

Public Summary of Monitoring Exercise

The Netherlands



Summary of the pilot country monitoring exercise in the Kingdom of The Netherlands

This summary presents the outcome of the EUAA pilot country monitoring exercise undertaken in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (hereinafter referred to as The Netherlands), in line with the Multiannual Monitoring Programme ([Management Board Decision No. 165 of 14 May 2024](#)). The monitoring exercise covered 'the operational and technical application of all aspects of the Common European Asylum System in The Netherlands, in accordance with Article 14 and Article 15(1)(a) EUAA regulation¹, encompassing the institutional framework and key areas of the CEAS, including the asylum procedure, reception conditions and the Dublin procedure, as well as contingency planning and preparedness. It was launched on 13 January 2025 and included an on-site visit by a team of experts (ToE) composed of EUAA experts, the EU Commission experts, EU Member States experts, and UNHCR as an observer from 16 to 27 June 2025. Throughout the pilot monitoring exercise, data were collected from a variety of sources in line with the [EUAA monitoring methodology](#), including through the Member State questionnaire, randomised case sampling analysis, and the inputs received from relevant stakeholders, as well as observations and interviews conducted during the onsite visit. Comments from the Netherlands on the draft findings were taken into account for the finalisation of the report which was submitted to the Netherlands on 13 October 2025.



Main findings

The Dutch asylum and reception system can be regarded as a **well-structured, albeit complex**, mechanism designed to manage the arrival and processing of individuals seeking international protection. It is anchored in a robust legal framework, supported by established institutional expertise and guided by a strong commitment to upholding the rights of applicants for international protection in line with both national and international standards. At its core, the system is governed by clear and transparent legal and procedural principles and characterised by strong interagency cooperation in different domains. Local municipalities play a significant role in the accommodation of applicants and integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Civil society organisations contribute to the system's effectiveness by providing additional services and ensuring that the rights and dignity of applicants are upheld throughout their stay. Yet, despite these strengths, the system faces a number of **systemic challenges** that affect both short-term performance and long-term resilience.

Asylum procedure

The **asylum procedure** continues to face major structural challenges, notably critical delays in its implementation, the persistent backlog of cases and the insufficient capacity to process them timely. These issues are deeply interconnected, hindering the overall efficiency of the procedure and making it essential to address them in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/2303](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010, (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021).



To address these challenges and enhance efficiency, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) has undertaken various initiatives aimed not only at expanding its operational capacity – such as increasing the number of staff – but also at reducing procedural complexity and developing structural changes. These efforts included, for example, accelerating the processing of manifestly well-founded cases with EUAA operational support and introducing efficiency-enhancing measures, such as clustering cases thematically, prioritising workloads, forming flexible teams and training new case officers to conduct non-complex interviews after a short, intensive programme combined with online training modules. Further, the abolition of the administrative penalty payment system – which has not contributed to reducing processing times – is expected to alleviate pressure on the IND.

However, despite these efforts, significant difficulties remain. The complexity of the procedure (which includes elements that go beyond the requirements of the asylum procedures directive such as the issuance of an ‘intended decision’ and the provision of a ‘rest and preparation period’), high staff turnover and lengthy onboarding periods for new case officers further undermine IND’s ability to reduce the growing backlog of asylum applications. As of mid-2025, the backlog of pending first-instance decisions has remained persistently high, at approximately 46,000 cases. Delays are acute across all procedural stages, especially between registration and the personal interview, severely impacting also unaccompanied children (UAC).

Reception

The **reception system** remains under persistent strain, primarily due to a chronic shortage of regular reception places. Despite a decline in asylum applications in early 2025, national occupancy rates remain critically high at around 97%. The core challenge lies in structural bottlenecks: lengthy asylum procedures and the prolonged stay of beneficiaries of international protection - who account for one-third of those accommodated in reception - due to the limited availability of housing in municipalities.

The shortage of regular reception places compelled the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum seekers (COA) to make extensive use of ‘temporary’ reception locations, which now represent nearly two-thirds of all facilities. These sites, such as vessels, tents or hotels, are not always suitable for long-term accommodation and are, in some cases, inadequate to meet the specific needs of vulnerable groups including families, persons with disabilities and children.

The lack of regular reception capacity also disrupts the flow of the reception system, particularly at the Initial Reception Centre in Ter Apel, where applicants remain longer than the intended few days, creating a systemic bottleneck. Frequent re-allocations (including between temporary facilities) further hinder continuity of healthcare and education, particularly for children and applicants with specific needs.

Contingency

The contingency plan does not incorporate specific response measures for UAC timely reception, appointment of guardians and provision of adequate support in times of disproportionate pressure, which represents a shortcoming under the new Reception Conditions Directive adopted in 2024. This is particularly important in light of forecasts indicating a rise in the number of UAC and young people by 2026, which will require additional specialised reception capacity and qualified staff to ensure their protection and well-being.





Conclusion

In response to these challenges, over the past years the Netherlands has introduced a range of **policy initiatives and reforms** aimed at improving the overall system's efficiency and sustainability through a multifaceted strategy (e.g. combining several measures, such as increasing staff capacity, approving structural financing, adopting a Distribution Act that entered into force in February 2024, reducing procedural complexity and developing efficiency gains). These efforts – that should be acknowledged and supported – clearly indicate that not only does the country have a good understanding of its system's shortcomings, but it also actively engages in identifying solutions and achieving meaningful efficiency gains.

The implementation of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** will present a crucial opportunity to further address existing challenges, rethink on the system efficiency, continue investing in long-term structural improvements and reduce procedural complexity, without undermining the requirements and procedural guarantees for applicants of international protection stemming from the EU acquis.

