EMN Ad-Hoc Query on Electronic platform for asylum seekers or their legal aids and representatives

Requested by Jutta SAASTAMOINEN on 29th November 2017

Protection

Responses from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway (23 in total)

Background information:

The Finnish Immigration Service is currently carrying out an AMIF funded project, AsylE- Implementing an e-platform for asylum seekers and their legal aids and representatives. The aim of the project is to optimize the asylum process through digitalization. The Finnish Immigration Service has since 2015 had the Enter Finland (www.enterfinland.fi) electronic platform for immigration matters through which one may for example apply for a residence permit or citizenship. Enter Finland is only a service portal and all necessary information on the asylum process is provided at www.migri.fi

Within the first phase of the project the electronic portal is implemented to be used by the legal aids and representatives of asylum seekers. The purpose of the project is to provide faster document exchange and better security for the exchange of documents. The legal aids and guardians will be able to follow the status of the application and to send and receive information to and from the Finnish Immigration Service. The service is to be in use within 2018.

The project is to also study the possibilities of providing electronic services directly to applicants of international protection. Services provided would be likely to include the possibility of following application status and registering personal data such as identity and family information to decrease the time required for collecting the information during interviews.

Summary

Responses were received from 23 Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway).

This summary is based on the 22 answers, which were indicated for wider dissemination.

1. Does your country currently have or is it considering providing asylum applicants or their representatives with some form of electronic service? If a service exists, please provide a link to this service.

20 (Member) States answered that they do not currently have any electronic platform available for asylum applicants. (AT, BE, BG, DE, HR, CZ, EE, FI, FR, HU, LT, LV, LU, MT, NL, PT, SI, SK, SE, UK).

Two (Member) States answered that they currently have services available to refugees electronically: **Norway:** https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/protection-asylum/protection-asylum-in-norway/ and **Italy:** https://fnasilo.dlci.interno.it/sprar/#! (in connection of SPRAR, (Second Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees) providing information on how to access the system.

Though not having services currently available, four Member States answered that they have future plans of providing asylum seekers with electronic services: **Belgium** has plans to develop a digital platform, including an electronic file in a first stage and a digital service desk/portal at a later stage. **Finland** is currently building an electronic service for the legal advisers and legal guardians of asylum applicants. Through the service the person can follow the stage of the processing and can electronically send additional information to the Finnish Immigration Service. Later on the Finnish Immigration Service hopes to send invitations to asylum interviews and other notifications through the portal and the portal will enable the legal adviser to make document requests from the Finnish Immigration Service. In the future, the Finnish Immigration Service wishes to also provide asylum applicants with electronic services. Another project the Finnish Immigration Service is currently working on is a conversational user interface. This would allow the asylum seekers to provide data before arriving to the asylum interview. In this service the person talks or writes to a chatbot providing personal data that is then added to the Finnish Immigration Service registry. This project is currently still in its vision stage. **Germany** holds ideas for a portal or mobile phone application in the future and currently has a digital application form used in asylum procedures. **Lithuania** has plans on launching an electronic service for asylum applicants called Migration Information System. (MIGRIS). All migration procedures will be transferred from paper to electronic files. Also an Electronic Migration Servises portal (eMIGRIS) will be created. eMIGRIS would allow users (including asylum seekers) to submit their requests online, upload additional documents, monitor the status of the submitted application, receive information related to the services and procedures provided to them, etc. The application for the development of the system has been approved and the system is expected to be launched in 2020. **The Netherlands** answered that they have digital applications forms used in the asylum procedure at application centers. The form is used to collect and share data efficiently, for instance with the Personal Records Database (Basis Registratie Personen). The information is also shared with the Expertise center for human trafficking/smuggling (joined by the immigration and naturalization service, the Royal Netherlands Marachaussee and the aliens' police) in order to analyze migration flows to The Netherlands and to enable the Royal Netherlands Marachaussee to supervise migration. It is also possible to appeal against asylum decisions digitally. Files are then digitally exchanged and the lawyer can submit grounds of appeal or other documents and look at files digitally. This digital portal is not managed by the immigration and naturalization service, but by the Council for the Judiciary.

2. If your country currently provides applicants of international protection with the possibility of electronic services, how is the identification of the applicant for this service done?

6 (Member) States provided an answer to the question. **Belgium** answered that log in authorization and assuring the right person is using the portal is one of the biggest challenges in development of the service and the issue is still being addressed. **Finland** answered that the service for legal advisors will work through strong identification and the legal advisor can sign in by using a mobile certificate, bank credentials or an identification card. The

future electronic service for asylum applicants is still in the phase of planning and the Finnish Immigration Service is looking into different possibilities of identification such as biometrics and different forms of weak identification. **Germany** replied that filling out the digital registration form takes place during the registration procedure. The employee makes sure that the applicant is registered only once. Before registering the applicant, s/he checks via "fast-ID" (digital fingerprint comparison with biometric data base) whether the asylum applicant was registered already before. In the **Italian** service, the asylum seeker must register on the website completing the information fields, confirming his or her email and signing the registration digitally. Afterwards the platform can be accessed through a login. The **Netherlands** also replied that filling out the digital registration form takes place during the registration procedure and the applicant is identified by a number. **Norway** responded that they review the applicants ID documents during the police interview.

3. If there currently is a service or a service is being built, in which language/languages is the service provided?

6 (Member) States provided an answer to the question. **Belgium** answered that the language for the future portal is not yet decided but probably it will operate in Dutch, French and possibly in English. **Finland** has its current electronic portal in Finnish, Swedish and English and these are the languages that will be offered to the legal assistants and guardians of asylum seekers. In **Germany** the digital registration form is in German language. If the self-service portal or mobile phone application becomes realized, the form will be in the most frequently spoken languages. The **Italian** service is available in Italian. The **Netherlands** digital registration form is only used when it is available in the spoken language of the applicant and is currently available in the most frequently spoken languages and is being translated into an additional seven languages. **Norway** answered that translation is provided through Skype or similar mediums if it is not possible to get a translator on site.

4. Is the service provided directly to the applicant or is the service used with assistance of a legal advisor/reception center employee/other person?

6 (Member) States provided an answer to the question. **Belgium** answered that this is still to be decided and it might initially be for the legal representative. The **Finnish** service can either be used independently by the applicant or with assistance. In **Germany** the digital form is filled out by the official employee. The **Italian** service can be used directly by the applicant or with assistance of a legal advisor/reception centre employee/other person. In the **Netherlands** the registration form is filled out by the applicant with assistance from an employee from the immigration and naturalization service. The **Norwegian** service is provided directly to the applicant and if needed, reception center employees provide assistance.

5. How have you benefitted from the provided service or what are the expected benefits?

6 (Member) States provided an answer to the question. **Belgium** has not yet decided. **Finland** considers that providing applicants and their representatives with electronic services is to optimize the asylum process through faster and safer exchange of documents. The service for applicants is to better include the applicants themselves in the application process and to provide them more information on the process. The service, through

providing processing status is to also improve customer service. In **Germany** the digital registration workflow currently used is to increase efficiency and to transfer data automatically in databases. The possible future self-service portal or mobile phone application is to decrease waiting periods of asylum applicants, reduce expenditure of translators and make the registration more efficient via mobile applications. **Italy** wishes to make information on the SPRAR system more accessible for its future users. In the **Netherlands** the digital registration form is developed to increase efficiency for everyone involved in the asylum process and to increase the satisfaction of the applicants. It is also to decrease waiting periods for the applicants, the translator can translate faster and more efficient, the immigration and naturalization service employee has access to the digital information and data can be easier shared. The main purpose of the **Norwegian** self-registration is to improve the quality of information registered in the databases and to save time and energy for the immigration service.

Questions

1. Does your country currently have or is it considering providing asylum applicants or their representatives with some form of electronic service? If a service exists, please provide a link to this service.
2. If your country currently provides applicants of international protection with the possibility of electronic services, how is the identification of the applicant for this service done?
3. If there currently is a service or a service is being built, in which language/languages is the service provided?
4. Is the service provided directly to the applicant or is the service used with assistance of a legal advisor/reception center employee/other person?
5. How have you benefitted from the provided service or what are the expected benefits?

Responses

	Country	Wider Dissemination	Response
	Austria	Yes	**1.** No. **2.** Since question 1 was answered in the negative, this question can also be answered with "no". **3.** No.

			4. No. **5.** No. --- Source: Ministry of the Interior.
	Belgium	Yes	**1.** Currently no digital platform or digital portal exists to exchange information with asylum applications and their legal representatives. There are very premature plans to develop such a digital platform, including an electronic file in a first stage and a digital service desk/portal at a later stage. However, the asylum applicant or his legal representative can request the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) for a copy of the file. The CGRS makes a scan of the file and/or requested documents (interview report, decision, questionnaire) and transfers the documents towards the applicant and/or his legal representative through e-mail. In a limited number of cases the copies of the documents are send through ordinary mail or are being collected at the CGRS in person. In 2017 the "Helpdesk lawyers, trusted persons and UNHCR" of the CGRS received about 5,700 applications to receive a copy of documents submitted by applicants or their legal representatives. **2.** Identification (how to provide authorisation to log in, and how to assure that the persons who makes an application through the digital portal is indeed the asylum applicant concerned or his legal representative) seems indeed to be one of the biggest challenges. The CGRS is currently still exploring how to address this issue. **3.** Not decided yet, plans for such a digital portal are still very premature (probably in Dutch, French and possibly in English). **4.** Not decided yet, plans for such a digital portal are still very premature. Possibly, it would initially be the legal representative who would get access to the reports of the interview through the digital portal. **5.** N/A
	Bulgaria	Yes	**1.** No, electronic services are not provided to asylum applicants. **2.** N/A

			3. N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
	Croatia	Yes	**1.** 1. No. At the moment Ministry of the Interior does not have a platform or electronic service for asylum applicants. **2.** 2. N/A. **3.** 3. N/A. **4.** 4. N/A. **5.** 5. N/A.
	Czech Republic	Yes	**1.** No, the Czech Republic does not even consider the future possibility to provide these electronic services. All important information, forms and other materials necessary for asylum seekers and/or their representatives are available on the MoI website. The reason for not providing asylum seeker with electronic services such as on-line access to their application lays in the protection of his/her personal data **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A

	Estonia	Yes	**1.** No, Estonia doesn´t provide and is not considering providing asylum applicants or their representatives with electronic services. **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
	Finland	Yes	**1.** The Finnish Immigration Service is currently building an electronic service for the legal advisers and legal guardians of asylum applicants. Through the service the adviser can follow the stage of the processing and can electronically send additional information to the Finnish Immigration Service. Later on the Finnish Immigration Service hopes to send invitations to asylum interviews and other notifications through the portal and the portal will enable the legal adviser to make document requests from the Finnish Immigration Service. In the future, the Finnish Immigration Service wishes to also provide asylum applicants with electronic services. The planning of this is in its very early stage and the service would most likely include the possibility of following the stage of the process and filling in some personal data, such as providing the names of family members to expedite the asylum interview. Another project the Finnish Immigration Service is currently working on is a conversational user interface. This would allow the asylum seekers to provide data before arriving to the asylum interview. In this service the person talks or writes to a chatbot providing personal data that is then added to the Finnish Immigration Service registry. This project is currently still in its vision stage. **2.** The electronic service for legal advisors will work through strong identification and the legal advisor can sign in by using a mobile certificate, bank credentials or an identification card. The future electronic service for asylum applicants is still in the phase of planning and the Finnish Immigration Service is looking into different possibilities of identification. Asylum applicants not having identity documentation causes obstacles to the strong identification process and there is a need to do research on the possibility of different biometric identification possibilities as a form of strong identification. Weak forms of identification are currently in consideration; in this possibility the applicant could for example be able to

			follow application status by providing their customer number and for example a password to the electronic service. The applicant's identity would not be visible within the platform and the Finnish Immigration Service would receive the applicant's inputted information through matching the provided customer number with data connected to the same customer number on the UMA information system (Finnish foreign citizens' database). **3.** The current Enter Finland portal operates in Finnish, Swedish and English and these are the languages that will be provided to the legal assistants and guardians. If the service for applicants is built, the restriction on use caused by only providing these languages has been noted and research will be made in the possibility of providing the service in other languages. The planned conversational user interface is wished to work in 180 different languages though it is likely to be piloted with a lesser amount. **4.** The service can either be used independently by the applicant or with assistance. If the service is provided in only Finnish/Swedish/English, this will cause a greater need for assistance into using the service. **5.** Providing applicants and their representatives with electronic services is to optimize the asylum process through faster and safer exchange of documents. The service for applicants is to better include the applicants themselves in the application process and to provide them more information on the process. Through providing the possibility of inputting data the time required for the interview is shortened. The future portal providing information on processing status is to also improve customer service as currently providing status information to applicants of asylum has been problematic due to not being able to confirm the identity via telephone.
	France	Yes	**1.** NO **2.** n/a **3.** n/a **4.** n/a

			5. n/a
	Germany	Yes	**1.** At this moment, no digital portal, website or mobile phone application exists to exchange personal data or documents between the asylum applicant and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in order to follow the progress of an asylum procedure. There are currently ideas for such a portal or mobile phone application ("self-service") but these are not yet realized. However, a digital application form (integrated in digital application workflow) is currently used in asylum procedures. While interviewing the asylum applicant the official employee (staff of German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees or local immigration authorities) fills out this form on a computer in the application center. There are a number of questions on the form, encompassing a wide range of topics such as personal details, the nationality, documents, life course, family situation and the journey of the applicant; finger prints and a biometric photograph are take in the application workflow. The form is used to collect and share data efficiently, for instance with the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) in Germany. The information is also shared with the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) in order to analyze security aspects as well as transfer biometric data to EURODAC. It is also possible to exchange files (files of asylum decisions and appeals against those) digitally with the courts. **2.** Filling out the digital registration form takes place during the registration procedure. While going through this process, the employee makes sure that the asylum applicant is registered only once: Before registration s/he checks via "fast-ID" (digital fingerprint comparison with biometric data base) whether the asylum applicant was registered already before. In such a case, the data will be downloaded and the already used identification number of the asylum applicant appears. In such a case, the data will be downloaded and the already used identification number of the asylum applicant appears. In other cases, when the asylum applicant wasn´t yet registered, a new, individual identification number will be used. **3.** The digital registration form is only used in German language. If current ideas for a self-service portal or mobile phone application will be realized, then the form will be available in many languages, especially the most frequently spoken languages. **4.** The digital registration form is currently filled out by the official employee.

			5. The digital registration workflow which is currently used is developed to increase efficiency for everyone involved in the asylum process and in particular to transfer data automatically in all relevant data bases. Before the hearing takes place the authorities have access to the digital information of the asylum applicant. If current ideas for a self-service portal or mobile phone application will be realized, it shall decrease waiting periods for asylum applicants, reduce expenditure of translators and make the registration - shortly after arriving in Germany (or even before arrival in Germany) - more efficient via mobile applications.
	Hungary	Yes	**1.** No, such a platform doesn't exist in Hungary. **2.** - **3.** - **4.** - **5.** -
	Ireland	No	
	Italy	Yes	**1.** The Ministry of the Interior has set up an online platform in the context of the SPRAR System (second reception system for asylum seekers and refugees), providing information on how to access the system. The link to the platform is the following: https://fnasilo.dlci.interno.it/sprar/#! **2.** The asylum seeker must register on the website completing the information fields, confirming his or her email and signing the registration digitally. Afterwards the platform can be accessed through a login. **3.** The service is provided in Italian.

			4. The service can be used directly by the applicant or with the assistance of a legal advisor/reception centre employee/other person. The benefit expected is to make information on the SPRAR system more accessible for its future users. **5.** The benefit expected is to make information on the SPRAR system more accessible for its future users.
	Latvia	Yes	**1.** No, Latvia does not provide electronic services to asylum applicants, because access to electronic services which processes personal data in any form requires Latvian personal identification number. Asylum applicants receive Latvian personal identification number at the end of asylum procedure, if asylum is granted, status of asylum applicant has been changed and his/her personal data has been entered into the Population Register **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
	Lithuania	Yes	**1.** Lithuania does not have an e-platform currently but there are plans for launching one. The system will be called the Lithuanian Migration Information System (MIGRIS). Virtually all migration procedures would be transferred to MIGRIS (from paper to electronic files). Also the Electronic Migration Services portal (eMIGRIS) would be created. eMIGRIS would allow users (including asylum seekers) to submit their requests online, upload additional documents, monitor the status of the submitted application, receive information related to the services and procedures provided to them, etc. The application for the development of the system has already been approved, currently the Ministry of Transport and Communications is preparing an order for financing the project. The system is expected to be launched in 2020. **2.** n/a

				3. The service is not yet being built. See answer to Q1. **4.** n/a **5.** See answer to Q1.
	Luxembo urg	Yes		**1.** No. At the moment the Directorate of Immigration does not have implemented a platform or electronic service for asylum applicants. **2.** N/A. **3.** N/A. **4.** N/A. **5.** N/A.
	Malta	Yes		**1.** The Office of the Refugee Commissioner does not provide any electronic services to asylum seekers or their representatives. **2.** N/A – see answer to question 1 **3.** N/A – see answer to question 1 **4.** N/A – see answer to question 1 **5.** N/A – see answer to question 1
	Netherlan ds	Yes		**1.** At this moment, no digital portal exists to exchange documents between the immigration and naturalization service and the asylum applicant or to follow the progress of an asylum procedure. There are currently no specific plans for such a portal. Initiatives for digital services are mostly focused on regular migrants. However, a digital application form is currently used in asylum procedures. The asylum

applicant fills out this form on a computer in the application center (if he is capable of doing so). There are a number of questions on the form, encompassing a wide range of topics such as the nationality, personal details, documents, life course, education, employment, military service, family situation, the journey of the applicant and residence in other countries. The form is used to collect and share data efficiently, for instance with the Personal Records Database (Basis Registratie Personen). The information is also shared with the Expertise center for human trafficking/smuggling (joined by the immigration and naturalization service, the Royal Netherlands Marachaussee and the aliens' police) in order to analyze migration flows to The Netherlands and to enable the Royal Netherlands Marachaussee to supervise migration. It is also possible to appeal against asylum decisions digitally. Files are then digitally exchanged and the lawyer can submit grounds of appeal or other documents and look at files digitally. This digital portal is not managed by the immigration and naturalization service, but by the Council for the Judiciary.

2. Filling out the digital registration form takes place during the registration procedure. While going through this process, the asylum applicant has a number. The employee who assists the asylum applicant makes sure that the asylum applicant fills out this number before he or she fills out the registration form.

3. The digital registration form is only used when it is available in the spoken language of the applicant. The form is not available in all languages, only in the most frequently spoken languages. Currently, the form is being translated to seven additional languages in order to expand its scope.

4. The digital registration form is filled out by the asylum applicant. An employee from the immigration and naturalization service is available to assist. If the applicant is not familiar with a digital system, he or she can fill out a paper form which if possible is entered in the digital registration form by an interpreter or translator.

5. The digital registration form is developed to increase efficiency for everyone involved in the asylum process and to increase the satisfaction of the applicants. It decreases waiting periods for asylum applicants, the translator can translate faster and more efficient, the immigration and naturalization service employee has access to the digital information before the hearing takes place and data can be easier shared with (among others) the Personal Records Database (Basis Registratie Personen).

	Country		
	Portugal	Yes	**1.** No **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
	Slovak Republic	Yes	**1.** No **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
	Slovenia	Yes	**1.** No. **2.** / **3.** / **4.** / **5.** /

	Country		
🇸🇪	Sweden	Yes	**1.** No, not to best of our knowledge. The only information electronically available is country information. Sweden has e-applications for many forms of legal migration but not for asylum. **2.** NA **3.** NA **4.** NA **5.** NA
🇬🇧	United Kingdom	Yes	**1.** No. An asylum claim in the UK must be lodged in person and the outcome of the asylum application is sent to the asylum applicant by letter. Please see below for the document provided to asylum applicants which gives details of the asylum application process: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/513585/Point_of_Claim_English_20160401.pdf **2.** N/A **3.** N/A **4.** N/A **5.** N/A
🇳🇴	Norway	Yes	**1.** 1. Yes. https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/protection-asylum/protection-asylum-in-norway/ **2.** 2. ID Documents are reviewed during an introductory police interview. **3.** 3. Translation is provided, through Skype or other similar medium if it is not possible to get a translator on site.

			4. 4. The service is provided directly to the applicant. If needed, reception center employees will provide assistance.
			5. 5. The main purpose of self-registration is to improve the quality of information registered in the databases and to save time and energy for the immigration service. Information can also be registered and refined numerous times during the process. Typically, an applicant will have more time available than what a case worker has. Today, asylum seekers for example self-register much more detailed information about their skills than what is necessary to process the asylum case, thereby making the integration process more efficient later down the line. Self-registration is also a key component in contingency planning, since it is much easier to scale up than «classic» registration would be.