



CROATIA

Return under the Dublin Regulation

Information for refugees who are returned to Croatia



Return under the Dublin Regulation

Under the Dublin Regulation, refugees may be transferred to the EU country responsible (in most cases, the country of first entry), so that the asylum procedure is carried out there. Refugees who have already been recognised in another EU country will be returned to that country on the basis of the safe third country clause because their asylum application is not admissible in Germany.

For many refugees, their imminent return to another EU country creates great uncertainty.

Our guide is intended for advisers, voluntary support groups and people who are affected. It is supposed to show existing services and contacts. Refugees will be given information about their situation after being returned as well as addresses of organisations they may contact locally for support.

However, no assessment of these organisations and services is made. Many services offering help are short-term projects and not subsidised on a regular basis. Consequently, there is often only a small number of permanent support structures.

We therefore do not claim that the list is exhaustive. This report must not be used as general proof of existing services offering help.

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Preliminary remark

As regards the current situation of asylum seekers in Croatia and the conditions for returnees under the Dublin Regulation, we especially refer to the report of the Swiss Refugee Council: "Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia", February 2025, retrievable at <https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/publications/dublin-state-situation-reports>.

The report deals with possible problems with access to the asylum procedure, violations of human rights at the borders and experience of police violence as well as problems with access to health care.

Procedure after re-entry into Croatia – what needs to be done first?

That depends on whether the person concerned left Croatia while the asylum procedure was in progress or whether he/she had not yet initiated an asylum procedure in Croatia before his/her departure. Upon arrival at the airport, the border police checks whether an asylum application had been lodged. Depending on the situation, different steps must be taken:

1. The person concerned has not lodged an application for asylum in Croatia yet

Asylum seekers lodge their asylum application upon arrival at the airport in Zagreb and are registered there. They receive a document proving their registration.

After registration, asylum seekers must report to a reception centre (in Zagreb or Kutina). They receive a written notice informing them where exactly they must go and within what time-limit. Usually, returnees must travel to the reception centre on their own and at their own expense. Vulnerable persons should be

accompanied to the reception centre; however, according to reports, this is not always the case¹.

Reportedly, the document proving registration is not always issued at the airport, either². Without this confirmation, returnees risk not being able to prove their status as asylum seekers when travelling to the reception centre.

2. The person concerned had already lodged an application for asylum in Croatia and left Croatia during the asylum procedure

a) A decision in favour of granting the asylum application has been taken:

Protection status has been granted and the person concerned has residence status in Croatia. An application for issue of the residence permit must be filed with the police authority at the place of residence.

b) No decision has yet been taken on the asylum application:

If the person concerned left Croatia while the procedure was still in progress, the procedure was suspended. Upon return to Croatia, the person concerned must reapply for asylum in order that the procedure is resumed.

c) The application for asylum was rejected:

If the application for asylum was rejected with final and binding effect, the person concerned must leave Croatia. If he/she reapplies for asylum, this request is treated as a subsequent application that is, first of all, examined for admissibility. For a subsequent application, new findings must be presented and shorter deadlines apply.

¹ Cf. Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia, Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlaenderberichte/2502_SR_C_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf, p. 18

² Are You Syrious, information of 20/5/2025

3. Recognised refugees in Croatia: the person concerned had already been granted protection status when he/she left Croatia

Beneficiaries of protection who leave Croatia for more than six months must inform the Ministry of the Interior thereof; otherwise, their residence permit will expire.³

If returnees no longer have a valid residence permit, they should first contact the Croatian Ministry of the Interior (e-mail: sluzba.za.medjunarodnu.zastitu@mup.hr). It can issue a copy of the decision on their asylum application. This serves as initial proof that they have protection status.

An application for renewed issue of the residence permit must be filed with the police authority at the place of residence. To do so, a residential address is required. Processing usually takes 30 days.

Returnees enjoying protection cannot be placed in a reception centre for asylum seekers. They must find accommodation themselves, for example by staying with friends or in a hostel if they can afford it.

If returnees have no accommodation, they can contact the welfare service at their last place of residence and ask for a place in a homeless shelter. They may also apply for a one-off cash payment (*jednokratna novčana naknada*); processing takes a few weeks and an address must be supplied. To apply for further support, they require a residence permit and a place of residence. Without a residence permit, they also do not have access to regular health care.

³ Cf. Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia, Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlaenderberichte/2502_SR_C_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf, p. 44

Residence status in Croatia

The documents in the possession of the persons seeking advice should be checked to see which status had been granted to them before leaving Croatia. In Croatia, the following residence permits are granted to refugees:

International protection

- Refugee status (*Azil*):
A residence permit is granted for five years. The permit holder is entitled to family reunification.
- Subsidiary protection (*Supsidijarna zaštita*):
A residence permit is granted for three years. The permit holder is entitled to family reunification.

Procedures under the law of residence / asylum procedures

Asylum applications may be lodged at the border or at any police station. Asylum seekers are given a document proving their registration (*potvrda o registraciji*).

Thereafter, asylum seekers must go to a reception centre in Zagreb (Porin) or Kutina within a defined time-limit of a few days. There an initial, brief interview takes place and the asylum application is registered. Afterwards, asylum seekers receive an ID card for asylum seekers (*iskaznica tražitelja*).

A detailed interview with an employee of the Croatian Ministry of the Interior (MUP) will take place at a later point in time.

Asylum seekers are entitled to an interpreter during the interviews.⁴

⁴ The Swiss Refugee Council reports about problems with interpreting in its report "Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia", Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlaenderberichte/2502_SR_C_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf, p. 13

Legal advice

Asylum seekers are entitled to legal information about the stage of their procedure. Asylum seekers without any means of their own are entitled to free legal advice from lawyers engaged by the Ministry of the Interior or refugee organisations.

Asylum seekers can also contact NGOs such as the Croatian Law Centre to get advice.

Accelerated procedure and safe countries of origin

The accelerated procedure is used, among other things, when asylum seekers come from countries of origin that are considered safe. The following countries are considered safe countries of origin: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey⁵.

Under the accelerated procedure, a decision on the asylum application is to be taken within two months. If this is not possible, the procedure will continue as a normal procedure.

Subsequent application

If the asylum application was rejected, a new application for asylum, a so-called subsequent application, may be lodged on certain conditions. To do so, new circumstances must have arisen, for example, a change in the situation in the country of origin or in the personal situation. The application is examined for admissibility on the basis of the facts put forward. Inadmissible applications are rejected.

Decision

Decisions on asylum applications are to be taken within six months. If the procedure takes longer, the person concerned will be informed. The decision must be taken within 21 months max.

⁵ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, p. 81

Appeal

If the asylum application is rejected, an appeal may be lodged with the Administrative Court within the time-limit specified in the notification. The appeal is supported by a lawyer and the appellant is entitled to free legal assistance.

Detention

Asylum seekers may be detained, for example, if there is a risk of absconding. Detention centres for foreigners are located in Ježevo, Tovarnik and Trilj. Depending on the reason for arrest, detention can last up to six months max.

Detained asylum seekers are entitled to free legal assistance. They are given a list of lawyers.

Competent authorities

Stage of the procedure	Competent authority	English name
Registration of the asylum application	<i>Granična policija Polijska uprava ili policijska postaja Prihvatni centar za strance Prihvatilište za tražitelje međunarodne zaštite</i>	<i>Border police Police administration or police station Reception Centre for Foreigners Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection</i>
Dublin procedure (responsibility assessment)	<i>Odjel za dublinski postupak, Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova</i>	<i>Department for Dublin procedure, Ministry of the Interior</i>
Determination of refugee status	<i>Odjel za postupak međunarodne zaštite, Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova</i>	<i>Department for international protection procedure, Ministry of the Interior</i>
Appeal	<i>Upravni sud</i>	<i>Administrative Court</i>
Onward appeal	<i>Visoki upravni sud</i>	<i>High Administrative Court</i>

Subsequent application	<i>Odjel za postupak međunarodne zaštite, Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova</i>	<i>Department for international protection procedure, Ministry of the Interior</i>
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Source: Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update

What duties do asylum seekers have in Croatia?

Asylum seekers are obliged

- to remain in Croatia until a decision on the asylum application is taken;
- to cooperate with the Croatian authorities, i.e. to provide the information required, to submit documents, to keep appointments;
- to have their fingerprints and photographs taken;
- to undergo a medical examination;
- to inform the authorities of their place of residence in Croatia and any changes.

What rights do asylum seekers have in Croatia?

As soon as an application for asylum is lodged, asylum seekers are entitled

- to remain in Croatia until a decision on the application is taken;
- to health care;
- to accommodation during the asylum procedure;
- to work (3 months after lodging the application);
- to financial support if they have no means of their own;
- to legal advice during the asylum procedure;
- to interpreters during the asylum procedure free of charge.

In the event of any discrimination or infringement of rights, an advisory centre of an NGO should be contacted; see addresses in the annex.

Return to the country of origin

For some countries and on certain conditions, refugees who want to return to their country of origin may receive financial support for their return to and reintegration into their country of origin.

Information in this regard is provided by the Croatian Ministry of the Interior or staff at the reception centre.

Accommodation after re-entry

Asylum seekers are entitled to accommodation in a reception centre for asylum seekers as soon as they have made their request for asylum. They will also be provided with food there.

Asylum seekers can remain in the reception centre until their asylum procedure is completed. This also applies for the duration of an appeal procedure. After a final rejection of the asylum application, asylum seekers are not entitled to accommodation any more.

Private accommodation at one's own expense is possible if it has been approved by the Ministry of the Interior.

Financial support for asylum seekers

Asylum seekers are entitled to financial support as soon as they are placed in a reception centre for asylum seekers, provided they do not have sufficient means of their own.

Access to health care

Asylum seekers are entitled to medical emergency care and to the medically necessary basic treatment in the case of an illness.

Victims of torture or rape and victims of other severe sexual, psychological or physical violence are entitled to the necessary treatment of the resulting effects. Members of vulnerable groups shall be entitled to psychosocial support. Minor children have access to full health care like regularly insured persons.

Medical care is available in the reception centres for asylum seekers. In addition, there are health centres and outpatient clinics especially for vulnerable persons, or treatments take place in hospitals.

Returnees under the Dublin Regulation requiring medical treatment should, if possible, bring their medical records, including a translation thereof, so that treatment can continue quickly. If the person concerned has serious health problems or chronic diseases, the contact point of Médecins du Monde should be informed thereof in advance (see address in the annex).

Beneficiaries of protection have access to health care just like persons insured in Croatia. Unemployed beneficiaries of protection will not receive any health insurance card and are not registered as an insured person in the central system with an identity number; they must prove their entitlement by presenting their residence permit. As soon as they take up work, they will be regularly insured and receive a health insurance card.

Not all employees in the health care system are familiar with rules regarding beneficiaries of protection; as a result, there may be problems with health care⁶.

The Swiss Refugee Council reports about problems with access to health care for asylum seekers, returnees under the Dublin Regulation and beneficiaries of protection⁷.

⁶ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, p. 153

⁷ Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia, Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlaenderberichte/2502_SR_C_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf, pp. 34 ff, 46 f

Access to the labour market

Asylum seekers may work 3 months after registration of their asylum application. On request, the Ministry of the Interior will issue a certificate in this regard.

Beneficiaries of protection have access to the labour market and do not require a work permit.

Problems with access to the labour market arise, above all, because of a lack of language skills due to a shortage of language courses⁸. The recognition of qualifications often presents a problem as well.

Access to educational institutions

Children of asylum seekers are entitled to school education just like Croatian children. They are enrolled in a school within 30 days of lodging the asylum application. There are preparatory classes and special language courses.

There are longer waiting times for enrolment in preparatory classes⁹.

Language courses for children and also for adults are offered by various organisations at the reception centres.

Beneficiaries of protection have access to educational opportunities just like Croatian citizens.

Access to housing for beneficiaries of protection

Beneficiaries of protection may remain in the reception centre for a maximum of 60 days immediately after recognition of international protection until they are provided

⁸ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, pp. 147 ff

⁹ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, p. 99

with housing. For this purpose, they must file an application for accommodation with the competent regional body of the Croatian Institute for Social Work.

Beneficiaries of protection who stay outside the reception centre for more than eight days without deregistering lose their entitlement to accommodation.

Beneficiaries of protection who have no means of their own are entitled to accommodation for a maximum of two years. The entitlement ends if and when someone fails to reside at the registered address for more than 30 days without good reason.

Beneficiaries of protection who left Croatia and return to Croatia or are deported there are usually not entitled to accommodation any more and must look for housing themselves.

Access to social services for beneficiaries of protection

Beneficiaries of protection are entitled to social services, for example to support in the event of unemployment.

Returnees need a residence permit and a place of residence in order to apply for social services. In the meantime, they can contact the welfare service at their last place of residence and apply for a one-off cash payment (*jednokratna novčana naknada*); processing takes a few weeks and an address must be supplied.

Vulnerable persons

According to the Croatian Law on International and Temporary Protection (LITP), vulnerable persons include the following: persons who are not legally competent, minors, unaccompanied minors, elderly and frail people, persons with serious illnesses, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, persons with mental illnesses as well as victims of human trafficking, victims of torture, rape or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, for example female genital mutilation.

If police officers identify a special need for protection when the request for asylum is made, they will inform the reception centre thereof. Social workers and employees of entrusted NGOs (e.g. the Croatian Red Cross) will then carry out a more detailed

examination of the need at the reception centre and shall provide the support required. Asylum seekers should contact social workers if required.

Various organisations report that the identification of asylum seekers with a special need for protection is often difficult¹⁰.

Accommodation is to be provided in consideration of sex, age, the needs of vulnerable persons and the family unit. Vulnerable asylum seekers are supposed to be accommodated at the reception centre in Kutina. If required, accommodation in other suitable facilities can be organised¹¹.

Special needs are supposed to be taken into account during the interviews. For example, an interview by a person of the same sex and with an interpreter of the same sex shall be possible. Moreover, the interview shall be carried out as soon as possible after lodging the asylum application.

In the event that vulnerable persons are returned from Germany, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*BAMF*) notifies the competent Dublin unit in Croatia. The notification gives information on the special needs with regard to accommodation and medical care. This also applies, for example, to families who are transferred separately due to violence within the family and are to be placed in different accommodation facilities. The responsibility of the German authorities ends upon arrival in the country of destination and will pass to the authorities in the country of destination.

In practice, however, it becomes apparent that the special needs are not always sufficiently taken into account in the country of destination. If possible, advisers should remain in touch with the transferred persons where critical cases are concerned. If their needs are not taken into account after arrival, they can take action, if required, and arrange contact with relief organisations.

¹⁰ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, p. 67, p. 68; Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia, Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlaenderberichte/2502_SR_C_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf, p. 40

¹¹ Cf. Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database; 2023 update, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>, p. 92, p. 105

Annex: Where can I get advice and support?

Information material on Croatia for refugees in various languages

Information for people seeking international protection in the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Law Centre, Croatian Ministry of the Interior and UNHCR): brochure for asylum seekers: <https://www.hpc.hr/en/2025/02/04/22553/>, in Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Croatian, Kurdish, Pashto, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian

Dublin Procedure (Croatian Law Centre and UNHCR): brochure about the Dublin procedure: <https://www.hpc.hr/en/2025/01/16/leaflet-dublin-procedure/>, in Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Croatian, Russian and Turkish

FAQ "About the procedure for seeking international protection" and "On the rights and obligations of asylum seekers and asylees" (Centre for Peace Studies (Centar za mirovne studije)): in Arabic, Dari, English, French, Croatian and Russian: <https://www.cms.hr/en/free-legal-aid-and-info-point/>

Asylum in Croatia (UNHCR): information for asylum seekers in English: <https://help.unhcr.org/croatia/homepage/asylum-in-croatia/>

w2eu.info - Welcome to Europe: independent information for migrants and refugees in Croatia, in English, French, Arabic and Farsi, compiled by a network of activists and organisations from Europe and North Africa: <https://w2eu.info/en/countries/croatia/overview>

Asylum authority

Ministry of the Interior

Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova

Department for international protection procedure

10 000 Zagreb

Ulica grada Vukovara 33

Tel. +385 1 6122 111

E-mail: sluzba.za.medjunarodnu.zastitu@mup.hr

<https://mup.gov.hr/en>

Contacts / local advisory services

Hrvatski Crveni križ

Croatian Red Cross

Ulica Crvenog križa 14/1

10000 Zagreb

Tel. +385 1 4655 814

E-mail: redcross@hck.hr

<https://www.hck.hr/>

Advice and psychosocial support for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection,
psychosocial support for detained asylum seekers

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

Centar za integraciju izbjeglica SOL

Tel. +385 98 979 2298

E-mail: info@jrs.hr

<https://hrv.jrs.net/>

Social counselling and legal advice, psychological support, intercultural activities,
integration measures and employment promotion for asylum seekers and
beneficiaries of protection

Are you Syrius?

Božidara Magovca 165

10000 Zagreb

Tel. +385 1 205 2843

E-mail: aysinfo@areyousyrious.eu

<https://www.areyousyrious.eu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/areyousyrious/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/areyousyrious.ays/>

Support for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection: language courses,
educational programmes, help with job search, charity clothes shop and charity
department store offering free hygiene and household products

One Stop Shop of the City of Zagreb

Welcome Centre for asylum seekers, beneficiaries of protection and foreign workers

Petrinjska ulica 31

Zagreb

Tel: +385 1 7001974

Mobile: +385 91 1622129

E-mail: integracija.stranaca@zagreb.hr

<https://zagreb.hr/en/centar-dobrodoalice/200866>

General legal information, information about social services and health care, educational institutions, employment opportunities, language courses and integration measures

Legal advice

Hrvatski pravni centar (HPC)

Croatian Law Center

Bednjanska 8a

10000 Zagreb

Tel: +385 1 4854-934

E-mail: hpc@hpc.hr

<https://www.hpc.hr/>

Legal advice for vulnerable persons, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection

Centar za mirovne studije

Centre for Peace Studies (CPS)

Kuća ljudskih prava

Selska cesta 112a

Zagreb

Tel. +385 1 482 00 94

Mobile: +385 91 3300183

E-mail: cms@cms.hr

<https://www.cms.hr/en/>

Legal advice for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection: Free Legal Aid and Info Point

Appointments by tel. +385 91 3300183 or e-mail: legal@cms.hr

Legal information also via e-mail or WhatsApp

<https://www.cms.hr/en/free-legal-aid-and-info-point/>

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

Centar za integraciju izbjeglica SOL

Tel. +385 98 979 2298

E-mail: info@jrs.hr

<https://hrv.jrs.net/>

Health care and advice

Médecins du Monde Belgique

<https://www.facebook.com/MdMCroatia>

E-mail: genco.croatia@medecinsdumonde.be

Medical care for asylum seekers, psychological examinations and advice at the reception centres in Zagreb und Kutina

Mental Health Zone

Online platform for psychological support in dealing with crises and traumatic experiences developed by Médecins du Monde ASBL – Dokters van de Wereld (MdM-BE)

<https://mental-health-zone.com/en/homepage/>

Guide for Third-Country Nationals – Access to Health Care in Croatia

Centre for Peace Studies

<https://www.cms.hr/publikacija/guide-for-third-country-nationals-access-to-health-care-in-croatia-eng/>

in Arabic, English, French, Croatian, Ukrainian

Victims of crime

National hotline for victims of crime: 116 006

Croatian and English

Advice for vulnerable groups

RCT - Rehabilitation center for stress and trauma

Kvaternikov trg 12

Zagreb

Tel. +385 1 4641 342

E-mail: info@rctzg.hr

<https://rctzg.hr/>

Psychosocial support for victims of torture

Sources

- Country Report: Croatia; aida Asylum Information Database, 2023 update; <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia/>
- Reception conditions in Croatia. Report on the situation of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Croatia; Swiss Refugee Council, February 2025, https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/Publikationen/Dublinlanderberichte/2502_SRC_Reception_conditions_in_Croatia_En_4.pdf
- Croatian Law Centre, <https://www.hpc.hr/en/>
- Are You Syrious?, <https://www.areyoursyrious.eu/>
- Centre for Peace Studies, <https://www.cms.hr/en/free-legal-aid-and-info-point/>



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