of refugee or subsidiary protection status, or an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons. For first instance decisions, some 75 % of all positive decisions in the EU-28 in 2015 resulted in grants of refugee status, while for final decisions the share was somewhat lower, at 69 %. In the first half of 2016, there were 475 000 first instance decisions in all EU Member States and more than half (59 %) of EU-28 first instance asylum decisions resulted in granting international protection.

In their discussion, Member States highlighted the need for better coordination between various ministries, national, regional and local authorities as well as with social partners and NGOs. In many countries, municipalities are in charge of refugees' reception and coordination at local level is extremely important. Creating the appropriate incentive systems at local level for effective implementation of agreed policy measures is key.

Some of the other challenges shared by Member States related to acute housing problems, the diversity of the refugee/asylum-seekers' population, the fact that significant number of asylum seekers disappear from the radar, especially if refused asylum, the lack of good data on their health situation, the high incidence of psychological problems.

In terms of delivering social protection to the most vulnerable, a number of Member States shared the important challenge presented by the big numbers of unaccompanied minors. There is a frequent need for treatment of trauma, but also lack of adequate housing options for them, difficulties in ensuring stability and supporting the establishment of an appropriate social network.

Measures identified as effective to reduce the time needed for labour market integration encompass swift action, including in the asylum centres, through counselling on employment, language training, individualised approaches, individualised support by PES, and early screening of skills/qualifications. Language courses are an essential part of integration policies according to all Member States. Language training should start as soon as possible, if possible in the asylum seeking-phase for those asylum seekers who are likely to receive protection. Such trainings are best provided in a flexible way (e.g. in the evenings) and in a targeted manner - for instance by offering language acquisition at the workplace.

As work is one of the most effective means for integration, asylum seekers and refugees need to be provided with the right incentives. Some Member States reported on how engaging refugees and asylum-seekers in voluntary work can be a good instrument in the initial integration phase. Acknowledgement of refugees' skills and qualifications, including non-formal skills is also paramount. A work-oriented approach was shared by some Member States, whereby access to benefits and services is linked to participation in integration programmes, and non-compliance can lead to benefit cuts, if necessary, similarly to the approach applied to natives. Member States shared their vision behind their integration programmes, which is one of support from the side of the host government on the one hand, and integration efforts from the refugees on the other.

Some positive policy initiatives shared include a Tripartite agreement between state, municipalities and social partners in DK which saw a common discussion on the problems and possible ways to solve them as well as common commitment; an Activation agreement determining rights and obligations of public institutions and refugees in BG; newly established mentoring scheme in LV that helps in everyday life – housing, work, contact with authorities; integration through voluntary work in the NL.

The next challenge for Member States will be to move from ad-hoc arrangements, put in place for the first-step reception measures, towards long-term integration measures into society and the labour market. Evidence shows that third country nationals can make a positive fiscal net contribution if they are well integrated in a timely manner, starting with early integration into education and the labour market. But evidence also shows that labour market integration on average takes a long time.

Social integration is a multidimensional issue which requires a cross-cutting approach. It is not just about social protection, but also about education, labour market, healthcare and housing. The scope and suddenness of the recent inflow of third country nationals to Europe, and in particular of refugees, calls for a more coordinated and inclusive policy response to better tackle the challenges posed by migration and reap its full benefits. For some Member States this is a new situation, therefore there is a clear benefit in exchanging experiences and best practices.

## II. Background

In the context of its annual reporting, the SPC decided to dedicate its 2016 thematic reporting to the role of social protection systems in facilitating the social inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers<sup>1</sup>. 17 Member States provided answers to the thematic questionnaire (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, HR, HU, LT, LV, LU NL, SI, SE, SK). The following document presents a summary of the main elements and challenges reported by Member States for the reporting period (January 2015 – June 2016). Its structure reflects the outline of the thematic questionnaire sent to the SPC Members. This technical document has been prepared by DG EMPL services in order to serve as background document for discussion in the Social Protection Committee. It does not constitute the official position of the Commission, nor does it prejudge any such position.

### 1. Overview

#### 1.1. Statistical evidence<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term "people with a migrant background" in this note refers to non-EU born, third country nationals, and to the children of immigrants that were born in the host country ("second generation"). Many of these people, originally having a non-EU nationality, were naturalised over time, hence the group of third-country nationals, a legally defined group, is smaller. "Asylum seeker" refers to a person seeking international protection who has applied but not yet been granted the status of "beneficiary of international protection". Beneficiaries of international protection include both refugees and subsidiary protection. The "refugee" status can be granted to a third-country national or stateless person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted 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 himself or herself 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 above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it (Directive 2011/95/EU). "Subsidiary protection" can be given to a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee, but in respect of substantial grounds which have been shown to believe 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 who is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

<sup>2</sup> All data included in this section has been extracted from Eurostat in November 2016.

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## **1.2. Overview of the major legislative reforms**

**By July 2015 Member States were expected to transpose the Reception Conditions Directive**, which provides for minimum harmonisation of standards for the reception of applicants for international protection in the EU. It ensures that applicants have access to housing, food, healthcare and employment, as well as medical and psychological care. **Therefore, some Member States (BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, LT and LV) introduced major legislative reforms during the reporting period**

Looking at **residence and work permits**, in **BE**, at federal level, the Royal decree of 29 October 2015, has reduced from 6 to 4 months the time for an asylum seeker to have legal access to the labour market. Furthermore, as of 8 July 2016 asylum seekers granted refugee status no longer receive a residence permit of unlimited duration but a temporary residence permit with a validity of 5 years (calculated from the moment the asylum application was lodged). After 5 years the refugee will receive a residence permit of unlimited duration, provided his/her refugee status has not been withdrawn (before this change, a recognized refugee immediately received the right to reside in Belgium for an unlimited period of time). Also **DK** shortened the **length of residence permits** granted to refugees. The residence permit granted according to the 1951 Refugee Convention is now given for a period of two years, and the permit for other types of protection is granted for one year (with a possibility of respectively two or three year renewals). All foreigners must have resided legally in Denmark for at least 6 years to qualify for a permanent residence and they must meet all "fundamental requirements" and 2 of 4 "additional requirements"<sup>3</sup>. Persons who have shown a particular willingness and ability to integrate can qualify for a permanent residence permit after four years of legal residence, provided he/she meets the fundamental requirements and all of the additional requirements.

**Flanders** and **Wallonia**, as well as **BG**, have introduced measures regarding **civic integration**. The Decision of the Flemish Government of 29 January 2016 implementing the Decree of 7 June 2013 concerning the Flemish integration and civic integration policy makes obtaining the civic integration certificate linked to results achieved, and no longer on the effort invested. The duty of civic integration is extended to those who move to Flanders within five years after having settled in the region of Brussels Capital or Wallonia. In **Wallonia**, the Decree of 28 April 2016 transforms the previous existing reception trajectory in the French speaking part of Wallonia into a mandatory integration trajectory. In June 2015, **BG** adopted a new National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration for 2015 – 2020<sup>4</sup>. The strategy puts focus on ensuring access to education and training in Bulgarian language, employment, recognition of qualifications, medical and social assistance, housing, social, cultural and civic integration.

Most of the major legislative reforms are reported by **DE**. The Act to Expedite Asylum Procedures entered into force on 24 October 2015, aiming at **expediting asylum procedures, facilitating the accommodation and the provision of basic services** to asylum applicants and refugees, and **enhancing the integration into society and the labour market** of refugees and asylum applicants with good prospects of staying in Germany. At the same time, it seeks to eliminate any inappropriate incentives which may exist for unjustified asylum applications. The Act also regulates the federal contribution to the costs incurred in connection with asylum seekers and persons seeking international protection, unaccompanied minor refugees and childcare. Additionally, it

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<sup>3</sup> The requirements are to have passed an active citizen exam test or have exhibited active citizenship in Denmark; to have held a regular full-time employment or been self-employed for at least 4 years within the last 4 years and 6 months; to have had a yearly taxable income on average DKK 270,000 / EUR 36,000 (2016 level) or above over the last 2 years; and to have passed the Danish language test 3 or an equivalent or higher level.

<sup>4</sup> CM's Decision N° 437 of 12 June 2015.

increases the federal funding for social housing provided in the framework of federal compensation payments to the Länder as part of the reform of Germany's federal system. The Act to Improve the Sharing of Data entered into force on 5 February 2016, and its aim is to improve the sharing of data to **expedite the registration of asylum seekers and of persons who enter or reside in Germany without authorisation**, and to transmit information collected in this context seamlessly to all agencies which require it to carry out their duties. The Act Facilitating the Expulsion of Foreign Criminals and Expanding the Group of Criminal Asylum Applicants Denied Recognition as Refugees entered into force on 17 March 2016. The aim of the Act is to **facilitate the expulsion of foreign criminals and to deny asylum seekers who commit crimes legal recognition as refugees** more consistently than had previously been the case. The Act Introducing Expedited Asylum Procedures entered into force on 17 March 2016 with the aim to **further expedite asylum procedures in cases where applications have little prospect of success**. The Act thus follows on from the Act to Expedite Asylum Procedures which entered into force on 24 October 2015. In addition, it seeks to ensure that asylum applicants **comply with the decision on their allocation to an initial reception centre**. The Act also specifies the requirements for medical certificates as proof of an obstacle precluding deportation on health grounds. Additionally, the Act enhances the protection of minors living in centres under the Asylum Act. The Integration Act and the Ordinance relating to the Integration Act is for asylum seekers with good prospects of staying in Germany are to be **integrated into society and the labour market as quickly as possible**. At the same time, asylum seekers with no prospect of recognition are to receive adequate support with a view to their return to their countries of origin. The aim is to take into account the different requirements and prospects of the persons seeking protection and to offer suitable services and benefits, and in return to require these persons to seek to integrate and to support them in doing so, with the aim of facilitating rapid and lasting integration. In this context, the focus is on equipping the persons concerned with German language skills and providing them with suitable training for the German labour market.

In **BG**, the Asylum and Refugees Act (ARA) was amended twice in 2015<sup>5</sup> as well as in 2016. The key aspects of the amendments made include: transposing Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13.12.2011 **on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection**, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for humanitarian protection and for the content of the protection granted; of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applications for international protection; and of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26.06.2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection. The Act introduces the notion of international protection, replacing the current law's concepts of refugee status and humanitarian status in all the act's definitions and references. An attempt is also made to further regulate the representation of unaccompanied minors.

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<sup>5</sup>An Act amending and supplementing the ARA adopted by the National Assembly (NA) on 2 October 2015, prom. SG. 80/16 October 2015; an Act amending and supplementing the ARA adopted by the NA on 11 December 2015, prom. SG. 101/22 December 2015.

In **DK**, in 2015 a new temporary protection status for refugees was introduced in the Danish Aliens Act for persons in need of international protection. Furthermore, a series of amendments to the Danish Aliens Act were adopted, aiming at reducing the influx of refugees and irregular migrants and giving the authorities the necessary tools to deal with a possible future increase. Access to family reunification for those with a temporary protection status has been postponed from 1 to 3 years.

In **CY**, the Legal Aid Law was amended in February 2015, harmonizing national law with Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection concerning legal aid. This Law provides for **legal aid in court procedures** where the applicant for international protection, who is in custody/detention, applies for a judicial review (a) against the administrative act which has as a legal effect his/her detention, (b) concerning the lawfulness of the duration of his/her detention (habeas corpus application).

**DK and SI** have introduced measures aimed at speeding and **making more effective the procedures for deciding on applications for international protection**. The scope of the rights of those granted international protection has been narrowed in **DK** as well as in **SI** (where these rights exceed the minimum standards imposed by the European legislative framework).

In **LT** the major change in legislation on integration of aliens granted asylum was the adoption of the Resolution of the Government (5 October 2016, No 998) "Providing State support for integration for asylum beneficiaries". It regulates the organisation, implementation, state support for integration, terms of integration in the refugee reception centres and municipalities, allowances, integration in educational system and employment, as well as public awareness and support for the integration for asylum beneficiaries. Special attention is paid to ensuring intensive Lithuanian language training and an early entry in the labour market. Municipalities are also involved in integration process. In the field of integration of aliens residing in Lithuania, the Action Plan for the Implementation of Foreigners' Integration Policy 2015–2017 was approved by the Order of the Minister of Social Security and Labour (31 December 2014). The measures of the Plan are co-financed from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the state budget of the Republic of Lithuania. The purpose of the Plan is to integrate foreigners into the Lithuanian society and to promote public tolerance towards foreigners, as well as strengthen inter-institutional cooperation in the field of integration of foreigners and to carry out the monitoring of integration processes.

In **LV** on 1 December 2015 the amendments to Social Services and Social Assistance Law came into force which expands the rights of persons having alternative status and their family members to social assistance (municipal) and social services (for minors). Additionally, several Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers have been adopted in 2016 with the aim to improve assistance and access to education, social and health care services for asylum seekers.

### **1.3. Overview of the major institutional changes**



**Major institutional changes took place in BE, BG, CY and LV.**

In **BE**, **Flanders** set up in September 2015 a **ministerial committee** in order to deal with the refugee crisis, while in **Wallonia** a **governmental task-force** was created for the same purpose. Some provinces and the employers' organisation Federation of Enterprises in Belgium set up dedicated platforms. Many local authorities and NGO's have contributed to the effort.

**BG** established a **National Council on Migration and Integration**<sup>6</sup>. The Council is a collective consultative body for formulation and coordination of the implementation of state policies in the area of migration and integration of foreigners, seeking or having received protection.

**CY** established an **Administrative Court Law** which provides extra protection to persons seeking international protection, in that, the Administrative Court has competence to hear judicial recourses at first instance, and, in particular, in taxation and international protection cases, to examine the substance of the case and to modify or substitute the administrative decision as it deems appropriate. The judges of the Court have been appointed and the Court began its operation as of 1st January 2016.

**LV** established a working group with the task to develop a model for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as for the integration of refugees and persons with alternative status in Latvia. On 2 December 2015 the Cabinet of Ministers approved by Decree the action plan for the relocation in Latvia of persons in need of international protection.

#### **1.4. Involvement of social partners and other national stakeholders**

**BG, DK, EE, FI, NL, LV, SI and SK** provided information on the involvement of social partners and other national stakeholders in the preparation of major reforms.

In **BG** the process of reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees is actively supported by a number inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in policy assistance and monitoring (UNHCR), social support programs (Bulgarian Red Cross, Council of the Refugee Women) and monitoring of reception and detention centres and legal assistance (Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Legal Clinic for Refugees and Migrants).

**SI, LV and EE** reported about **increased cooperation with sectorial NGOs and humanitarian organisations**. In **SK**, the State Integration programme is the result of the cooperation between several Ministries, the Social Insurance Agency and the Association of towns and municipalities. In **FI**, the Finnish Immigration Service, the Police and the Border Guard have updated their **contingency plans** together with the Finnish Red Cross. In addition, authorities have **consulted social partners and other relevant national stakeholders** when preparing relevant legislative reforms. . In **LV** the „The Latvian Red Cross” in close cooperation with state institutions ensure the availability of social workers and social mentors for asylum seekers as well as for refugees and persons with alternative status.

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<sup>6</sup> CM's Decree № 21 of 5 February 2015.

In DK, the legislative changes relating to refugees and immigrants in general have to follow the same standard procedures for public consultation as all other legislative proposals proposed by the government in Parliament. In addition, in March 2016, a **tripartite agreement**<sup>7</sup> on integration was reached between the **government and social partners** aiming at improving the framework for particularly labour market integration. These, together with an agreement with the representatives of 98 municipalities, include a range of more than 80 initiatives to be implemented in 2016.

Similarly, in NL, a **temporary Ministerial Committee on Migration** was created in August 2015. One of its outcomes is a **Task-force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees (TWIV)** consisting of the VNG & Divosa (representatives of municipalities), employers' organisation VNO-NCW, the Dutch Trade Union Confederations FNV and CNV, the Social Economic Council, COA (administrative authority for housing asylum seekers), the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands, the Royal Association of Small and Medium-sized Businesses Netherlands (SME), the Ministry of OCW and the Ministry of SZW. The purpose of this task-force is to enhance existing measures to supervise refugees to access employment and to identify and remove bottlenecks in the integration process.

## 2. Legislative reforms for the period 2015-2016

### 2.1. Access to social protection systems

As regards social assistance and other forms of income support AT, CY, DE, DK and LV have recently introduced reforms.

CY has introduced in July 2014 the **Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)** to which refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have access, while in LV in December 2015 the amendments to Social Services and Social Assistance Law came into force, expanding entitlements to persons having alternative status (i.e. subsidiary protection) and their family members to the **guaranteed minimum level of income, shelter and night-shelter services, as well as information and consultations of the social service.**

In DK a **new integration benefit** was extended since July 2016 to all benefit recipients (including refugees) who have not resided in Denmark for at least seven out of the past eight years. The integration benefit is levelled to 50 percent of to the maximum social assistance (which is means-tested). In order to incentivise better integration, the benefit will be increased after passing a certain Danish language exam<sup>8</sup>. Persons who receive the integration benefit may also be entitled to receive other forms of financial support such as housing subsidies or assistance in special cases

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<sup>7</sup> Background: The Danish labour market model builds upon a division of labour between the state and social partners, where these have a large degree of influence on employment policy, wage and working conditions. The model builds on three parts: tripartite cooperation, collective bargaining agreements and a high level of organisation. A tripartite agreement is an agreement negotiated between the three central parts of the Danish labour market: the Social Partners (employer and employees organisations) and the Danish Government. Even in areas that are strongly regulated by legislation, such as working environment, job centres and unemployment insurance, there is a broad cooperation and involvement of all parties. (Read more on <http://uk.bm.dk/en/Themes/The%20Danish%20Labour%20Market.aspx> and <http://um.dk/en/news/NewsDisplayPage/?newsID=9EDE0041-F303-42DB-8F52-A4556FF3E96A>)

<sup>8</sup> "Dansk 2" which is written at B1 and oral at B1+according to the Common European Framework of Reference.

(individual expenses, health care, dental care etc.). In addition, it is possible to be granted support for housing and getting settled and, in the course of the first two years, families will gradually be eligible for the full child benefits. Furthermore, foreign nationals, including refugees, who have been granted residency have full access to the universal and free Danish education and healthcare system. In April 2016 a Job Reform was introduced, capping the total social assistance (reducing additional housing support if a certain threshold is reached) and introduces a 225 hour-rule, whereby a social assistance recipient who is able to work needs to work for 225 hours per year. Both the Job Reform and the Integration benefit aim **at increasing the economic incentive to join the labour market**. These initiatives are expected to have a substantial impact on people with migrant background in general, as they are significantly overrepresented in the group of people who receive social assistance. Furthermore, in DK the rates of economic benefits for asylum seekers were reduced by 10 percent.

In DE, since 1 January 2016, tolerated persons<sup>9</sup> have been able to receive support during in-company vocational training, in the form of the vocational training grant and assisted training, **much more quickly than had previously been the case**; namely, after 15 months of prior residence rather than the previous requirement of four years (Act Amending Book XII of the Social Code). This change also applies to those persons with residence permits on humanitarian grounds that had previously been subject to the requirement of four years of prior residence. The Integration Act also opens up the training phase of assisted training to tolerated persons after just twelve months of residence, for a limited period until the end of 2018. In addition, since 1 January 2016, trainees with tolerated-person status have also been able to receive training-related assistance for the first time. The target group for this instrument has been expanded accordingly. Trainees can receive training-related assistance during in-company vocational training if they need additional support, e.g. to overcome linguistic and educational weaknesses, or in the form of support from external educators. The aim is to keep tolerated persons from dropping out of vocational training, in particular. After six years of residence, tolerated persons can also, for a limited period, receive support in the form of pre-vocational training programmes, including the vocational training grant or training stipend, provided that they are not subject to a ban on employment. Furthermore, the possibility of requiring participation in integration courses is being extended. In future, asylum applicants with good prospects of staying, certain tolerated persons and persons with a residence permit under Section 25 (5) of the Residence Act can be required to attend an integration course, if they receive benefits under the Act on Benefits for Asylum Applicants. In addition, persons with asylum status, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can also be required to attend an integration course in the future.

**Concerning access to financial services**, in AT the implementation of the Payment Account Directive on 8 June 2016 with the introduction of the Consumer Payment Account Act, stipulates that each credit institution in Austria has to provide such an account and that for consumers

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<sup>9</sup> The DE competent authorities decide which specific status of international protection is granted to asylum applicants: accepted asylum [stricter criteria to obtain it], refugee, subsidiary protection or tolerated person status.

belonging to a social or economic vulnerable group which includes asylum seekers and refugees the cost is €40 per year (instead of €80).

**Regarding access and take-up of social assistance benefits**, in **BE** for the reported period an **increase in the take up of social assistance benefits** by recognized refugees (integration income and housing installation bonus) can be seen in the statistics produced by the Federal Public Service Social Integration<sup>10</sup>. In **AT** there are **tendencies of restricting the access to benefits** of the means-tested-minimum-income scheme (BMS) for persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. For example, the federal state of Upper Austria has decided to shorten BMS benefits for persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status limited in time from 1 July 2016. Since then, persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status only receive a BMS payment of €365 plus an additional, conditional €155 integration bonus which is tied on integration efforts. In the Federal State of Lower Austria persons who have been granted subsidiary protection status have been excluded from the entitlement to BMS benefits according to Lower Austria's BMS law on 4 April 2016.

## 2.2. Access to health and long-term care

**Several Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, FI, HR, LU, LV, NL and SI) reported on recent healthcare measures taken during the reporting period that specifically target applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.** Such measures were mostly triggered by the increase in the number of applicants.

**A few countries (BE, DK and NL) reported on increased support to municipalities.** To alleviate the pressure on the municipalities' resources, **DK** introduced some relevant amendments: as of July 2016, only those newly-arrived refugees and family reunified persons who are considered to be in need will receive a medical check (previously all newly arrived refugees and family reunified persons were offered a medical check). However, municipalities are still obliged to offer a health assessment for all UN quota refugees. Furthermore, the government has provided approximately €2,500,000 in support of pilot-projects in four municipalities aiming at detecting and treating trauma among refugees. In the **NL**, two major agreements were signed between the national and local government concerning also the healthcare for refugees (for more details see section 2.4). In 2016, **BE (Flanders)** has created an additional budget for the reception and the impact of the increased influx of refugees.

**CY, HR, LU, LV and SI reported on actions planned or taken to increase the capacity of physical and mental health services provided at reception or later stages of the asylum process and upon protection is granted.** In **HR**, the Ministry of Health has concluded contracts with Health Centres in several locations to address the needs of the Reception Centre of asylum seekers. An Agreement is under way, drafted by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior and the International NGO

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<sup>10</sup> For more detailed information see Federal Public Service Social Integration Bulletin statistique. Juin 2016 : Table 3 p. 11 and Table 11 p. 31 [http://www.mi-is.be/sites/default/files/statistics/mi-is\\_2016.2\\_bulletin\\_fr.pdf](http://www.mi-is.be/sites/default/files/statistics/mi-is_2016.2_bulletin_fr.pdf)

*Médecins du Monde* with the aim of increasing the presence of medical staff (doctors and nurses). Changes and amendments to the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Protection of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia will be introduced in the 3rd quarter of 2016. In October 2015, **LU** committed itself to strengthen the capacity of its health infrastructures. In December 2015, **LV** approved the action plan for the relocation and receipt in Latvia of persons in need of international protection, which, among other things, foresees that initial health check for asylum seekers must be provided on the next working day after the person is accommodated in the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre and, in accordance with Cabinet Regulations, asylum seekers have to undergo mandatory lung X-rays within five working days. In April 2016, amendments to Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers on procedure of health care organisation and financing were adopted, establishing that a series of health care services<sup>11</sup> for asylum seekers shall be paid for from the national budget funds. Plans to amend the regulation to add a list of obligatory health checks are also in the pipeline. **SI** reported on efforts to provide medical care to those who asked for medical assistance: from September 2015 to March 2016, medical assistance was provided to more than 25,000 people by regular medical services, volunteering doctors and humanitarian organisations at reception and accommodation centres across the country. In **CY**, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health for the years 2016-2018 provides equal opportunities for health care to all citizens, irrespective of their socio-economic status and place of residence. Within its strategic goals, it is foreseen to develop and implement national programs targeting specific, vulnerable and certain age groups, with emphasis given to the Completion of the review of Cyprus' capacity to Migrants Health issues and other vulnerable groups. Also, special provisions have recently been introduced to ensure the immediate access to healthcare services of children of irregular immigrants and refugees.

**Several Member States (AT, BE, BG, FI and HR) have increased their efforts to identify and support patients with special needs.** In **AT**, the Ministry of Health has recently commissioned a concept for a platform for psychosocial needs. **FI** has also run an experiment by creating a small "unit for clients with special needs" (for 15 clients) within the reception system. **HR** has increased the psychological support to patients with special needs from a doctor-psychiatrist in a specific health institution close to the main Reception Centre for asylum seekers. In **BE**, Fedasil is currently working on quality norms for the psychological assistance to vulnerable asylum seekers to guarantee a harmonised approach for the entire reception network (to be finalised in 2016). In addition, a policy note has been adopted stating the intention to enhance the counselling and treatment provided to asylum seekers with mental health problems. There is also extra investment in the care for refugees suffering from trauma or other psychological problems (with a focus on minors) through a reinforcement of nine Centres for Mental Health Care active across **Flanders** and of the organisation Solentra. In **BG**, a new provision was introduced in 2015, with the amendments made

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<sup>11</sup> Emergency medical assistance, childbirth assistance, dental assistance in acute cases, primary health care, psychiatric help and medical assistance to minors, as well as the events specified in the Epidemiological Safety Law and medications required for tuberculosis treatment.

to the Asylum and Refugees Act (ARA), whereby the medical check-up of the person should establish whether he/she belongs to a vulnerable group and whether he/she has special needs<sup>12</sup>.

**Some countries (CY, EE, HR and SI) stepped up or introduced specific services for victims of sexual violence and gender-based violence.** CY, EE and HR have stepped up the services to assist victims of torture and sexual violence at the reception centres or related health institutions. In EE, for example, an ongoing project implemented by the Estonian Sexual Health Association creates networking and readiness in hospitals to provide specialised support for rape victims. Similarly, SI has in place Standard Operating Procedures to prevent and react in cases of sexual violence and gender-based violence (SOPS)<sup>13</sup> and established an inter-ministerial working group with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, UNHCR and non-governmental organisations to this purpose.

**BG has reported on investments to protect public health.** From April to October, upon entering the refugee accommodation centres, microbiological and parasitological research on carrying intestinal pathogenic microorganisms, on imported parasites and on malaria have been carried out, so to provide the main vaccinations as quickly as possible. In addition, the National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases conducted a threefold study for carriers of a wild poliovirus of children up to 5 years of age accommodated in the centres.

**DE has been investing in improving the availability of relevant data on migrants' health and increasing guidance and training available to practitioners.** On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Health, the Robert Koch Institute is currently laying the groundwork for health monitoring and reporting of migrants and persons with a migrant background, both present and future. The Ministry is also in the final stages of examining a proposal from Heidelberg University on improving the available data on the health and primary medical care of asylum seekers in initial reception centres and collective accommodation. The Ministry has also published an expert recommendation from the Robert Koch Institute on carrying out standard health examinations. The implementation strategy for the early vaccination of asylum seekers after their arrival in Germany has also been made available. The quarterly Migration Info-Service produced by the Federal Centre for Health Education has been expanded to include a section on refugees, in order to provide practitioners with information about events, specialist literature and foreign-language media offerings. With the aim of offering specific training for refugee support workers and volunteers, the Centre has also developed training courses designed to equip them to identify and foster refugees' existing resources. The first modules are already being taken up. Furthermore, together with the Ethno-Medical Centre (*Ethnomedizinisches Zentrum e.V.*) in Hanover, the

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<sup>12</sup> The following activities are carried out in the medical cabinets: initial examinations upon registration of the asylum seekers; permanent medical supervision; offering first medical assistance; control over person's hygienic status permanent monitoring for compliance with hygiene requirements; drafting and maintaining medical documentation of each person.

<sup>13</sup> The guidelines for planning the assistance specifically focus on unaccompanied minors, single parents with minor children and families with minor children, disabled people, people with intellectual disabilities and people with mental health problems, older people, pregnant women, victims and potential victims of human trafficking, victims of rape, torture and other serious forms of psychological, physical and sexual violence and homosexual, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.

Ministry has produced the leaflet "Health Guide for Asylum Seekers in Germany", which is intended to give asylum applicants an initial overview of the German health system and the medical examination which is carried out in the initial reception centres<sup>14</sup>. Since June 2016, the University Hospital Münster of WWU Münster has been implementing healthcare services (with a focus on psychotraumatology) for refugee children and their families, known as special out-patient services (*Spezialambulanz*).

**AT is the only country that reported on change concerning long-term care provisions.** On 1 January 2015, a clarification of the Austrian provision in the Federal Long-term Care Act entered into force concerning the competences of the States in providing long-term benefits in cash to eligible people.

### **2.3. Access to enabling services**

**Integration measures have been reinforced in the following Member States: BE, DE, DK, BG, HR, LT, LV, SK and SI.** In **DK**, the criteria relating to refugees "potential for integration" is introduced in the selection of refugees to be resettled in Denmark. It is based on a concrete assessment of all circumstances, including language skills, educational aspects and work experience, family relationships, networks and the refugees' age and motivation. In **BG**, beneficiaries of asylum or international protection are offered an integration agreement, determining their rights and obligations, as well as those of relevant authorities<sup>15</sup>. Measures part of this agreement include housing services, enrollment of children covered by compulsory preschool and school preparation in kindergarten and in state or municipal schools, training in Bulgarian language, health insurance and services, vocational guidance, inclusion in programs for employment and training, information on vacant jobs.

In **HR**, the finalization of the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period from 2016 to 2018 is underway. A Protocol on Integration was made for the Croatian Bureau of Employment, defining the Bureau's actions with regards to registration, preparations for employment, mediation in employment and involvement in active labour market policies of persons granted international protection.

In **BE**, since January 2015, the institutions and organisations of **Flanders and Brussels (Dutch speakers)** in the field of integration and civic integration have been merged and integrated into one External Autonomous Agency. The Integration Agencies were recently strengthened so as to meet the expected increasing number of additional integration programs. The Flemish government has announced that, from January 2016 onwards, third country nationals who want to acquire a certificate of civic integration at the end of the integration programme will have to pass a test and demonstrate that they have reached a certain level of fluency in Dutch. In the French

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<sup>14</sup> Written in simple language, it has been translated into Arabic, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Pashto and English, as well as Dari and Farsi as of the third edition. The guide sets out important points of contact for health care (doctors, pharmacies, hospitals), provides examples of certain services which are available, and offers practical advice on how people can protect themselves from disease.

<sup>15</sup> Ordinance on the terms and conditions for conclusion, implementation and termination of an integration agreement for foreigners granted asylum or international protection was adopted by CM on 10 August 2016.

speaking part of **Wallonia**, on 28 April 2016, a decree was passed that transforms the voluntary reception pathway into a mandatory integration pathway. The decree has made all components of the programme compulsory: a reception module (social assessment, information on rights and duties, administrative assistance), learning French (120h), citizenship training (20h) and adapted socio-professional assistance (4h). As is the case in Flanders, in Wallonia an administrative fine can be imposed in case third country nationals do not register or participate. A service for social interpretation (SETIS Wallonia) has been approved and has been strengthened financially. Services for ethno psychological support have been reinforced. The government of the **German-speaking Community** is also planning the development of an integration path and the adoption of a decree on the integration of newcomers by the end of the parliamentary term.

**SK** is currently developing its State Integration Programme and is expected to be ratified before the end of 2016 and to come into force on 1 January 2017. The integration measures that are planned to be carried out through the State Integration Programme focus exclusively on persons who have been granted asylum or subsidiary protection.

**DE** adopted in July 2016 a new Integration Act, aiming at facilitating the integration of asylum-seekers with good prospects of staying in the country as quickly as possible. This Act puts particular focus on enabling services such as the provision of language courses. Furthermore, in the framework of the ESF Integration Guidelines of the Federal Government, a priority area entitled "Integration of Asylum Applicants and Refugees" has been implemented since 1 July 2015. The aim of this priority area is to support the group in question in the context of integration into work or vocational training or in attaining a school-leaving qualification (e.g. through advice, skills development, placement and recruitment of employers to engage with the programme). In addition, standard nation-wide training about the position of refugees under residence law and labour law is being provided for the staff of job centres and employment agencies, in particular. The "Integration through Qualification" funding programme has been expanded in the 2015-2018 programming period to include the priority area "ESF training measures under the Recognition Act". The programme has been given an additional €19 million in federal funding to allow refugees' support needs to be met as well.

In **LT**, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020 provides additional services to those provided by the state to asylum seekers (material aid, legal aid and/or assistance, psychological aid and/or assistance, Lithuanian language trainings, social aid, healthcare services, sport and other leisure activities, IT course, events for asylum seekers) and foreigners granted asylum (material aid, legal, health care services, psychological help and consultations, additional courses of Lithuanian language, civic orientation courses, professional orientation and consultations, social skills and IT trainings, activities with local community, etc.) Three integration centres in major cities provide those services for foreigners legally residing in Lithuania, including foreigners granted asylum.

**LV** started a mentoring programme for asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status with the aim to support faster socioeconomic integration including by helping to deal with everyday situations and practicing language in real life situations.



**In regards to access to early childhood education and care BE (Flanders), CY, DK and LV reported on recent reforms.** BE (Flanders) made sure that asylum seekers are given priority in income related child care places, and absolute priority in child care with "plus subsidy" (*plussubsidie*). CY assessed and reviewed the criteria used to allocate the vacant places to younger children (aged 3 years to 4 8/12 of non-compulsory education in public kindergartens. Based on the revised criteria, priority is now given to children of asylum seekers and refugees. DK implemented alternative language stimulation activities for refugee children for a test period of two years (from 2016 to 2018). LV adopted the Regulation on procedures for providing educational opportunities for asylum seekers, including pre-school. HU has decided to reform day-nursery and kindergarten care and to increase the availability of early childhood care, as well as the number of children eligible for free catering in day-nurseries and kindergartens.

**In regard to access to schooling and other educational arrangements for minors AT, BE, CZ, DE and SI reported on new measures.** In AT, asylum seekers under the age of 25 can now start an apprenticeship in sectors that lack apprentices and skilled workers. Furthermore, Vienna provides 1000 asylum seekers and refugees aged between 15 and 21 with the necessary education to pursue further schooling or vocational education and training. BE reported an increase in the resources available for the integration of minor asylum seekers and refugees in the education system. In CZ eligible minors are offered a course on culture and democracy and DE now provides special language classes targeting migrants under the age of 27 as preparation for secondary school or higher education. SI launched websites on the integration of asylum seekers and refugees for school managements, teachers and parents as well as other professionals working with children and adolescents who applied for international protection.

**Concerning transport subsidies and vouchers only BG reported that free monthly bus cards are now available.** In many other Member States subsidies for transportation have already been provided before the reporting period.

**As regards language courses CZ, DE and LV integrated language classes into the general integration programme.** In CZ participants of the State Integration Programme are entitled to 400 hours Czech language lessons and in DE lessons up to the level B1 are available. In LV social workers and asylum seekers agree on a socio-economic integration plan, which includes basic language training. When registering as unemployed refugees and persons with alternative status in LV can now participate in language training (taught without intermediary language) up to the level of B2. However, the size and scope of language trainings largely varies. **AT and BE report on a significant increase in the resources available for language classes.** Co-funded by AMIF, CY provides Greek language classes for three different levels, with each level including 75 hours of language lessons. In BG beneficiaries of international protection attend 600 hours Bulgarian language course to reach level A2 or B1.

**In regard to legal advice CY, EE and HU reported on reforms.** CY harmonised its law with EU standards for the reception of applicants of international protection, concerning legal aid in court procedures. In EE asylum seekers are guaranteed daily counselling services, including legal advice,

upon the arrival to, and during their stay in, a detention centre or accommodation centre. Asylum seekers staying outside the accommodation centre or detention centre can also contact the counsellors in order to obtain the counselling service. HU amended its regulation to ensure the legal representation of unaccompanied minors within the shortest time possible (more details below).

**Regarding Job Counselling and Employment Services BE (Brussels Capital Region), BG, DE, LV and SI implemented programmes to support the access to the labour market of asylum seekers and refugees.** In BE (Brussels Capital Region) the "*Action Primo-Arrivant*" (action newcomers) is aimed at organising a smooth trajectory for the newcomer-jobseeker by matching the service offered and its partners. In BG the Refugees Employment and Training Programme is financed by the national budget and is aimed at the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the Bulgarian labour market by increasing their employability through Bulgarian language training, professional qualification courses and providing subsidized employment. In 2015 under this programme, 56 unemployed persons (Bulgarian citizens) were hired and 232 thousands BGN were provided. Funding for the immigrants' integration is provided as well under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" (OP HRD) 2014-2020 and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived. Among other DE programmes, the project "Prospects for Young Refugees", for example, offers young refugees guidance regarding the German vocational training and employment system. Young refugees are provided with information about pathways into the German vocational training and labour market, and how it is structured and functions. In LV individualised employment support is provided by the State Employment Agency (SEA). While registering in SEA as unemployed, the SEA will run an overall profiling of a refugee to identify a person's situation and what kind of active labour market policy measures are most appropriate to help the person to integrate into the labour market. Similarly, SI is currently implementing the first of two phases of active employment policy programmes. The current programme focuses on relevant contents when entering the Slovenian labour market (i.e. learning about the labour market in Slovenia, acquiring employment searching skills, recognising and assessing current knowledge and skills of the pilot's participants with a practical test and individual action plans). **BE (Wallonia) and AT earmarked an additional funding to support the socio-professional integration of refugees.** In DK, the government signed agreements with the social partners and municipalities with the aim to improve the framework for the labour market integration of refugees. Key initiatives include: better matching individual competences with local demands for labour in regards to future distribution of refugees, better screening and better sharing of information on skills, intensified job integration programme, etc.

**Regarding recognition of formal and informal qualifications and skills, BE (Flemish Region) as well as AT have implemented new skills testing procedures** to facilitate the recognition of qualification obtained in foreign countries. Furthermore, in BE (Flanders) additional funds have been reserved for the recognition and statement of equivalence of foreign degrees and for the development of a flexible procedure for refugees who are unable to present their diplomas and the required documents. In addition, on 26 June 2016 the government of the **Federation Wallonia-Brussels**

decided to launch at the start of the new academic year, a new alternative procedure for the recognition of higher education diplomas for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection that are unable to produce the normally required formal documents. Through this, it will be possible to organise interviews in order to confirm the level of education of the applicant. The procedure will be free. **AT also introduced an Act of authentication of education and training (*Anerkennungsgesetz*)**. A One-stop-Shop to apply for authentication as well as legal provisions for the contact points (*Anlaufstellen*) were established. The contact points give guidance to applicants and help them through the recognition process. Furthermore special regulations for refugees, who may not always have all the required documents at hand, were created. **In BG the government adopted a new National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration for 2015-2020**, which includes a focus on the recognition of qualifications. As for now, the State Agency for Refugees consults foreigners on the recognition of professional qualifications obtained in the country of origin. **DE expanded the "Integration through Qualification" funding programme** in the 2015-2018 programming period to include the priority area "ESF training measures under the Recognition Act". The aim is for people with foreign professional qualifications to more frequently take up employment which reflects their training. **Furthermore, DE developed the KOMPAS programme (*Kompetenzfeststellung, frühzeitige Aktivierung und Spracherwerb*: identification of skills, early activation and language acquisition)** to bring together integration courses and labour market policies.

**As regards orientation and integration courses BG, CY, CZ, DE, LV and NL reported on the implementation of new integration and orientation courses, as well as the expansion of existing measures.** **BG** initiated various projects aimed at cultural orientation, initial adaptation and integration. **CY** has started several projects to support the orientation and integration of refugees, all of which are financed by the AMIF. **CZ** implemented a new concept of the integration programme for beneficiaries of international protection, which focuses on learning the Czech language, joining the labour market, housing, education and retraining. As part of the new Integration Act, **DE** has put an increased focus on providing integration courses to newly arrived asylum applicants. Courses are now open, to applicants with good prospects of staying and certain tolerated persons. The integration course is the key service offered by the state to promote migrants' lasting linguistic and social integration. In the **NL** the courses for the Orientation on the Labour Market (OLM) were broadened and the budget for social orientation was expanded. In **LV** the NGO "Safe House" ensures training courses and informative measures for persons under international protection.

**In regard to pre-departure measures only, BE reported that it began to provide 3 days cultural orientation trainings** for each resettlement group in the country of departure. The main goal of this training is to allow the refugees to make an informed decision on being resettled in Belgium and to manage their expectations regarding their life in Belgium. No other Member State has reported any significant reforms.

The following Member States report on the policy reforms related to the arrival of unaccompanied minor: **BE, BG, CZ, CY, DE, HU, LV, SE and SI.**

**BG** and **HU** implemented policy measures regulating **the legal representation of unaccompanied minors**. In order to ensure the legal representation of unaccompanied minors within the shortest time possible, the **HU** regulation was amended as of 1 August 2015, by obligating the public guardianship authority to assign a child protection guardian for unaccompanied minors, within eight days of receiving the request from the asylum authority. Similarly, in **BG**, unaccompanied minors who seek or have been granted international protection will be appointed a representative from the municipal administration, designated by the mayor of the municipality or by an official empowered thereby. Training for foster parents' trainers to provide specialized foster care for children from this target group was also organized in 2015 in **BG**.

In order to **enhance the protection of minors living in centres under the Asylum Act**, **DE** has implemented a procedure whereby persons working in these centres who are involved in the supervision, care, education or vocational training of minors are required to submit an extended certificate of good conduct. In **LV**, according to the amendments of 1 December 2015 to the Social Services and Social Assistance Law, minor asylum seekers that suffer from violence are entitled to receive social rehabilitation. In the design of the new Asylum Law, adopted in December 2015, special attention was paid to the identification of unaccompanied minors that could be victims of human trafficking.

**BE**, **CY**, **HU**, **SE**, and **SI** have faced significant increases in the number of unaccompanied minors and the need to make **specific arrangements for accommodation, including measures to expand the capacity of reception centers, care and housing services**.

**CY** provides housing to unaccompanied minors through a mix of government and NGO managed institutions due to the increasing numbers of arrivals. Apart from shelter and support services, emphasis is given to social integration with a strong role for NGOs in the development of social integration programmes. In **SE**, since 1 January 2016, under the Social Services Act, children and young persons aged between 16 and 20 in need for accommodation and support, but not in need of care or treatment, can be offered supported accommodations. The youngest unaccompanied children are foremost placed in foster homes in **SE**. The National Board of Health and Welfare, has been tasked with initiating and coordinating initiatives to raise awareness regarding foster homes – both for potential hosting families and unaccompanied minors. **SI** is in the process of implementing a one-year pilot project (ending 31 July 2017) to provide a more suitable regulation in the field of care and housing. It includes accommodation in two public residence halls for secondary school students for unaccompanied minors who reside in **SI** illegally or have the status of international protection applicant or of internationally protected person.

**BE** applies a specific reception model for unaccompanied minors in three phases: 1) observation and orientation facilities; 2) specific sections in collective reception centres or collective reception facilities; 3) individual reception facilities in Local Reception Initiatives. Temporary reception facilities have been created for unaccompanied minors with difficulties/problematic behaviour in general reception facilities. But due to the increase in arrivals, applying this model has not been possible at all times. In addition, facilities have been created to accommodate unaccompanied minors who

are undergoing age assessment. A pilot call for foster families was launched end of 2015 due to the steep increase in the number of very young unaccompanied minors (under 12 years of age). The initiative became operational in October 2015 and, in May 2016, 37 foster care places were available. From October 2015 the contact points that facilitate the transfer of unaccompanied minors to youth care were reinforced. The capacity for the residential reception of young unaccompanied minors, specifically of very young unaccompanied minors, was increased by 18 places (operational since January 2016). In **BG** unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees fall under the category "children at risk" and therefore are entitled to protection under the child protection system. The following protection measures should be taken in case of identifying children at risk, including refugee children: accommodation in family of close relatives or friends, accommodation in foster families, in social services providing residential care - Crisis centers, Centers for family-type accommodation, Homes for children deprived from parental care. It is important to note that social services for children up to 18 years of age or until graduation from high school but no later than 20 years of age are free of charge. **HU** implemented numerous legislative changes in 2015 to recognise the need of special care of unaccompanied minors. Administrative staff of the child protection specialised service was increased. Unaccompanied minors arriving to HU are given the same provision and care as any children with Hungarian citizenship placed in the child protection system or young adults entitled to after-care provision, with their special needs taken into account.

In the field of **education**, still in **BG**, the new Pre-school and School Education Act establishes that school-age children seeking or having received international protection will be provided – if needed – with additional teaching in the BG language under conditions and procedure defined by the State educational standard for learning the Bulgarian literary language and the State educational standard for financing the institutions. The standard is currently being developed and will be applied to the new academic year 2016/2017. It will include learning Bulgarian language as a foreign language at school under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Similarly, the **LV** government is providing intensive Latvian language immersion for minor asylum seekers and once the refugee status is recognized and the transfer to the residence municipality decided, the policy includes joining a Latvian school. The new Asylum Law strengthens the obligation that the minor must receive education in state official language.

#### **2.4. Housing inclusion and support**

Several Member States (**BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, LU, LV, NL, SE and SI**) reported on recent measures taken during the reporting period that specifically target applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. In many cases such changes were due to the increase in the number of applicants.

A few Member States (**DE, DK and NL**) have increased their support to municipalities. In **DE**, the *Länder* are receiving €500 million in additional compensation payments in 2016 to fund social housing. Similarly, in 2016, **DK** has allocated more funding by the state party to the municipalities in order to ensure adequate housing of the larger number of incoming refugees. In the **NL**, two

major agreements were signed between the national and local government concerning housing, integration, participation, education and healthcare for refugees (> € 700 million).

Some countries (BE, CY, DK, EE, LU, LV and SI) have provided or plan to provide new facilities or to improve the capacity and standards of existing ones. In CY, in 2015, the Ministry of Interior operated, for a few months, the Emergency Reception Centre for persons who may be in need of international protection, following group arrivals/rescues by sea during the months of September-November 2015, of persons who later applied for international protection. There are plans to establish a second reception centre in an urban area, which will be used for the housing of vulnerable asylum seekers. A few projects co-funded under ERF and implemented in 2015 supported increased capacity and services supplementary to the accommodation services offered at the Kofinou Reception Centre. In BE the capacity of the reception network (covering the entire Belgian territory) has been adapted to the inflow and outflow of applicants of international protection<sup>16</sup>. In LV, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs is implementing from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017 the project "Support measures for reception and accommodation in Latvia of persons in need of international protection", which aims to raise standards of reception of asylum seekers in the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre and to strengthen the capacity of the asylum procedure<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, as of December 2015, due to amendments to Social Services and Social Assistance Law, persons having alternative status (i.e. subsidiary protection) and their family members are now entitled to receive a housing benefit from the social service of the local government as available to other respective local residents. In DK, some amendments to the Danish Aliens Act adopted in the second half of 2015 make it possible to derogate from the Danish Planning Act and to make use of real estate owned by public authorities (municipalities, regions and independent institutions) to house asylum seekers. Furthermore, tent camps have been established to accommodate asylum seekers (only for single men). In LU, since 2015/2016, the Agency responsible for social housing has made available for refugees several habitations. These families are supported by the new (June 2016) service for integration and social cohesion - LISKO. In addition, the National Committee for the social defence (*Comité National de Défense sociale asb*) has launched the pilot project "*Structure de meubles*": furniture is collected from private people and is made available to disadvantaged groups, including families of refugees. Within the project, activation measures for refugees are also foreseen. In EE, the Ministry of Social Affairs concluded agreements with real estate companies who assist beneficiaries of international protection arriving in the framework of resettlement and relocation in finding dwellings from open market. SI has prepared contingency plans to increase accommodation capacity should the

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<sup>16</sup>In July 2016 the Federal Government adopted a plan to reduce the capacity of the reception network with +/- 10.000 reception places by April 2017 in view of the sharp drop in asylum applications.

<sup>17</sup> Activities planned in the project: support for asylum seekers (material, psychological, medical, informational assistance, translation); renovating and widening of Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre for a larger number of asylum seekers (building construction, equipment); training of staff involved in the area of asylum (EU training, forums, seminars); equipment of premises for interviewing asylum seekers; 24-hour security of buildings and the territory of the Asylum Seekers Accommodation Centre.

number of international protection applicants increase further. This plan was confirmed in July 2015 by the Government<sup>18</sup>.

**A few countries (BE, CZ, DE, DK and EE) have made changes to the rules determining where applicants and beneficiaries can be accommodated.** In 2015, BE prepared a mandatory geographical dispersal plan but, given the rapid reduction in the arrivals of new asylum seekers, it was decided not to activate it. In addition, in **Flanders**, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court (June 2015), the Flemish Housing Code will be adapted to allow asylum seekers to join their relatives in a social renting house, awaiting the decision on their application, without the obligation to fulfil the requirements normally required to people who want to join relatives in a social renting house. In **EE**, the new activity plan for resettlement and relocation emphasises that in choosing the first living places for beneficiaries of international protection, person's needs (for example needs for social services, health care services, support person services and adaptation programme), possibilities for employment, best interests of children (including the availability of schools and childcare), integration indexes of local governments and local governments readiness to offer services for successful coping are taken into account. **DE** has introduced a three-year legal obligation for recognised refugees, persons with asylum status and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection<sup>19</sup> to take up residence in the Land to which they are initially sent during the asylum process<sup>20</sup>, applied retroactively from 1 January 2016. This regulation does not apply to persons who are in jobs with compulsory social insurance coverage, enrolled in vocational training or undertaking university studies. In support of integration, a legal basis has also been established for a ban on moving to areas with a particular risk of segregation, a provision has been introduced allowing the residency requirement to be lifted and a hardship clause has been created. **CZ** has updated the State Integration Programme (SIP) integration programme for refugees, in force since 1 January 2016. Under SIP – which each beneficiary of international protection can enter upon request – eligible persons can first make use of the accommodation possibilities offered in State-owned integration asylum centres for a period of up to 18 months. They are obliged to pay, on a regular basis, the agreed fees for accommodation and utility consumption. Assistance in housing, employment, language and further education is subsequently provided within an individual integration plan. Assistance in social field is provided as well. In the second stage, persons and families benefiting from international protection are permanently placed in a municipality in the country, usually in a region of their choice. They are entitled to the reimbursement of entry costs (security deposit, payment of rent for the first two months, necessary essential furniture and other

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<sup>18</sup> In accordance with the contingency plan for expanding accommodation capacities, two branches of the asylum centre were opened at the location of the former single-person housing centre of the Ministry of the Interior, with a capacity for 96 persons, and the multi-purpose facility of the Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief in Logatec, with an accommodation facility for up to 100 persons.

<sup>19</sup> In Germany, a person applies for asylum, then the competent authority decides which specific status of international protection is granted (accepted asylum [stricter criteria to obtain it], refugee, subsidiary protection or tolerated person). Therefore, in Germany beneficiaries of international protection includes recognised refugees, persons with asylum status and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

<sup>20</sup> In cases where integration is hindered by living conditions in initial reception centres or other temporary accommodation, the Länder authorities may assign those affected to another location within the Land, usually within six months of recognition.

fittings for the dwelling, etc.). Similarly, in **DK**, as part of the two agreements signed in March 2016 with social partners and 98 municipalities, employment opportunities will be a key variable in determining the allocation of individuals across municipalities. The future distribution will focus on better matching of individual competences and local demands for labour.

## 2.5. Obligations, Flexibility and Continuity of Services

In regard to obligations asylum seekers and refugees need to fulfil during their integration path **BE** (Flanders and Wallonia), **CZ**, **EE**, **LV** and **DE** decided to implement mandatory integration and language measures, some in combination with sanctions on social benefits for non-compliance. In **BE** (Flanders and Wallonia) have implemented obligatory integration courses, in Brussels courses are still voluntary. In **CZ** beneficiary of international protection may join the State Integration Programme, in such case, an individual integration plan is developed and must be followed for 6-12 months. In **DE** asylum applicants with good prospects of staying, certain tolerated persons and persons with a residence permit can be required to attend an integration course, if they receive benefits under the Act on Benefits for Asylum Applicants. In addition, persons with asylum status, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can also be required to attend an integration course. Refusing to participate in or dropping out of refugee integration measures and mandatory integration courses without good cause will in future result in limits to benefits. In **EE** refugees at the age of 18 to the retirement age who are fit for work are now required to participate in the Estonian language training. In **LV** legislative amendments are underway in order to make registration at the State Employment Agency and hence participation in ALMPs and other activation measures mandatory as precondition for receiving the benefit for refugees and persons with alternative status.

As regards benefits of integration measures for family members both **DE** and **BE** reported that family members belong to the target group of the integration programmes provided. **DE** furthermore provides integration courses for migrants who are unable to attend a general integration course for family or cultural reasons.

Concerning the continuity of services and the timeframe in which the beneficiaries of international protection are allowed to apply for social protection and services **BG**, **CZ** and **DK** reported on reforms. In **BG** refugee can be provided with financial support for housing for a period of up to six months from the date of coming into effect of the decision granting status. In **CZ** a new two-phase programme for accommodation has been developed under the SIP (see point 3.4). The most substantial reform was reported from **DK**. There a new integration benefit was introduced in September 2015 for newly-arrived Danish nationals and foreigners and who have not lived in Denmark for at least seven of the past eight years (EU citizens who fulfil EU regulations on free movement of workers are exempt from this regulation). The integration benefit is levelled to 50 percent of to the maximum social assistance (which is means-tested). In order to incentivise better integration, the benefit will be increased after passing a Danish language exam. Persons who receive the integration benefit may also be entitled to receive other forms of financial support such as housing subsidies or assistance in special cases (individual expenses, health care, dental care



etc.). In addition, it is possible to be granted support for housing and getting settled, and in the course of the first two years families will gradually be eligible for the full child benefits. Furthermore, foreign nationals who have been granted residency have full access to the universal and free Danish education and healthcare system. In April 2016 a Job Reform was introduced; it caps the total social assistance (reducing additional housing support if a certain threshold is reached) and introduces a 225 hour-rule, whereby a social assistance recipient who is able to work needs to work 225 hours within one year. Both the Job Reform and the Integration benefit aim at increasing the economic incentive to join the labour market. The initiatives are expected to have a substantial impact on people with migrant background, as they are significantly overrepresented in the group of people who receive social assistance.

## 2.6. Combating discrimination and reducing segregation

The following MS have introduced measures aimed at combating **discrimination and reducing segregation**: **BE, LV, FI, EE and DK**.

In **BE**, the Royal decree of 18 November 2015 installed a Commission of Experts (representatives of the judiciary, the legal profession, the social partners and experts designated by the competent ministers) that will evaluate the application and the effectiveness of the antidiscrimination laws covering the whole population. Their evaluation report due in the course of 2016 will be the basis for the reform of the existing antidiscrimination legislation. Moreover, by the end of this legislature (2019) a National Institute on Human Rights will be set up in BE.

In **Flanders** work is ongoing regarding the conclusion of an integration pact between local authorities, the media, education partners and associations of people with a migrant background in view of combating direct and indirect discrimination and racism. In the **Federation Wallonia-Brussels**, under the 6th State reform, the *Fonds d'Impulsion à la Politique des Immigrés* (FIPI) [Fund to Promote Immigration Policies] was discontinued and its resources were transferred in part to the federated entities which assume this mission henceforth under their respective competences. Against this background, the French-speaking Community has redefined the objectives and the allocation of funding and has adopted a new work environment, the "*Projets de Promotion de la Citoyenneté et de l'Interculturalité*" (PCI) [Projects for the Promotion of Citizenship and Interculturalism]. A first call for proposals was adopted in June 2015, along three lines: Civic education, Intercultural dialogue, promotion of diversity and the fight against racism, and Rights of Migrants. 160 projects were selected for this call, for an amount of €1,450,000. A new call for proposals was issued in May 2016.

In **EE** in July 2014, the Government tasked the Ministry of Social Affairs with preparing a development and action plan in the areas of social security, inclusion and equal opportunities for the years 2016-2023. The preparatory process, which was based on broad public consultations and the Welfare Development Plan 2016-2023 and that also covers the area of employment, was adopted on 30 June 2016. The objectives of the non-discrimination policy in this strategy include 1) ensuring effective legal protection on all grounds of discrimination, 2) awareness rising among different relevant target groups and 3) non-discrimination mainstreaming at national level.

In **FI** in early 2016, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment launched an initiative entitled "TRUST – Good Relations in Finland to promote non-discrimination of asylum seekers in municipalities and counties where asylum seekers have been placed". The initiative aims at developing and testing good practices, both at reception centres and in municipalities, to strengthen and maintain good relations and mutual respect. The initiative will be implemented at seven reception centres across the country in 2016-2018. These centres are newly established reception centres that have faced negative attitudes and resistance from the local community. In this context, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are given information on non-discrimination and gender equality legislation and on Finnish integration policy. Beneficiaries of international protection also are targeted with activities supporting their early integration, such as voluntary work. The reception centres involved are trained on measures to strengthen good relations both in the centre and with the local community. NGOs and other civil society actors at local level participate in the promotion of good relations through local events, media campaigns and sports activities, for example. Municipalities are encouraged to include measures promoting good relations in their equal opportunities strategies.

**FI** and **DK** have identified **some of the main obstacles that prevent asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection from fully exercising their rights**. In particular in **FI**, the following obstacles have been listed: lack of language (including English) skills, lack of education (including illiteracy), lack of familiarity with the service provision and service-usage, which is also negatively affected by the lack of Arabic interpreters, making it more difficult for the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection to interact with public authorities, thus hindering the processing of applications. A lack of trust in public authorities and lack of information have also been named by **FI** as obstacles. Indeed in order to tackle the latter, **DK** has recently introduced new mandatory course for asylum seekers aged 16-17 on basic democratic rights, gender equality, women's rights and gender relations.