Information provision - Cyprus

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Cyprus is bound by EU legislation and has transposed relevant provisions through Refugees Law 2000 (6(I)/2000) | Ο περί Προσφύγων Νόμος του 2000 (6(I)/2000), (12 December 2020)

National legislation

12 January 2020: Refugees Law 2000 (6(I)/2000) | Ο περί Προσφύγων Νόμος του 2000 (6(I)/2000), (12 December 2020)

Competent authority and other stakeholders

Area/stage of the asylum procedure	Competent authority
Reception	CODECA, EUAA
Registration of application	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA
Lodging of application	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA
Dublin procedure	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA
Assessment of application	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA

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Area/stage of the asylum procedure	Competent authority
Communication of first instance decision	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA
Content of protection	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, EUAA
Appeal procedure	Asylum Service | Υπηρεσία Ασύλου, Administrative Courts
Communication of second instance decision	Administrative Courts
Resettlement	n/a

Provision of information in the asylum procedure

Access to procedure

The provision of information to applicants for international protection is regulated under national legislation, specifically Article 4(e) of the Cyprus Refugee Law (6(I)/2000).

If a third-country national arrives illegally, they are transferred to the First Reception Centre where they undergo further screening, including medical tests and fingerprinting. Applicants receive information on the lodging and registration of their asylum application before the registration process begins, typically within 3 days of their arrival at the First Reception Centre. Group information sessions are oganised, where applicants receive a leaflet that outlines the asylum process and their rights. The leaflet provides detailed guidance on how to lodge an application, the asylum procedure and relevant timelines. The provision of information is handled by the EUAA, with the Cyprus Asylum Service (CAS) taking a supportive role. CAS, with support from the EUAA, also develops and produces

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the information materials.

The information provided to applicants includes details about the steps they need to take while staying in the camp (First Reception Centre), the house rules of the centre, the asylum procedure and the Dublin III Regulation (which addresses the responsibility for processing asylum claims within the EU). Additionally, information is provided on what constitutes an asylum application, the asylum interview process and how decisions are made.

The Cyprus Asylum Service ensures that information is accessible to third-country nationals by providing translation services based on the linguistic needs of applicants. The most requested languages for translation are Arabic, French and Farsi.

For unaccompanied minors, additional guidance on the Dublin procedure is provided, while in the framework of the vulnerability screening, applicants are given tailored information.

Third-country nationals who are detained in Cyprus are also provided with information on their right to make an application for international protection. Information leaflets are available at all detention facilities and are provided to individuals who express a desire to apply for asylum. This information is made available by the facility's staff, and once the application is completed, it is submitted to the Cyprus Asylum Service for further processing. In the main detention centre, a fingerprinting system managed by the Cyprus Asylum Service.

For more information:

- Cyprus Refugee Law (6(I)/2000)
- Cyprus Ministry of Interior - Asylum Service
- UNHCR Cyprus
- IOM Cyprus

Dublin procedure

Applicants seeking international protection receive detailed information on the Dublin III Regulation during an information session on the asylum procedure. EUAA Information Officers are responsible for providing information on the Dublin procedure. These officers are trained to explain the Dublin III Regulation and its

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implications to applicants, ensuring that they understand their rights and obligations.

The information provided to applicants covers the responsibility of the country where the asylum application is lodged, which must comply with the Dublin III Regulation in determining which EU Member State is responsible for processing the claim. The explanation includes two stages: if the applicant has passed through another European country before applying for international protection or if they have first-degree relatives residing in another European country.

The information is primarily provided through an information leaflet and is made available in all languages that are spoken or expected to be understood by applicants residing in the First Reception Centre or a detention facility.

In addition to the common information leaflet, applicants are provided with an "Exit Info Package" when they leave the First Reception Centre ("Pournara"). This package contains additional information on relevant services, where to apply for various types of support, and details on how to navigate their next steps in the asylum process.

There are targeted materials available to applicants with special needs, such as unaccompanied minors or survivors of human trafficking, within the context of the Dublin procedure. Detailed information on vulnerable applicants is available through the Cyprus Asylum Service website.

Regarding relocation, Cyprus has set a cut-off date for applicants eligible for relocation, which was implemented on 1 January 2023. The relocation process begins after a thorough screening of applicants' files to determine eligibility based on criteria set by other EU Member States. These criteria may include family composition, vulnerability or other specific factors. Once the selection process is completed, applicants who meet the criteria are informed about the possibility of relocation. They are then invited to an information session organised by the Asylum Service and the EUAA.

Once a transfer decision under the Dublin III Regulation is made, applicants are informed about legal remedies and the steps they can take to contest the decision. In the First Reception Centre, a designated Dublin officer is responsible for informing eligible applicants about their upcoming Dublin interview and the associated legal rights. The officer provides applicants with details about the interview process and the legal options available to them.

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First instance determination

Cyprus does not conduct admissibility procedures, and no admissibility interview is performed. However, with the operationalisation of the EU Pact, it is expected that admissibility procedures will be introduced. These procedures will be managed by the Cyprus Asylum Service, possibly in collaboration with EUAA staff. As of now, the system for admissibility interviews is not in place.

Applicants are informed about the possibility of a personal asylum interview during an information session that takes place early in the process. This session provides an overview of the process, including information on the personal interview, its importance and what is required from the applicants. They are reminded that it is obligatory to provide their contact details, such as phone numbers and addresses, under the Refugee Law. The information includes the purpose of the interview, the procedural specifics, the rights and obligations of the applicants during the interview, the role of the individuals involved (such as the case officer), confidentiality considerations and the availability of interpretation services.

The information is provided in a group setting during the initial information session. Applicants are given an information leaflet that outlines the personal interview process and their rights during the procedure.

Once applicants are informed about their personal interview, they are notified about the date and location of the interview through interview letters. These letters are handed out to residents of the First Reception Centre before they leave the facility. For applicants residing in private accommodation, the interview details are sent by post or communicated by phone.

During the information session, applicants are informed that they can submit additional documents to support their asylum claim. They are advised to submit any relevant evidence early in the process, either at the time of their initial application or during or before the personal interview. This ensures that applicants have the opportunity to present all necessary information before the decision is made.

After the personal interview is completed, the case officer from the Cyprus Asylum Service orally informs the applicant about the next steps in the asylum procedure. This includes details about the drafting of a recommendation report and the subsequent notification of the final decision made by the Head of the

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Asylum Service.

Once a decision is made granting protection status, applicants are notified in writing. The decision letter includes information on the applicant's rights and obligations as beneficiaries of protection. This includes the obligation to apply to the Civil Registry and Migration Department for a residence permit. The leaflet that accompanies this decision is currently being revised to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of the information.

Upon receiving a decision from the Cyprus Asylum Service, applicants are informed about the possibility of lodging an appeal if they wish to challenge the decision. This information is provided both in the decision letter and orally. The letter includes details of the appeal procedure, including the 30-day period within which the appeal must be submitted and the relevant address for filing the appeal.

Applicants are informed about their right to legal assistance during the appeal process. In the decision letter, applicants are provided with a paragraph detailing how to lodge an appeal, including the address of the relevant court. Information on the cost of the appeal procedure is also shared, and applicants are advised on how to submit their appeal.

In the event of a negative decision, applicants are provided with information about their right to appeal. Additionally, the case officer informs the applicant orally about the 7-day voluntary departure period granted from the date of receiving the rejection decision. A relevant leaflet on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is also provided to the applicant.

Legal assistance and representation

Applicants are provided with information on their right to consult with a legal advisor or other counsellor throughout the asylum process. This information is made available at the time of submitting the asylum application. The Asylum Service will assist applicants with legal and procedural information specific to their case and clarify any questions they may have about the decision issued or the appeals process. The relevant information is outlined in a guide and an information leaflet, which is also available on the Cyprus Asylum Service website.

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The EUAA Information Officers provide this information, and the leaflets are available both in hard copy and online.

Applicants are informed about their right to free legal representation during the information sessions and throughout the asylum procedure, such as during the interview. Both EUAA officers and Asylum Service officers provide this information to applicants.

Resettlement and humanitarian admissions

Cyprus does not implement resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes.

Content of protection

Upon receiving a positive decision on their asylum application, beneficiaries of international protection are provided with essential information on their rights and obligations under the Cyprus Refugee Law. These rights are like those of Cypriot citizens. This information is provided by the Cyprus Asylum Service.

Beneficiaries have the right to access the general education system, further training and retraining programmes. They can also seek recognition of foreign educational certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Beneficiaries are entitled to access the legal system, including the right to use the courts without the need to provide guarantees for judicial expenses.

Vulnerable individuals, such as those with disabilities, are entitled to specialised support, and all beneficiaries have access to social and medical services.

Beneficiaries are allowed to work in any field, either as employees or self-employed. After 9 months of residing in Cyprus, they can apply for a work permit through the Labour Platform, either online or by visiting a District Labour Office.

Beneficiaries can apply for family reunification, which allows their family members to join them in Cyprus.

Beneficiaries are free to practice their religion and participate in various social integration programmes that aim to help them integrate into the local

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community. Beneficiaries are informed about various integration programmes available to them, including language classes and social integration initiatives. This information is typically provided during the initial notification of the asylum decision and during the information sessions held at the First Reception Centre.

EUAA and Asylum Service staff typically provide oral information during these sessions, while the competent Migration Department, part of the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection, also offers additional resources, including information leaflets on the integration programmes available.

Beneficiaries of international protection receive information on their employment rights upon receiving their asylum decision. This includes details about their eligibility to work, as well as access to employment-related training and professional development programmes. They are informed that they can start working 9 months after their application is lodged. Furthermore, beneficiaries can apply for a work permit, which is processed through the Labour Platform (either online or at the District Labour Offices). Cyprus offers a broad range of employment opportunities for beneficiaries, with few restrictions, except in fields related to national and public security.

Beneficiaries are also informed about their right to education and healthcare upon receiving their decision. In terms of education, they are provided with information about their access to the general education system, including both primary and secondary education, as well as further training or retraining programmes. This ensures that beneficiaries can improve their skills and integrate into society more effectively.

In terms of healthcare, beneficiaries are informed about their entitlement to enroll in the General Health System (GESY). The GESY system provides access to a wide range of medical services, including doctor consultations, hospital treatment and medications, either completely free or at a minimal cost. Beneficiaries are encouraged to register for the system through the GESY portal to ensure they can access the necessary medical care.

Upon receiving a positive asylum decision, beneficiaries of international protection are provided with detailed information about how to obtain their residence permit. Refugee status grants a 3-year residence permit, which is renewable upon expiration, while subsidiary protection status is associated with a 1-year residence permit, also renewable. Beneficiaries must apply for their residence permit through the Migration Department or the district offices of the Aliens and Immigration Units.

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Provision of information in reception

Reception conditions

Asylum applicants receive crucial information about their rights, obligations and reception conditions as soon as they arrive at the First Reception Centre. The information is typically provided before they lodge their asylum applications through an information session, organised by language, nationality and date of entry. In addition, an information kiosk is available at the centre, where applicants can seek information on all matters related to their stay, providing them with an ongoing resource throughout their time in the centre.

The information is primarily provided by EUAA Information Officers, who are tasked with informing the applicants about their rights and obligations under the asylum procedure. This information provision is conducted in collaboration with staff from the company that operates the First Reception Centre, CODECA.

The information materials are developed in collaboration with the EUAA and the Cyprus Asylum Service. Information is provided both orally during the group sessions and through written materials, such as leaflets. The leaflets are available in Arabic, Farsi, French and English. Interpreters are made available to assist when necessary.

For applicants with special needs, targeted materials have been developed by the EUAA. These materials are distributed to residents in the Safe Zone (SZ B) of the reception centre. The information provided to these groups includes details about international organisations and NGOs that offer specialised services. It also covers the registration process for social benefits, healthcare and school enrolment.

Applicants in reception are informed about organisations that provide legal assistance and can offer guidance on reception conditions. Specifically, asylum seekers are provided with information on UNHCR and the Cyprus Refugee Council, both of which offer legal support to asylum seekers. This information is shared through oral briefings.

Applicants are informed about their right to access medical services while staying at the reception centre. Doctors from the Ministry of Health are stationed in all

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centres and provide oral information to asylum seekers on how to access healthcare.

Asylum seekers are informed about their employment-related rights during the group sessions at the reception centre. They are told orally about when and under which conditions they are allowed to work in Cyprus. This includes the possibility to work after a certain period, specifically 9 months after lodging the application. At the Kofinou Centre, social workers are available to provide additional details on employment, such as which sectors of the economy asylum seekers are permitted to work in. Applicants are also encouraged to visit the Labour Office for more inquiries and assistance with employment opportunities.

The EUAA provides a leaflet on access to the education system, which is distributed during the information session. At the Kofinou Centre, social workers assist families and children with any questions they may have about education. Furthermore, the Social Welfare Service is responsible for informing unaccompanied minors about their specific rights and obligations concerning education.

In detention

Information provision is provided by officers of the Asylum Service who are posted at the Menoyia Detention Centre for Irregular Migrants.

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