

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ACCESS TO THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE





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WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION (ASYLUM)?



All men, women and children have the right to live in safety and in respect of their fundamental freedoms and rights.

It means that they have the right to express their opinions and beliefs and make decisions for their lives.

IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO SEEK INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN ANOTHER COUNTRY WHEN IT IS DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO RETURN TO OR LIVE IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY.

- You may need international protection if the dangers you fear in your home country form severe violation of human rights.
- These dangers can affect men, women and children in different ways.
- These dangers may be caused by the state, through its officials, or by other persons that are not part of the state.
- International protection will be given if the state or other authorities of your country are either unable or unwilling to protect you from the danger you are facing.

The authorities will assess if you are in need of international protection and if so, which type of protection is relevant for you.

ADDITIONAL EXPLANATIONS:

In Europe, international protection can be also called refugee protection, asylum, refugee status or subsidiary protection.

International protection can be given if you are persecuted in your home country because of:

- race
- nationality
- religion
- political opinion
- belonging to a certain social group meaning a group of persons who share a common characteristic and who are perceived as being different by the surrounding society in the considered country.

Persecution means:

- physical or mental violence
- abusive treatment and punishment
- actions of authorities affecting, for example, your possibility to get medical care, work, education, help from the police or seek justice before the courts.

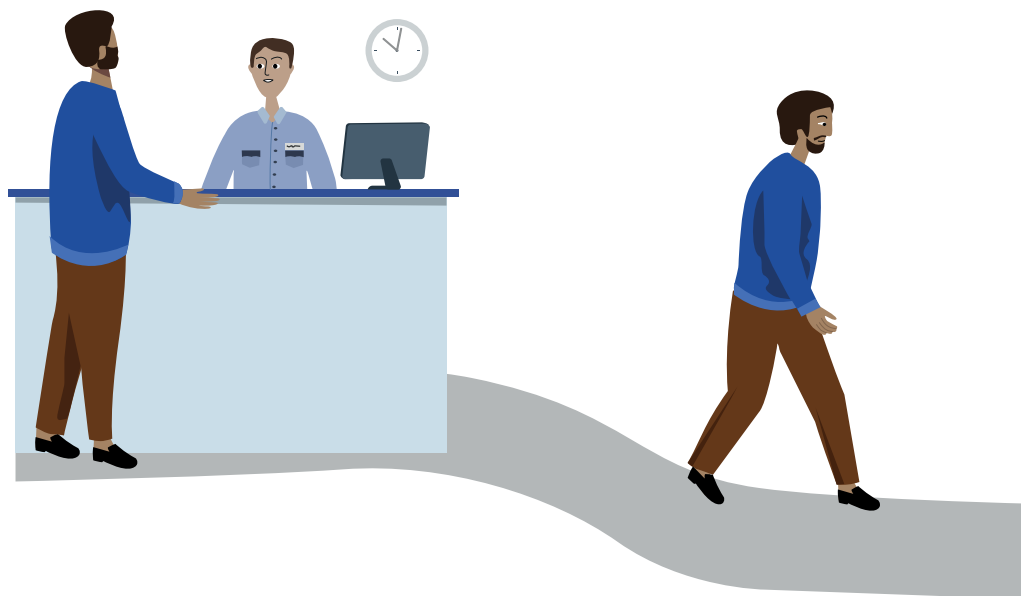
In addition, international protection can be given if you are:

- at risk of death penalty or execution, or
- at risk of torture, or other inhuman treatment, or
- from a state which is affected by armed conflict that threatens the life and security of the civilian population.





WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS IN THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE?



After informing the authorities that you are seeking protection, the authorities will guide you through the asylum procedure.

The asylum procedure is the process that determines whether you will be granted international protection. This includes a thorough examination of the reasons why you left your country and cannot return.

After you ask for international protection, there are several steps in the procedure.

FIRSTLY, YOUR APPLICATION MUST BE REGISTERED

Registration ensures that you can remain in Europe until the final decision on your application is made and that all your urgent needs will be addressed. Urgent needs can include, for example, a place to stay, food, clothes, hygiene products and medical assistance.

AFTER YOUR APPLICATION IS REGISTERED, YOU WILL RECEIVE DOCUMENTATION STATING YOUR STATUS AS AN ASYLUM SEEKER.



Asylum seekers are persons who asked for international protection and who are waiting for the decision on their application. The document that you receive as an asylum seeker is a personal document which cannot be shared or given to anyone else. You must carry it with you at all times.

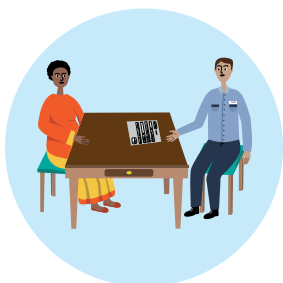
REGISTRATION IS STANDARD FOR EVERYONE AND MEANS THE FOLLOWING:



Your fingerprints will be taken and safely stored in the European database Eurodac.



You will be photographed.



You will be asked for additional information regarding you and your family, your journey to and through Europe, and the reasons why you left your country and fear returning. Your personal data will be collected and saved in the national system.



It is your obligation and in your best interests to cooperate with the authorities and tell the truth.



You will be asked to present all your identity documents.



You and/or your belongings may be searched for security reasons. This will be done while fully respecting your dignity and integrity. Your personal things remain your property and will be returned to you.



You may attend a medical examination. This might include quarantine to protect everyone's health.



Any information you share with the authorities will stay confidential. This means that any information you share will not be shared further without your consent and never with the authorities in your home country.

DID YOU ARRIVE WITH YOUR FAMILY?



In Europe everybody can seek international protection individually. Even if you arrived with your family, you can apply for international protection on your own. You can also apply together with your family.

If you apply together with your family, the examination will take into account all the reasons for applying for international protection stated by you and your family members. If there are good reasons you do not want your family members to know why you are applying for international protection, you should say this to the asylum authorities.

In Europe, everybody below the age of 18 is a child. The child's well-being and safety is the priority throughout all steps of the asylum procedure.



ARE YOU UNDER 18 YEARS OLD AND WITHOUT YOUR PARENTS?

If you are under 18 years old and you are alone, without your parents, you are an unaccompanied child.

If this applies to you, inform the authorities so that they can help you.



WHAT IS THE DUBLIN PROCEDURE?

When you arrive in Europe and ask for international protection, the authorities will first determine which European country will be responsible for examining your application.



MAIN RULES



If you wish to apply for international protection, you are expected to do so as soon as possible in the first country where you arrive.



One European country only will examine your application. You cannot choose the country which will examine your application.



You should not travel or move to another country on your own initiative before the end of your asylum procedure.



The country responsible for examining your application may be the country where you are now, but it could also be another European country. This depends on whether you have links to another European country.

In order to correctly determine the country that will examine your application, make sure to inform the authorities:

- if you have a family member in another European country;
- if another European country issued you a visa or residence document;
- if the country where you are now is not the first European country you entered;
- if you have already asked for international protection in another European country.



It is important that you inform the authorities immediately if you have a family member in Europe.

The authorities will see if you can be reunited with your family members through the Dublin procedure.

If the Dublin procedure is considering you, you may be transferred to another European country that is responsible for your application.

* The Dublin system applies in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

NEXT STEP: EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION



You will be invited to a **personal interview** where you will be asked to present in detail the reasons you are asking for international protection.



After the personal interview, your application will be assessed and you will be notified of the **decision** in writing. This means that the authorities will communicate to you whether or not you have been granted international protection. You will also be informed about the reasons for the decision.



If you believe that a mistake was made, you can **appeal** against the decision. You will receive more detailed information at a later stage in the procedure.



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO EXAMINE YOUR APPLICATION?

The asylum procedure can take a relatively long time as the authorities will check every detail of your application and will then decide on your request.

Normally, it can take up to 21 months to examine your application and take the decision, starting from the day of registration.

However, the procedures and time limits might be different if your application is assessed within a special procedure, such as the accelerated procedure, border procedure or admissibility procedure. Your application may also be prioritised. In such cases, you will be provided with specific information by the asylum authorities.

It is important to know that this period of waiting for a decision can be stressful. You should be patient and remember that you can receive help from the authorities and other organisations.



WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?



YOU CAN STAY IN THIS COUNTRY



Applying for international protection gives you the right to stay in this country until the examination of your application is concluded.

If you need it, you will receive accommodation, food or money to buy food, basic and necessary medical care, social assistance, and education for children.

If you want to work during the asylum procedure, ask the authorities for specific information.

➤ YOU CAN RECEIVE SPECIAL SUPPORT IF YOU NEED IT



Inform the asylum authorities if:

- you have experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence,
- you have any other difficulties such as a disability or serious illness that could make it difficult for you to fully participate in the asylum procedure.

The authorities will further assess your situation. Additional support may be provided if needed. This may include more time for you to go through the procedural steps if you need it and specialised staff to deal with your case.

YOU CAN ASK FOR AN INTERPRETER



If the authorities communicate with you in a language that you do not understand, you can ask for an interpreter. You will not pay for the interpreter.

An interpreter who speaks a language you understand will be present during your personal interview.

You can ask for a male or female interpreter and case officer if this helps you to fully express yourself. Where possible, your request will be met.

The interpreter helps you to communicate with the authorities, but only on matters concerning your application. The interpreter is neutral and respects confidentiality, does not favour anyone, does not share anything you say with anyone outside the authorities and has no influence on the decision on your application.

Inform the authorities immediately if you do not understand the interpreter.

YOU CAN HAVE A LAWYER



A lawyer is a person providing legal assistance to you before the authorities. A lawyer can assist with your application, the asylum procedure, official communication, etc. A lawyer is independent from the authorities.

It is your right to consult a lawyer at any stage of the asylum procedure.

A lawyer can be provided free of charge if you are not granted international protection and you appeal against the negative decision. Ask the authorities if a lawyer is available free of charge during other stages of the procedure too. Additionally, you can always ask the authorities for legal and procedural information free of charge. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), also known as civil society organisations, may also provide this information.

Share with the authorities the details of your lawyer or other legal assistance you are receiving. If there are any changes in this regard, communicate them to the authorities so that they can keep your lawyer informed about your application.

YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH UNHCR

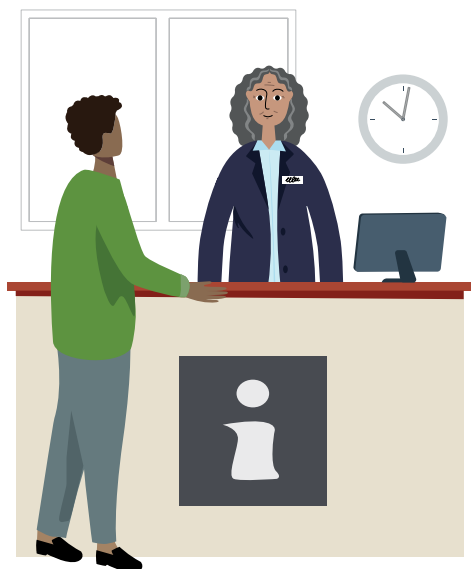


You can contact and communicate with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) or their partner organisations, in any step of the asylum procedure.

UNHCR protects the interests and rights of asylum seekers and refugees. It also provides information and assistance with your application. This can be done by UNHCR officers as well as by partner organisations.

UNHCR contact details and information on the asylum procedure can be found on the UNHCR webpage <https://help.unhcr.org/>.

➤ YOU CAN ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS



You can contact the authorities, UNHCR, a lawyer or other information providers, if there is anything unclear regarding

- your rights,
- your obligations,
- the procedure,
- the timeframe,
- the current status of your application, or
- other matters on your application.

You will receive additional information related to the asylum procedure and specific information related to your case. You can find useful contacts at the end of this brochure



WHAT ARE YOUR OBLIGATIONS?

➤ COOPERATE FULLY WITH THE AUTHORITIES



It is important and in your interests to fully cooperate with the authorities, communicate with them, reply to their requests, and follow the procedural steps.

This allows the authorities to examine your application properly.

➤ TELL THE TRUTH



What you say is very important for the credibility of your application. This is why you need to be honest, give full, precise, and correct information, to the best of your knowledge, about your identity, family, country of origin, the reasons you have left your home country and why you cannot return there.

It can happen that you will not remember everything. This is not a problem. Do not try to invent an answer but explain that you do not remember.

➤ KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENTS



You have to appear before the authorities in person if requested.

You may be called to appointments in relation to your application. You must attend all appointments whenever you receive a note from the authorities, a letter or any other notification indicating a date and time, so that your application can be properly examined.

You must appear at the date and time given.

If you cannot attend the appointment for a serious reason, immediately inform the authorities.

➤ PROVIDE CORRECT CONTACT DETAILS



The authorities must be able to reach you in relation to your application, for example to invite you to an appointment or to inform you about your application. Therefore, it is important that the authorities have your current address and contact information, so that you can be contacted at all times.

If your address, email or telephone number have changed, inform the authorities as soon as possible.

Remember, you must not leave this country during your asylum procedure.

If you are being accommodated in a centre, you should not leave the centre without the necessary authorisation while your application is being processed.

PRESENT ALL DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT YOUR APPLICATION

Such documents may include the following.

Identification documents

Passport, ID card, school ID card, birth certificate, driving licence, wedding certificate, family book, military ID card, any evidence of employment, certificates, etc.

Documents relating to your situation

Court judgments, arrest warrants, reports from police investigations, other documents from the police or courts, threatening or warning letters, newspaper articles (including reference to specific names), baptism certificate, card of membership into a political party, photographs, social media posts, medical or psychological documentation, etc.

You do not need to submit documents that contain general information about your country. The asylum authorities are aware of the general situation in your country.



You can submit the documents during the examination of your application. It is in your interests to submit relevant documents as early as possible.

The authorities will further specify how to submit the documents and provide further details.

It is important to present original documents, where possible.

You must not destroy or dispose of any identity documents. You must not withhold any relevant documents. You must not submit a fake document.

If you do not have any documents with you, explain the reasons during the interview. If possible, ask your friends or relatives to send them to you as long as this would not put you or them in danger.

REMEMBER TO FOLLOW THE LAW OF THIS COUNTRY



IF YOU ARE NOT ABLE TO FULFIL ANY OF YOUR OBLIGATIONS, IMMEDIATELY INFORM THE AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE REASONS FOR THIS. OTHERWISE, IF YOU BREACH YOUR OBLIGATIONS, THERE MIGHT BE VARIOUS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES. YOU ALSO RISK LOSING YOUR RIGHTS AS AN ASYLUM SEEKER.



WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO NOT MEET YOUR OBLIGATIONS?

➤ YOUR ASYLUM PROCEDURE COULD BE STOPPED

Your application may be considered as withdrawn or abandoned. This means that you may lose your status as an asylum seeker and all the related rights if the authorities believe you are no longer seeking protection.

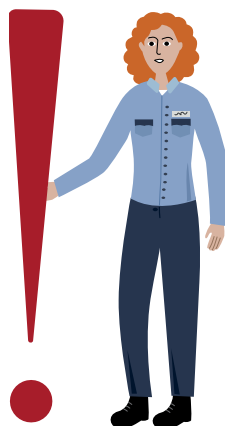
This can happen, for example, if you have left the country or the accommodation centre without proper authorisation, or if the authorities cannot contact you.

You will also lose your status as an asylum seeker if you tell the authorities that you would like to stop the procedure. For example, because you decided to return to your country.

➤ THE SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOU MAY BE LIMITED OR CANCELLED

Services provided to you such as accommodation, food, healthcare, social assistance, etc. might be reduced or stopped completely, if you do not cooperate with authorities and do not fulfil your obligations.

For example, if you leave the accommodation centre without proper authorisation or if you do not appear to your appointment without a proper reason.



YOUR APPLICATION MAY BE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED

If you provide misleading information related to your identity or your application, or if you destroy or forge documents, this may have a negative impact on the assessment of your application.

Your application might be accelerated or rejected and you might not obtain international protection.

Also, international protection could also be taken away from you if the authorities find out later that you did not tell all the truth during the asylum procedure.

YOU MAY BE DETAINED

Detention means that you are obliged to remain in a particular facility, from which you will not have the right to leave freely. You may be detained only in exceptional circumstances and when there is no effective alternative. The reasons for detention can be, for example,

- if relevant aspects of your application (such as your identity) cannot be verified without detention, or
- if you give a false identity, or
- if you forge or conceal relevant aspects of your application.



LET THE AUTHORITIES KNOW IF



A MEMBER OF YOUR FAMILY IS MISSING

If any family members are missing after you left your country, inform the authorities. They may help you to find them.



YOU NEED SPECIAL MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY SUPPORT

Inform the authorities if you have any health problems, if you are pregnant, if you experienced violence, if you have a disability, if you require lifesaving medication or other needs. You will receive medical assistance.



IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING RETURNING TO YOUR COUNTRY VOLUNTARILY

You can return voluntarily to your country at any time during the asylum procedure.

In this case, your asylum procedure will be stopped and you will no longer have the right to stay in the country as an asylum seeker.

If you want to return voluntarily, contact the authorities. You may receive assistance for your return.

Ask the authorities for more information about voluntary return and the assistance you might receive.



➤ YOU CAN RAISE A COMPLAINT

You can raise a complaint in relation to the asylum procedure if you believe that:

- any of your rights have been violated;
- procedural rules have been breached;
- a state authority treated you inappropriately or unethically.

Note that a complaint is not an appeal against the decision on your application.

You can raise a complaint at any stage of the asylum procedure.

If you submit a complaint, it will not have a negative impact on your application.

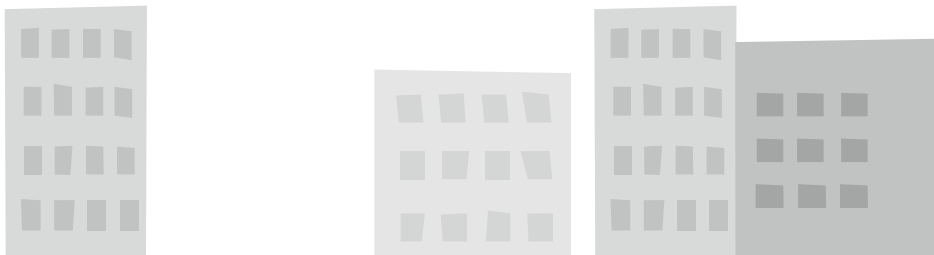


Ask the authorities, UNHCR or your lawyer how to raise the complaint.



FURTHER INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

This page is meant to be completed with further information and contact details by the national authority. The EUAA does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, content, completeness, legality or reliability of the information included in this page by the national authority or by any other responsible third party.



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