



Financial Assistance and Support Services for Asylum Seekers across the EU

On 11/12/2014 the UK House of Commons submitted an inquiry to the ECPRD network (ECPRD request n°. 2711) regarding the financial and logistical support for asylum-seekers in EU Member States. The answers, presented in this edition of the Spotlight publication, cover the conditions in 23 Member States¹. Asylum seekers are third country nationals, present on the territory of the EU, who have filed a claim for international protection from persecution in their countries of origin, on the grounds laid out in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, more specifically on the basis of: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion.

In addition to this international standard, the EU has extended its asylum policy through the Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011) to also incorporate subsidiary protection for those people who do not qualify for refugee status, under the aforementioned auspices but who, nonetheless, would be at risk of suffering maltreatment, if returned to their country of origin. In 2013, a Common European Asylum System was introduced, comprising of five key legislative acts² which deal with the very technical details of filing and examining asylum requests and the rights of the asylum-seeker during the procedure³. With this common basis, it is still up to each individual Member State to determine the amount of financial aid and the precise forms of infrastructural support available to asylum seekers.

1. Accommodation

All of the 23 Member States that have replied to the request provide asylum seekers with accommodation. Upon arrival, accommodation is usually offered in reception centres. Asylum seekers are exclusively housed in centres specifically designed for this purpose in Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain. Asylum seekers in Germany are lodged in reception centres at the beginning of the procedure, for a period of time from 6 weeks up to 3 months, after which they can either be housed in communal centres or in rented flats or rooms.

Asylum seekers can also be entitled to private housing or facilities different from reception centres, as is the case in Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovenia. This option is usually available under special circumstances such as on the grounds of maintaining the family unity, or for sake of protection of the asylum seekers, or where there is a lack of space in a reception centre.

The customary practice is that in case the asylum seekers needs private housing (according to their special needs), they receive an amount of money that varies from country to country. The choice of accommodation also influences the amount of the monthly allowances that the Member States give to those undergoing the asylum procedure. This will be further explained in the section dedicated to the allowances.

2. Food

Asylum seekers are generally offered full board within accommodation facilities. This is what the Belgian model calls "Bed, bread, bath". It is indeed general practice that these three needs - accommodation, food and sanitary health - are covered. In some cases, fees are charged for meals, but this is usually the case for the asylum seekers who live outside of the accommodation centre or who receive a more substantial allowance from the state. In other cases, such as in Finland, asylum seekers can choose whether to have meals or not at the reception centres.

¹ The parliaments of Bulgaria, Latvia, the Netherlands, Malta and Sweden did not reply to the request.

² The Qualification Directive, The Asylum Procedure Directive, The Reception Conditions Directive, The Dublin III Regulation (establishes that the first Member States entered is the responsible one for processing the asylum claim) and the EURODAC Regulation (concerns a fingerprint database which enables the implementation of the Dublin Regulation).

³ Which according to the new legislation in place, may not last longer than 6 months.

3. Financial Assistance

All Member States grant some financial support to asylum seekers during the period in which the procedures establishing their status are unfolding. Each Member State has a **different allowances regime** for asylum seekers, reflecting the different variables and different costs of living in each national context. The calculations behind this allowance usually take into account whether or not the asylum seekers are provided with full board (accommodation and food) and whether or not they have the legal right to work in that country, as well as their age, marital status and special needs.

This Spotlight will use as its unit of measure the allowances received by an individual, who is single and aged over 18, in the different Member States. We will then make concrete references as to how this relates to the calculations of allowances for families and minors.

Some Member States calculate the allowance based on the cost of living in that country, such that in the Czech Republic, the allowance equates to a minimum living wage; in Estonia it is the minimum consumption expenditure (€90), with each second member of the family receiving 80% of this sum and the children receiving an additional €15 and in Hungary it is 10% of the smallest amount of the old-age retirement pension.

The allowances received by an asylum seeker, who is provided with food and housing, varies within the EU from €10/month in Lithuania and €13/month in Croatia (including the right to work), to €143 in Germany and €91-718/month in France, (depending on family composition and special needs). Within this range there is a very mixed spectrum of options among EU Member States. Meals are a key factor in the calculation and thus, for those asylum seekers who do not receive meals as part of their provided services, the money received increases to €27/month in the case of Romania to €227/month for Germany to €14.71 in the case of Finland. The other EU Member States are somewhere between these limits, as shown in the table at the end of this document.

Allowances are further increased when accommodation is not provided. A good example in this regard is Italy, where an asylum applicant for whom it is not possible to find a place in a reception centre can receive up to €76, an aggregate sum for the sums received within the first 35 days from arrival, if accommodation in the centres cannot be provided.

EU Member States vary on their approach to allowances for children and most importantly, in their assumptions regarding age categories. For example, in Ireland a minor asylum seeker over 12 receives the same allowance as an adult in the same situation, whereas in Germany there are 3 categories of age for minors (up to 6, between 6-14 and 14-18) each being entitled to different allowances, respecting the age progression. The range for minors varies from €19.06/month in Spain to €201/month in Germany. Also, a major difference is between the Member States that provide more for minors than for individual adults (Hungary, Estonia, UK) and those that provide less (Germany, Spain).

Financial support for school supplies and education falls under a special regime of allowances (Austria, Hungary, Spain). In Austria, this amount is 200€ year and in Spain the amount can go up to a maximum of 250€ per person. Additionally, Spain commits itself to funding the cost of tuition for university studies for asylum-seekers, for a maximum amount of 1,364.31€person.

Following status determination

Most Member States continue the support of asylum seekers for a limited amount of time following the conclusion of the status determination procedures, at rates usually identical with those prior to those before the conclusion of procedures. If granted Refugee Status, integration programs are set into motion, which can last from 4 months (Austria) to 8 years in the Czech Republic (regarding housing only). Usually the continued aid is dependent on the attendance of either languages or training classes, as is the case in Spain, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Slovenia, the asylum-seekers granted refugees status benefit of a one-time financial assistance cash payment, which is the equivalent of the basic minimum income.

If denied Refugee Status on the basis of incompatibility with the Geneva Convention criteria, asylum-seekers may still be eligible for subsidiary protection, according to EU law. However, regardless of the outcome of this option, the support for them continues for a limited amount of time ranging from 21 days in the UK, to several months in the other Member States, provided that they continue to cooperate with the authorities (Austria, Poland, Czech Republic).

4. Healthcare

Asylum seekers are allowed the same medical care as any other EU national of a Member State in: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Poland (except for specific treatment in a health resort), Portugal, Romania and Spain (on an ad hoc basis). Asylum seekers have access to medical care through the reception centres' facilities in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Italy and Slovakia. In the Czech Republic asylum seekers are entitled to partial medical and psychological services. In Denmark, only children of asylum seekers are entitled to the same healthcare provision as children who are residents, adults being covered by the Danish Immigration Service for emergencies only. In Hungary the asylum seekers are entitled to use specific health care services as family doctor service and full emergency coverage including pregnancy and obstetrical care. Spain and the UK give child-birth allowances.

5. Clothing

Member States provide clothing either within the accommodation facilities, or they give a special allowance to the asylum seeker. In the first group are Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia. Asylum seekers receive an allowance for clothing in Austria (€150/year), Denmark, Poland (a one-off financial assistance allowance or coupons for the purchase of clothing and footwear) and Spain (€81/season/person for a maximum two seasons a year).

6. Education & Training

Access to education, as a human right, is respected for asylum seekers but it is understood to mean very different things from one Member State to the other, going from full access to the country's educational system, to specific classes organised for integration purposes to very basic support. Full access to education is offered by Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland (where children have access to education and care by public institutions), Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. In Denmark, children between 7 and 16 are offered special courses at, or in affiliation with, the asylum centre. Newly-arrived asylum seekers are required to attend an introductory course to the Danish Language, culture and society.

Additionally, some Member States offer specific sector-based education. Belgium offers training courses during the first 6 months allowing adult asylum seekers to attend language courses, cooking classes and IT lessons. Hungary reimburses educational expenses in the reception facility. Slovakia and the Czech Republic provide language lessons. The support to university studies varies from State to State, going from no financial support, as it is the case for Ireland where asylum seekers are not entitled to free third-level education, to the coverage of University tuition, as it is the case for Spain.

7. Right to Work

The right to work is recognized by the following Member States: Finland (after 3 months from the submission of the asylum request), Belgium (after 6 months), Croatia, Cyprus (limited to certain sectors), Denmark, where an asylum seeker who is over 18 and meets certain conditions, can apply to the Danish Immigration Centre to approve an offer of employment, Finland (after 3-6 months depending on which documents the asylum seekers have with them), Greece, Slovenia and Spain. Slovenia grants the right to work only after 9 months from the day of submission of the asylum seeker's documents.

8. Public Transport

Some Member States refund a part of the expenses for specific forms of transport. Such is the case for Austria (if travelling for health issues or going to school), Denmark (to and from meetings with officials, healthcare providers, etc.), Finland (local transport), Hungary (in the form of a travel discount), Lithuania (when the use of public transport is connected with the processing of the application), Luxembourg (all over the grand Duchy), Poland (in order to take part in the proceedings, for health issues, other particularly justified cases), Portugal and Spain (monthly allowance or any other evidence of payment of public transport within the province of residence).

Member State	Accommodation		Financial Assistance (approx. €/month)			Clothing (€/month)	Education & Training	Food (€/month)	Health Care (€/month)		Public Transport	Work	Legal Assistance/ Interpretation
	Centres	Private Housing	Individual	Spouse	Minor (18)				Full	Partial			
Austria	✓	✓	40	same	90	150/Y	Full	✓ /200 or 90	✓		Ad Hoc		
Belgium	✓		207	same	123	✓	Full			✓		✓	✓ / Yes
Croatia	✓		13	n/a	n/a	✓	Full	✓	✓			✓	
Cyprus	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	Full	✓	✓			✓	
Czech R.	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a		Limited	✓		✓			
Denmark	✓	✓		n/a	n/a		Limited	✓			Ad Hoc	✓	
Estonia	✓		90	72	105		n/a	✓					
Finland	✓	✓	92.25	75.9	59	✓	n/a	✓		✓	Yes	✓	✓ /Yes
France	✓	✓	91-340.5	Max 718	n/a		n/a						
Germany	✓	✓	143	129	92	✓	n/a			✓			
Greece	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a		Full	✓	✓			✓	
Hungary	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	✓	Limited			✓	Travel Discount		
Ireland	✓	✓	80	same	40		Full (w/o University)	✓	✓			X	
Italy	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a		n/a	✓		✓			
Lithuania	✓		10	same	same	✓	Full (below 18yrs old)	✓			Ad Hoc		✓ /Yes
Luxembourg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		n/a	✓		✓	National		
Poland	✓	✓	13-26 (50-100Zl)*	✓	✓	140PLN*	Full	✓	✓		Ad Hoc		
Portugal	✓		✓	n/a	n/a	€	Full	✓	✓		€		
Romania	✓		20.39 (3Ron/day)	n/a	n/a		n/a		✓				
Slovakia	✓				n/a		Limited	✓		✓			✓ / Yes
Slovenia	✓		✓	n/a	n/a	✓	Full	✓				✓	✓ / Yes
Spain	✓		51.60	same	19.06	181.7/season	Full	✓	Ad Hoc		✓	✓	✓ / Yes
United-Kingdom	✓		£36.62	£72.52 (per couple)	£39.80 or £52.96 (under 16)		n/a	n/a	n/a		For medical purposes	n/a	n/a

* EP in-house conversion to euro

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