

EASO Query System

PCY.2020.001 Summary report

PCY.2020.001 - Digitalisation of communications with asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection

Query type: **Policy**
Date of report: 06/11/2020
Date of query: 09/01/2020
Requesting entity: France

Dissemination policy: **Restricted** to national asylum administrations.

For any questions, please contact queries@easo.europa.eu. This query summary report is also available on the EASO Information and Documentation System ([IDS](#)) and the Management Board (MB) restricted area on the [EASO website](#).

Response rate: 21 out of 32 EU+ countries

Countries that replied: AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI and SK

Background information/reason for asking query

OFPRA, the French determining authority, is leading a project to computerise processes for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. Some functions can already be performed online, such as reporting a change of address. Since the Law of 10 September 2018, invitations to a personal interview can be sent electronically.

Under the current project, an applicant/beneficiary is assigned a user account and he/she can follow the progress of the file and receive notifications about the decision. France would like to learn from similar initiatives undertaken by other EU+ countries.



Methodological note

A draft of this summary report was circulated for comments to all 22 EU+ countries which contributed to the original query. Two countries (BE, SE)¹ sent their comments which were incorporated to the final version of the report.

The responses submitted by participating EU+ countries are included as an attachment.

Main highlights

- Out of 22 responding EU+ countries, only 3 (**FR, NL and SE**) have **established computerised systems** for applicants for international protection, while 7 (**AT, BE, IE, PT, SE and DE**) are **planning to establish computerised systems** in the future.
- Both **file follow-up/information on progress** and **notification of change of address** are the **most commonly digitalised** steps of the asylum procedure. Other processes which are frequently digitalised include: request for additional documents, invitation to the personal interview, notification of the decision, communication with the applicant's legal representative or with already recognised beneficiaries of international protection, and consulting personal information registered in the application.
- While the **majority of IT solutions are tailor-made for asylum applicants**, in some EU+ countries (e.g. **NL**) **the services are part of the general system** in which citizens of a given country communicate digitally with their government.
- Among technical solutions selected for the purpose of digitalising communication with applicants, EU+ countries most commonly make use of **online platforms, online forms and user accounts**.
- Only **FR** has made and **DE** plans to make **regulatory or legislative changes to set up a computerised system**.
- The **COVID-19 outbreak** at the beginning of 2020 (after this query was disseminated) **had a major impact on a digitalisation of first and second instance procedures in many EU+ countries** (e.g. **AT, BE, FR, EL, CZ, FI and SE**). This resulted in some countries establishing electronic tools and/or portals of digital services in the framework of the asylum procedure (e.g. **FI**) or to roll-out planned computerised systems sooner than expected (e.g. **AT and BE**). Institutions operating in the area of asylum resorted to digital means such as **(semi-) automated systems of registration** of basic data supporting the making/lodging process, **electronic tools that allow applicants to check the status of their application, notification of decisions** and various **systems of electronic data-sharing and processing** (submission of additional documents via electronic tools and electronic case files) (see also EASO's "COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems" – Issue [1](#) and [2](#), 2 June, 15 July 2020).

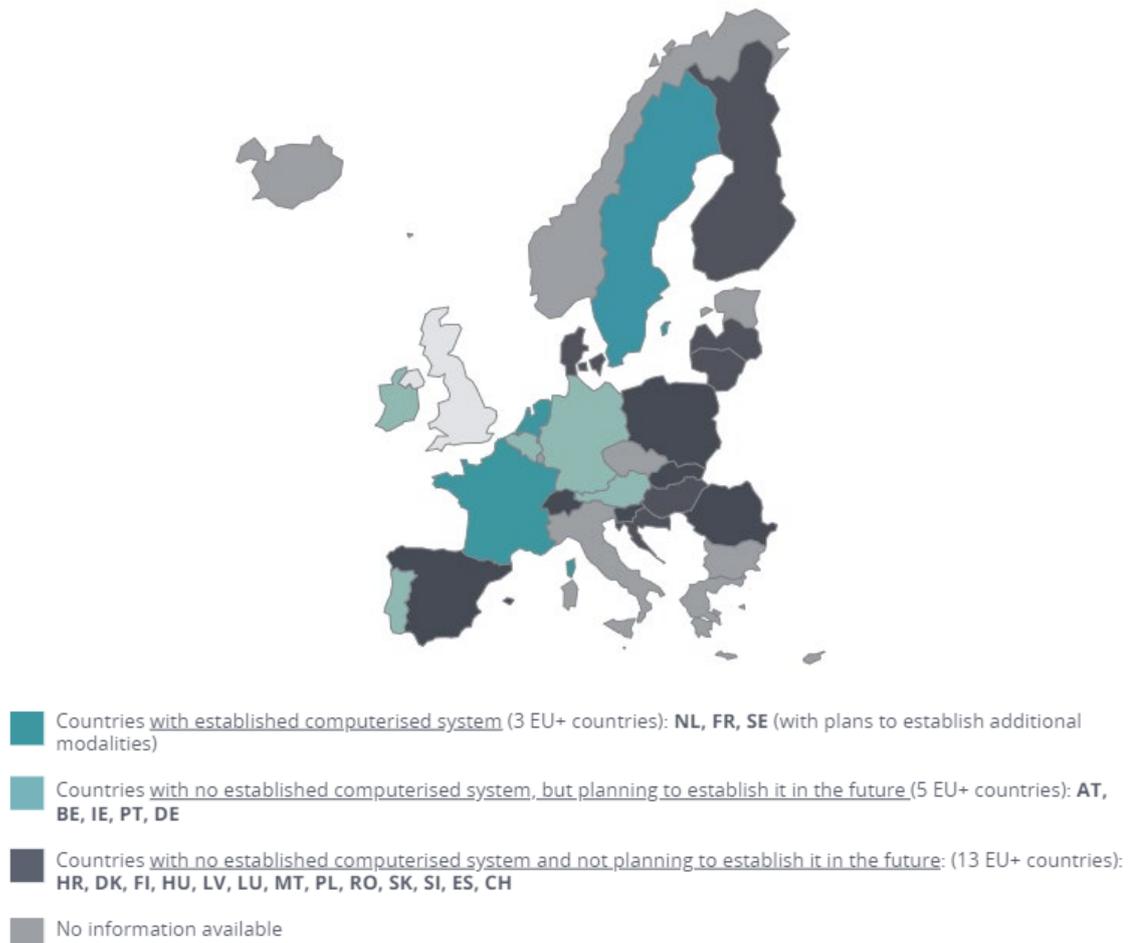
¹ As of 1 February 2020, the United Kingdom (UK) is no longer part of the European Union. The UK has therefore not been requested to review and validate the draft summary report. The UK input in this query has been incorporated as originally provided.

Summary of replies to the query

Established (or planned to be established) computerised system for applicants for international protection

Out of 22 responding EU+ countries, only 3 (**FR**, **NL** and **SE**²) have established computerised systems for applicants for international protection, while 6 (**AT**, **BE**³, **IE**, **PT** and **DE**⁴)⁵ are planning to establish computerised systems in the future (for ease of reference, in the following sections of the reports, these countries will be marked with an asterix “*”) (see Map 1).

Map 1. Existence of computerised systems in the framework of the asylum procedure



Computerised steps of the asylum procedure

Both file follow-up/information on progress and notification of change of address are the most commonly digitalised steps of the asylum procedure (see Table 1). Other processes which are frequently digitalised include: request for additional documents, invitation to the personal interview, notification of the decision, communication with the

² Apart from the already existing systems, **SE** is also planning to set up additional modalities.

³ **BE**: Recognised refugees, social services employees, municipal employees and lawyers acting on behalf of a recognised refugee, can request civil status documents online: e.g. refugee certificate, birth certificate, marriage certificate. These documents are sent by post to the applicant. It is not a computerised system per se but rather a “written procedure” facilitated via e-mail.

⁴ **DE**: Existing systems are used by employees of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and support communication with applicants, e.g. via standardised messages or post.

⁵ **CH** clarified that, due to considerable delays in adapting their IT system to the recently amended legal framework (changes in asylum law entered into force on 1 March 2019), no further IT-related initiatives can be planned at the moment.



applicant’s legal representative or with already recognised beneficiaries of international protection, and consulting personal information registered in the application.

Table 1. Computerised steps of the asylum procedure

Submission of an application (0 EU+ countries)	-
Invitation to the personal interview (4 EU+ countries)	AT*, IE*, PT*, FR (planning phase)
File follow-up and information on progress (6 EU+ countries)	AT*, FR (under development), DE*, IE*, NL, PT*
Request for additional documents (4 EU+ countries)	AT*, DE*, IE*, PT*
Notification of change of address (6 EU+ countries)	AT*, FR, DE*, IE*, NL, PT*
Notification of the decision (4 EU+ countries)	AT*, IE*, NL, SE (e-service on the website of the Swedish Migration Agency available for applicants which allows them to check if SMA has made a decision on an application)
Other (3 EU+ countries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BE* (CGRA wants to implement an electronic portal for the applicant’s lawyer and for beneficiaries of international protection); • NL (applicants can see what personal information is registered, such as name, date of birth; a notification can be received when a residence permit expires); • SE (the following modalities exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-service on the website of the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) available for public counsellors. It is used for making appointments for personal interview together with the applicant for international protection and for submitting documents to SMA by the public counsellor. The e-service is restricted to the use of public counsellors due to possibility to authenticate the user. - E-service on the website of the Swedish Migration Agency available for applicants which allows them to make an online appointment to collect identity cards and to apply for special benefits. - Possibility for applicants to send secure messages to case officers (as of 1st November 2020). - Possibility for beneficiaries of international protection (with official e-identification) to apply for a prolongation of a residence permit online if they have been granted international protection before (as of 26th August 2020). <p>The SMA is also developing a computerized system <i>Min sida</i> (My Page) where an applicant for residence permit can retrieve information about the processing of the application. No decision has been taken on launching a <i>Min sida</i> to applicants for international protection).</p>
Not applicable	CH, DK, ES, FI, HR, HU, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI and SK

Technical solutions

Among technical solutions to digitalise communications with applicants, EU+ countries most commonly use online platforms, online forms and user accounts (see Table 2).

Table 2. Technical solutions



Online platforms



Online forms



User accounts



Other

No technical solution is yet defined

Not specified

Not applicable

AT*, NL (every applicant who stays longer than 4 months in the Netherlands receives a citizen service number (BSN number), which allows him/her to log on to a service called MyImmigration Service – MijnIND; the service is part of the general system in which Dutch citizens also communicate digitally with their government), **FR** (OFPRA is considering creation of digital platform with an user account in 2020)

FR (online form for "Notification of change of address")

IE* (with an electronic system it is envisaged that once an application has been submitted, correspondence with applicants will be electronic and recorded in a user account)

BE*, DE* (set of individual software applications for employees of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)

PT*

SE

CH, DK, ES, FI, HR, HU, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI and SK

Only **FR** has made and **DE** is planning to make regulatory or legislative changes to set up computerised systems (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regulatory or legislative changes made (or planned) to set up a computerised system

Yes (2 EU+ countries)	FR⁶ and DE^{*7}
No (3 EU+ countries)	AT*, NL and PT*
No information	BE^{*8}, IE^{*9}, SE
Not applicable	CH, DK, ES, FI, HR, HU, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI and SK

Data protection and confidentiality

Only **DE**, **IE** and **NL** provided detailed information on how they ensure data protection and confidentiality or will in the future (see Table 5).

Table 5. Data protection and confidentiality

Alignment with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (e.g. user consent for notifications, period after which an account is deleted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DE* - IE*: User consent will be required at the application stage; online account and electronic communication will be the default with postal communication only permitted on an exceptional basis; under the Data Protection Act 2018, which transposes the provisions of GDPR, the account will be archived in line with GDPR requirements but will not be deleted;
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⁶ **FR** indicated that "Not for 'Notification of change of address'. The 10 September 2018 Act allows OFPRA to send the invitation letter to the personal interview and first instance decision "by any means" while ensuring confidentiality and personal delivery to the applicant. Precise regulatory provisions on the process and the guarantees will be taken around the implementation of the digital safe".

⁷ **DE** specified that it was reflected in the Second Data Exchange Improvement Act (*Datenaustauschverbesserungsgesetz*).

⁸ **BE** specified that it is "too early in the reflection phase".

⁹ **IE** stated that "not yet determined. Still in planning stages".



	- NL : Applicants can register and subscribe to MijnIND and give consent for notifications by doing so.
Guarantees of confidentiality/method of authentication and certification of identity	- IE* : The details have not defined but it is envisaged that the applicant will receive a system-generated username and can select the password; access at the IPO will be confined to the international protection officer via username and password; - NL : The applicant must first register with the citizen service number and provide a password.
In planning phase	AT*, BE*, PT*
No information	SE, FR
Not applicable	CH, DK, ES, FI, HR, HU, LV, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI and SK

Information provision on the system, accessibility and alternatives for individuals who cannot use the online system

Only **FR** and **NL** provide detailed **information** on the system to applicants and beneficiaries. In **FR**, during the personal interview, case officers provide applicants with information on the online process to update their address, and in **NL**, information about MijnIND can be found directly on the Immigration Service (IND) website (it is planned that information on the system will be provided already at the lodging stage). MijnIND is also available in various languages.

For individuals who cannot use the online system, **AT*** specified that the applicant has the possibility to follow the case in person at one of the local branches of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). Similarly in **IE***, it is expected that an appropriately-scaled version of their current process is likely to continue in parallel with any new online system in order to provide an **alternative** option. In **NL**, applicants can also telephone a call centre for more information or reach out to a lawyer. In some cases, it is also possible to speak directly to the case officer.

Attachments



[Original Query](#)



[Compilation or replies](#)



Other topical outputs

- EASO (European Asylum Support Office), COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception systems – Issue [1](#) and [2](#), 2 June, 15 July 2020.
- EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Information and Documentation System – IDS: [COVID-19 emergency measures in asylum and reception](#)
- EASO (European Asylum Support Office), Survey on ICT tools and asylum processes, December 2017 (unpublished).
- EMN (European Migration Network), [Ad-hoc query on Electronic platform for asylum seekers or their legal aids and representatives](#), November 2017.