



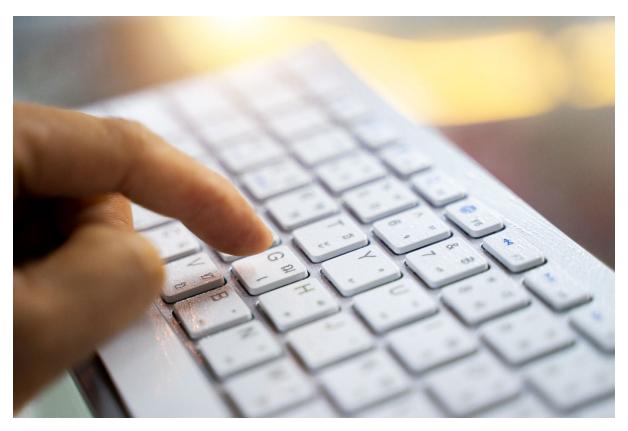
Issue No 23, 11 September 2025



Digital Transformation of Asylum and Reception Systems

The integration of digital technologies to improve processes has become an integral component of how asylum and reception systems are designed and delivered across EU+ countries. The introduction of digitalising asylum procedures was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure a continuity of services, the rise of artificial intelligence and growing caseloads for asylum and reception officials to manage.

Digital tools help to streamline administrative processes, increase efficiency and expand access to information and services for asylum seekers and migrants. They also cut processing times, reduce administrative burdens and improve consistency, in addition to improving coordination among different stakeholders and fostering more connected, data-informed governance.





A benefit of digitalisation in international protection systems is its potential to foster self-reliance among asylum seekers. Self-reliance refers to an asylum seeker's ability to autonomously manage aspects of their international protection procedure, such as accessing information, submitting documents, booking appointments and tracking updates, without needing constant, direct support from national authorities or reception centre staff. Digital platforms can empower applicants to take a more active role in their application for international protection, improving both the user experience and administrative efficiency. By promoting autonomy, digitalisation helps build skills, confidence and a smoother integration for applicants, while reducing pressure on reception centre staff and services.²

At the same time, digitalisation carries the risk of reinforcing existing inequalities and excluding the most vulnerable applicants. Many asylum seekers may not have the resources to access digital devices or lack Internet connectivity or basic digital literacy required to navigate new systems. Others are effectively excluded from digital services due to a lack of a recognised legal identity, restrictive national policies or geographic isolation in areas with poor infrastructure.³

Methodology

This situational update presents information collected through a query which was launched in 2025 by the Netherlands as part of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) International Knowledge Platform's exchange on self-reliance and the active involvement of asylum seekers using digital tools within the reception system. The query was launched to learn from experiences, exchange best practices and inspire improvements in the digitalisation of reception processes.



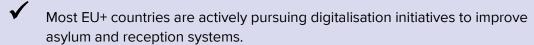
The query was disseminated through the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Query Platform to members of the EUAA Reception Network across EU+ countries. While not all countries replied to the query, common trends can be seen across the responding countries. The EUAA presented the findings of the query during the COA International Exchange event, held in Eindhoven on 15-16 May 2025. Following the event, there was significant interest in making the findings publicly accessible. And thus, this situational update presents the results of the query, relevant EUAA products and publicly available sources.

The information provided by EU+ countries are not collected in a harmonised way. Some countries reported only self-reliance and digitalisation of reception processes, while others covered the entire international protection procedure.

The reporting on national practices, activities and recommendations serves as examples which are not exhaustive and do not imply endorsement on the part of the EUAA. Due to the continuously changing situation, the information described may have changed or been updated by the time of publication. Please consult the original sources for the latest developments and information.



Key findings



- Several countries have or are introducing tools such as chatbots and apps to enhance communication and self-service for asylum seekers.
- National plans often include front-end digital tools for residents but also internal systems to manage reception capacity and administrative tasks.
- Digital screening and online tools to manage financial allowances highlight targeted efforts to improve specific reception processes through digital tools under the new Pact.
- Challenges with digitalising reception systems can include an applicant's lack of digital literacy, limited access to digital infrastructure, legal restrictions and language barriers.
- Developing capacity management systems for accommodation places will allow national authorities to use real-time data to optimise resource allocation and service delivery across facilities.

1. Introduction

Both the European Union (EU) and international organisations such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have addressed digital developments and provided recommendations on the way forward. On 15 December 2022, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to a people-centred digital transition through the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles. The declaration sets a framework which is aligned with core EU values and fundamental rights, such as a human-



centred approach, freedom of choice, safety and accessibility and participation. UNHCR's Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026 outlines digital inclusion as a fundamental right. According to the strategy, forcibly displaced and stateless individuals should be able to participate meaningfully in the digital society, just like their host communities.

Nonetheless, it is widely recognised that countries must address systemic barriers to implement these strategies, including connectivity in isolated areas, weak infrastructure in rural or remote areas, and gaps in digital literacy, content accessibility and linguistic relevance. These challenges can be solved through a multi-stakeholder effort and strategic policy alignment that include digital inclusion into the broader frameworks for asylum, integration and human rights. For digital transformation to be a force of equity and resilience in asylum systems, policymakers must ensure that digital tools are not only efficient but also inclusive, rights-based and adaptable to the diverse realities of displaced communities. In this context, both EU institutions and EU+ countries have developed policies and practices to increase the self-reliance of asylum seekers within asylum and reception systems through digitalisation.



2. EU laws, strategies and tools

Digitalisation has become a progressively prominent feature in the EU's approach to managing migration and asylum in recent years. While neither the recast Reception Conditions Directive nor the instruments of the Pact on Migration and Asylum explicitly mandate the digital transformation of reception processes, the provisions of the Pact clearly guide Member States in that direction. For example, the revised Eurodac and Screening Regulations, which are central to the



Pact, leverage digital infrastructures to streamline data collection, sharing of information and decision-making across both EU-wide and national platforms. The revised Reception Conditions Directive 2024 introduces innovative reception management tools which are designed to enhance flexibility and efficiency. Additionally, the Pact strengthens data-sharing between national IT systems and considers the development of an EU-level case management system to address reception capacity and enable more effective intra-EU communication.⁵

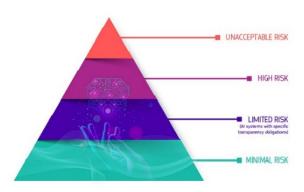


Figure 1. European Commission, <u>Shaping Europe's</u> <u>digital future</u>, <u>Al Act</u>

Parallel to these developments, the European Commission has introduced the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act (Regulation EU 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024), which classifies AI systems used in migration, asylum and border control as 'high risk'. Their use and impact on the final outcome of an asylum application affect individuals who are often in vulnerable situations. Consequently, the use of AI in this context must fully respect fundamental rights, including the freedom of movement, non-discrimination, the principle of non-refoulement and the rights to privacy and personal data protection.⁶

Complementing these legislative and operational efforts, the EUAA launched its <u>Strategy on Digital Innovation</u> to support EU+ countries in transforming their asylum and reception systems through digitalisation. To strengthen the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and promote efficiency, the report calls for digital solutions in migration governance which respect rights, coordinated exchanges and capacity-building initiatives.



Recently, the European Parliamentary Research Service published a briefing
on the use of Al in asylum procedures, outlining potential benefits and risks. The EU has
developed Al technologies, such as biometric recognition, language analysis and forecasting
asylum trends, to improve efficiency and reduce pressure on national asylum systems. While
Al applications like dialect recognition and case-matching are still in the early stages, some
Member States have already started testing these tools. Despite their potential advantages,
the use of Al in asylum processes raises concerns related to fairness, discrimination, bias and
data protection, which are the subject of ongoing legal and ethical discussions.

The EUAA has also developed a digital tool, the <u>Assessment of Reception Conditions (ARC)</u> <u>Tool</u>, designed in close collaboration with experts from Member States to support national reception systems and to harmonise practices across EU+ countries. This tool enables reception authorities and operators to quickly assess the quality and compliance of reception



conditions based on harmonised standards, including the recast Reception Conditions Directive.

In the area of early identification and support for vulnerable applicants, the <u>Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN) Tool</u> offers an interactive, evidence-based platform to help authorities identify special procedural and reception needs throughout the asylum process. The tool is grounded in CEAS legal provisions and good practices, and was developed with input from a broad network of experts and civil society actors. It provides practical, individualised guidance without replacing the need for professional judgment or training, and complements other EUAA support mechanisms such as training modules, guidance documents and practical tools.

3. National strategies on digitalising reception systems

Most EU+ countries are at different stages with developing national strategies related to the digitalisation of their reception systems. While some have established long-term strategies, others are still in the early phases of development.

Sweden and Norway, for example, have formal digitalisation strategies in place, with more than 5 years of experience in this area. While the Netherlands does not have a specific national strategy in place, it has continually digitised procedures over the last 5 years.

In contrast, countries such as Cyprus has only recently begun digitalisation activities, with less than 1 year of experience, while Czechia and Portugal have been engaged for 2-5 years.

Digitalisation efforts at the national level have been essential in preparing for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. They also play a key role in enhancing control and security measures within asylum procedures.⁷

4. Trends across EU+ countries

Developments documented in the <u>EUAA Asylum Report</u> over several years show that digitalisation efforts within asylum systems were already in progress prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which subsequently acted as a driving force to accelerate research on and the adoption of digital tools.

Several countries, including Czechia, Finland, Germany and Slovakia, have either developed or upgraded their IT systems to improve the management of resources and services, while broadening the range and type of data collected. In France, the online application process was expanded to include family reunification procedures.

Innovative uses of AI have emerged. For example, the <u>CELIA project</u> in the Netherlands uses AI for language assessments to determine the origin of some applicants. Countries like Czechia and Germany have made advancements in digital identity management by implementing digitalised residence permits with extended biometric data storage. However, a significant shift has not yet been undertaken in some countries, like Czechia, to promote the self-reliance of reception residents.

Digital technologies have been gradually applied across various functions, including the provision of information to applicants within the asylum and reception systems, the creation



and management of electronic case files, and the facilitation of communication between asylum, reception and return authorities and judicial bodies.8

In 2024, Austria transitioned to electronic files for asylum procedures, streamlining the process through digital documentation. In 2025, Ireland's International Protection Office invested in digitalising the registration and lodging of applications for international protection. This led to the launch of the International Protection Applicant Portal, an online platform for applicants to register and monitor their application file.

Norway is also making significant improvements by developing a new IT case management system to improve the efficiency of their asylum procedures. ¹⁰ Meanwhile, both Czechia and Germany have focused on digitising residence permits and the storage of biometric data. ¹¹

Sweden upgraded its <u>website</u>. The new site features a clearer information structure with user-friendly language and guided navigation to understand the asylum process. Finally, Italy launched <u>multilingual flyers</u> in Rome, enhancing the reception and inclusion of asylum seekers through more accessible and diverse language support.

Over the years, many countries have also introduced and expanded digital systems for submitting appeals and related documents. ¹² In countries like Hungary, ¹³ the Netherlands and Germany, ¹⁴ full-scale electronic court procedures are mandatory for parties represented by lawyers. However, countries such as Malta do not yet allow the digital submission of appeals. In Luxembourg, ¹⁵ appeals may be filed both physically and digitally, although only the physical submission is currently deemed legally valid.

At the same time, several countries offer electronic notifications of court decisions and updates. For example, Sweden's migration courts accept digital submissions and send notifications without requiring users to create an account. Other countries, such as Italy¹⁶ and Poland,¹⁷ have incorporated remote hearings and digital proceedings into their judicial systems, making asylum-related legal processes more flexible and accessible.

Regarding data protection and confidentiality, platforms in Belgium, Italy and Germany ensure secure transmission of submissions through encrypted systems, while Belgium requires lawyers to use certified electronic signatures to access e-filing systems. Some countries, including Greece, combine digital and in-person submissions, with electronic files securely transferred between courts and government authorities. Estonia uses the <u>e-toimik portal</u> for case tracking and document submission.

Finally, courts and tribunals have addressed the use of digital tools in asylum processes, establishing standards to protect applicants' rights in line with international law. For example, the Belgian Council of State <u>referred</u> a question to the Constitutional Court on the processing of personal data during personal interviews by means of videoconferencing introduced by Royal Decree of 26 November 2021. The Belgian Council of State partially suspended the decree and referred a question to the Constitutional Court, asking whether the new method provided by law violated constitutional, GDPR and ECHR standards. It also found that the decree unlawfully excluded lawyers and guardians from hearings for confidentiality reasons, potentially infringing applicants' rights to legal assistance and to be heard.

In November 2024, the Danish Refugee Appeals Board <u>annulled</u> a decision to transfer an applicant to Italy under the Dublin III Regulation due to significant shortages in Italy's asylum system. The board referenced reports highlighting delays, bureaucratic obstacles and failures in Italy's digital systems to access the asylum procedure. Furthermore, the applicant's lawyer



argued that Italy's suspension of Dublin transfers due to a state of emergency violated the principles of timely and efficient processing. It concluded that Italy could only receive applicants if individual guarantees were provided, but given the current conditions, annulled the transfer decision.

4.1. Access to information and services

Several EU+ countries have produced videos on various aspects of the asylum procedure and reception rules and rights, enabling applicants to have 24/7 access to information. For example, asylum seekers in accommodation centres in Latvia have easy access to video and printed informational material, including infographics explaining the asylum process, rights, obligations and access to services, such as healthcare and legal aid. The material is also available online in 13 languages. Hotline services are continuously available to those who speak English or Russian.

The Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) has developed an <u>online information platform</u> which is tailored to asylum seekers and offers content in 14 languages across eight different thematic areas, including asylum procedures, accommodation, healthcare, living in Belgium, returns, work, learning and unaccompanied minors. The platform includes audio functions and a glossary of complex terms to ensure broad accessibility and usability.

In the Netherlands, the MyCOA platform promotes self-reliance among residents by offering detailed information on the asylum process, centre-specific services (such as healthcare, safety, rights and obligations) and personal updates, namely messages or scheduled activities. MyCOA is available in 10 languages and is developed in collaboration with both residents and staff. The information management of the system is automated: non-personalised data on the numbers of residents in centres and changes in these numbers are constantly monitored, analysed and shared with relevant stakeholders.

Continuous support is provided by on-site staff in reception centres in Czechia, while digital-based support services complement this personal assistance by offering timely and accessible information.

Healthcare information and advice are accessible online and by phone to all residents of Sweden, thus a dedicated platform for only asylum seekers has not been developed. A service called My page allows applicants to view updates on their case, but it is not linked to reception-related services.

In other EU+ countries, digital information tools are only partially available, often limited to basic information which is accessible through online registries.

4.2. Self-management within the reception system

Self-management tools for residents in reception facilities refer to digital tools which allow asylum applicants to manage aspects of the reception process by themselves. Development in this area varies across EU+ countries.

Czechia has made digital tools available, for example digital forms to submit an application for international protection and using email communication to interact with applicants. Other platforms are under development, such as a new web application that will provide information on reception conditions, asylum procedures and integration. All reception centres in Czechia offer free wifi to residents and dedicated rooms equipped with laptops and Internet access.

The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) in the Netherlands has introduced a digital identification card for residents, allowing fast identification and both supervised and unsupervised access to COA premises.

In Sweden, although certain parts of the asylum and temporary protection processes can be carried out online, residents of reception centres cannot currently apply for daily or special allowances through digital means. Likewise, digital tools are not available to manage reception-related matters.

Some countries have introduced a system allowing asylum seekers to digitally book appointments to obtain documentation, verify work rights and access healthcare and other services.

4.3. Use of AI and algorithms

The use of AI technologies in the reception process varies across EU+ countries. Most countries are still in the early stages or not yet implementing these tools, and thus decisions are made individually by a case officer.

The Netherlands stands out as an exception, where COA, together with the Immigration Policy Lab, has implemented an AI tool called <u>GeoMatch</u>. This tool is used to screen and match beneficiaries of international protection with suitable municipalities, aiming to improve integration outcomes and support individuals in building a successful life in their new communities.

In Sweden, a distribution algorithm is used to allocate individuals across the country; however, it is not based on Al.

4.4. Programmes to support the digital literacy of applicants

Support for developing digital skills among asylum seekers and residents in reception centres varies significantly across EU+ countries, with a mix of structured programmes, informal initiatives and self-directed learning opportunities.

In Belgium, Fedasil, in collaboration with the University of Ghent, has developed the <u>Digital Skills Project</u>, which includes 12 multilingual modules. The material is distributed to Fedasil reception centres and partner organisations, and sessions can be organised by staff, volunteers or even residents with relevant experience.

The Netherlands supports a range of initiatives on digital inclusion. Selected centres offer digital skills workshops, often in collaboration with NGOs or libraries. Additionally, combined language and digital integration programmes are available and voluntary digital coaching where digitally literate residents assist others is encouraged. Most centres also provide access to computers in common areas and wifi.

In Sweden, NGOs have taken the lead in delivering digital skills training, though the Swedish Migration Agency is working towards better coordination of these efforts across all reception centres.

In Latvia, while no formal training programmes are in place, asylum seekers can independently develop their digital skills using computer labs with Internet access in accommodation centres. Staff are available to assist with software use, and some integration activities provided by NGOs include digital skill components.



Other EU+ countries do not currently have comprehensive digital skills training programmes in place but have plans to introduce digital literacy and support programmes through the national implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

5. Feedback from asylum seekers

User involvement in the development of digital tools for reception systems varies across EU+ countries, with some incorporating feedback mechanisms to enhance relevance and usability, while others have still to introduce such approaches.

In Sweden, user feedback was integrated during the development of the My Page service, helping to tailor the platform to applicants' needs. Similarly in Norway, the START self-registration tool collects user insights when developing new features. Feedback is gathered through group interviews, user testing and input from staff working at reception centres. When collecting user feedback on the self-registration tool, the authorities found that some asylum seekers appreciated being able to actively participate in their asylum case.

In the Netherlands, residents in COA reception centres are actively encouraged to provide feedback on digital services through multiple channels. Although the digitalisation of the reception process is ongoing, resident participation and feedback are considered crucial to ensure that digital tools remain relevant, accessible and user-friendly. Current feedback methods include Resident Councils (*Bewonersoverleggen*), which are held regularly at most COA locations. The meetings offer residents a platform to raise issues, including feedback on digital tools and services. COA staff and, when needed, interpreters participate to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, during the development of digital platforms, such as MyCOA, residents take part in user testing sessions to assess usability, language accessibility and clarity of information.

6. Challenges in promoting digital self-reliance

Promoting digital self-reliance and active participation in the reception of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection is not always evident, as authorities face challenges and barriers.

In Norway, difficulties to access digital tools include limited digital literacy among the elderly and individuals with health challenges. In addition, some applicants may not have access to their device when the police collect all devices for investigation during the first days after arrival, which prevents applicants from using the self-registration tool upon arrival.

Sweden faces legal obstacles that regulate how applications can be submitted digitally, alongside accessibility issues that affect some users.

The Netherlands encounters challenges related to language and literacy barriers, which hinder complete engagement with digital tools, even when they are translated. Additionally, not all residents have access to smartphones, stable wifi or digital skills. Some asylum seekers also prefer personal interaction over digital interfaces, particularly for sensitive and complex processes. Lastly, the availability of digital infrastructure varies across different locations which can undermine self-reliance in reception systems.

To design human-centred solutions that address the needs of people, Belgium promotes the autonomy of asylum seekers in reception through the Digital Skills Project. Similarly, the Netherlands encourages self-reliance in reception through digital tools such as the MyCOA

app, which enables residents of reception centres to access services and be informed about their life in the centre and the whole asylum procedure, while GeoMatch assigns applicants to a municipality based on the matching interview of the beneficiary of international protection about their background, connections and goals. Finally, digital skills workshops empower residents to take control of their own reception and future.

7. Future digitalisation plans

There is consensus across EU+ countries that an effective reception system relies on integrated, needs-adapted information systems. Digitalisation efforts aim to improve record-keeping, data collection and procedural management, while enhancing service accessibility and enabling applicants to exercise their rights swiftly. This framework includes robust monitoring of entries and exits at accommodation facilities, ensuring applicants access only authorised rooms and services. New information systems linked to the asylum register and other databases are planned to be implemented, incorporating physical infrastructure elements such as special identification cards, QR code readers, electronic signature devices and secure door access systems. Ongoing maintenance and upgrades will be critical to safeguard these systems against cyber threats and to ensure their long-term reliability.

Belgium is considering the deployment of an Al-powered chatbot on the Fedasil website to enhance accessibility and promote self-reliance among users. The chatbot will be available 24/7, offering information in 14 languages and centralising communication by managing emails and messages in a single point of contact. Designed to emulate natural human conversation using colloquial language, the chatbot will use information from trusted sources such as the Fedasil website and affiliated asylum partner sites.

Cyprus has initiated the digitalisation of its archive and registration systems; however, this process has not yet extended to reception procedures.

Czechia has launched a beta version of a new application "APPlicant", which is currently available in Czech and English. Future digitalisation plans include multi-language adaptation and AI integration. Additionally, all reception centres in Czechia will be equipped in 2025 with information TVs providing 24/7 updates.

The Dutch COA has developed a comprehensive digitalisation roadmap focused on participation and self-reliance within reception centres. The main objectives include supporting residents in developing digital skills to manage their affairs independently and reducing staff workload through digital process optimisation. The plan envisages a user-friendly digital environment which is accessible in multiple languages and offers round-the-clock access to relevant information, including personal files, digital wallets for daily allowances, healthcare support, incident-reporting, guidance and the digital management of identification and location preferences.

Norway is preparing for the implementation of the Screening Regulation 2024/1356, which envisages to complete screening within 1 week through digital solutions at the first reception centre to which the applicant arrives.

Portugal is advancing the digitalisation of internal procedures and databases, specifically enhancing information flow between central services and accommodation centres.

Sweden is progressing towards digital handling of daily and special allowances.



Latvia is engaging in discussions to implement the Pact on Migration and Asylum, focusing on digitalising information, data and processes across asylum procedures.

Additional resources



EUAA Strategy on Digital Innovation in Asylum Procedures and Reception Systems creates a framework to enhance the effectiveness of CEAS by supporting EU+ countries in a meaningful digital transformation of asylum processes.



EUAA Asylum Report 2025 The Agency's flagship report presents an overview of key developments in asylum in 2024. It summarises changes to policies, practices and laws. Additional resources include:



Executive Summary 2025 / Digital version



International Protection in Europe: A Year in Review



- Country overviews
- National Asylum Developments Database
- National Asylum Developments 2025 (PDF)

Previous editions of the EUAA Asylum Report are also available.



EUAA Case Law Database serves as a point of reference for European and national case law related to CEAS. The search function allows to consult the latest jurisprudence on digitalisation and reception. Additionally, the page on Asylum appeals systems provides an overview of digital tools to access appeal procedures.



EUAA Who is Who in International Protection in the EU+, Issue No 5: Reception authorities presents an overview of national authorities responsible for reception conditions in EU+ countries, commonly referred to as reception authorities.

¹ European Asylum Support Office (EASO). (October 2021). The digitalisation of asylum processes, Fact Sheet No 3.

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2022). <u>Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026:</u> Strengthening protection, building self-reliance and optimizing delivery.

³United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2022). Digital Transformation Strategy 2022-2026: Strengthening protection, building self-reliance and optimizing delivery.

⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022). <u>Digital inclusion - UNHCR Digital Transformation</u> Strategy

⁵ European Commission. (12 June 2024). <u>Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum</u>

⁶ Recital 60 of the <u>Regulation EU 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 (Artificial Intelligence Act)</u>

⁷ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). (2025). <u>Asylum Report 2025</u>

⁸ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). (2025). Asylum Report 2025

⁹ International Protection Office | An Oifig Um Chosaint Idirnáisiúnta. (2024, November 26). What's New-International Protection Office.

Norwegian Directorate of Immigration | Utlendingsdirektoratet. (2024, October 7). <u>Utlendingsforvaltningen får nytt IT- og saksbehandlingssystem [The Immigration Service is getting a new IT and case management system].</u>

European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). (2025). <u>Asylum Report 2025</u>
 For more information, please consult the EUAA Case Law Database, Asylum Appeals Systems page, https://caselaw.euaa.europa.eu/Pages/asylum-appeals-systems.aspx

¹³ Courts of Hungary | Magyarország Bíróságai. Electronic procedures

¹⁴ Section 55d VwGO

¹⁵ Article 2, Law of 21 June 1999 establishing the rules of procedure before administrative jurisdictions

¹⁶ Article 83(7)(f) <u>Decree Law No 18/2020</u>

¹⁷ Supreme Administrative Court | Naczelny Sąd Administracyjny. (2019). <u>Informatyzacja Postępowania Sądowoadministracyjneg</u> [Digitalisation of judicial and administrative proceedings].