Reception - Croatia

Reception System

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Croatia is bound by the recast Reception Conditions Directive and has transposed its provisions through the Law on International and Temporary Protection 70/2015 | Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti 70/2015

National legislation

24/06/2015: Croatia transposed the recast Reception Conditions Directive by Law on International and Temporary Protection 70/2015 | Zakon o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti 70/2015 as amended by Laws on Amendments to the Law on International and Temporary Protection 127/2017, 33/2023 and 17/2025 | Zakon o izmjenama i dopunama Zakona o međunarodnoj i privremenoj zaštiti 127/2017, 33/2023 i 17/2025

Competent authority and stakeholders

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Authority responsible for reception	The Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection under the authority of the Directorate for Immigration, Citizenship and Administrative Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior. The service is responsible for the reception and accommodation of all applicants for international protection in the Zagreb and Kutina reception centres. The Directorate for Borders of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the accommodation of irregular migrants and foreigners and operates the Reception Centre for Foreigners. To accommodate irregular migrants and foreigners, local police directorates operate two transit centres in Trilj and Tovarnik, located near the border with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Other actors involved	UNHCR, the Croatian Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations conduct training and educational programmes in reception centres and provide other forms of aid and assistance, with the prior consent of the ministry. NGOs funded under AMIF implement specific projects, for example the Croatian Red Cross provides psychosocial support and creative workshops to asylum seekers; the Croatian Legal Centre provides legal protection; Médecins du Monde provides healthcare and deals with the prevention of illnesses; the Jesuit Refugees Service and Rehab Centre provide services for stress and trauma.

Organisational aspects

The reception system in Croatia is centralised. The state owns the two reception centres in Zagreb and Kutina which are directly operated by the Service for the

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Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection. The provision of certain services and activities may be outsourced to international organisations or NGOs through AMIF funding.

Allocation of applicants to geographical areas within the territory

Information is not currently available.

Staff and training

Information is not currently available.

Reception phases

The procedure for recognising the right to accommodation is initiated by submitting a request to the competent social welfare centre in the place of residence of the asylum seeker. The centre rules on the request by issuing a decision. An appeal may be lodged against the decision within 15 days from its date of notification, which shall not delay the execution of the decision. The appeal is determined by the ministry competent for social affairs through a formal decision which may be appealed before the competent administrative court within 8 days from its date of notification.

Recognised beneficiaries of international protection may remain in the reception centre for 60 days following a positive decision, provided that within 8 days they request subsidised accommodation from the competent regional social welfare office and do not have sufficient funds of their own. Requests may also be submitted after this period, explaining the reason for missing the deadline.

Contingency planning

Several containers are kept in storage which can be used for housing during the development phase of the first reception centre or in the event of a large influx of migrants.

Facilities

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Overview of different types of reception facilities according to national classification

Reception centres consist of:

- Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Zagreb: former Hotel Porin is a collective accommodation centre managed by the Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection where applicants are accommodated as soon as their application is lodged.
- Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Kutina: serves the same purpose as the centre in Zagreb but is primarily intended to accommodate vulnerable groups of applicants for international protection who need additional reception and procedural guarantees.

Premises at the border

Name of the reception facility	n/a
Access description	n/a
Management	n/a
Type of applicants accommodated	n/a
Number of centres	n/a
Capacity	n/a
Location of the centres within the country	n/a

Initial reception centres

Name of the reception facility	n/a
Regime	n/a
Management	n/a

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Type of applicants accommodated	n/a
Number of centres	n/a
Capacity	n/a
Location of the centres within the country	n/a

Collective accommodation centres

Name of the reception facility	• Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Zagreb • Reception centre for applicants for international protection in Kutina
Regime	Open
Management	The Service for the Reception and Accommodation of Applicants for International Protection manages both reception centres
Type of applicants accommodated	• Reception centre in Zagreb: all applicants for international protection who lack sufficient means of subsistence • Reception centre in Kutina: vulnerable applicants for international protection
Number of centres	2
Capacity	• Reception centre in Zagreb: 600 • Reception centre in Kutina: 300
Location of the centres within the country	One reception centre is located in Zagreb, while the other in Kutina (80 km from Zagreb)

Individual accommodation centres (such as private houses, flats, hotels)

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Name of the reception facility	n/a
Regime	n/a
Management	n/a
Type of applicants accommodated	n/a
Number of centres	n/a
Capacity	n/a
Location of the centres within the country	n/a

Temporary solutions when housing capacities is temporarily exhausted

Name of the reception facility	n/a
Regime	n/a
Management	n/a
Type of applicants accommodated	n/a
Number of centres	n/a
Capacity	n/a
Location of the centres within the country	n/a

Reception facilities for applicants with special needs

In the reception centre in Zagreb, families, single women and vulnerable groups are accommodated in separate premises, while single men are housed in a different area of the facility. The centre in Kutina is primarily intended to accommodate applicants with special needs/vulnerabilities who need additional reception and procedural guarantees. Both centres have NGOs staff and trained

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specialists who provide psychosocial support to applicants with special needs.

Unaccompanied minors: The Foster Care Act (OG No 115/18) allows unaccompanied children to be placed in foster families.

Victims of human trafficking, torture or other forms of violence: Accommodation for victims of trafficking is provided in the National Shelter for Adult Victims of Trafficking and the National Shelter for Children Victims of Trafficking. Shelter locations and all treatment of victims of trafficking are confidential. The shelters are managed by civil society organisations that meet the legal requirements to provide temporary accommodation to children and adult victims of trafficking, as prescribed by the Ordinance on Minimum Conditions for the Provision of Social Services (OG 40/2014 as amended by 66/2015).

When a victim needs access to certain services within the programme, they are referred to a person specially designated to trafficking victims in that area of service (e.g. a designated person in the Employment Bureau) in order to minimise the victim's exposure. Professional associates in social care centres, coordinators and employees of shelters for victims of trafficking within the social welfare system are obliged to treat all data related to victims as a professional secret.

Applicants with disabilities and special health needs: In the facility in Zagreb, a doctor is present every day to conduct basic medical screenings and attend to health cases and non-emergency issues.

Women: The Ministry of the Interior developed standard operating procedures to prevent and address sexual and gender-based violence in reception centres, in cooperation with UNHCR, *Médecins du Monde*, the Red Cross and the Croatian Law Centre. The new procedures, which were implemented in April 2021, define the roles and responsibilities of all service providers in the prevention of and response to violence. The Gender Equality Office designed leaflets in eight languages on gender-based violence for women applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

LGBTIQ: Information is not currently available.

Material reception conditions provided in kind and cash

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Definition of material reception conditions

Material reception conditions are defined by Article 55 of the Law on International and Temporary Protection (LITP). They include accommodation in the reception centre, food and clothing provided in kind, reimbursement of travel costs incurred for the purpose of the asylum procedure, and financial assistance.

Material reception conditions provided in kind

Type and purpose	Accommodation, meals, clothing and reimbursement of travel costs incurred for the purpose of the asylum procedure.
Duration and recurrence	Duration can depend on individual cases and circumstances.

Financial allowances and vouchers

Type and purpose	Financial assistance (pocket money).
Duration and recurrence	Information is not currently available.
Calculation and amount	The Decision on the Amount of Financial Assistance for Applicants for International Protection establishes that the amount of financial assistance to applicants placed in the reception centre is HRK 100 per month (approximately EUR 13.3) when they do not own valuable items or their monthly funds do not exceed 20% of the base amount used to determine financial assistance for maintenance.
Applicants granted allowance	All applicants.
Modalities of provision	Information is not currently available.

Material reception conditions for vulnerable persons

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The ordinance on healthcare standards for applicants for international protection and foreigners under temporary protection regulates initial and supplementary medical examinations and the scope of healthcare for applicants for international protection with special reception needs. The ordinance lists the different vulnerable groups who are entitled to healthcare: persons deprived of legal capacity, children, unaccompanied children, elderly and infirm persons, seriously ill persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, single parents with a minor child, people with mental disabilities and victims of human trafficking, victims of torture, rape or other psychological, physical and sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation.

These categories of persons have a right to psychosocial support and assistance in appropriate institutions:

- A pregnant woman or a parturient woman requiring monitoring of pregnancy and childbirth is entitled to healthcare to the same extent as a person insured under compulsory health insurance.
- Children up to the age of 18 are guaranteed full access to healthcare in accordance with legislation governing the right to healthcare under compulsory health insurance.

Rights and obligations during reception

Provision of information and counselling

Modalities of information provision on benefits and obligations related to reception conditions	An official of the Ministry of the Interior individually informs an applicant about their rights and obligations in Croatia, within 15 days of expressing their intention to apply for international protection and prior to lodging the formal application. Applicants receive information, both orally and in writing, from an official interpreter, in the applicant's native language or in a language they can understand. In addition, videos are available in reception centres for applicants for international protection and foreigners residing in Croatia that provide general information and information on legal counselling, accommodation and daily life, healthcare, education, legal framework and cultural features in the local community.

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Provision of legal assistance on the reception conditions available	An applicant with no financial resources is provided with legal assistance upon request. Organisations working to protect the rights of refugees provide legal assistance or collaborate with attorneys with whom the ministry has an agreement for free legal counselling. In addition, applicants receive written information on the possibility of free legal assistance from UNHCR representatives and other relevant organisations that work to protect the rights of refugees.
House rules	Reception officers inform applicants about the house rules of the reception centre. These rules are also displayed in a visible location within the premises of both reception centres, and are available in Croatian, English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashto, Somali and other languages commonly spoken by residents within the centre. Upon their arrival at the reception centre, applicants are also informed by social workers and psychologists from the Croatian Red Cross working within the facility about the rules of conduct they must adhere to while accommodated.

Freedom of movement within the territory

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Assignment of a particular area of residence to applicants	According to Article 54(1) of the LITP, applicants for international protection have the right to freedom of movement within the territory of Croatia but are obliged to notify the ministry if they intend to leave their registered address for more than 24 hours. Article 54(2) of the LITP regulates the restrictions on the freedom of movement, where deemed necessary, in order to: • Determine the facts and circumstances on which the application for international protection is based, especially if there is a risk of absconding; • Establish the identity or nationality of the applicant; • Safeguard national security or public order; • Prevent the spread of infectious diseases; • Prevent endangering the lives of individuals or damaging property; • Ensure compliance with the conditions of international protection; or • If it can be reasonably assumed that the applicant has submitted an application for international protection in order to delay or hinder the implementation of an expulsion or return decision made after a forced removal procedure. Article 54(7) of the LITP states that the freedom of vulnerable applicants may be restricted by placement in a reception centre for foreigners based on an individual assessment, if deemed appropriate considering their personal circumstances, needs and health situation. Article 54(8) outlines that the freedom of unaccompanied minors may be restricted by placement in a reception centre for foreigners, separately from adults, for the shortest duration possible, if deemed necessary based on an individual assessment.

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Reporting obligations	As established by the Ordinance on the realisation of material reception conditions (Official Gazette, No 135/15 and 61/19), an applicant is permitted to stay outside of the reception centre for more than 24 hours with prior approval from the reception centre, for a maximum duration of 15 days. In such cases, the resident retains an assigned room within the facility. The applicant must submit a request for approval of absence to the reception officer at least 2 days before the intended absence. The authority may, based on an individual assessment, deny the request, in which case it will issue a written decision. In addition, an entry/exit system is also in place in the reception centres to record absences and other information.

Employment and vocational training

Time limit to access the labour market	Article 61 of the LITP regulates the modalities to access employment for applicants for international protection. Applicants can access the labour market 3 months after lodging an application for international protection. This right ceases once a final decision on the application is issued.
Criteria to access the labour market	A residence permit or work permit are not required. There are no costs to be covered by the asylum applicant. An employer does not need to verify the applicant's right to work. At the request of an asylum applicant, the Ministry of the Interior issues a document to certify that the applicant has the right to work. Persons whose applicant status has ended must return the employment certificate to the ministry for annulment within 15 days of the change of circumstances. In addition, applicants must inform the reception centre in writing of the conclusion of their employment contract within 15 days of its signature. The employer's confirmation of the contract shall be attached to this document.

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Employment support for applicants	Information is not currently available.
Adults' access to vocational training	Not defined in law.
Access to tertiary education	Information is not currently available.

Healthcare

Medical screening	Upon arrival, applicants for international protection undergo an initial medical check-up consisting of a general medical examination to identify any illnesses, infections or diseases, and they receive any required vaccinations. An interpreter is available to assist during the medical check-up and to provide psychosocial support.
Level of healthcare	The government provides emergency and indispensable healthcare and medicine. The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health are responsible for providing health services to asylum applicants. According to Article 57(1) of the LITP, emergency and necessary treatment of illnesses and mental health issues is provided to all applicants. Further primary healthcare is ensured by NGOs, such as Médecins du Monde and the Croatian Red Cross, which operate under contracts with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Health to provide complementary services at reception centres. Applicants can access the family medicine team at the nearest public health centres for additional health services. Urgent and indispensable dental, paediatric and gynaecological primary healthcare and laboratory diagnostics are also provided by the public health centre. If an applicant needs to see a specialist or a doctor in the public health centre, translation and transportation are provided.

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Access to healthcare	Information is not currently available.

Education for minors

Elementary and secondary education for minor applicants is provided under the same conditions as for Croatian citizen. The Red Cross, in cooperation with officials from the Ministry of the Interior, supports children in reception centres to ensure they can follow online schooling and continue with their education as their Croatian peers.

Preparatory and supplementary classes in the Croatian language, as well as supplementary classes in individual subjects, are provided based on needs. A Croatian language programme for preparatory classes is available for primary and secondary school students who do not speak Croatian or speak it insufficiently. This programme consists of an intensive 70-hour Croatian course, delivered over a maximum of one academic year.

In addition, the Ministry of the Interior partnering with civil society organisations has organized and implemented initial and advanced courses in Croatian, English and German for children accommodated in the reception centre.

Socio-cultural orientation and language learning

Access to socio-cultural orientation	Information is not currently available.
Language classes	Civil society organisations organise and carry out initial and advanced courses in Croatian, English and German for adults in reception centres.

Sufficient means

Arrangement of private accommodation

After undergoing a hygiene and medical examination and submitting an application for international protection, applicants may, with the prior consent of

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the ministry, reside at their own expense at any address in Croatia.

In such cases, applicants must submit a certified copy of a lease agreement or a certified statement by the property owner confirming that they will accommodate the applicant and ensure an adequate standard of living, or a title deed if the applicant is the owner of the property in which they intend to reside, or a hotel reservation if the applicant is accommodated in a hotel.

Contribution to reception and healthcare costs

Pursuant to the LITP as amended in 8 December 2017, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are entitled to accommodation if they lack the financial means or property to support themselves.

If the centre determines that the asylum seeker has funds or property sufficient to cover accommodation, the decision recognising the right to accommodation will determine that the asylum seeker must contribute to the accommodation costs by making payments to the account of the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing.

Sufficient means test

Information is not currently available.

Sanction regimes, reduction or withdrawal of material reception conditions

Circumstances for reducing or withdrawing material reception conditions

As specified in Article 4 of the Ordinance on the realisation of material reception conditions (Official Gazette, Nos 135/15 and 61/19), material reception conditions may be reduced or withdrawn if the applicant:

1. Does not reside in the reception centre where accommodation has been provided;
2. Is absent from the reception centre for more than 24 hours without authorisation from the centre;

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3. Violates the provisions of the house rules of the reception centre;
4. Possesses sufficient means to maintain an appropriate standard of living.

The decision to reduce or withdraw material reception conditions is based on an individual assessment, with particular consideration given to the applicant's personal circumstances.

Possible sanctions and procedure

The reception centre can restrict or deny some material reception conditions, provided that it is proportionate to the aim pursued, taking into account the needs of applicants who require special procedural or reception guarantees, while maintaining the applicant's dignity and standard of living.

The ministry also has the right to request repayment of the costs of accommodation, including material damage incurred, if the applicant possesses sufficient means to maintain an appropriate standard of living or violates the provisions of the house rules of the reception centre.

Review of the sanction decision

The sanction decision may be appealed before the Administrative Court within 8 days from the date on which the decision is notified.

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