



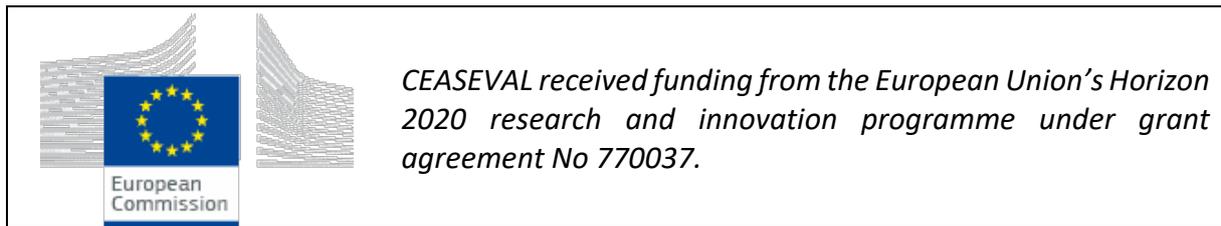
National report on the governance of the asylum reception system in Bulgaria

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Abstract

Based on field research on national level but also examining two local case studies – Sofia and Harmanly, this text describes the reception of asylum seekers in Bulgaria.

Keywords: asylum seekers, reception, Bulgaria

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Introduction

Based on field research on national level but also examining two local case studies – Sofia and Harmanly, this text describes the reception of asylum seekers in Bulgaria.

The research makes use of all the scarce literature available on the subject. Interviews were conducted both on national level and on the locations of the two case studies – Sofia and Harmanli. Some of the conversations were of informal character and were held outside of the time frame of this particular research. The text does not quote them directly, but they are a result of the team's long-term experience in the field and provide the necessary basis for the writing of this analysis.

The methodology includes also participant observation in the form of participation in numerous forums organised by CERMES or other NGOs or international organisations and representatives of government institutions represented.

The analysis of multilevel governance has encountered difficulties in several areas.

- Lack of academic tradition. Migration studies in Bulgaria are scarce and very limited in scope. *The Figures of the Refugee*, a book edited in 2009 by CERMES director Anna Krasteva, is among the few studies in the field. There is, however, a deficiency of scientific analyses of the national system of reception of asylum seekers. Those available are mostly reports of non-governmental organisations.
- Difficult fieldwork. Interviewing met with numerous difficulties. The good collaboration with the State Agency of the Refugees made it possible to have meetings with their representatives. We failed to elicit positive response even from individuals who had played direct part in articulating the policies in the field. The narrow circle of workers on migration and/or asylum seeking, also narrows the scope for interviewing representatives of non-governmental and migrant organisations, since such interviewing had taken place in the course of other research projects. The specifics of the system and the mechanisms of public policies did not allow for a more substantial number of interviews to be conducted.

1. The background: the initial design of the national governance of asylum seekers' reception and main reforms

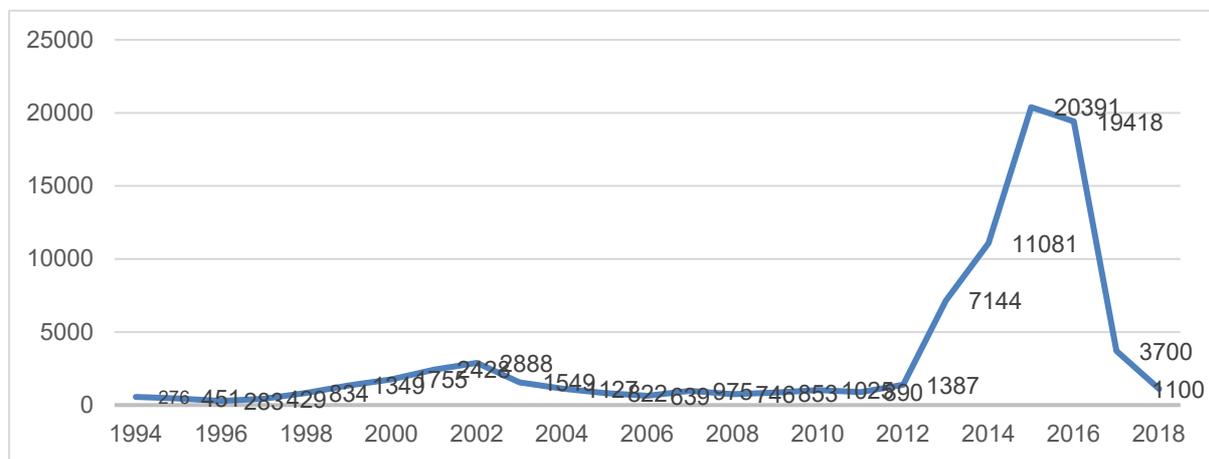
Anna Krasteva summarizes four periods of asylum seekers waves, which can also be illustrated using statistics of the National Refugee Agency:

- "Period of fluctuations: 1993–1998. The number of applications for asylum varied. In 1994 it almost doubled (to 561) as compared to the previous year 1993, falling to the initial level two years later in 1996 and then rising again at the end of the period – to 429 in 1997. It should be noted that these fluctuations were within a small range – between 250 and 550 per year.
- Period of first increase: 1999–2005. Already in 1999 the number of applications had increased by four-fold from the initial one in 1993, increasing further by 400 to 670 a year in this period, i.e., by as many and even more than the total number of applications in the previous period. It should be noted that the peak in 2002 – 2,888 applications for asylum– was ten times higher than that in 1993, when statistics began to be kept. Even then, the size of the refugee flow was neither threatening nor beyond the capacity of the already established institutional structure for dealing with refugees in Bulgaria (Krasteva 2006).

- The paradoxical European period: 2005–2011. There were multiple forecasts that Bulgaria’s accession to the EU in 2007 would attract massive refugee waves. This did not happen. Throughout the period before and after Bulgaria’s EU accession, the number of applications for asylum did not exceed 1,000 per year, ranging between 822 and 890.
- The period of the refugee crisis: 2012–2016. The increase began at the very beginning of this period, soaring by almost six times – from 1,387 in 2012 to 7,144 in 2013. The peak was in 2015, when an unprecedented for Bulgaria 20,391 persons applied for asylum. The next year, 2016, was characterized by a halt in the increase and even a slight decline in the number of asylum seekers – 19,418, but it was still much higher than that before the peak – 11,081 in 2014)” (Krasteva 2017).

As a result of the peak in asylum applications, those arriving in the country were confronted with a situation of institutional collapse, political and media ostracism and growing social tensions (Staykova, 2013).

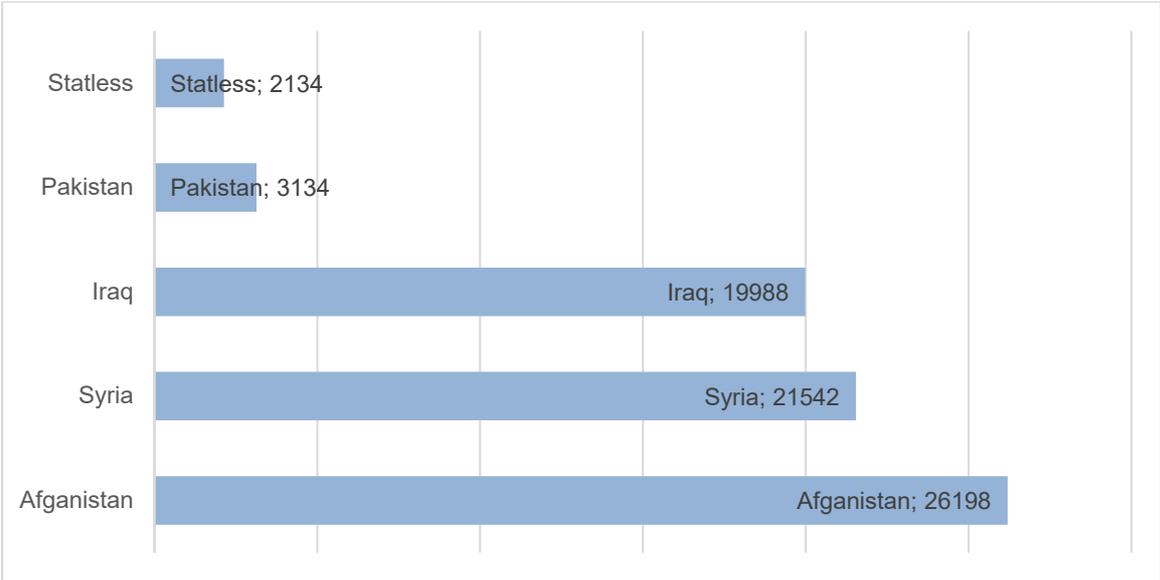
Figure 1: Asylum applicants 1993-2018



Source: <http://www.aref.government.bg/index.php/bg/aktualna-informacia-i-spravki>

According to the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) for the past years around 85 000 people have applied for asylum. Among them the highest number of applications came from citizens of Afghanistan, followed by those of Syria, Ipaq and Pakistan.

Figure 2: Countries of origin (01.01.1992 – 31.10.2018)



Source: <http://www.aref.government.bg/index.php/bg/aktualna-informacia-i-spravki>

We can also include a subsequent post-crisis period, in which the number begins to decline again.

1.1 The initial governance design

Asylum was the best developed migration policy field in the initial years of the democratic transition after 1989, although the number of asylum seekers prior to the refugee crisis was insignificant.

After signing the Geneva Convention in 1993, Bulgaria joined the family of asylum granting countries. At present, there are three types of protection provided by the state. Notably, asylum represents a mechanism that is hardly ever applied, although a special commission attached to the vice-president is authorized to consider applications, and temporary protection has never been actually applied.

Figure 3

ASYLUM	INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	TEMPORARY PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the types of protection granted to foreigners who are persecuted for reasons of their opinions or activity in the defense of internationally recognized rights and freedoms, and is granted by the (Vice) President of the Republic of Bulgaria in conformity with Art. 98, item 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes refugee status and humanitarian status pursuant to Art. 1 (2) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees and is granted by the Chairperson of the State Agency for Refugees in conformity with Art. 2 (3) of the Law on Asylum and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary protection shall be granted in the event of a mass influx of aliens who are forced to leave their country of origin due to an armed conflict, civil war, foreign aggression, violation of human rights or indiscriminate violence on the territory of the relevant country or in a part of the country, and who for these reasons are unable to return thereto (Law on Asylum and Refugees, Art. 1 (3) by the Council of Ministers

Source: Authors

As early as 1992, the National Office on Territorial Asylum and Refugees at the Council of Ministers, which in 2000 was transformed into an Agency of the Refugees at the Council of Ministers and since 2002, the currently active State Agency for Refugees was established under the Council of Ministers. In 1997, the first centre for registration and reception of asylum seekers and refugees opened in the village of Banya, and in 2001 – registration and reception centre in Sofia (Ovcha Kupel). The Pastrogor transit centre opened in 2008. The law states as follows:

- “registration and reception centres – for registering, accommodating, medical examination, social and medical assistance and conducting of procedure for determining the competent state to examine the application for granting international protection, and of procedure for providing international protection to foreign nationals; for accommodation of foreign nationals, who have applied for asylum” (Art. 47)
- “transit centres – for registration, accommodation, medical examination and conducting of procedure for determining the competent state to examine the application for granting international protection, and of procedure for providing international protection to foreign nationals” (Art. 47)

1.2. Main reforms throughout the 2000s

Before 2012-2013 the reception system was more or less stable and of interest only to a few international and national humanitarian organizations. No specific procedures for distribution of asylum seekers were to be identified across the national territory. National legislation governs that asylum seekers are entitled to material reception conditions during all types of asylum procedures. The state is obliged to provide food, accommodation, social assistance, health care and psychological support. The length of the stay in a reception centre is not limited by the law. The law allows asylum seekers to reside at so-called “external addresses”, which designates accommodation outside of reception facilities, but asylum seekers are obliged by law to pay for any such accommodation on their own.

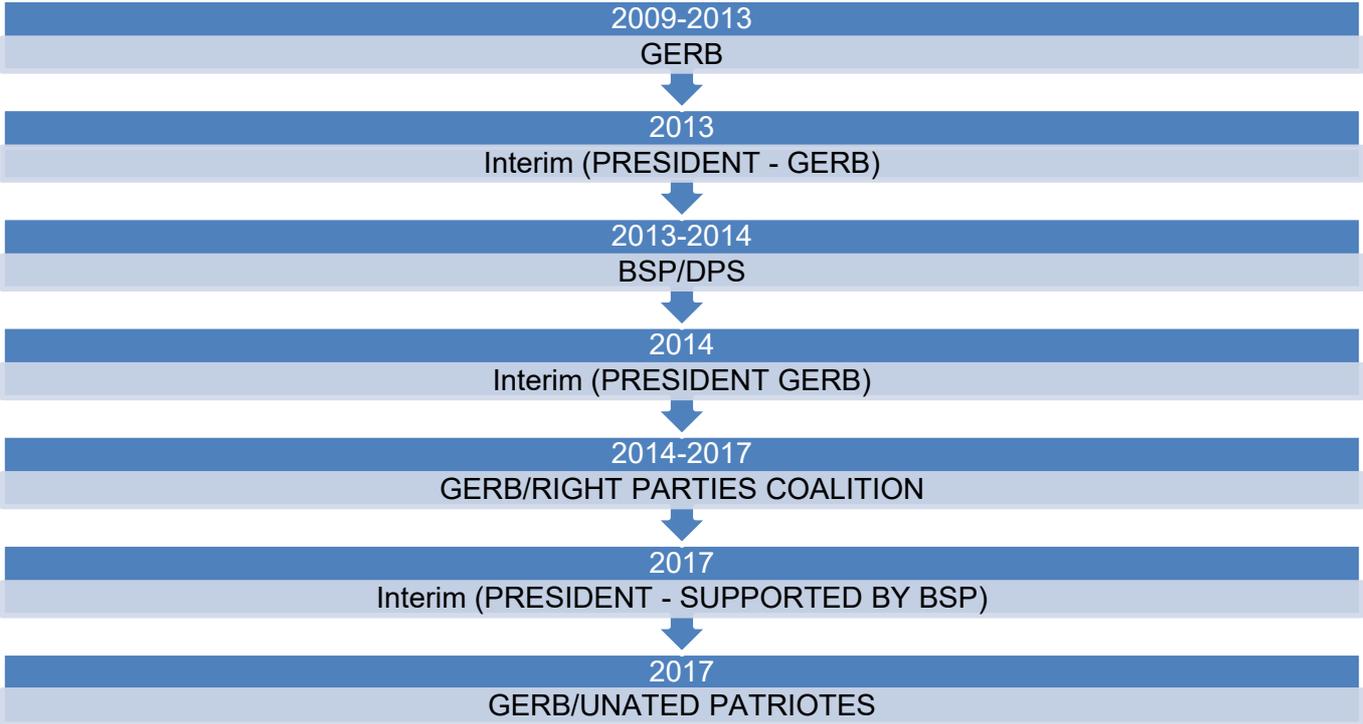
2. Recent processes of reconfiguration of the governance of the reception system

The so-called refugee crisis forced a process of reconfiguration on the reception system.

2.1 Process of decision-making

From the outset of the refugee crisis until the present moment, seven governments have been in power in Bulgaria.

Figure 4

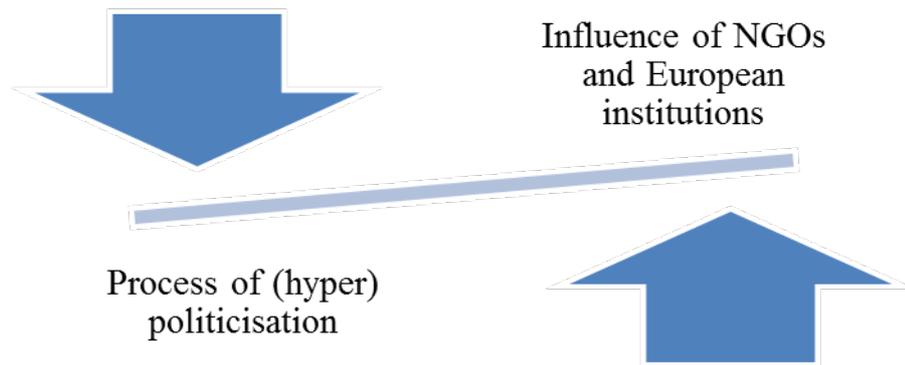


Source: Authors

This largely presupposes discontinuity in the process. Interestingly enough, although such a discontinuity is present, there has not been any significant difference in the overall understanding of the governance of the reception system.

Several mutually exclusive tendencies influence the decision-making process relevant to the system for reception of asylum seekers. The institutions engaged in the process, namely the State Agency for refugees, have to work in a complicated situation, wherein they attempt to satisfy societal expectations, to meet the requirements of their European partners, to take into account a complicated political situation, in which the representatives of the extreme right are either supporters, or participants in the government, and leftist opposition shares a similar populist or extremist view in respect with migration. Not only the extreme political parties, but also mainstream political actors produced populist discourse in response to ongoing negative attitudes. According to an October 2013 survey by Alpha Research, 83 percent of the population have voiced their concerns that the growing numbers of refugees poses a risk for the country's security. This position is held by most of social-demographic groups. A sociological survey made by Alpha Research in September 2016 shows that 61 percent of Bulgarians believe that migrants pose the most precarious external threat to national security (Alpha Research, *Societal attitudes*, September 2016), and according to Eurobarometer from November 2016, 77 percent are against the resettlement of third-country nationals in Bulgaria (Autumn edition of Standard Eurobarometer 2016) .

Figure 5



Source: Authors

2.2 Main revisions of the current reception system

It should be noticed that there are no significant changes in the procedure after the migration dynamisation situation in the country, besides the harmonisation with the EU standards. Among the most recent and significant changes are those related to changes in legislative framework.

In 2015, the Law on Asylum and Refugees was amended two times. The Amendment of the act, effective as of 16.10.2015, transposed Directive 2011/95 / EU and Directive 2013/33 / EU. The transposition of the Qualification Directive introduced the concept of "international protection". It also clarified the grounds for granting international protection, the concepts of 'subjects of persecution', 'acts of persecution', 'subjects of protection, subsequent to application for protection', 'the best interests of the child and the members of the family'.

Additional exclusion clauses have been introduced. Changes have been made in relation to the representation of unaccompanied minors and underage foreign nationals - municipal administration appoints a representative designated by the mayor of the respective municipality.

With regard to the transposition of the reception directive, special attention was paid to the provisions on reception conditions, rights and obligations of asylum seekers, access to the labour market, and the notion of vulnerable group. The centres to open had to be of the closed type and operate under the State Agency of the Refugees.

The amendment to the LAR, effective as of the end of December 2015, transposes Directive 2013/32 / EU. With the incorporation into Bulgarian legislation of the Procedural Directive, amendments have been incorporated into the examination procedure for applications for international protection. Dublin proceedings are no longer mandatory, but applied only in the presence of evidence of competence for examining an application for international protection from another EU member state.

There is an admissibility procedure introduced for subsequent applications. The time to reject apparently unsubstantiated applications was extended in the accelerated procedure from three calendar days to ten working days. The application examination procedure has also been extended – from three to six months. The provisions on the rights of foreign nationals, access to personal dossier and conducting of interviews were specified.

Other revisions of the current reception system could be summarised as follows.

Facilities

By the beginning of 2013, the total capacity of the reception centres was 805 places as follows: 425 places in the Sofia reception centre, 80 in the Banya reception centre (Central Bulgaria) and 300 in the Pastrogor transit centre in (in the border area with Turkey and Greece) (AIRA Report 2013). As already mentioned, the transit centre is specifically designed to accommodate asylum seekers applying at the border. In practice, the conditions in these two types of institutions managed by the State Agency for refugees are not very different. The capacity as stated above proved rather insufficient with the increased number of asylum seekers who have arrived since mid-2013. The situation is adequately described by AIRA: "Until the beginning of September 2013, in less than 25 days, the existing two reception centres - the one in the city of Sofia and the one in the village of Banya, as well as the transit centre in the village of Pastrogor, Svilengrad municipality, were severely overcrowded and overloaded to such an extent that caused an utter institutional collapse of SAR. SAR's reception facilities management had to accommodate from 8 to 15 newly arriving asylum seekers in rooms equipped for a maximum of 2 to 4 persons. In order to save space, families, including families with children were separated in violation of the provisions of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and the national Family Code. In early September 2013, when all the possibilities for accommodation in rooms had been exhausted, SAR started to "accommodate" newly arriving asylum seekers on mattresses in the corridors of its reception facilities. Due to the insufficient reception capacity provided by SAR, 85 the premises for 24-hours police detention of the Regional Border Police Directorate in the area of Elhovo, close to the Turkish border and a major entry point to Bulgaria for new arrivals, were used for accommodation purposes, leading quickly to overcrowding. Therefore, the Border Police started to convert various premises into accommodation facilities for newly arriving asylum seekers or to refer them to the detention centres for irregular migrants in Lubimets and Busmantsi. Thus, the detention centres, being closed facilities to ensure deportation, were used for the accommodation of elderly, sick and wounded people, as well as many families with children, including infants aged between 0 and 12 months. On 8 October 2013, a new detention centre with a capacity of 300 persons, which was provisionally named "distribution centre", was opened in the town of Elhovo; its capacity was immediately exhausted" (AIDA Report November 2013).

In order to cope with this situation, the State Agency for Refugees opened new accommodation facilities, namely several of the so called temporary accommodation centres at Vrazhdebna (Sofia district) in September 2013 and few weeks later at Voenna Rampa (Sofia District). The former has the capacity to house 420 and the latter – 500 individuals. None of these facilities was designed to suit that purpose, and the living conditions became target of criticism on the part of human rights organisations. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee even demanded the resignation of the government because of the conditions of reception of asylum seekers, which had prompted protests across immigrant communities. In an open letter, Margarita Ilieva, attorney at law and Director of the Legal Program at the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, wrote as follows: " During visits on 3 and 8 October 2013 at the accommodation centres for foreign nationals at the districts of Voenna Rampa and Vrazhdebna in Sofia, the BHC representatives encountered the following situation: 1. Numerous individuals at the Vrazhdebna facility testify that officers, conducting interviews of asylum seekers, have threatened to prolong indefinitely the refugee status procedure of asylum seekers for whomever the security police force stationed on the premises would single out as instigators of the protest and unless asylum seekers desist from complaining and protesting (...) 2. The protest of the asylum seekers at the Vrazhdebna Centre was engendered by the inhumane living conditions, in which they are accommodated: (...) No doctor is available. (...) There is no heating. (...) Food is insufficient – canned

food is provided once in a week or ten days. As for daily commodities, such as bread, the immigrants must contrive to obtain them on their own, usually through donations. (...) None of the SAR officers was present on the location. Their last visit, according to the police security, was in the beginning of September. (...) The situation in the district of Voenna Rampa is similar. The housing conditions encountered there constitute inhumane/degrading treatment of refugees, in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention for human rights. They also constitute a grave violation of Art. 29 (1) of the Law of Asylum and Refugees, which rules that asylum seekers shall have the explicit right of shelter and food and access to free medical and psychological assistance. In this sense, authority has completely abdicated from legality. The BHC classifies this crisis as a radical institutionalized violation of fundamental human rights. The crisis with the inhuman treatment of asylum seekers from Syria is the biggest human rights crisis in Bulgaria since the beginning of 2013. The current government, which appoints the SAR leadership, is responsible for the crisis and therefore is obliged to offer its resignation”¹.

A third centre for temporary accommodation opened in Harmanly using the facilities of a former military base with accommodating capacity for 450 persons. According to AIDA, the conditions on that location were even worse “as asylum seekers are accommodated under a closed regime in tents and in “containers”, without electricity and sewerage, under extremely poor living and hygienic conditions, and a high risk of epidemics” (AIDA Report November 2013).

In October 2013, a fourth centre opened in the village of Kovachevtsi with capacity to accommodate 300 inmates. Although at the time this was the only centre where living conditions were up to the minimum standards, it closed quickly in November 2014. Among the grounds to enact this decision we can also name the negative reaction of the population when children of asylum seekers were enrolled in the local school.

In the coming years, living conditions gradually reached the acceptable standards, not without the support of European funds and donations from international organisations.

Vulnerable groups

According to the law, vulnerable categories include: children, pregnant women, elderly, single parents, people with disabilities, and individuals who have suffered severe forms of physical or psychological harm or sexual abuse. Legislation requires that vulnerability should be taken into account when deciding on accommodation. In practice, no specific accommodating facilities exist for these precise type of groups and international organisations are engaged in supporting the state in the process of establishing special facilities. For example with the support of UNHCR new facilities for unaccompanied minors are under construction in several centers.

Social assistance

As of the beginning of the crisis, the social assistance guaranteed by the law was distributed in cash. The amount of this assistance is equal to the minimum social aid, granted to nationals. This practice is highly criticised by international and national humanitarian organisation as quite insufficient to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers, especially in the cases involving unaccompanied minors (AIDA Report 2013). In the spring of 2015 the State Agency ceased retroactively as of February 1 of the same year to provide this monthly financial aid. The motive was that food would be provided three times a day at the reception centres. According to AIDA, it took several months for the new measure to be

¹ The director of the State Agency for refugees was dismissed in October 2013.

implemented. Meanwhile, humanitarian organization, various NGOs and individual donors contributed food donations (AIDA 2015). This support helped the establishment of good dialogue and cooperation between the NGO sector and the state institution, namely the State Agency for Refugees.

Labour market

Bulgarian legislation allows asylum seekers access to the labour market. At the outset of the crisis, access was guaranteed if the determination procedure took longer than one year. Amendments to national legislation adopted as of October 2015 have reduced the period to three months in accordance with the Reception Conditions Directive.

Education

Access of asylum seeking children to education is guaranteed by legislation. In practice, there are many impediments to their enrollment in schools. After 2017, many efforts were undertaken to address the situation by the state.

“Ethnic” organization of the centres and new “closed” centres

In August 2016, a mass brawl between Afgani and Iraqi asylum seekers erupted at the Harmanli centre. In consequence, the first closed type facility under the administration of the State Agency for refugees.

On 24 November 2016, a prohibition imposed on free movement in and out of the centre (unauthorized leaving) sparked a riot at the Harmanly institution. Some weeks before the incident, rumours were current that there was an outbreak of some infectious disease at the centre. Despite repeated reassuring statements issued by the authorities that this was not a precarious epidemiological situation that could affect employees at the Centre or residents of the town, and that it involved standard cases of the chickenpox, a disease typical of Bulgaria, Harmanli residents insisted that medical examinations be conducted in the presence of the media. Protests have been organized that led to the enforcement of temporary measures restricting the free exit of inmates from the facility grounds. As a result of the riots in the centre, 400 Afghan and Iraqi nationals were arrested, 1000 inmates were removed from the centre, and 24 police officers were injured.

In the aftermath of the riot, a new director of the centre was appointed and some reorganizations were implemented. Afterwards, the ethnic principle of accommodation began to be practiced in all reception centres in Bulgaria.

Detention centres (Busmantsi, Lyubimets, Elhovo²) in Bulgaria are under the administration of the Migration Directorate of the Ministry of Interior. After 2016 asylum seekers can also be placed in closed reception facilities under the jurisdiction of the State Agency for refugees during the determination of their claim. This legislation amendment also accounts for the Harmanli riots and the reaction of several political actors.

Administrative zones

In September 2017, the government introduced the so called ‘movement zones’, which comprise the geographical environs surrounding any given reception centre. The asylum seeker can apply for a permission to leave the zone and in case of denial of the request, the motivation for this denial must also be adduced. Permission is not required in the cases when asylum seekers have to leave the zone in

² Defunct as of 2017.

order to appear before a court or other public body or if they happen to be in need of emergency medical assistance.

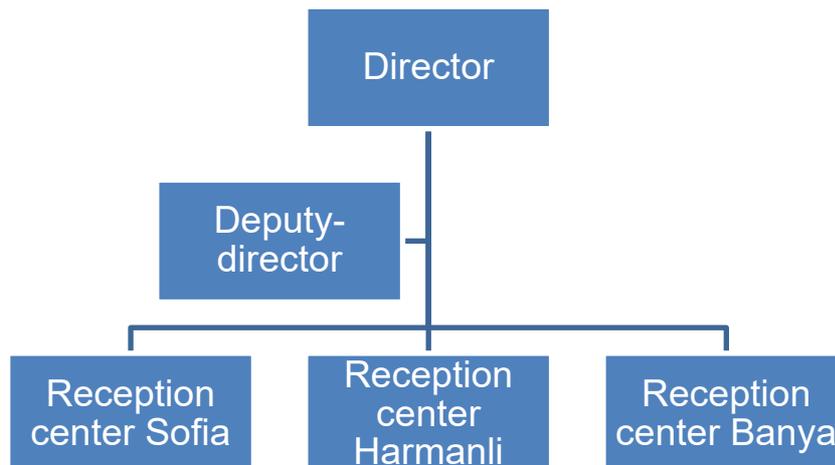
2.3 The formal governance structure today

The State Agency for Refugees is the principal institution with authority to implement state policy in the field of reception of asylum seekers. At this stage, the Agency has one transit centre on the Bulgarian-Turkish border, at the location of Pastrogor. It performs registration, accommodation and border areas procedures. By 2018, there are three registration and reception centres and they are used for registration, accommodation and conduction of procedures in the interior of the country. These include:

- Harmanli Registration and reception centre
- Banya Registration and reception centre
- Sofia Registration and reception centre with three divisions („Ovcha Kupel“, „Vrazhdebna“, „Voenna Rampa“).

The governance structure is highly centralized and all the reception centres are under the supervision of the Director of the State Agency for Refugees.

Figure 6



Source: Autors

The Director is appointed by the Prime minister following a resolution of the Council of Ministers. According to legislation, reception centres should work in coordination with other government institutions.

The legislation does not explicitly provide for or guarantee access to reception centres for international organizations such as UNHCR, IOM, and other international or national NGOs. In practice, following the signing of a partnership agreement they are free to operate in the reception centres. The partnership agreements are signed on individual basis with the respective NGO or international organisation, usually on the initiative of the non-governmental sector, and are a good example of the positive cooperation between the institutions and other entities engaged in the sector.

3. Concrete functioning of the governance of the reception system today

According to the State Agency for Refugees operatives on the premises of all three centres, functional by 2018, as of November of the same year the Ovcha Kupel facility housed 150 persons, Voenna Rampa – 110, and Vrazhdebna – 56 or a total of 312 persons in Sofia, which amounts to around 15 percent of the capacity of these facilities. Following the riot in Harmanli from November 2016 different centres accommodate individuals of different nationalities – Voenna Rampa housed asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Pakistan and single individuals from Iraq; Ovcha Kupel – mainly families from Syria, Iraq and Africa, or exceptions, such as Myanmar; Vrazhdebna also accommodated individual Syrian nationals, but no families. In Harmanli, asylum seekers were also assigned according to ethnicity or nationality and as of November 2018 the centre was far from reaching its full capacity.

Authorities often return asylum seekers who have come to Sofia from Harmanly back to their departure location. In the words of the State Agency for Refugees operative, they prefer to reside in Sofia as this affords them a better chance to get in touch with traffickers who can assist them in getting out of the country, rather than for any essential difference in treatment on the two locations.

At present, there are the so-called “mouvment zones”, that is, inmates are allowed the right to move freely around Sofia, but if they are caught twice and if a protocol is issued of their leaving the respective zone, the state is empowered to accommodate them into a closed-type centre. The State Agency for Refugees has already established a closed-type centre in Sofia with capacity of 60 places, which housed all but five individuals at the time our interviews were held.

At present, the centres offer computer rooms and playrooms for the children, and, in the words of the SAR representative, “great care is taken” of them. Almost all the children go to school, with provided transportation and a social worker to accompany and assist them both in Sofia and Harmanli. According to an interviewee in Harmanli, children are well accepted in schools and quickly adapt to the educational system. In Harmanli, the volunteer operated so-called ‘Afghani school’ provides assistance to children.

In the cases of unaccompanied minors, the municipalities are responsible of appointing a custodian, who is supposed to attend the interview for status determination. In the words of the State Agency for Refugees representative, “the conditions are being improved”. At present, for example, assisted by IOM, a protected zone for unaccompanied minors is under construction at the Voenna Rampa facility, which will offer 24-hour security and psychologists. A similar zone is to be installed at Ovcha Kupel.

At present, the accommodation conditions are good. Food is provided three times a day. Kitchens are also available for asylum seekers to cook for themselves in the centres in Sofia. According to the State Agency for Refugees operative, these were built with “European money” and not on budget or donated funds.

Medical care is made available to asylyum seekers. Asylum seekers have medical insurance and, in this sense, have also access to the health care system. There can be a problem in securing a personal physician.

Three months from the commencement of the procedure, asylum sekers obtain the right to work. According to the State Agency for Refugees operative, a great percentage of the people work. They are engaged in large retail chains, tailoring, or as automechanics. The State Agency for Refugees itself organizes meetings with employers, including some cases where local business owners in Sofia and Harmanly evinced active interest in hiring asylum seekers.

In addition, there is a national program for employment and training of foreigners with refugee or humanitarian status received in the current year or in the previous two calendar years. It provides Bulgarian language training, training for acquiring professional qualification and subsidized employment. The program grants its beneficiaries with 180 hours for a language course and 300 hours for qualification. This program seeks for broad participation including SAR, integration centers, local employment offices as well as employers and qualification centers.

Some international organization and international and national NGOs, such as UNHCR, the Red Cross, Caritas, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, The Council of Refugee Women in Bulgaria, Foundation for Access to Rights, the Voice in Bulgaria Legal Aid Centre, the Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights, are represented locally in Sofia and Harmanli centres. Usually this happens with a simple physical presence of representative of a particular organisation in the center in case some of asylum seekers need help or consultation.

While IOM and UNHCR provide the financial and administrative support to the State Agency for Refugees, some NGOs are specialised in providing legal assistance, such as Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Access-to-Rights Foundation, Voice In Bulgaria Legal Aid Centre, Bulgarian Lawyers For Human Rights Foundation, whereas others, such as Caritas provide social assistance, CVS has a volunteer programme supporting migrant children taking Bulgarian language courses, the Nadya Centre provides psychological support, etc.

4. Policy outcomes. Mechanisms of convergence and divergence in policy implementation

The reception system in Bulgaria is of the centralized kind. General conditions in reception centres are accounted for by national policy and do not differ according to locality neither are contingent on the local authorities. Potentially, this is a source of divergence, since not all NGOs and IOs are equally present in all reception centres.

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Appendix 1. List of official documents

National Strategy in Immigration and Integration (2008-2015);

National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015–2020);

Strategic Objectives of the State Agency for Refugees for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017;

National Strategy for Integration of Individuals Granted International Protection in Bulgaria (2014–2020);

2018 Action Plan of Implementation of the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015-2020;

National Assambly Stenograms, 13/20.07.2018

Appendix 2. List of interviews

Name	Organization	Position	Date
ST	NGO	Consultant	12/12/2018
DT	NGO	Legal advisor	12/12/2018
MP	NGO	Consultant	12/12/2018
MT	Volunteer	Volunteer	10/12/2018
SV	State Agency for Refugees	Social support expert	12/12/2018
PP	State Agency for Refugees	Director of a reception centre	9/11/2018
SI	State Agency for Refugees	Director of a reception centre	6/11/2018
AI	Political party	Leader of local branch	5/11/2018
ML	Political party	Leader of local branch	7/11/2018
IA	Journalist/Volunteer	Media owner	6/11/2018
NK	School	School Principal	5/11/2018
-	Volunteer	-	6/11/2018
AA	Migrant organization	Member	5/12/2018



The research project CEASEVAL (“Evaluation of the Common European Asylum System under Pressure and Recommendations for Further Development”) is an interdisciplinary research project led by the Institute for European studies at Chemnitz University of Technology (TU Chemnitz), funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 770037.) It brings together 14 partners from European countries aiming to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the CEAS in terms of its framework and practice and to elaborate new policies by constructing different alternatives of implementing a common European asylum system. On this basis, CEASEVAL will determine which kind of harmonisation (legislative, implementation, etc.) and solidarity is possible and necessary.