

Data management in the asylum procedure in Germany: Study by EMN Germany for the European Migration Network

Grote, Janne

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Federal Office
for Migration
and Refugees



Accurate, timely, interoperable? Data management in the asylum procedure in Germany

Study by the German National Contact Point for the
European Migration Network (EMN)

Working Paper 90

Janne Grote



Forschung

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The European Migration Network

The European Migration Network (EMN) was established in 2003 by the European Commission on the initiative of the European Council to meet the need for a regular exchange of reliable information in the field of migration and asylum at European level. Since 2008, Council Decision 2008/381/EC has provided the permanent legal basis for the EMN and National Contact Points have been established in the Member States of the European Union (with the exception of Denmark, which has observer status) and in Norway.

The mission of the EMN is to provide the European Union (EU) institutions, national institutions and authorities as well as the public with up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum with a view to supporting policy in this area. EMN Germany is based at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Nuremberg.

Its main tasks include the implementation of the annual EMN work programme. This includes the preparation of the annual policy report 'Migration, Integration, Asylum', the preparation of up to four topic-specific studies, the response to ad hoc requests sent to the network as well as the dissemination of information in various forums, e.g. by organising their own conferences and participating in conferences in Germany and abroad. In addition, the National Contact Points each establish national networks of organisations, institutions and individuals active in the field of migration and asylum.

As a rule, no primary research is conducted within the framework of the EMN, but rather existing data and information are processed and analysed; only if necessary are these supplemented by independent collection of data and information. EMN studies are prepared according to uniform specifications in order to achieve comparable results within the European Union and Norway as well as Georgia and Moldova. In order to also ensure conceptual comparability, a glossary has been compiled, which is accessible via the national and international EMN websites.

After the completion of the national reports, a synthesis report is produced that summarises the most important results of the individual national reports and thus allows for a European overview. In addition, there are topic-specific information sheets (EMN-Informs), which present selected topics in a concise and precise manner. The EMN Bulletin provides quarterly information on current developments in the EU and its Member States. With the 2014 work programme, the Return Expert Group (REG) was also established. It deals with aspects of voluntary return, reintegration and forced return.

All EMN publications are available on the website of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. The national studies of EMN Germany as well as the synthesis reports, informs and the glossary can also be found on the national website: www.emn-deutschland.de.



Summary

This study is the German contribution to the EMN study 'Accurate, timely, interoperable? Data management in the asylum procedure'. The study is conducted in all participating EU Member States and Norway according to common specifications. The results of the national study are subsequently incorporated into a comparative synthesis report, which provides a pan-European overview of the measures and challenges with regard to data management in the asylum procedure in the Member States.

Data on asylum seekers and asylum applicants is collected for the purposes of establishing and documenting identity, verifying the need for protection, as well as for administrative, integration and security purposes in the asylum process. Consistent data management across all authorities is of particular importance for a reliable asylum procedure. The early collection and interagency exchange of personal data enables asylum seekers to be clearly identified, prevents multiple registrations and allows individual process steps in the asylum procedure and beyond to be more closely linked.

Data collection and data matching

The goal of today's data management in the asylum process is uniform data collection and storage at the earliest possible point in time and central storage with access rights specific to the authorities. To this end, the existing recording systems of the border police authorities and police forces of the Länder have been expanded to include the recording of the making of an asylum application. In addition, the reception centres of the Länder were equipped with so-called 'PIK stations' and, since 2018, the local foreigners authorities have also been equipped with one PIK station each. The PIK station enables the automated storage of personal data and biometric data of the identification measures in MARiS, the electronic workflow and document management system of the BAMF for the processing of all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures) and in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR), the core data system in the area of asylum and foreigners law. Certain (bio-metric) data of asylum seekers are also stored in other national (security authority) databases (AFIS-A and INPOL) as well as European databases (EURODAC). In the further course of the

asylum procedure, personal data is compared with additional national and European databases, such as the Schengen Information System (SIS II), the national visa file or the European VISA Information System (VIS).

Provision of information to asylum seekers

The provision of certain personal data as part of the asylum application process is mandatory. If the person concerned objects to the provision of essential data, this may lead to the discontinuation of the asylum procedure, the rejection of the asylum application or the reduction of benefits under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act. At the same time, asylum seekers and asylum applicants have a right to be informed about data collection, storage and processing, as well as the rights to information, modification, deletion and objection.

Data quality and data protection

Quality assurance of the data stored in the asylum procedure, particularly in the Central Register of Foreigners and MARiS, now begins as early as the time of initial registration when making an asylum application by recording the data via the PIK station and the police recording systems. This enables the automatic creation of the respective data record in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS as well as automated register comparisons, with – among others – security authorities. In this way, the authorities involved can access a uniform data record on a role-specific basis, thus eliminating or reducing the need for multiple entries of the same data by different authorities. In addition, possible incorrect data entries and multiple registrations can be cleaned up, and prior stays and possible security-relevant knowledge can be identified at an early stage. Since the same data record of a person is accessed in the subsequent processes, all further procedural steps can also be seen as quality assurance measures in that the data can be checked, corrected and supplemented if necessary. Important further tools and methods of quality assurance in data management are data cleansing measures as well as the IDM-S tools of name transliteration and analysis or the web-based transcription service, speech biometrics, image biometrics and evaluation of mobile data devices.

In Germany and the EU, the right to informational self-determination applies to German and European citizens as well as to third-country nationals. Legal protection is provided by the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the national Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG). At the European, national, Länder and authority-specific levels, corresponding data protection officers monitor the legal data protection requirements.

Challenges and best practices

The starting point and impetus for the numerous reforms in the asylum process related to data management were various challenges that arose in the course of the high influx of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, which temporarily led to administrative overload in Germany. Among other things, lengthy and at times confusing (data processing) procedures at the individual authorities involved in the asylum procedure were identified as neuralgic points, which led, among other things, to multiple registrations as well as status, responsibility and benefit uncertainties for the asylum seekers and authorities involved.

With regard to data management, two legal changes in particular were instrumental in addressing the challenges: the First and Second Data Sharing Improvement Acts. They formed the legal basis for the expansion of the Central Register of Foreigners into a core data system and the associated simplified conditions for storing additional facts and for transmitting data to other public agencies. Work has been and continues to be carried out on linking the existing IT systems of the individual authorities involved at the federal, Länder and local levels. Interfaces have been and will be created for communication and role-specific access to data from the respective other systems – with the Central Register of Foreigners as the core data system at the centre of the inter-agency data exchange.

Outlook

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is conducting a pilot project on the use of blockchain technology in the asylum process. For example, the introduction of blockchain is being tested in cooperation with the Saxony Land directorate as part of the AnKER facility in Dresden. Here, the communication channels between the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the Land actors in the context of the asylum procedure are to be made more efficient and faster, and established with no media discontinuities of information in sub-processes. Based on the positive

experience gained, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is also planning to make individual IDM-S tools available to other European countries, in particular the language and dialect recognition and the web-based transcription service (TKS).

Parallel to the reforms carried out in Germany, processes of increased interoperability of national databases have been initiated at the European level, in which Germany has actively participated. The reform processes at the European level relate in particular to the creation of a ‘European Criminal Register Information System’ (ECRIS), the addition to a ‘European Criminal Records Information System for Third Country Nationals’ (ECRIS TCN), the creation of an ‘Entry/Exit System’ (EES) and a ‘European Travel Information and Authorization System’ (ETIAS). The regulations have already entered into force, but contain multi-year implementation provisions for the Member States, so that implementation is expected partly in 2021 and partly in 2022. In addition, an expansion of the Eurodac system to include another group of persons (third-country nationals apprehended during an unauthorized stay) and the expansion and linking of the various EU databases are planned.

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1 Introduction

The debate about data collection, data storage, data processing and data transfer in the asylum procedure is relatively non-controversial. There is a broad consensus among the EU Commission, the governing parties in Germany, the opposition and civil society that a coherent and inter-authority data management in the asylum procedure is necessary in order to carry it out as quickly, reliably and resource-efficiently as possible. On the one hand, speedy asylum procedures should give the asylum seekers themselves as quickly as possible certainty about their protection status or the rejection of their application for protection. On the other hand, the cooperation of the numerous federal, Länder and local authorities in the asylum procedure should function as smoothly as possible, duplication of work should be avoided and resources should be saved.

In the course of the strong influx of asylum seekers to Europe and Germany – especially in 2015 and 2016 – it became apparent that the administrative structures in Germany and other EU Member States were not sufficiently prepared for the high number of asylum seekers. This led to sometimes long waiting times in Germany, first from the making of an asylum application to registration, then between registration and the formal asylum application, then from the formal asylum application to the asylum interview, and finally from the interview to the initial decision on the asylum application. This resulted in a so-called backlog. This circumstance led to status uncertainties for asylum seekers and temporarily to emergency care situations for some, as necessary benefits could not be granted due to the outstanding registration or formal asylum application¹, but also due to coordination problems among the authorities within the federal structure.

The central authority in Germany for conducting the asylum procedure, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), reached its capacity limits, especially from 2015 up to and including 2017. Although the number of registrations, formal acceptance of asylum applications, asylum interviews

and decisions could be successively and significantly increased, it nevertheless took until 2018 before the backlog from previous years could be significantly reduced. However, the increase and multiplication of staff at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and in other authorities (including the Federal Police, foreigners authorities, youth welfare offices, schools, administrative courts, asylum counselling centres; cf. Grote 2018: 36, 41) could not cope with the sharp increase in administrative work alone. Solutions had to be found to relieve the burden on staff, make the procedure more resilient even with high numbers of arrivals and save resources overall. Process steps had to be simplified, better coordinated, redesigned to be less personnel-intensive, accelerated and at the same time the reliability of the individual steps as well as of the collected, stored, supplemented and forwarded data had to be increased and made to comply with data protection requirements.

This initial situation led to a large number of reforms with regard to data management in the asylum procedure, which affected both the timing of data collection (including earlier registration and frontloading of data collection), the comprehensive digitisation of a large part of the processes in the asylum procedure (including the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees's Digitisation Agenda 2020), the technical means for data collection and storage (including digitised fingerprinting through 'PIK stations'), data cross-checks with security authorities, as well as the organisation, exchange and quality assurance of data between the authorities involved (including the implementation of the core data system with role-specific access rights and with no media discontinuities with regard to the data transmission).

This study describes the data collection, the competent authorities, the type of data storage, the databases, the data protection requirements and the data quality assurance measures in Germany at the end of 2019. Since this study is primarily concerned with the documentation of data management in the asylum procedure, it focuses on so-called cross-border asylum applications, which account for the majority of asylum applications in the Federal Republic of Germany. The study does not, or only marginally, deal separately with other forms of asylum applications, for example, when persons with legal prior residence in Germany apply

1 The entitlement to certain asylum seeker benefits arises in principle only after registration, which is accompanied by the issuance of a proof of arrival, or in particular after the formal application for asylum, which is accompanied by the issuance of a residence permit.

for asylum², when convicted criminals apply for asylum from prison or when children of recognised beneficiaries of protection are born in Germany and also receive protection status (so-called family asylum).

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the German asylum procedure in order to better understand which process steps are usually followed by asylum seekers in the asylum procedure and which authorities are involved. Chapters 3 to 6 focus in more detail on the individual phases from the making of an asylum application, registration, formal asylum application and interviews to the first-instance decision on the asylum application with a view to data management. Chapter 7 describes important data protection, data cleansing and data quality assurance measures, before Chapter 8 describes some key challenges and best practices of the past reform years.

This study is produced within the framework of the European Migration Network, which means that it is carried out in parallel following a similar pattern in a large part of the other EU Member States and Norway. Based on the individual national reports, a comparative EMN synthesis report is produced afterwards, which summarises the national results and is published.

Definitions

The study uses a large number of abbreviations and technical terms that are relevant to the specific topic area, but are not necessarily directly accessible to the general linguistic usage and body of knowledge. For this reason, in addition to a list of abbreviations, a detailed glossary was prepared in this study, which can be found in Annex 1 to the study.

² Such as students who cannot return during their stay in Germany due to the outbreak of a warlike conflict in their country of origin.

2 The asylum procedure in Germany

In order to better classify the specific explanations on the data-related process steps in the following chapters, this chapter describes the German asylum procedure and individual relevant administrative processes. In the German asylum procedure, a distinction can be made between

- the *making of an asylum application* (e.g. Sections 18, 18a, 19 of the Asylum Act),
- the *registration of asylum seekers* (in the form of the “obligation to file an asylum application” according to Section 22 of the Asylum Act and “filing an asylum application” and issuance of the proof of arrival according to Section 63a of the Asylum Act),
- the *formal lodging of an asylum application* (e.g. Sections 13, 14 and 23 of Asylum Act) and
- the *asylum interview, examination of and the decision on the asylum application* (Sections 25, 31 to 33 of the Asylum Act).

The making of an asylum application and the registration of the asylum seeker can take place in immediate succession if the asylum seeker submits their asylum application directly to the competent reception centre. However, the two process steps can also take place separately in terms of time, place and the authorities involved. This is the case, for example, if the asylum seeker makes their asylum application when crossing the border to the Federal Police or another public authority that is not competent for ‘registering’ the asylum application (the making of an asylum application with the Federal Police, the police of the Länder or the foreigners authorities is therefore sometimes called ‘initial registration’³). The actual registration of asylum seekers is carried out by the competent reception centres under the responsibility of the Länder. The formal application for asylum is finally and solely made at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which is also responsible for the asylum interview, the examination of and the decision on the asylum application.

3 Sometimes the term ‘registration’ is also used in connection with initial registration, although the types of registration and the legal basis differ, as the Federal Police, for example, do not issue proof of arrival, as the competent reception centre does in connection with registration.

2.1 Making an asylum application

To ‘make an asylum application’ means to express the intent to seek asylum. Persons seeking protection must express their intent to seek asylum to a public authority at the time of or immediately after entering Germany.

2.1.1 Making an asylum application at a border, police or foreigners authority

The intent to seek for asylum is often expressed in the course of crossing the border at a border authority, but can also be expressed to the police forces of the Länder or a foreigners authority, whereby the process steps are similar (Sections 18, 18a, 19 of the Asylum Act). Already at this point in time, the asylum seekers are subjected to identification measures (ED-Behandlung), whereby essential basic personal data and (biometrical) identity features are collected (in particular fingerprints of asylum seekers who have reached the age of 14 and from 1 April 2021 also from the age of six⁴, as well as a photo). These identification measures have been digitalised in recent years (cf. Chapter 3).

The authorities responsible for border police tasks, the Land police forces as well as the foreigners authorities forward the asylum seekers to the nearest reception centre after the identification measures (in case of the first asylum application, the actors mentioned do not know which reception centre is the responsible reception centre, so they refer the asylum seekers to the nearest reception centre; cf. Chapter 2.1.2). For this purpose, the authority issues the asylum seeker a so-called *certificate of registration as an asylum seeker* (Anlaufbescheinigung). The certificate of registration as an asylum seeker is an informal document that is not regulated by law and merely docu-

4 From 1 April 2021, fingerprints are also to be taken from children aged six and over; a change in the wake of the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act, the main parts of which already came into force on 9 August 2019.

ments that the person has expressed the intent to file for asylum with the authority. This facilitates the forwarding to the next reception centre and can document during follow-up checks by the authorities that the person has already expressed the intent to file for asylum and is on the way to the assigned reception centre. The asylum seeker must go to the designated reception centre without delay (cf. Chapter 2.5 on deadlines).

In addition, the said authorities take custody of the passport or passport substitute as well as all necessary documents and other papers in the possession of the asylum seeker and forward the documents to the reception centre (Section 21 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 15 subs. 2 nos. 4 and 5 of the Asylum Act).⁵

2.1.2 Making an asylum application to reception centre not competent to register the asylum application

Upon arrival, the reception centre, by using the EASY-System⁶, first checks whether it is the competent reception centre. On the one hand, this is based on the country of origin of the asylum seekers, since not all countries of origin are accommodated in all reception centres and not all branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees process all countries of origin. If it is not the competent reception centre, the so-called initial distribution of asylum seekers (EASY distribution) takes place. With the help of the EASY system, the distribution to the 16 Länder is determined according to an annually determined quota ('Königstein Key').⁷ If the asylum seeker is not the competent reception centre and has not already undergone the identification measure, an identification measure with corresponding storage as well as security and fingerprint cross-check takes place. Subsequently, the asylum seeker will also be issued a certificate of registration as an asylum seeker (Anlaufbescheinigung) and, if necessary, a ticket for onward travel to the competent reception centre.

⁵ Copies of the documents taken into custody must be handed over to the asylum seeker upon request (Section 21 subs. 4 of the Asylum Act).

⁶ IT application for the initial distribution of asylum seekers to the Länder.

⁷ "According to the 'Königstein Key', it is determined [amongst others] how many asylum seekers a Land must take in. This is based on tax revenue (2/3 share in the assessment) and population size (1/3 share in the assessment). The quota is recalculated annually" (BAMF 2021b; note by the author).

2.1.3 Airport procedure

In the case of asylum seekers from a safe country of origin (Section 29a Asylum Act)⁸, who wish to enter via an airport and apply for asylum with the border authority, the asylum procedure shall be conducted prior to the decision on entry to Germany, if the foreigner can be accommodated on the airport premises during the procedure or cannot be accommodated on the airport premises only because of a necessary hospital stay. The same applies to third-country nationals who request asylum from the border authorities at an airport and who cannot prove their identity with a valid passport or other means of identification. The third-country nationals shall immediately be given the opportunity to apply for asylum with the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees assigned to the border checkpoint. In these cases, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees shall interview the asylum seekers in person without delay. The asylum applicants shall immediately thereafter be given the opportunity to contact a legal adviser of their choice, unless they have already secured legal counsel (Section 18a subs 1 of the Asylum Act).⁹ Such an airport procedure is carried out at five airports in Germany: Berlin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich.

If the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees rejects the asylum application in the airport procedure as manifestly unfounded, it threatens the rejected asylum applicant with removal as a precautionary measure in accordance with Sections 34 and 36 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act in the event of entry (Section 18a subs. 2 of the Asylum Act). The decisions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees together with the refusal of entry shall be delivered by the border authority. The border authority shall immediately send a copy of its decision and the administrative file of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to the competent administrative court (Section 18a subs. 3 of the Asylum Act).

The third-country national shall be allowed entry if the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees informs the border authority that it is not able to decide the case within a short time; the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has not taken a decision on the asylum

⁸ Safe countries of origin include the six Western Balkan states Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ghana, Senegal and the EU Member States.

⁹ Requirements for refusal of entry by the border authority pursuant to Section 18 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act remain unaffected by the requirements.

application within two days of it being filed; the court has not taken a decision within two weeks, or the border authority has not requested detention as required by Section 15 subs. 6 of the Residence Act or the judge has refused to order or extend detention (Section 18a subs. 6 of the Asylum Act).

2.2 Registration at the competent reception centre

Once the asylum seeker reaches the competent reception centre, which is responsible for registration, accommodation and food, they go through a multi-stage process until the formal asylum application is filed with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The registration is much more comprehensive than the processing at the border, police or foreigners authority or at a non-responsible reception centre and is also accompanied by further procedural steps (see below). The competent reception centre first cross-

checks whether the asylum seeker has already undergone an identification measure. If this is the case, no new identification measure takes place or the personal data can be taken from the Central Register of Foreigners and checked or, if necessary, supplemented. If no identification measure has taken place before, the reception centre carries out the identification measure, which includes a national and European register comparison via Fast-ID to¹⁰ determine possible previous stays and registrations as well as security cross-checks (cf. Chapter 4.1 on data management in the registration phase). If possible, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees already provides support in this procedural step with the IDM-S tools which apply if asylum applicants cannot prove their identity or origin beyond doubt by presenting a valid passport, passport substitute or other identity document, or if an identity document presented has forgery features. (cf. Infobox 1 and Chapter 4).

¹⁰ Fast-ID (Fast Identification) is a system for carrying out rapid cross-checks of fingerprints using the AFIS-A database (INPOL).

Infobox 1: Establishing identity and security cross-check

“In order to improve the identification process, [in 2016] the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees introduced assistance systems within the framework of the programme ‘Integrated Identity Management – Plausibility, Data Quality and Security Aspects (IDM-S)’. They provide supporting information within the framework of the clarification of the facts. This provides case officers with additional indications that can make it easier for them to determine the facts of the case. [The IDM-S tools include:]

- Image biometrics,
- Name transliteration and analysis [or web-based transcription service],
- Speech biometrics and
- Evaluation of mobile data devices.

With these assistance systems, which are based on modern data analysis methods, the information collected from asylum seekers in the asylum procedure can be immediately checked for plausibility. This leads to better data quality. If doubts remain about the identity of applicants, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees carries out a check by means of a language and text analysis, for which language experts are consulted.” Such cases can, if necessary, be reported to the competent specialist unit within the security group at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The respective unit ‘Operational Cooperation with Federal and Länder Security Authorities’ works closely with various national authorities from the field of internal security within the framework of the Joint Counter-Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Centre (GETZ) and the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ). In addition, since the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act came into force on 1 May 2020, the AsylKon procedure has been carried out instead of automated data matching with the security authorities (see below). In the AsylKon procedure, the Federal Office of Administration is in charge and, in addition to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, also explicitly addresses the foreigners authorities and reception centres of the Länder (see below).

Source: BAMF 2019 a; BAMF 2020a; note by the author.

2.2.1 Arrival centres, AnkER and functionally equivalent facilities

The reception centres in the Länder were successively integrated into newly created ‘arrival centres’ (Ankunftszentren) nationwide from November 2015¹¹, partly into ‘AnkER facilities’ (arrival, decision-making and return facilities)¹² from August 2018 and into ‘functionally equivalent facilities’ in some Länder from April 2019. The basic idea of the arrival centres was to combine various processes and actors from the federal government, the Länder and the municipalities in one place in order to speed up procedures and facilitate coordination processes between the actors. AnkER facilities in turn built on this experience and developed the concept further by integrating additional process steps and actors (e.g. asylum procedure and return counselling, teaching values in the language of origin and initial orientation courses or legal application offices as well as return measures for persons not in need of protection; BAMF 2018a: 2f.). Tried and tested steps of the AnkER facilities have in the meantime been adopted by arrival centres. Sometimes, for example, some functionally equivalent facilities are rather terminological developments of arrival centres than conceptual-organisational ones, such as the Hamburg Senate reported for its functionally equivalent facility (Bürgerschaft der Freien und Hansestadt Hamburg 2020: 2). At the end of 2020, there were 14 arrival centres nationwide, nine AnkER facilities and seven functionally equivalent facilities, each of which was assigned a branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, as well as 35 other branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

In the arrival centres as well as in the AnkER and functionally equivalent facilities, numerous process steps of different actors are spatially combined and closely coordinated. Depending on the facility, registration, identity checks, medical care, accommodation, asylum procedure counselling, integration preparation measures (e.g. data collection, but also teaching values in the language of origin and initial orientation), return counselling, legal counselling, up to and including the

formal asylum application, asylum interview and decision, the organisation of municipal distribution and return measures can be combined at one location. For this purpose, the competent authorities and organisations are clustered under one roof or in close proximity (Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 2). The Länder are responsible for the respective reception centres and properties. They provide the other authorities with premises for their activities.

Authorities involved

Depending on the structure of the respective arrival centres, AnkER or functionally equivalent facilities and the process steps combined therein, the authorities that are located in the respective centres and facilities permanently or on an ad hoc basis differ. Thus, depending on the facility, in addition to the Land authorities responsible for operating the reception centres, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the Federal Employment Agency, the (central) foreigners authorities, the Land police, the social welfare office, child-care and educational institutions, welfare organisations for independent asylum procedure counselling and also return counselling, youth welfare offices for unaccompanied minors as well as administrative courts are affiliated (Regierung von Niederbayern 2021; Senatsverwaltung für Integration Arbeit und Soziales 2021; EMN/BAMF 2017: 50). The following example of an AnkER facility in Deggendorf shows the range of integrated authorities and organisations (Infobox 2).

Issue of a proof of arrival

At the end of the registration process, the reception centre responsible for the accommodation¹³ issues a ‘proof of arrival’ (Ankunftsnachweis), whereby the stay in the federal territory is deemed to be permitted (Section 55 subs. 1 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 63a subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). The PIK stations that have been in operation at the reception centres since the beginning of 2016 have a printer for this purpose, which prints out the proof of arrival in a forgery-proof manner. The proof of arrival entitles the holder to and is also a prerequisite

11 Bavaria opened two so-called arrival and return facilities (ARE) in Ingolstadt and Bamberg in September 2015, which were then converted into AnkER facilities in 2018 (Government of Upper Franconia 2021).

12 When setting up AnkER and functionally equivalent facilities, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Building and the Home Affairs usually enters into administrative agreements with the respective Länder, which provide the framework, although there is no “rigid standardisation, but rather various AnkER modules are to be implemented according to need” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 2, 4).

13 Families with children can be obliged to stay in an initial reception centre for up to six months, while the duration of stay is otherwise usually up to 18 months. Asylum seekers whose asylum application has been rejected as inadmissible or manifestly unfounded can be obliged to stay in an initial reception centre for up to 24 months. Asylum applicants from so-called safe countries of origin are in turn obliged to stay in an initial reception centre until their asylum procedure has been completed. Safe countries of origin include the six Western Balkan states Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ghana, Senegal and the EU Member States.

Infobox 2: Authorities and agencies involved in the AnkER facility Deggendorf (Bavaria)

- Administration of the AnkER facility with registration, accommodation and catering as well as curative care for the asylum seekers
- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)
- Central Foreigners Authority (ZAB)
- Government Reception Centre (RASt)
- Deggendorf District Office with staff from the Social Welfare Office, the Youth Welfare Office and the Health Office
- Police
- Caritas Deggendorf (refugee and integration counselling as well as childcare and homework help)
- Adult education centre (VHS) Deggendorf (initial orientation courses)
- School (primary, secondary and vocational school)
- Legal advice and application office of the Bavarian Administrative Court Regensburg
- Counselling Centre of the Employment Agency
- [Private] Security services for access control to the site and general security in the accommodation or on the accommodation site

Source: Regierung von Niederbayern 2021; note by the author.

Infobox 3: Individual documents handed out at the end of each process step

Making and asylum application	=	Certificate of registration as an asylum seeker (Anlaufbescheinigung)
Registration of an asylum application at the competent reception centre	=	Proof of arrival (Ankunftsnachweis)
Formal asylum application at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees	=	Certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision (Aufenthaltsgestattung)
Granting of protection status by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees	=	Residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis)

for receiving social benefits (including accommodation, food and health care in accordance with Section 3 of the Asylum Seekers Benefit Act). The proof of arrival is also important because the date of issue is the cut-off date from which the official period of residence in Germany is calculated, which is relevant for subsequent claims (such as for attending integration courses after three months of permitted residence). The proof of arrival contains, among other things, an identification number (AKN number), basic personal data, external identity features (eye colour, height) as well as a photo (Section 63a subs. 1 of the Asylum Act, Annex 2 to Section 3 subs. 1 of the Proof or Arrival Ordinance and Section 4 subs. 1 of the Proof or Arrival Ordinance¹⁴).

¹⁴ Ordinance on the Certificate of Notification as an Asylum Seeker (Proof of Arrival Ordinance – AKNV)

Withholding of the passport or passport substitute

If the asylum seeker reports directly to the reception centre responsible for their admission and has not before made their asylum application at another authority, the reception centre will take custody of the passport or passport substitute as well as all necessary documents and other papers in the possession of the asylum seeker and forward the documents to the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees assigned to the reception centre (Section 21 subs. 2 and 3 Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 15 subs. 2 nos. 4 and 5 of the Asylum Act). If the asylum seeker had already handed in the documents in question at another official office, these documents are sent to the reception centre, which in turn forwards them to the

competent branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.¹⁵

2.2.2 Asylum procedure counselling and return information

Since 2018, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees offers voluntary, independent asylum procedure counselling (Asylverfahrensberatung – AVB; Section 12a of the Asylum Act). The asylum procedure counselling takes place in two stages. First, in the first stage, all asylum seekers are provided with information on the asylum procedure and return options in group discussions before submitting their application. Subsequently, asylum seekers may receive voluntary asylum procedure counselling in individual interviews by specially trained staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 12a of the Asylum Act). The individual asylum procedure counselling of the second stage is an offer “which asylum seekers can take advantage of voluntarily throughout the entire duration of their procedure, from the time of their asylum application until after the notification of the decision. [...] In practice, however, individual counselling at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees often takes place before the asylum interview” (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 11). The asylum procedure counselling is also of particular importance with regard to possible special protection needs (vulnerabilities).¹⁶ The asylum seekers are informed that consideration can be given in the further procedure as well as in accommodation in the case of vulnerabilities.

Stage 1 of the asylum procedure counselling also includes initial information on return options. In the course of the formal asylum application, this return counselling has been carried out systematically and comprehensively by staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees since 2017. This is a standardised and open-ended return information session lasting about 10 minutes, in which the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees points out existing return programmes and the approximately 900 return coun-

selling centres of the Federal Government, the Länder and welfare organisations, and in some cases hands out information material in the language of the respective country of origin (Returningfromgermany.de 2021). Here, no distinction is made between prospects to remain and countries of origin, except that the support services of the respective country-of-origin-related return and reintegration programmes may differ. Furthermore, additional individual return counselling is offered, which can be taken advantage of both during the asylum procedure and after the asylum application has been rejected (BAMF 2018a: 2).

2.3 Formal asylum application and Dublin procedure examination

The formal asylum application is filed with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 14 subs. 1 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act) in principle in person and orally or in writing at the branch office which is assigned to the competent reception centre. A written application is only permissible in exceptional cases (Section 14 subs. 2 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act).

Before the asylum application is examined by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, by means of the Eurodac cross-check¹⁷ it is clarified whether Germany or another Member State is responsible for examining the asylum application according to the criteria of the Dublin III Regulation ((EU) 604/2013). If there are indications that responsibility lies with another Member State, a request to take charge or take over is submitted to that Member State. The requested Member State usually agrees within the deadline for reply if it considers the request to be well-founded (BAMF 2019a: 16f.). If the requested Member State considers the request to be unfounded, it must explicitly reject it. If the Member State does not expressly reject the request to take charge or take over within the deadline for reply, this is deemed to be the consent of the requested Member State. As a rule, the transfer must take place within six months, otherwise the Member State that made the take-over request is responsible for the procedure. If international protection has already been granted in another state, a further asylum application in Germany

¹⁵ The documents will be handed over again if they are no longer needed for the further execution of the asylum procedure or for measures terminating the stay (Section 21 subs. 5 of the Asylum Act).

¹⁶ Article 21 of the European Reception Directive (2013/33/EU) lists the following vulnerable groups as examples: (unaccompanied) minors, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of trafficking in human beings, persons with serious physical illnesses/mental disorders and victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological or sexual violence.

¹⁷ Eurodac is an information system whose purpose is to assist in determining the EU Member State responsible for examining an asylum application in accordance with the Dublin III Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013) through the collection, transmission and comparison of fingerprints.

is principally inadmissible (BAMF 2019a: 28). Communication between the Member States in the Dublin procedure takes place via DublinNet, a protected electronic communication system.

With the exception of Dublin procedures, which are conducted in Dublin centres¹⁸, all other types of procedures are now generally processed in the branch offices in which asylum applications were filed, while maintaining the principle of unity of the interviewer and decision-maker. The ten countries of origin with the highest number of arrivals are generally accommodated in all reception centres within the framework of the so-called EASY distribution and processed by all assigned Federal Office for Migration and Refugees branch offices. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees branch offices ensure that procedures are prioritised and accelerated by means of decentralised file and procedure management, which monitors the deadlines and duration of procedures, taking into account the individual case.

2.4 Asylum interview and examination of the asylum application

The interview takes place in person at the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which is assigned to the reception centre. It is not public. The applicants present their individual reasons for fleeing to a case officer of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in the presence of an interpreter and, if necessary, a lawyer and/or a person of trust. Applicants for asylum will be notified of an appointment for this after they have formally applied for asylum. The appointment must be kept or written notification must be given in good time beforehand or, in the case of illness, a medical certificate must be submitted stating why the appointment cannot be kept. Otherwise, the asylum application is rejected (BAMF 2019b).

¹⁸ In February 2017, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees set up three so-called Dublin Centres in Berlin, Dortmund and Bayreuth. The processing of Dublin requests to the Member States, which until then had been carried out by staff in the branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, was subsequently transferred to the three Dublin Centres. Since then, only the Eurodac cross-check and the Dublin admissibility interview have been carried out in the branch offices with regard to Dublin procedures. If there is a Dublin case, the branch offices forward the asylum file to the Dublin Centre assigned to them.

During the interview, the asylum applicants explain their individual reasons for fleeing, their route taken, their living conditions in the country of origin or third country, their curriculum vitae as well as circumstances that the asylum applicants would expect upon return. In order to substantiate these explanations, the asylum applicants are requested to submit evidence in their possession, which may include photographs, documents from the police or other authorities, and, if necessary, medical certificates (BAMF 2019b). The information provided on identity and the reasons for fleeing can be cross-checked if there are doubts. The results of the IDM-S tools can also be used in this process step, if applicable, in order to verify the information provided on the identity. In addition, the asylum applicants' statements are "translated and recorded and then translated back for the applicants after the interview. This gives them the opportunity to add to or correct what has been said. Finally, the minutes are presented to them for approval by signature" (BAMF 2019b).

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees then examines whether one of the four forms of protection – entitlement to asylum, refugee protection under the Geneva Convention, subsidiary protection or a national ban on removal – applies. "Only if none of these forms of protection comes into question is the asylum application rejected [in its entirety]" (BAMF 2019 a: 21).¹⁹

Special reception centres and fast-track procedures

With the entry into force of the 'Act on the Introduction of Accelerated Asylum Procedures' on 17 March 2016, so-called fast-track procedures were introduced with Section 30a of the Asylum Act, according to which the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees shall decide on the application within one week of it being filed (Section 30a subs. 2 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act). According to this, fast-track procedures for asylum procedures may be used in a branch office assigned to a special reception centre (Section 5 subs. 5 of the Asylum Act) if the person applying for asylum

1. is a national of a safe country of origin (Section 29a of the Asylum Act),
2. has clearly misled the authorities as to their identity or nationality by presenting false

¹⁹ After the asylum procedure has been concluded without appeal, another asylum application (so-called subsequent application) can be filed – among other things if the factual situation has subsequently changed (Section 71 of the Asylum Act).

information or documents or by withholding relevant documents,

3. has in bad faith destroyed or disposed of an identity or travel document that would have helped establish their identity or nationality, or if the circumstances clearly give reason to believe that this is so,
4. has filed a follow-up application,
5. has made an application merely in order to delay or frustrate the enforcement of an earlier or imminent decision which would result in their removal,
6. refuses to comply with the obligation²⁰ to take their fingerprints in accordance with European law, or
7. was expelled because of serious reasons of public security and order or if there are serious reasons to believe that they constitute a serious threat to public security and order (Section 30a of the Asylum Act).

If the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees cannot decide on the procedure within the one-week period, it continues the procedure as a non-fast-track procedure (Section 30a subs. 2 sentence 2 of the Asylum Act). The accelerated procedure has been applied in special reception centres on the basis of administrative agreements between the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and Bavaria since June 2016 and North Rhine-Westphalia since July 2018.

2.5 Time limits and duration of proceedings

One aim of reforming data management and individual process steps in the asylum procedure in Germany is to make the procedures more reliable and faster. For this reason, in addition to the actors and responsibilities already mentioned, the legal requirements

for deadlines in the individual process steps are presented below, followed by information on the average duration of individual process steps in practice. The information is particularly helpful in a European comparison in order to sharpen the understanding of the individual process steps in the national asylum procedures, which are prepared in the synthesis report that accompanies this study.

2.5.1 Deadlines for the individual process steps

Making an asylum application to the border police and forwarding to a reception centre

If asylum seekers express their intent to file an asylum application with the border police, the asylum seeker must be forwarded “without delay” to the nearest reception centre for reporting (registration) (Sections 18 subs. 1 and 19 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). The asylum seeker is obliged to follow the forwarding “without delay” or by a time specified by the authority. If there are no indications why the onward journey to the reception centre could take longer, the forwarding authority usually gives a two-day deadline for the onward journey. If the asylum seeker does not comply with the obligation within this period, the asylum application made is considered withdrawn and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees discontinues the procedure (Section 20 subs. 1 in conjunction with Section 33 subs 1 and 5 of the Asylum Act). If no specific timeframe for forwarding is specified, immediacy “is not to be determined objectively alone, i.e. it is to be equated with ‘immediately’”. Rather, consideration is given to the individual possibilities to go to the responsible office as soon as possible” (Bergmann 2020: Section 20 of the Asylum Act marginal no. 5; see in detail Bruns 2016: Section 20 of the Asylum Act marginal no. 7).

The authority that forwards the asylum seeker to a reception centre notifies the reception centre in writing of the forwarding, the filing of the asylum application and the obligatory notification that has taken place. Since 2018, the Federal Police has been transmitting written information via email. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, this should also be done in future by the Land police, foreigners authorities and reception centres via email to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, although in the case of the latter two it is being examined whether this can also be

²⁰ Pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 concerning the establishment of Eurodac for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on law enforcement applications for comparison with Eurodac data made by Member States' and Europol's law enforcement authorities and amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 establishing a European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 1).

done via the XAusländer²¹ standard for data exchange instead.

The reception centre in turn informs the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees assigned to it without delay, at the latest one week after receipt of the above-mentioned notification, whether the asylum seeker has been admitted to the reception centre and forwards the notification of the first registration of the asylum application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. In order to speed up the procedure at this point, in recent years, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has digitalised the communication between the reception centres, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the foreigners authorities by implementing interfaces (so-called XAVIA-interface). For this purpose, so-called scanning centres have been set up in Germany, in which asylum-relevant documents are scanned and entered into MARiS²², so that the documents are digitised and available to the staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees when processing applications. If the person does not arrive at the reception centre within one week, an alert can be entered in the police search systems for the purpose of determining their whereabouts (Section 66 subs. 1 sentence 1 no. 1 of the Asylum Act). Unless the authority to which the asylum application was first submitted, in its discretion, specifies a longer or shorter period of time for arrival at the competent or nearest reception centre based on the individual circumstances, an arrival at said reception centre within one week can consequently be considered sufficient (Haderlein 2020: Section 20 of the Asylum Act marginal no. 5).

Making an asylum application at a foreigners authority or Land police and forwarding to a reception centre

If asylum seekers express their intent to file for asylum with a foreigners authority or Land police, the asylum seeker must be forwarded “without delay” to the nearest reception centre for reporting (registration) (Section 19 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). With regard to immediacy, the framework conditions documented above apply.

21 “The XAusländer standard is a data exchange format based on XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and promotes the electronic exchange of identical data between the authorities in the administration of foreigners in Germany” (BAMF 2021d; cf. in detail glossary in Annex 1).

22 MARiS is the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees’ electronic workflow and document management system for processing all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures) (BAMF 2021a).

Making an asylum application to a reception centre that is not competent for accommodation and supply and forwarding it to the competent reception centre

Asylum seekers who express their intent to file for asylum to a reception centre not competent to register the asylum seeker, are, as far as possible, identified by the latter and then forwarded to the responsible reception centre (Section 22 subs. 1 sentence 2 of the Asylum Act). Asylum seekers are obliged to comply with the forwarding to the competent reception centre “without delay or by a date specified by the reception centre” (Section 22 subs. 3 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act). With regard to immediacy, the framework conditions documented above also apply to reception centres that are not competent for registration.

Registration by the competent reception centre, issuing of the proof of arrival and deadline to formally apply for asylum

Asylum seekers who are received and registered by the competent reception centre are issued with a proof of arrival “without delay” after registration (Section 63a subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). After registration, asylum seekers have to file their formal asylum application within two weeks at the latest; otherwise their proof of arrival expires (Section 63a subs. 4 in conjunction with Section 67 subs. 1 no. 2 of Asylum Act).

Formal application for asylum and issuance of the certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision (Aufenthaltsgestattung)

It is regulated by law that asylum applicants must be issued a certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision within three working days after formally applying for asylum.²³ The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is responsible for issuing the certificate as long as the asylum applicants are obliged to live in a reception centre (Section 63 subs. 1 and 3 sentence 1 of the Asylum Act). Otherwise, the foreigners authority is responsible to whose district the certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision is restricted or in whose district the asylum applicant has to take up residence (Section 63 subs. 3 sentence 2 Asylum Act).

23 This applies, if the person in question does not already hold residence permit – for example if the asylum application is not made across borders but in the course of a legal prior stay.

Applying for asylum when entering by air

Asylum seekers from safe countries of origin as well as asylum seekers who cannot identify themselves with a valid passport or passport substitute and who enter via an airport and make their asylum application at the border authority shall be given the opportunity “without delay” (see above) to file the asylum application at the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees assigned to the border control point. The asylum interview by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is to take place “without delay”. The person applying for asylum is then to be given the opportunity “without delay” to contact a legal adviser of their choice, unless they have previously assured themselves of legal assistance (Section 18a subs. 1 of the Asylum Act).

Examination and decision on an asylum application under the accelerated procedure

If the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees conducts the asylum procedure as an accelerated procedure (cf. Chapter 2.4), it decides within one week from the moment of the formal asylum application. The decision must be handed over to the applicant within one week. If the procedure cannot be decided within this period, it is conducted as a non-accelerated procedure (Section 30a subs. 2 of the Asylum Act).

Examination and decision on an asylum application in the regular procedure

If a decision on the asylum application is not made within six months, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees must inform the asylum applicant on request by when a decision on their asylum application is expected to be made (Section 24 subs. 4 of the Asylum Act).

Time limits under European law

Article 6 of the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) regulates access to the asylum procedure, according to which registration must take place no later than three working days after the application for asylum has been lodged if a person lodges an application for international protection with an authority that is responsible under national law for registering such applications. Where the application for international protection is lodged with other authorities where such applications are likely to be lodged but which are not responsible for registration under national law, Member States shall ensure that registration takes place no later than six working days after

the application is lodged. Member States shall also ensure that these other authorities where applications for international protection are likely to be made, such as the police, border guards, immigration authorities and detention centre staff, have the relevant information and that their staff receive the necessary level of training and instructions, commensurate with their tasks and responsibilities, to inform applicants where and how applications for international protection can be made. An extension of the deadline is foreseen in such cases where a large number of third-country nationals or stateless persons apply for international protection at the same time. If this makes it very difficult in practice to comply with the above time limits, Member States may provide for this time limit to be extended to ten working days (Article 6 para 1 and 5 of the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU)).

Article 31 para 3 of the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU) in turn stipulates that Member States shall ensure that the examination procedure of an asylum application is completed within six months of the formal lodging of the application. However, exceptions to this rule are also provided for, whereby the procedure may be extended by a maximum of nine further months if: a) complex issues of fact and/or law arise; b) a large number of third-country nationals or stateless persons apply for international protection at the same time, making it very difficult in practice to complete the procedure within the six-month time limit; c) the delay is clearly due to the applicant’s failure to comply with their obligations under Article 13. Further exceptions may apply (cf. Article 31 para 3, fourth sentence and para 4 of Directive 2013/32/EU). Overall, however, Member States shall ensure that the examination procedure is in any case completed within a maximum period of 21 months after the formal application has been submitted (Article 31 para 5 of Directive 2013/32/EU).

Article 10 of the Asylum Procedures Directive also requires Member States to ensure that applications for international protection are not rejected or excluded from consideration solely because the application was not made as soon as possible.

2.5.2 Duration of the individual process steps in practice

Data on the average duration from expressing the intent to apply for asylum to the formal asylum application in the case of cross-border asylum applications is only available from 2017 onwards in Germany. Since

then, the making of an asylum application (expressing the intent; Asylgesuch) has been recorded more comprehensively and, from 2018 onwards, comprehensively by all competent authorities (but the Länder police) with the police recording systems or a PIK station and offer valid data that allow a person-related allocation of the individual process steps and durations. Previously, it was possible to express the intent to apply for asylum to the Federal Police when crossing the border, for example, which was then forwarded to the nearest reception centre. However, only the so-called EASY system was available, in which no personal data was recorded, but only the country of origin and the number of persons to be forwarded were entered. The EASY distribution system continues to be used for distribution, but it was supplemented by the initial registration with the help of the PIK stations and the police recording systems (including the creation of a preliminary file in MARiS and creation of an inventory in the Central Foreigners Register), on the basis of which the respective initial registration as well as arrival and application times can be recorded and traced for each person (statistics on the intentions to apply for asylum (Asylgesuch-Statistik) as of January 2017).

The number of persons making an asylum application has been declining since 2017. While 186 644 asylum applications were made in 2017, the number was 164 693 in the following year and 146 619 in 2019.

Table 1: Number of intentions expressed to apply for asylum (2014-2019)

2014*	2015*	2016*	2017	2018	2019
-	-	-	186 644	164 693	146 619

*Expressions to intend to apply for asylum (Asylgesuche) have only been validly recorded via the statistics on the intentions to apply for asylum since 2017.

Source: BAMF; Deutscher Bundestag 2020b: 28; Deutscher Bundestag 2019b: 24.

Table 2 illustrates the particularly high influx of refugees in 2015 (441 899 formal asylum applications) and 2016 (722 370), whereby it must be taken into account that a larger proportion of the asylum applications submitted in 2016 are attributable to asylum seekers who had already entered the country in 2015 but were unable to submit their asylum application in that year (so-called EASY-GAP, see below). From 2018 onwards, the level of intentions expressed to apply for asylum is again largely consistent with the number of formal asylum applications. Thus, in 2018, 161 931 formal asylum applications were filed, compared to 142 509 in 2019.

Table 2: Number of formal asylum applications (2014-2019)

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
173 072	441 899	722 370	198 317	161 931	142 509

Source: BAMF 2020b: 6.

The average time from expressing the intent to apply for asylum to formal asylum application – i.e. including the registration process in the reception centre – was nine days in 2017 and subsequently increased to 13 days in 2018 and 14 days in 2019 (Table 3).

Table 3: Average duration from making to lodging an asylum application in the years 2014-2019 (in days)

Year	Average duration in days
2014	-
2015	-
2016	-
2017	9
2018	13
2019	14

Source: BAMF/MARiS.

The increase in the average duration from 2017 to 2019 can be explained primarily by two influencing factors. Firstly, the reception centres of the Länder were equipped with the PIK stations from 2016 onwards, and only in the course of 2017 were the border police and foreigners authorities also fully connected to the core data system. In this respect, this may have had an influence on the average duration in 2017, as the statistics in 2017 still do not, or only partially, depict the intentions expressed to apply for asylum at the border police, the police of the Länder or foreigners authorities. The expressions to intent to apply for asylum were thus only recorded in the statistics on the intentions to apply for asylum at the reception centre, so that the period from the expressed intention at the border to the arrival and registration at the competent reception centre is not or not completely included in the data for 2017.

On the other hand, the arrival centres, which were successively created from November 2015 onwards, have been further developed over the years and additional actors and processes have been integrated (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). The individual process steps can sometimes take up several days.

Length of proceedings from formal application for asylum to first instance decision

With regard to the duration of proceedings from the formal asylum application to the first-instance decision, two procedures can be distinguished. On the one hand, all procedures in total and, on the other hand, Dublin procedures (Dublin decision or exercise of the right of self-entry).

As can be seen in Table 4, the average duration of procedures varies significantly in the period 2014–2019. While the average duration of Dublin procedures fell continuously from 130 days in 2014 to 45 days in 2019, the average duration of all procedures has only been falling continuously since 2017. For example, the average duration was 213 days in 2014 and initially fell to 156 days in 2015 – an effect that can be attributed in particular to the prioritisation of asylum applications from persons from Western Balkan countries in 2015. Subsequently, the average duration initially rose to 214 days in 2016 and then to 323 days in 2017, which can be explained in particular by the strong influx of asylum seekers from autumn 2015 to the beginning of 2016 and the resulting ‘EASY gap’ and ‘backlog’ (see Grote 2018). There were delays in all procedural steps, which initially caused procedural durations to increase before they were successively reduced again significantly from 2018 onwards (2018: 230 days), to 187 days in 2019.

Table 4: Average duration from lodging until first time decision in the years 2014–2019 (in days)

Year	All procedures in total	Dublin procedure
2014	213	130
2015	156	100
2016	214	99
2017	323	70
2018	230	44
2019	187	45

The statistics include all completed procedures up to 31.12.2020. All procedures that had not been completed by the cut-off date are not included in the statistics.

Source: BAMF/MARiS; Status: 31.7.2020.

EASY gap and backlog

The experience of the years of high refugee influx in 2015 and 2016 was decisive for the reforms in the individual asylum procedure steps and in data

management in the asylum procedure that have been initiated in Germany in recent years.²⁴ During this period, there was a heavy backlog of asylum applications, applications and application processing. The arrival of almost one million new asylum seekers within a period of eight months, particularly in the months between July 2015 and February 2016 (cf. Figure 1, blue line), caused problems regarding the prompt registration of asylum applications. The number of monthly newly arrived asylum seekers entered into the EASY system peaked at 206 101 in November 2015. However, after multiple registrations²⁵ were deducted, the actual number of newly arrived asylum seekers is thought to have been fewer than 200 000. The number of new arrivals each month fell sharply once again after November 2015. In March 2016, just under 20 000 newly arrived asylum seekers were recorded in the EASY system, with the number falling to 15 400 on average between April 2016 and June 2017 (as illustrated by the statistics on expressed intentions to apply for asylum in Figure 1 from January 2017 onwards).

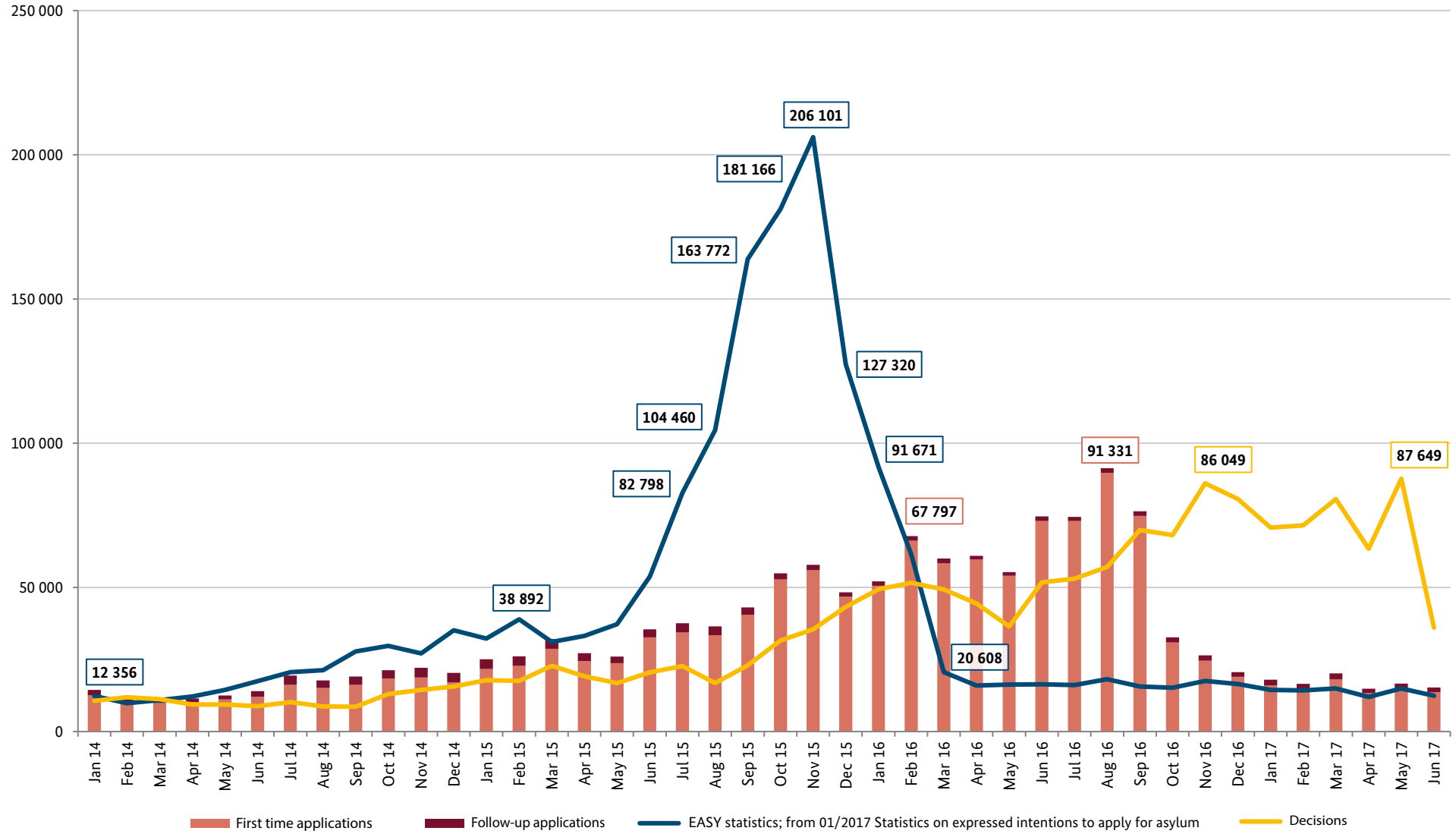
The number of formal asylum applications submitted to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees reflects the number of asylum seekers who have actually remained in Germany. However, the large discrepancy between the number of newly-arrived asylum seekers and the number of asylum applications filed highlights the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees’s lack of capacity to process the asylum applications of all newly arrived asylum seekers promptly after they enter the Federal Republic. This discrepancy and the backlog of hundreds of thousands of asylum applications became referred to as the ‘EASY gap’.

The EASY gap peaked in the second half of 2015, as illustrated in Figure 1, based on the gap between the number of first time and follow-up applications registered (orange and red bars) and the number of persons originally making an asylum application (blue line). As the number of newly arriving asylum seekers fell under 20 000 from March 2016, while at the same time the number of applications recorded each month steadily increased, the EASY gap was finally reduced by November 2016. From then on, it was possible to ensure that applications could be

²⁴ The following remarks are based on Grote 2018: 15ff.

²⁵ The EASY access figures are based on entries in an IT application that does not record personal data and is therefore susceptible to incorrect and multiple entries. For example, the EASY statistics for 2015 showed an influx of almost 1.1 million asylum seekers, while the number was subsequently estimated at 890 000 (BMI 2017a).

Figure 1: Requests for asylum, asylum applications and decisions (01/2014 to 06/2017)



Source: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

submitted again immediately after entry and without waiting time (Deutscher Bundestag 2016a: 14). The reduction of the backlog as well as solutions for the waiting period were also urgent because further residence and social benefits depend on the submission of the application.

The third important indicator is the number of asylum decisions made. As can be seen in Figure 1 (orange line), the number of monthly decisions increased more than eightfold from January 2014 to May 2017. At the same time, similar to the EASY gap, the relationship between the number of formal asylum applications and the number of asylum decisions must be considered at this point. It can be seen that since March 2014 up to and including September 2016, more asylum applications were submitted each month than were decided. With the EASY gap reduced, more decisions were taken than applications received in October 2016 for the first time in over two and a half years (October 2016: 68 135 decisions vs. 32 640 first time and follow-up applications). By the end of September 2016, 579 000 pending cases had accumulated, which had to be processed in addition to the new monthly asylum applications. Within the following twelve months, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees was finally able to reduce the number of pending cases to 99 334 by the end of September 2017 and thus below the 100 000 mark for the first time (BAMF 2017b: 2). At the end of 2019, there were still 57 012 pending cases (BAMF 2020c: 2).

When this study describes the various measures to accelerate the asylum process through process optimisations, changes in responsibilities, front-loading of data collection and facilitated data exchange and matching between authorities, these are largely based on the initial situation described in this chapter.

2.6 Authorities involved in the asylum procedure

The Table 5 on the following page provides an overview of the authorities responsible for the individual process steps from the application for asylum to the decision on the asylum application. While several different authorities are involved in the making and registering of asylum applications, only the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is responsible during the lodging and examining phases.

2.7 Data collected during the asylum procedure

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the data collected at the individual process steps of the asylum procedure, the responsible authorities, the way data is collected and stored, and the databases in which the collected data is stored (Chapter 2.7.1). It then describes which data collection has been frontloaded in recent years in the wake of the high influx of asylum seekers in order to accelerate certain process steps, increase data quality and facilitate planning for authorities in follow-up processes (Chapter 2.7.2). Finally, an overview of the individual databases, the authorities authorised to access them and the purposes of access are described (Chapter 2.7.3).

2.7.1 Individual data, authorities involved, time and type of collection and storage

For reasons of comparability with other European countries, the documentation of the individual data collected and stored as shown in Table 6 begins at the time of registration. However, as explained in Chapter 2.1, data collection in Germany begins as soon as asylum seekers make their asylum application. The data collected in the course of asylum seekers making their asylum application is described separately in Chapter 3.

As of December 2020, the table only documents the personal data collected in the asylum procedure and not the storage of procedural steps, such as the individual process steps in the Dublin procedure, whether a person is already participating in an integration course or job-related German language support during the asylum procedure, the decision on the asylum application or return measures – even if these sometimes take place during the asylum procedure. The above-mentioned and other storage facts can be found in detail, for example, in the ‘Regulation on the Implementation of the Law on the Central Register of Foreigners’ (AZRG-Durchführungsverordnung – AZRG-DV).

Table 5: Authorities involved in the individual process steps of the asylum procedure

Type of Authority	Authorities to which an asylum application can be <u>made</u>	Legally competent for <u>registering</u> an asylum application	Legally competent for <u>lodging</u> an asylum application	Legally competent for <u>examining</u> an asylum application
Border police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Police (nationwide) ■ Waterways Police of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (for the Port of Hamburg) ■ Bavarian Border Police (for the Bavarian Land borders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Police* ■ Waterways Police of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* ■ Bavarian Border Police* 	-	-
Local police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Police forces of the Länder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Police forces of the Länder* 	-	-
(Branch) office for refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Foreigners authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees* ■ Foreigners authority* 	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
Ministries (Interior, Justice, etc.)**	-	-	-	-
Local citizen's office/ Mayor of a local city/ town**	-	-	-	-
(Local) immigration office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Residents' registration offices of the municipalities 	-	-	-
(Shared) accommodation for refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ s. Reception centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ s. Reception centres 	-	-
EU Agencies**	-	-	-	-
International Organisation**	-	-	-	-
Detention facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prisons ■ Youth detention centres ■ Detention facilities 	-	-	-
Reception centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception centres ■ AnkER & functionally equivalent facilities ■ Arrival centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception centres ■ AnkER & functionally equivalent facilities ■ Arrival centres 	-	-
Mobile teams***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mobile teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mobile teams 	-	-

*Full registration does not take place at the marked authorities. However, among other things, they carry out identification measures and enter certain basic data with the help of the police recording systems or PIK stations (if available) into both the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) and MARiS, which are subsequently cross-checked and supplemented during registration at the reception centre (cf. Chapter 2.2.1).

**As this study was prepared within the framework of the European Migration Network, the table also includes authorities/actors that are not involved in any step of the process in Germany for reasons of comparison.

***Mobile teams were deployed from September 2015 to September 2016 to make a subsequent registration of asylum seekers who could not be registered promptly due to the high influx of asylum seekers. Under the direction of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and with personnel support from the German Armed Forces and customs, 170 mobile teams with a total of around 350 employees travelled to the municipalities and facilities to make the subsequent registrations. They were equipped with laptops and fingerprint scanners for this purpose (Grote 2018: 39).

Table 6: What data is collected at what time by whom, how is it collected and where is it stored?

Categories of data collected	Phases of the information collection	Authorities responsible for data collection in the individual phases	Data collection method	Storage format of the data	Name of the Database(s) or relevant electronic workflow systems / data matching procedures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registering (1) - Lodging (2) - Examination (3) <p>If data is re-used but not re-collected in a following phase, data is not collected in that phase. Therefore, if data is not collected in a specific phase but only re-used or not used at all, no number is added for that phase.</p>	<p>(Individual data can also be collected by other authorities in the temporal context of the asylum procedure. However, first and foremost only those authorities that are substantially (also) responsible for the phase of the asylum procedure indicated in the second column are documented here; for the responsibilities of other authorities, see the Law on the Central Register of Foreigners.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online self-registration - Written questionnaire (in paper) - Oral (interview, face-to-face) - Oral (interview via phone/videocall) - Biometric (Scan) - Open source (e.g. social media) - Analysing documents - AmD – analysing content on mobile devices (e.g. mobile phones, laptops) - Using automated or artificial intelligence for analysis of dataForm application procedure (in the course of the Covid 19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electronic file - Database - Paper form 	
Name					
<i>Current names (first name and surname)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception Centre ■ Foreigners Authority ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic file ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon²⁶ ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ INPOL ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II ■ VerBIS ■ VIS ■ Visa file
<i>Birth name</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above)

²⁶ Asylum consultation procedure (Asylkon procedure). In this process, the Federal Office of Administration (BVA) initiates a security comparison with the Federal Intelligence Service, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the Federal Military Counter-Intelligence Service, the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Customs Criminal Police Office.

<i>Previous names</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ MARiS
<i>Pen names (Alias)</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)
<i>Religious name</i>	1 (voluntary indication)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)
<i>Artist name</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)
<i>Monastic name</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)
<i>Other names (spellings of names under German law; names not defined)</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	■ Idem (see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS
<i>Gender</i>	1	■ Idem (see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	■ Idem (see above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AFIS-A (INPOL) ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS²⁷ (standard nationwide, centralised) (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ Eurodac ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ INPOL tracing of stolen property ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II ■ SIS AFIS ■ VerBIS

27 GENESIS is the main database of the Federal Statistical Office, in which the data stored in the Central Register of Foreigners is also delivered anonymously to the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) and the European Statistical Authority (Eurostat).

Biometric data					
Photo	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biometric (Scan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) INPOL tracing of stolen property MARiS Resident register SIS II VerBIS
Fingerprints (which fingers, rolled or pressed)	1 (all fingers, rolled and pressed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biometric (Scan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFIS-A Asylkon AZR (standard nationwide, centralised; here only the results of the fingerprint match) Eurodac MARiS (here only the results of the fingerprint match) SIS II SIS AFIS
Iris scan*	-	-	-	-	-
Others*	-	-	-	-	-
Eye colour	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) MARiS Resident register SIS II
Height	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Date of birth	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. passport) Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated)



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II ■ SIS AFIS ■ VerBIS
Citizenship(s)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ AmD (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) ■ Language Biometrics Assistance System (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) ■ Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II ■ SIS AFIS ■ VerBIS
Country of origin	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ AmD (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) ■ Language Biometrics Assistance System (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II ■ SIS AFIS
Place of birth					
<i>Town</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ SIS II

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SIS AFIS ■ VerBIS
<i>Region</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS
<i>Country</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (not yet, but possibly in the future through a reform of the AZR law; nationally uniform, centralised; standard nationwide, centralised) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register
<i>Other*</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Date of arrival in Germany (first entry)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ AmD (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic file ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asylkon ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS

Last place of residence in the country of origin	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. identity card, rental agreement) AmD (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) MARiS Resident register
Last place of residence before entry in Germany*	-	-	-	-	-
Contact details					
<i>Phone number</i>	1 (voluntary information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Centre Foreigners Authority Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (probably no longer a storage subject after the reform of the AZR law; standard nationwide, centralised) MARiS VerBIS
<i>Email address</i>	1 (voluntary information)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (probably no longer a storage subject after the reform of the AZR law; standard nationwide, centralised) Resident register VerBIS
<i>Current address</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. registration certificate) Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid 19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Responsible reception centre</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Competent immigration authority</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Responsible Land</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)

Civil status	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. certificate of marriage, civil union or divorce; death certificate of spouses or partners) Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) MARiS Resident register
Accompanied by					
<i>Spouse or civil partner</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. additionally documented by birth certificates; certificate of marriage, partnership or divorce) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) MARiS Resident register VerBIS
<i>Children</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Parents</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Other relatives</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Family members in Germany					
<i>Name (first name and surname)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) MARiS Resident register VerBIS
<i>Residency</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Citizenship (of spouses and civil partners)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) MARiS Resident register
<i>Other*</i>	-	-	-	-	➔

Family members in another (Member) State*	-	-	-	-	-
Close relatives in the (Member) State*	-	-	-	-	-
Close relatives in another (Member) State*	-	-	-	-	-
Health status					
<i>Specifics on health status</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Medical service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. certificates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic file ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ IT system of the medical service ■ IT system of the health department ■ Reception centre system ■ In the case of notifiable illness or infection, the result is also communicated to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.
<i>Reference that a general health check has been carried out (place, date)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ IT system of the medical services ■ IT system of the health department ■ Reception centre system
<i>Carrying out vaccinations (type, place, date)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ IT system of the medical service ■ IT system of the health department ■ Reception centre system
<i>Carrying out the examination for the presence of infectious pulmonary tuberculosis after (place, date)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ IT system of the medical service ■ IT system of the health department ■ Reception centre system

Education

<i>School attendance</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception Centre ■ Foreigners Authority ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. certificates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS
<i>Academic studies</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above)
<i>Trainings</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ VerBIS
<i>Apprenticeships</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception Centre ■ Foreigners Authority ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic file ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS
<i>Non-formal work experiences</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ VerBIS
<i>Occupation</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception Centre ■ Foreigners Authority ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Electronic file ■ In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS (occupational groups) ■ Resident register ■ VerBIS
<i>Language skills</i>	1, 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Idem (see above) 2. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. certificates) ■ Language Biometrics Assistance System (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) ■ Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above)

<i>Profession</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above)
Criminal record (e.g. in the case of a security check and indications of endangerment by criminal offences or if an interview reveals indications of a connection to persons or organisations suspected of supporting terrorism or endangering the free democratic basic order or the security of the Federal Republic of Germany)	1	<p>Usually recorded either before registration or during the asylum procedure by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Authorities entrusted with border police tasks (if necessary already at the time of asylum seekers making an asylum application) ■ Competent Federal Police authority ■ Investigating police authority ■ Federal and Land constitutional protection authorities ■ Public prosecutors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oral (interview, face-to-face) ■ Document analysis (e.g. passport) ■ Register comparison (database cross-checks with security authorities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ MARiS (in certain constellations, an extract from the criminal record is taken into the file, otherwise e.g. sentences submitted by the applicants, if relevant for the asylum procedure) ■ SIS II
Suspicion of and endangerment by criminal offences (various criminal offences cf. Table 24 and 24a AZRG-DV Annex Data)	1	<p>Usually recorded either before registration or during the asylum procedure by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Authorities entrusted with border police tasks (if necessary already at the time of asylum seekers making an asylum application) ■ Competent Federal Police authority ■ Investigating police authority ■ Federal and Land constitutional protection authorities ■ Public prosecuto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS (in certain constellations, an extract from the criminal record is taken for the file)
Convictions for unauthorised entry or residence in the Federal territory (Section 95 subs. 1 no. 3 or subs. 2 no. 1 of the Residence Act)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foreigners authorities and public bodies entrusted with the implementation of immigration law provisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) ■ GENESIS (anonymised and aggregated) ■ Eurostat (anonymised and aggregated) ■ MARiS (in certain constellations, an extract from the criminal record is taken for the file) ■ SIS II
Financial resources*	-	-	-	-	-

Supporting documents					
<i>Passport (serial no.; valid until; issuing state; keeping office; whether document was checked and by which office and when; result of check (no manipulation, falsified, not conclusively assessable))</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Centre Foreigners Authority Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) INPOL tracing of stolen property MARiS Resident register PassTa VIS Visadatei
<i>Travel document (see further information under 'passport').</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Passport substitute document (see further information under 'passport').</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Reasons for fleeing	2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. passport, certificates) AmD (only by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARiS
Reasons for not wanting to be returned to the competent Member State as part of a Dublin procedure	2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. passport, certificates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARiS
Previous applications	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Centre Foreigners Authority Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Register adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Information on the route taken	3, 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Information on exclusion grounds*	-	-	-	-	-



Religious affiliation	1 (voluntary indication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Centre Foreigners Authority Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. baptismal certificate) Form application procedure (in the course of the Covid-19 pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylkon Ausländerdatei A (decentralised, fragmented) AZR (standard nationwide, centralised) MARIS
Vulnerabilities					
<i>Unaccompanied minor</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception Centre Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. birth certificate, passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic file In databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If applicable, also IT system of the medical service MARIS Reception centre system
<i>Pregnant</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. medical certificate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Disabilities</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Elderly</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. birth certificate, passport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Single parent with minor child(ren)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. birth certificate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Victims of human trafficking</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. evidence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Mental disorders</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral (interview, face-to-face) Document analysis (e.g. medical certificate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
<i>Victims of torture, physical or sexual violence (female genital mutilation)</i>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idem (see above)
Other*	-	-	-	-	-

*Individual data categories that are listed here but are not collected in Germany are listed for reasons of comparison within the framework of the common study specifications of the European Migration Network.

Sources: BMeldDÜV, 2nd BMeldDÜV, AKNV, AsylbLG, AsylG, AufenthG, AufenthV, AZRG, AZRG-DV, BDSG, BKAG, BKADV, BMG, BPolG, DSGVO, SGB VI, SGB VIII, SGB XIII, StPO, Regulation (EG) No 562/2006, Regulation (EC) No 767/2008, Regulation (EC) No 810/2009, Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006, Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, Regulation (EU) No 603/2013; For further specific references, see Annex 1; As of December 2020.

2.7.2 Frontloading data collection in the asylum procedure for further purposes

In the course of or in the wake of the high influx of refugees to Germany in 2015 and 2016, a large number of measures were taken to reform the asylum procedure and related processes (for example, accommodation, integration, return). Also with regard to data collection – as documented in this study as a whole – a large number of changes were initiated at various levels. In addition to the measures that were originally aimed at the asylum procedure and included, for example, the numerous reforms regarding the Central Register of Foreigners and the creation of interfaces to other authorities, more far-reaching reforms were also initiated. Two of the measures should be highlighted here that are not attributed to the asylum procedure in the narrower sense or specifically, but were closely (more) linked to the asylum procedure with regard to data collection: 1. security-related measures and 2. integration measures.

Security-related measures

The First Data Sharing Improvement Act²⁸ entered into force in substantial parts on 5 February 2016, initiated an earlier registration, an advance and extended information collection as well as a central storage, standardisation and digitalisation of the collected data of asylum seekers²⁹. In addition to accelerating (asylum) procedures and distributing asylum seekers more easily among the Länder, a key objective of the Law was “to ensure public security in the context of the immigration of asylum seekers” (BMI 2020a: 6). For this purpose, it was newly regulated that a “security cross-check should already be carried out immediately after the storage of data in the Central Register of Foreigners of asylum seekers and foreigners who have entered or are staying without permission” and should be made technically possible (BMI 2020a: 6). This was made possible on the one hand by equipping the relevant authorities with the PIK stations, early digital identification measures and the possibility of Fast-ID matching (cf. Chapter 3), and on the other hand by setting up the core data system and connecting various authorities – including the security authorities – which significantly facilitated the interoperability of the authorities and authority systems.

28 ‘Law on the Improvement of Registration and Data Exchange for the Purposes of Residence and Asylum Law’ and ‘Regulation on the Certificate of Notification as an Asylum Seeker’ (Proof of Arrival Regulation).

29 In addition to asylum seekers, early registration was also introduced for persons who entered the country without permission.

Integration measures

Furthermore, with the First Data Sharing Improvement Act in February 2016, it was decided to store additional integration data on schooling, vocational training and other qualifications in the Central Register of Foreigners at an early stage in order to enable “rapid integration and job placement” (Nationaler Normenkontrollrat 2015: 3). Thus, Section 3 subs. 3 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners stipulates that the following data on asylum seekers and asylum applicants will be additionally stored for the implementation of integration measures and for the purpose of job and training placement:

1. School education, studies, training, profession,
2. Language skills,
3. Participation in an integration course pursuant to Section 43 of the Residence Act and a measure of job-related German language promotion pursuant to Section 45a of the Residence Act (Section 3 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners).

This data is transmitted to the social welfare authority and the authority responsible for implementing the Asylum Seekers’ Benefits Act (Section 18a no. 10-12 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners) as well as to the Federal Employment Agency and the authority responsible for implementing the basic income support for job seekers (Section 18b no. 10-12 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). The former receive this and other data (cf. Table 6), to check, among other things, whether the conditions for claiming benefits are met (Section 18a sentence 1 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). The latter receive this and other data to fulfil their tasks for basic income support for jobseekers (Social Security Code II) and for employment promotion (Social Security Code III) (Section 18b sentence 1 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners).

In addition to the aforementioned data the Federal Employment Agency was integrated as another actor in the registration process prior to the formal asylum application in the course of the establishment of arrival centres and later of AnKER and functionally equivalent facilities (cf. Chapter 2.2. on the establishment of arrival centres, AnKER and functionally equivalent facilities). The Federal Employment Agency focuses on two target groups: on the one hand, asylum seekers with good prospects to remain, who are expected to be granted protection status with a high probability and thus a residence and work permit to work; on the other hand, beneficiaries of protection

who have been granted a positive decision on their asylum application. The Federal Employment Agency offers both individual counselling and group information, for example with information on work, internships, further education, training and studying in Germany, but also with information on German language support (for example integration courses and job-related German language support), and also on the employment agencies and job centres themselves (BA 2019a: 2). In doing so, employees access the above-mentioned data stored in the core data system, but also record “specialised data on previous professional experience and qualifications [...] in the context of self-disclosure” and store these in the Federal Employment Agency’s own ‘Placement, Counselling and Information System’ (VerBIS) (BA 2019: 2).

2.7.3 Data management during the asylum procedure

Table 7 below provides an overview of important regional, national and European databases that either store data in the context of the asylum procedure and/or are accessed for comparison in the context of individual phases of the asylum procedure. The list does not claim to be exhaustive and explicitly leaves out certain databases, such as local IT systems and databases or actor-specific databases, such as those of the medical service for health examinations in the context of registering asylum seekers.

Table 7: Databases in the asylum procedure

Database / Data cross-check proced	Overview and definition of the database	National authorities that have ³⁰ access to the database or to its data (sometimes the listed authorities do not have direct access but only via contact points or only upon request or in exceptional cases to individual data, which, however, cannot be differentiated in the following)			Data shared with other Member States (excl. EU databases)	
		Name of the authority/organisation with direct or indirect data(base) access (if applicable, also other authorities)	Phase of possible data exchange in the asylum procedure	Purpose	Type of data	Purpose
AFIS-A (INPOL)	National database that includes an automated finger-print identification system and allows digitally stored fingerprints to be cross-checked in real time using the Fast ID process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nuclear licensing and supervisory authorities ■ Reception centres ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Embassies and consulates ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office of Justice ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police ■ Federal Office of Administration ■ Federal Motor Transport Authority ■ Aviation security authorities ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Police of the German Bundestag ■ Customs authorities ■ Customs Criminal Investigation Office 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system or if Fast-ID is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 	Identification and verification of asylum seekers and applicants and prevention of multiple registrations by checking unauthorised prior stays or registrations in the past in Germany	Fingerprints	Prosecution of criminal offences by competent foreign authorities, for arrest or residence investigation or police observation or control or identification. Observation or Control or Establishment of identity

30 “Access to a database” means that a public authority has direct access to a database without having to request the transmission of data through other public authorities or intermediary bodies. “Access to data” means that an authority has access to the data contained in a database through transmission or sharing with another authority. Both options are considered in the table.

Asylkon	Data-crosscheck-procedure (not a database itself) that enables a security cross-check of specific data to be initiated automatically after a record has been created in the AZR and is made available to the requesting authorities for reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception centres ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (only cross-check via Fast-ID, whether security-relevant information on persons is stored; check in case of a hit is carried out by the Land police) ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Police forces of the Länder (entitled to retrieve, but do not provide their own findings) ■ Customs Criminal Investigation Office 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal</i> asylum application 	Security cross-check-procedure with the querying authorities (BKA, BfV, BAMAD, ZKA and BND) providing their insights	n/a	n/a
Ausländer-datei A	Regional databases of the foreigners authorities with decentralised storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Land Offices for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Police forces of the Länder (local police stations) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal</i> asylum application 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Organisation of the work of foreigners authorities (e.g. issuing and extending residence permits)	-	-
AZR – Central Register on Foreigners	National database (register) in which the data of foreigners who live or have lived in the country not only temporarily (at least 3 months) are stored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Nuclear licensing and supervisory authorities ■ Reception centres ■ Foreigners authorities and public authority entrusted with the implementation of foreigners law regulations Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Federal Foreign Office ■ Embassies and consulates ■ Federal Employment Agency and the authority responsible for implementing basic benefits for jobseekers ■ Federal Office for Foreign Affairs ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office of Justice ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal</i> asylum application 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	The AZR serves the authorities and organisations as a core data system for the exchange of information. This exchange is partly automated. For example, the registration of persons who have moved to a reception centre can be automated by transferring the data from the AZR to the local resident registers of the registration authorities (information about newly arrived immigrants via automated push-message from the AZR)	1. e.g. photograph, basic personal data and reference to the foreigners authority in charge of the file; move to or from the country; blocks on transfer; date of death	With regard to 1.: fulfilment of humanitarian and social tasks: search for missing persons for family reunification or support in guardianship and maintenance matters

- Federal Criminal Police Office
- Federal Intelligence Service
- Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police
- Federal Office of Administration
- The bodies responsible for the implementation of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act
- The authorities responsible for accommodation in shared accommodation and the public health service
- Courts
- Youth welfare offices
- Criminal Police Offices of the Länder
- Aviation security authorities
- Registration authorities
- Supreme federal and Land authorities entrusted with the implementation of regulations under residence, asylum and passport law as a separate task
- Police forces of the Länder
- Police of the German Bundestag
- Other authority in the visa procedure
- Federal Statistical Office (anonymised data)
- Nationality authorities
- Public prosecutors
- Social welfare agency
- Pension insurance institution
- UNHCR
- Displaced persons authorities
- Central Office for Financial Transaction Investigations
- Customs Criminal Investigation Office
- Customs administration authorities
- And other non-governmental bodies, if applicable



Eurodac	European data-base that stores data of fingerprints and the date the fingerprints were taken, the gender of the asylum seekers and the place and time of the asylum application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police ■ Europol ■ Criminal Police Offices of the Länder ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Competent national authorities of the other Eurodac countries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 	Cross-checking whether another Member State is responsible for processing the asylum application in accordance with the Dublin Regulation	n/a	n/a
Eurostat	European database provided by the Statistical Office of the European Union within the European Commission statistics and data on Europe in cooperation with national statistical offices and other national authorities (anonymously and aggregated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All authorities, as data are sent to Eurostat anonymously, aggregated and published 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Joint analysis and improved exchange of asylum and migration statistics for the development of Community legislation and policies	n/a	n/a
GENESIS - Common New Statistical Information System	Main national database of the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) that receives and publishes anonymised, aggregated data from the asylum procedure, among other things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All national and international authorities, as data are sent to Eurostat anonymously, aggregated and published 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Prepare and provide statistical data	All data stored in the AZR without naming names (anonymised)	Information dissemination via www.destatis.de to all interested bodies
INPOL tracing of stolen propertyen	National database in which items wanted in connection with possible criminal offences are stored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reception centres ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Foreign Office ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data with PIK station or police recording system is used) 2. <i>registration</i> 	Cross-checking whether the identity papers are wanted	Objects (e.g. passports, cars)	Foreign authorities responsible for the prosecution of criminal offences, e.g. for arrest or police control or identification.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Criminal Police Offices of the Länder ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Police of the German Bundestag ■ Public prosecutors ■ Customs Investigation Offices ■ Customs Criminal Investigation Office ■ And if necessary others 				
MARiS	National database that serves as the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' electronic workflow and document management system for processing all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Office of Administration ■ Courts and public prosecution offices ■ Security authorities of the Länder ■ Customs Criminal Investigation Office 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data is carried out with the help of a PIK station or the police recording system) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Processing of all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures)	-	-
Resident register of the local registration authorities	Local/regional databases (resident registers), for example of the residents' registration offices or citizens' offices or citizens' bureaus (cf. Ausländerdatei A of the foreigners' authorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public prosecutors ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office of Justice ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police ■ Federal Office of Administration ■ Residents' registration offices ■ Tax authorities, insofar as they are active in criminal prosecution ■ Courts, insofar as they perform tasks of criminal prosecution, the execution of sentences or the execution of sentences ■ Main customs offices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Registration, deregistration and reregistration of persons residing in their area of responsibility, issuance of identity papers and income tax cards	-	-

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prison authorities ■ Police forces of the LänderPublic prosecutors ■ Federal and Länder constitutional protection authorities ■ Customs Investigation Service <p>In the case of activities that fall wholly or partly within the scope of EU law, the transmission of certain data (section 34(1) sentence 1 BMG) shall apply in accordance with the laws and agreements applicable thereto if data are transmitted to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ public bodies in other EU Member States, ■ public bodies in other Contracting States to the Agreement on the European Economic Area, ■ EU institutions and bodies ■ Bodies and institutions of the European Atomic Energy Community 				
SIS II	European database, for determining the lawfulness of entry or residence of third-country nationals in the Schengen area as well as handovers, BOLO, missing persons reports and property tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foreigners authorities (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Federal Foreign Office (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Embassies and consulates ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police ■ Federal Office of Administration ■ Eurojust members (national actors) ■ Europol ■ Frontex 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if application for asylum is made directly to the reception centre) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>inter-view/examination</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Determination of entry bans ■ Handover/delivery of persons ■ BOLO ■ Missing persons reports and search ■ Property tracing of stolen and lost property 	n/a	n/a

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Judicial authorities (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Vehicle registration authorities (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Federal Aviation Authority (from 8 December 2021 onwards) ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Public prosecutors ■ Tax investigation authorities ■ Customs authorities ■ Competent authorities of the other Schengen States 				
SIS AFIS	European database that functions as a biometric identification system and uses digital imaging technology to store and analyse fingerprint data and facial images. Also used in the Eurodac system for the automatic collection and cross-check of fingerprints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cf. authorities SIS II <p><i>Note:</i> SIS AFIS is currently being implemented; full implementation is planned for the end of 2021.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if application for asylum is made directly to the reception centre) 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 4. <i>interview/examination</i> 	Enables fingerprint and facial image cross-check for security purposes and within the framework of the Dublin procedure	n/a	n/a
VerBIS	National database of the Federal Employment Agency, which can be accessed by the employment agencies and job centres and the employer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Employer service ■ Employment agencies ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Job centre 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>registration</i> 	Collection of professional data on previous professional experience and qualifications	-	-
VIS	European database in which biographic data as well as biometric information (fingerprints and photographs) are stored for five years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Foreigners authorities ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Embassies and consulates ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Waterway Police ■ Europol 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>registration</i> 3. <i>formal asylum application</i> 	Among other things, exchange on visa applications and short-term stays between Schengen states; Fraud prevention and security	n/a	n/a

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Customs Criminal Investigation Office ■ Competent national authorities of the other VIS Member States 				
Visa file	National database as part of the AZR containing data on third-country nationals who have applied for a visa at a German mission abroad. Contains information on visa applicants and the decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Federal Office for Migration and Refugees ■ Embassies and consulates ■ Federal Employment Agency ■ Military counterintelligence and security agency ■ Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and Land Offices ■ Federal Criminal Police Office ■ Federal Intelligence Service ■ Federal Police, Bavarian Border Police and Hamburg Water Police ■ Federal Office of Administration ■ Courts ■ Job centre ■ Criminal Police Offices of the Länder ■ Police forces of the Länder ■ Social welfare offices ■ Public prosecutors ■ Social welfare agency ■ Central Office for Financial Transaction Investigations ■ Customs authorities 	<p>1. <i>making an asylum application</i> (if identification measures & recording of basic personal data is carried out with the help of a PIK station or the police recording system)</p> <p>2. <i>registration</i></p>	Control of unauthorised residence	-	-

Sources: 1st BMeldDÜV, 2nd BMeldDÜV, AKNV, AsylbLG, AsylG, AufenthG, AufenthV, AZRG, AZRG-DV, BDSG, BKAG, BKADV, BMG, BPolG, DSGVO, SGB VI, SGB VIII, SGB XIII, StPO, Regulation (EG) No 562/2006, Regulation (EC) No 767/2008, Regulation (EC) No 810/2009, Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006, Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, Regulation (EU) No 603/2013; For further specific references, see Annex 1.

3 Making an application to an authority not competent to register the asylum application

The focus in this chapter is on the information and data management of authorities to which an asylum application is made and which are not responsible for the registration of asylum seekers. The competent reception centres of the Länder are responsible for registration in the narrower sense (see Chapter 2.2). In a broader sense, registration also takes place when an asylum application is made to the Federal Police or the Land authorities responsible for border police tasks (Section 18 subs. 5 of the Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 16 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act), police or foreigners authorities (Section 19 subs. 2 in conjunction with Section 16 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act) or a non-competent reception centre (Section 22 subs. 1 sentence 2 in conjunction with Section 16 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act), an initial registration or partial registration takes place in the form of recording the asylum application and the identification measures (cf. Stahmann 2018: 8). For this purpose, among other things, the existing registration systems of the border police authorities and police forces of the Länder for the initial registration of asylum seekers were expanded from mid-2016³¹, the reception facilities of the Länder were equipped with so-called 'PIK stations' and, since 2018, the municipal foreigners authorities have also been equipped with one PIK station each (Grote 2018: 39). The 'PIK' is the so-called personalisation infrastructure component and the 'PIK station' consists of a fingerprint scanner, a camera for taking facial images, a document verification device (scanner) for reading out personal documents, software for data collection and a printer for printing out the certificate of registration as an asylum seeker or the proof of arrival during the actual registration at the competent reception centre (cf. Chapter 2.2). The PIK station enables the automated storage of personal data, biometric and data

from the identification measure in 'MARIS'³² and in the Central Register of Foreigners, the core data system created in recent years. In addition, biometric data is stored in the AFIS-A database (under the responsibility of the Federal Criminal Police Office), in INPOL and for subsequent transmission to EURODAC, so that the data is also available in real time to numerous authorities in subsequent processes (cf. Chapter 3 on data management in this phase). Finally, data stored in the course of securing, establishing and verifying identity can be used via the Federal Office of Administration to establish grounds for refusing a protection and/or residence title (so-called grounds for refusal; Section 3 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act, Section 4 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act, Section 60 subs. 8 sentence 1 of the Residence Act and Section 5 subs. 4 of the Residence Act) or for the examination of other security concerns to the Federal Intelligence Service, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the Military Counter-Intelligence Service, the Federal Criminal Police Office, the Federal Police and the Customs Criminal Police Office (Section 73 subs. 1a sentence 1 of the Residence Act). In addition, when a new data record is created in the Central Register of Foreigners for the first time, a check is carried out to see whether the person in question already exists with a data record in the Central Register of Foreigners database – the so-called NID check, the 'non-identical person check'. This is to ensure that there are no multiple registrations.

In Chapter 2.7.1, Table 4 already systematically documented all data collected, authorities involved, types of collection and storage as well as the corresponding databases for the phases from registration to asylum application processing. For reasons of comparison, the data collection and transmission in the context of asylum application processing at authorities that are not

31 Initially, the reception centres of the Länder and the branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees were equipped with the PIK stations at the beginning of 2016. The development of the equipment of the individual authorities is also statistically reflected in the asylum seekers recorded, who intend to file an asylum application, by PIK stations, differentiated by the respective authorities, as the evaluation of the Data Sharing Improvement Act shows (BMI 2020a: 15f.).

32 MARIS is the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' electronic workflow and document management system for processing all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures) (BAMF 2021a). No fingerprints are stored in MARIS.

competent for registration were³³ not recorded in the table. For this reason, the following section first documents what information is given to the asylum seekers themselves by the said authorities when they express their intention to apply for asylum (Chapter 3.1), what data is collected (Chapter 3.2) and in what form it is forwarded (Chapter 3.3).

3.1 Providing information to asylum seekers

The Federal Police as well as the Land authorities responsible for border police tasks, the police forces of the Länder and the foreigners authorities carry out an identification procedure of the asylum seekers and forward them to the nearest reception centres. The nearest reception centre uses the EASY system to check whether it is the competent reception centre or whether the asylum seeker must be transferred to the competent reception centre. For the purpose of transfer, the authorities issue the certificate of registration as an asylum seeker, the so-called Anlaufbescheinigung (cf. Annex 2 form of a certificate of registration as an asylum seeker). Various data are printed on the certificate, including surname, first name, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, gender (male, female, diverse) and a photograph.

The staff of the authorities are obliged to inform the asylum seekers in writing that they must comply with the transfer without delay or by a date specified by the authority (cf. Chapter 2.5.1 on deadlines and immediacy). They must also inform what legal consequences a violation of this obligation would entail. This is a change that was introduced when the ‘Act on the Introduction of Accelerated Asylum Procedures’ came into force on 17 March 2016. The provision of information is intended to take into account the fact that with the same law, not travelling on to the reception centre without delay was given more restrictive consequences, in that the asylum application is considered withdrawn in these cases and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees discontinues the procedure (in the case of forwarding to the nearest reception centre: Section 20 subs. 1 sentences 1 and 2 in conjunction with Section 33 subs. 1 and 5 of the Asylum Act; in the case of forwarding to the competent reception centre: Section 22 subs. 3 of the Asylum Act

in conjunction with Section 33 subs. 1 and 5 of the Asylum Act). The letter issued to the asylum seekers at this point can be seen in the form of the notification pursuant to Section 20 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act (Annex 3).

Since fingerprints are also taken during the identification procedure and stored in the Central Register of Foreigners and MARiS via the PIK station or the police recording systems, which automatically triggers a fingerprint cross-check with the Eurodac database according to the EURODAC II Regulation, appropriate instruction on the Dublin procedure and the Eurodac cross-check is also provided. The Eurodac and Dublin information during the identification measure is provided by means of common information sheets³⁴ of the Member States, the receipt of which must be confirmed by the asylum seeker with a signature on a corresponding form (BAMF 2019e: 3f.). However, the cross-check of a hit in the Eurodac database does not take place at this point and only becomes relevant when the formal asylum application is filed with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (cf. Chapter 5).

In addition, there is a general instruction on data collection and disclosure by the competent authorities. The Federal Police refers, for example, to the ‘Information on Police Data Processing by the Federal Police’ as well as the ‘Information on Non-Police Data Processing by the Federal Police’, which can be accessed online and which, for example, provides information on the legal basis, the purpose of processing, the rights of access and deletion, informs asylum seekers about data storage, rights of objection as well as rights of amendment and deletion, the storage period and contact options to the competent data protection officers (BPOL 2021).

If the designated authorities take custody of identity documents, certificates or other documents in accordance with Section 21 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act in connection with the asylum application, the asylum seekers must certify this in writing (cf. Annex 4 form of such a certificate). The authorities then forward the retained documents by registered mail to the reception centre to which they forward the asylum seekers.

The signed instructions are forwarded as pdf documents via email to the nearest reception centre and

³³ In some Member States, there is no process of making an asylum application as in Germany, but the registration process takes place directly.

³⁴ The two leaflets can be accessed via the following link on pages 9ff of the document deposited there: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/Behaltungen/AsylgesuchSammelvordrucke/Asylgesuch/sammelvordruck-asylgesuch-deutsch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=10 (22.01.2021).

to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (this procedure has already been practised by the Federal Police since 2018; according to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' specialist unit, this will also be done by foreigners authorities and non-responsible reception centres from the second quarter of 2021).

3.2 Information and data collection of the authorities involved

In the course of making an asylum application, basic personal data, fingerprints and each one facial image of the asylum seekers are collected with the help of the police recording systems or PIK stations, parts of which are also printed on the certificate of registration as an asylum seeker. The asylum seekers are first instructed and informed about the data collection and the upcoming data cross-check at national and European level (cf. Chapter 3.3). After the basic personal data and the digitally recorded fingerprints have been collected, these data are cross-checked with the various national and European databases via Fast-ID (cf. Chapter 3.1). If data on the person has already been entered in MARiS or in the Central Register of Foreigners, it can be transferred, checked and, if necessary, supplemented.

Formal information of the authority employees

- Authority/office, place, date, telefax number, name of the person in charge, case number and email of the person in charge
- Information on the reception centre/foreigners authority to which the asylum seeker must go and reference to the fact that this must be done without delay
- EASY option number (if forwarded to the competent reception centre by a non-responsible reception centre if it uses the EASY system)
- Whether documents were withheld (e.g. passport)
- Period of validity of the certificate of registration as an asylum seeker

Personal data of the asylum seeker

- **Date of entry** (upon request and cross-check with documents provided)
- **Fingerprints** (1. initially pressed prints of all ten fingers for Fast ID cross-checking, if the age of 14 has been reached – from 1 April 2021 from the age of six; taken by means of finger scanner of the PIK station or the police recording systems; 2. after

Fast ID cross-check, rolled fingerprints are also taken)

- **D number** (D = dactyloscopy = fingerprinting procedure)³⁵
- **E-number** (twelve-digit event number as unique reference of the respective identity measure and fingerprinting, which is stored in INPOL)
- **AZR number** (Central Register of Foreigners reference number assigned when a person's data is stored in the Central Register of Foreigners for the first time)
- If available, **passport or passport substitute data** (if the document has a machine-readable line, the data can be read by the document reader of the PIK station and transferred automatically)
- **Gender** (male, female, diverse, unknown)
- **Facial image** (biometric photo is taken by the camera of the PIK station or the police recording station)
- **Height in cm** (for wheelchair users, the size is measured while sitting)
- **Eye colour**
- **Family name**
- **Birth name**
- **First name**
- **Alias personal data** (e.g. if there are several spellings of the names and no identification documents are available that show a specific spelling)
- **Date of birth** (in case of doubt also only partial information, such as the year of birth; in case of missing documents to determine the age, no estimation of the age takes place for persons over 14 years; for children estimated younger than 14 years, the estimated age is entered to avoid inadmissible fingerprinting of children under 14 years in the subsequent processes)³⁶
- **Country of birth**
- **Birthplace**
- **Birth district**
- **Citizenship** (in MARiS only one citizenship, in AZR up to four)
- **Language** (native or main language, if reliable information on this can be provided; if applicable, voice recording to determine the country of origin)
- **Religious belief** (optional)
- **Ethnicity**
- **Civil status** (married, single, divorced or widowed)

35 Each person who has been processed for identification is assigned a twelve-digit 'D-number' after the fingerprints have been evaluated. The D-number is retained for any further identity measures of the person.

36 From 1 April 2021, fingerprints will also be taken from children aged six years and older (change in the wake of the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act, which came into force in substantial parts on 9 August 2019).

- Whether **minor family members** are present, for whom the certificate of registration as an asylum seeker is also valid (in each case name, first name, date of birth, nationality) and whether it is the asylum seeker's own details or if these could be taken from corresponding documents
- Whether the asylum seeker is accompanied by **other family members**
- Whether **family members** (minor children, spouse or civil partner) are already living in another (permanent) residence in Germany (family relationships with German nationals or with foreign nationals who have never resided in Germany may not be stored)
- Indication whether the personal data are based on information provided by the asylum seekers or could be verified on the basis of documents.

3.3 Data cross-check with other authorities

If the asylum application is recorded using the PIK station or the police recording station at this stage, the data recorded during the identification measure (basic personal data as well as identity features, such as the fingerprints of asylum seekers who have reached the age of 14 resp. from 1 April 2021 from the age of six³⁷ and a photo) is stored automatically in the AZR and without the fingerprints also in 'MARiS'³⁸.

At the same time, the fingerprints are stored in the police database AFIS-A (INPOL), which documents the identification measure and allows the authorities to see in the subsequent processes whether and where the person in question has already been registered. For this purpose, the authorities have the so-called Fast-ID at their disposal, which allows for an immediate cross-checking with the database. If, for example, the cross-checking process produces a fingerprint match, based on this unique identifier, it can be determined whether, where and by which authority the person has already been registered and for what purpose (cf. Tangermann 2017: 15f.). In addition, the passport and passport substitute

documents are automatically cross-checked with the INPOL tracing of stolen property file.

In addition, an automatic cross-check with databases of the security authorities takes place, the so-called asylum consultation procedure (AsylKon procedure). In the process, the Federal Office of Administration (BVA) initiates a security cross-check with the Federal Intelligence Service, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the Military Counterintelligence and Security Agency, the Federal Criminal Police Office and the Customs Criminal Police Office. The Federal Office of Administration collects possible security-relevant information and makes it available to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the locally responsible foreigners authorities. There, for example by requesting an extract from the Federal Central Register, an assessment of the information can be made under asylum or foreigners law after further consolidation of the information. The police forces of the Länder are also authorised to access the results of the security cross-check. However, they are not involved as a specialised service and do not provide any findings (Section 73 subs. 1a of the Residence Act). Every relevant change of personal data in the Central Register of Foreigners will initiate the Asylkon procedure again. In the phase of making an asylum application, a corresponding security-relevant report can thus determine at an early stage whether an asylum seeker poses a threat to public security, for example.

In addition, a cross-check is made against the following national and European databases when the intention to apply for asylum is expressed:

- **Eurodac** (detection of a registration in another Member State; however, the automated hit return is practically only used further from the formal asylum application; see Chapter 4)
- **SIS II** (Comparison with open APBs)
- **VIS** (e.g. verification of the country of origin, cross-check of visa applications and previous stays in another European state)
- **Visa file (national)** (including verification of the country of origin, cross-checking visa applications and previous stays in Germany)

37 Change in the wake of the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act, which came into force in substantial parts on 9 August 2019.

38 In MARiS only the results of the fingerprints crosscheck is stored not the fingerprints themselves.

4 Information and data management during registration

The registration of the asylum seekers and the issuing of a proof of arrival are carried out by the competent reception centre. This step in the procedure has become much more important in the past few years. The extended data collection has been frontloaded to this process step and various authorities and procedures have been integrated in the arrival centres, AnkER or functionally equivalent facilities under one roof on site. Since then, a large part of the personal data has subsequently been made directly accessible and usable for the further asylum procedure under the responsibility of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

4.1 Data cross-check during registration

The storage of data in the Central Register of Foreigners and MARiS in the course of registration by the reception centre is also carried out with the help of the PIK stations. If an initial registration has already been made with another authority (cf. Chapter 3) and the data has already been stored in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS, this data can be called up via Fast-ID, cross-checked and, if necessary, changed and supplemented. The register cross-check serves on the one hand to save time and ensure the quality of the data stored, but on the other hand also to record possible multiple registrations and multiple identity declarations for one person.

As part of the registration automated register cross-checks with the following national and European databases take place, amongst others, with the help of Fast-ID cross-checks:

- **AFIS-A** (fingerprint cross-check to establish previous asylum applications or asylum-related registrations or irregular stays in Germany)
- **Asylkon** (national security cross-check)
- **Eurodac** (fingerprint cross-check to determine a registration in another EU Member State, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and de-

termination of responsibility for conducting the asylum procedure)

- **INPOL tracing of stolen property in the framework of Asylkon** (including cross-checking the use of stolen identity documents)
- **SIS II** (comparison with open APBs)
- **VIS** (e.g. verification of the country of origin, cross-check of visa applications and previous stays in another European state)
- **Visa file (national)** (including verification of the country of origin, cross-check of visa applications and previous stays in Germany)

A hit in the national visa file or in the European VIS can, for example, allow conclusions to be drawn about the country of origin of the asylum seeker or asylum applicant and verify the information. In this case, the cross-check makes further verification of the information on the country of origin superfluous. On the other hand, a hit in the visa file or in VIS can also call into question information on the country of origin and provide circumstantial evidence for false statements (see below on language biometrics).

During the Fast-ID cross-check with the databases of security authorities, an automated coded feedback is sent, which indicates whether there is a hit in the database and if so, what type of hit.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is involved in the registration phase, particularly in establishing identity with the help of the IDM-S tools (cf. Infobox 3 in Chapter 2.2). In addition, a frontloaded physical and technical document examination (PTU)³⁹ can already take place at this point in time under the responsibility of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

The aim of analysing mobile devices, such as mobile phones, is to support and cross-check the plausibility

³⁹ “The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees examines and assesses the authenticity of documents submitted in the asylum procedure as part of the factual investigation and identity determination process. For this purpose, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees employs, among others, specially trained document experts” (BAMF 2021c).

and, if necessary, to disprove the information on the identity and nationality of asylum seekers. Analysing data is legally permissible only in the case of asylum seekers and asylum applicants if they do not hold a valid passport or passport substitute that can be used to establish identity and nationality and if there are no other less restrictive means available, such as a VIS hit (Section 15 subs. 2 no. 6 of the Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 15a of the Asylum Act). The legal basis for analysing mobile devices was created by the addition of subs. 2 no. 6 to Section 15 of the Asylum Act and the introduction of Section 15a of the Asylum Act as part of the ‘Act to Improve the Enforcement of the Obligation to Leave the Country’, which came into force on 29 July 2017.

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugee’s ‘Language Biometrics Assistance System’ supports staff in checking Arabic-speaking applicants by making it possible to draw conclusions about their region of origin via digital dialect recognition for five Arabic dialects. For this purpose, the asylum applicants enter a short speech sample by telephone, which is analysed with the help of specific speech biometrics software, whereupon the information on the applicant’s origin is either plausibilised or indications of the spoken language, the dialect and the citizenship are provided. The ‘language biometrics assistance system’ makes it possible to carry out manual verification steps more quickly, speed up asylum procedures overall and make it easier to identify false statements about citizenship (eGovernment-Wettberwerb.de 2018).

The web-based transcription service (TKS) “represents the transcription of names into a uniform spelling. In order to harmonise the spelling of Arabic names, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is currently developing a web-based transcription service for inter-authority use, which translates Arabic names into a uniform Latin spelling and is to be used as early as the first contact with the authorities by the arriving persons” (BAMF 2020a).

Image biometrics serves to avoid multiple registrations, as the facial images can be cross-checked and thus serve as further evidence in addition to fingerprints for identification or uncovering former registrations. In addition, image biometrics is also used for identification in security cross-checks, for example in the case of a hit in a database cross-check, in which facial images are also stored.

A challenge in frontloading the use of IDM-S tools to the registration process currently arises with regard to interpretation, which is not guaranteed across the

board in the registration process. However, since the use of individual IDM-S tools requires verbal explanations, the use of the tools is not always possible and is then made up for in the formal asylum application process, where interpreters are generally present. According to the responsible department of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, possible solutions are currently being examined and piloted in close cooperation with the data protection officer of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to ensure that appropriate interpretation is also provided in the registration process for the use of IDM-S. In the future, this process step shall be frontloaded across the board if possible.

During the registration phase new data is added, for example, on the residential address of the asylum seeker, which can only be reliably entered at this time. The residential address is also automatically reported via push-message by the Central Register of Foreigners to the registration and foreigners authorities, which can transfer and cross-check it with other personal data in their respective databases (resident register and Ausländerdatei A). In addition, a variety of other data is collected in the registration process (cf. Table 6 in Chapter 2.7.1 in particular on data for the implementation of integration measures and for the purpose of job and training placement).

Furthermore, a medical examination is carried out by the medical service and stored in the own medical IT systems as well as those of the health office. In turn, the Central Register of Foreigners records when and where the general health examination (pursuant to Section 62 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act) and an examination for the presence of infectious pulmonary tuberculosis (pursuant to Section 36 subs. 4 or 5 of the Infection Protection Act), when, where and which vaccinations were carried out, as well as the determination that there are no medical objections to admission to a collective accommodation facility (Section 3 subs. 2 nos. 9-11 of the Asylum Act).

4.2 Information and data access for asylum seekers

In this process step, the authorities involved in the registration process in the arrival centres, AnkER and functionally equivalent facilities are responsible for the data they collect and the corresponding instructions. This applies in particular to the reception centre, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the

foreigners authority, the Federal Employment Agency and the medical service, and also to other authorities if necessary. At the same time, the provision of certain personal data is obligatory in the context of making an asylum application and the formal asylum application. If the person concerned objects to providing essential data, this can lead to the asylum procedure being discontinued, the asylum application being rejected or benefits being reduced under the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act (BAMF 2018b).

At the same time, asylum seekers and asylum applicants have the right to be informed about the collection, storage and processing of data as well as the rights to access, modification, deletion and objection.⁴⁰ If identification measures are carried out for the first time during registration, asylum seekers are given the Eurodac or Dublin information sheet to sign, which is available in various languages (cf. Chapter 3.2). In addition, the asylum seekers receive instructions on how to apply for asylum at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 14 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act) as well as the consequences if they do not comply with the obligation to apply for asylum at the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees immediately or by the date specified by the reception centre (Section 23 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act). The instruction must be signed by the asylum seeker. It is available in 45 languages (as of August 2020; BAMF 2020d; cf. form of a corresponding instruction in Annex 5).

If IDM-S tools are used by staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to check the plausibility of certain information, the applicants are also informed about their use and functionality, which is confirmed by the applicants' signatures. If the instruction forms are not available in the respective mother tongue, there are corresponding information mate-

rials as well as oral explanations for the interpreters, which they again pass forward to the asylum seekers, provided that interpreters are available at the respective location in the registration process to translate the information to the asylum applicants. If no instruction and briefing can take place, IDM-S use can be made up for during the formal asylum application process, where interpretation is generally provided.

In addition, asylum seekers are given an information sheet on applying for asylum, which informs them about the function, the actors involved and the documents to be brought along, including personal documents, evidence of the individual reasons for fleeing and certificates (cf. form of the information sheet on applying for asylum, which is available in 16 languages; Annex 6; BAMF 2017d). For the general requirements on information, amendment and deletion of stored personal data of asylum seekers, cf. centrally Chapter 7.2 on data protection.

Training of staff

The employees of the respective authorities are informed about the specific procedures for data collection and storage, the data protection regulations as well as the information and instruction requirements for the asylum seekers, in particular through corresponding service regulations. In addition, the employees undergo appropriate training and further education.

⁴⁰ The obligation to take appropriate measures to provide data subjects with a processing or privacy notice stems from Article 12 GDPR which obliges data controllers to provide "any information referred to in Articles 13 and 14 and any communication under Articles 15 to 22 and 34 relating to processing to the data subject in a concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible form, using clear and plain language." The information referred to in Articles 13 sets out the information to be provided where data has been collected from the data subject. It includes setting out the purpose of the data collected and legal basis; legitimate interests of the data controller (where this is used as the legal base); recipients of the data or categories of data; and if the data will be transferred to a third country or international organisation. Articles 15 to 22 refer to the data subject's rights including the rights to access, rectification and erasure; the right to object (if data is being collected for certain purposes including for a task carried out in the public interest or an official function vested in the data controller or in pursuit of legitimate interests of the data controller), right to data portability etc.

5 Information and data management in the formal asylum application process (lodging phase)

The recording of the essential personal data is usually completed with the registration phase. By performing a new Fast-ID cross-check and checking the file created in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS, staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees can retrieve the personal data record of the asylum applicant that was created in the previous procedural steps. MARiS is an internal system of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and can be accessed directly. The Central Register of Foreigners is accessed via MARiS or via the Federal Office of Administration's register portal, which also provides access to VIS and the visa file in order to retrieve the relevant information. The Central Register of Foreigners and MARiS are continuously linked with each other in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to facilitate operation and data cross-checking.

Retrieving the previously stored data saves time when filing an application and at the same time offers the possibility of re-checking and, if necessary, changing and supplementing the personal data. For example, during the formal asylum application process, information may come to light that makes it necessary to change the data already recorded, and additional data may be recorded. New data or data cross-checking arise in particular with regard to possible vulnerabilities, language and origin, new indications through a document cross-check and the Dublin procedure.

As a rule⁴¹, applications are accepted in person at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in the presence of an interpreter (on site or via video interpreting), unless the applicant is sufficiently proficient

41 In many branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, it was not possible to make a formal asylum application in person during the Covid-19 pandemic. Asylum seekers who wished to make a formal asylum application were told to remain at their reception centres and make a written asylum application there (see Chapter 8.2.2).

in German. The interpreters do not have access to the procedural data.

Vulnerable persons

If indications of possible special protection needs are raised or become apparent when the application is lodged, a corresponding note is filed in the asylum file and the responsible case officer is informed of this. The case officer can either make appropriate preparations for the interview or decide that the interview will be conducted by specially-commissioned case-officers⁴² of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

Information on the language and references to the region of origin

If not done before, the IDM-S tools may also be applied at this stage, for example the Language Biometric Assistance System if applicants cannot prove their identity or origin beyond doubt by presenting a valid passport, passport substitute or other identity document, or if an identity document presented has forgery features. In this context, it is also asked in which language the asylum interview is to be conducted (interpreted). This is noted in order to ensure appropriate interpretation at the interview.

42 "Specially-commissioned case-officers are specially trained case officers who are deployed for interviews for vulnerable applicants. These include unaccompanied minors, victims of torture, traumatised persons and gender-specific victims of persecution as well as victims of human trafficking. In addition to their own tasks in processing procedures, the special representatives are available to their superiors and colleagues as contact persons" (BAMF 2019a: 39). In addition, each branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees employs 'Special Representatives for Security in Asylum Procedures', who process asylum cases "with a special security connection" and sensitise the staff of the Federal Office for security aspects (e.g. with regard to indications of "extremism, terrorism, criminal offences, human trafficking, war crimes, crimes against humanity and illegal smuggling activities" (BAMF 2019k: 2).

Dublin procedure

The first step in this procedure is to check whether the person applying for asylum has already been registered and whether the corresponding data record shows that they have already been informed about the Dublin procedure and the cross-check with the Eurodac data. If this is not the case, this is done at this point (cf. Chapter 4.2).

If the register cross-check results in a Eurodac hit and thus indicates the responsibility of another Member State within the meaning of the Dublin Regulation, a Dublin initial interview is conducted. If a Dublin case can still be assumed, the asylum file will be forwarded to one of the Dublin Centres established since February 2017, which will be documented accordingly in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS. These centres check the responsibility of the other Member State and initiate the so-called take-over request in the corresponding case if necessary (cf. in more detail on the Dublin procedure: BAMF 2019a: 16ff.).

Documents to check the plausibility of the reasons for fleeing

Passport, passport substitute or other documents (cf. Chapters 2.1 and 2.2.1; Section 21 subs. 2 and 3 of the Asylum Act in conjunction with Section 15 subs. 2 nos. 4 and 5 of the Asylum Act) that are presented when an application is filed are scanned upon arrival at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and stored in both MARiS and PassTa (Passport Tracking Application)⁴³ as well as recorded in the Central Register of Foreigners, unless they have already been scanned in one of the previous process steps. Original documents are then checked for authenticity in a multi-stage process (cf. Chapter 7.1 for quality assurance measures). If no physical-technical examination (PTU) of the documents by specially trained document experts at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is necessary, the original documents are forwarded to the competent foreigners authority. The foreigners authority can hand the documents back to the applicant if they are no longer needed for the further execution of the asylum procedure or for measures terminating residence (Section 21 subs. 5 of the Asylum Act).

⁴³ PassTa is an online system in which all original identity documents and certificates are stored. It is used to cross-check and track the documents across the individual process steps so that the most current processing status and location of the documents in the BAMF can always be tracked.

If this has not already been done in one of the previous steps of the process, new documents can also be accepted at this point, for example those that the asylum applicant would like to submit for plausibility checks or as evidence of the reasons for fleeing and persecution in the country of origin. These can be, for example, arrest warrants, medical certificates, etc. In this context, staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees document the type of document and whether it is an original document or a copy. If asylum applicants submit non-scannable documents (e.g. USB sticks), these documents are first specified in consultation with the asylum applicant, which is noted accordingly in the electronic asylum file, and the original documents are forwarded to the responsible case officer.

5.1 Data cross-check at the lodging phase

As part of the formal asylum application process the Fast-ID cross-check and automated register cross-checks are again carried out against the following national and European databases:

- **AFIS-A** (fingerprint cross-check to establish previous asylum applications or asylum-related registrations or irregular stays in Germany)
- **Asylkon** (national security cross-check)
- **Eurodac** (fingerprint cross-check to determine a registration in another EU Member State, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland and determination of responsibility for conducting the asylum procedure)
- **INPOL tracing of stolen property in the framework of Asylkon** (including cross-checking the use of stolen identity documents)
- **SIS II** (comparison with open APBs)
- **VIS** (e.g. verification of the country of origin, cross-check of visa applications and previous stays in another European state)
- **Visa file (national)** (including verification of the country of origin, cross-check of visa applications and previous stays in Germany)

If, for example, a hit with regard to security-relevant aspects or a wanted person or arrest warrant is identified in the course of the cross-checking, the local police authority and the foreigners authority are to be informed by the staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

The cross-check with the European VIS and the national visa file is relevant, for example, for the verification of personal data and identity documents. In this context, it is usually assumed that in the case of a previous visa issuance, the foreign embassies and consulates have only approved the visa upon presentation of a valid passport. If the information in the VIS or the visa file matches the documents presented when the application was submitted or the information provided, it has been verified. Accordingly, the cross-check may reveal evidence of incomplete or incorrect data. For a match in the case of a VIS hit, the embassies of the Member State may also be consulted directly and asked to send the relevant documents (one-year retention period for Schengen visas). In the event of a hit in the national visa file (including for longer-term national visas), the competent German embassy can again be asked to send the relevant documents.

EA difference in the register cross-check during the formal asylum application procedure compared to the previous procedural steps arises with regard to a possible Eurodac hit: if the register cross-check with Eurodac results in a hit and thus an indication that another Member State is responsible for processing the asylum application, this information is analysed and utilised accordingly (see above).

5.2 Information and data access for asylum applicants

Only in the case that certain instructions described above on individual data cross-checks and procedural applications (e.g. IDM-S) have not already been carried out, these must be made up for accordingly (cf. the previous chapters). In these cases, the interpreters can clarify possible questions or translate necessary explanations – for example, about the IDM-S tools.

Asylum applicants also receive an information sheet on the asylum interview when they are summoned. This contains information on the interview as well as information on interpretation, the possibility of having the interview and translation carried out by persons of the same gender for personal reasons, scheduling, travel information, childcare options, catering and the information that specially-commissioned case-officers of the Fed-

eral Office for Migration and Refugees are available for vulnerable persons if the person in question belongs to one of the groups and informs the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of this (cf. Annex 7 information sheet on the asylum interview date, which is available in 16 languages; BAMF 2017c). The interpreters involved are always informed of their duty of confidentiality before the start of the application procedure.

In addition, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees provides general instruction on data protection law based on the GDPR. The asylum seekers are informed about the contact details of the data protection officers, the data storage and its purpose, the legal basis, the data transfer to the various actors involved in the asylum procedure (security authorities, residents' registration offices, foreigners' authorities, social welfare authorities, employment agencies, etc.) as well as to the competent authorities of other Member States of the European Union as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, if this is legally permissible, the storage periods, the request for a restriction of data processing for interests worthy of protection, the rights of information, complaint and deletion. Finally, applicants are informed that the information they provide in the current asylum procedure will not be disclosed to the authorities of their country of origin and that this will also apply after the conclusion of the asylum procedure, insofar as the applicants have been granted international protection (BAMF 2020: 8).

The general data protection information is handed out in writing by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees staff as part of the initial briefing and must be signed by the applicants. The initial instruction and the information sheet on data processing by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are available in 41 languages (cf. Annex 8 Information sheet on data processing by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees). In addition, interpreters can translate questions and ambiguities of the asylum applicants during the asylum application process. For the general requirements on information, amendment and deletion of stored personal data of asylum applicants, cf. centrally Chapter 7.2 on data protection.

Training of staff

The employees of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are informed about the specific procedures for data collection and storage, the

data protection regulations as well as the information and instruction requirements for asylum applicants, in particular through corresponding service regulations. In addition, the employees undergo appropriate training and further education.

6 Information and data management during the asylum interview and examination phase

Interpretation is also generally provided for at the interview if the applicant does not have sufficient knowledge of the German language (Section 17 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). Unless the ‘language biometrics assistance system’ has already been used for language analysis – for example, because since spring 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic the application could sometimes only be submitted in writing – the language biometrics will be initiated by the case officer before the start of the personal interview if applicants cannot prove their identity or origin beyond doubt by presenting a valid passport, passport substitute or other identity document, or if an identity document presented has forgery features. The applicants will be instructed accordingly and informed in cooperation with the interpreters (cf. Chapter 4.2 on the requirements).

Before the asylum interview, the case officer of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees retrieve the applicant’s data record in MARiS, which also contains the scanned additional documents (evidence, certificates, etc.) that were submitted, for example, when the application was filed. The data and information on the individual reasons for fleeing collected during the interview shall be collected from the applicant. They may also be collected from other public bodies, foreign authorities and non-public bodies without involving the applicant if

1. this is allowed or expressly required by the Asylum Act or another legal provision;
2. it is obviously in the interest of the data subject and there is no reason to assume that [they] would refuse [their] consent if [they] were aware of [their] personal data being collected,
3. the cooperation of the data subject is not sufficient or would require an unreasonable effort,
4. the task at hand, by its very nature, makes it necessary to collect data from other persons or agencies or

5. it is necessary in order to verify information provided by the person concerned (Section 7 subs. 2 sentence 2 of the Asylum Act).

Particularly with regard to points 3 and 4 and when collecting further information from foreign or non-public agencies, data may only be collected if this does not endanger the person or their relatives (Section 7 subs. 2 sentence 3 of the Asylum Act).

The interview itself is recorded in writing. The interview minutes are then translated and submitted to the applicant for signature and, if necessary, amendment. If there are any changes or additions, these are included in the minutes and corresponding sections of the minutes are retranslated. The minutes also record which persons took part in the asylum interview. The decision by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on the asylum application is also issued in writing and the reasons for it are stated in writing (Section 31, subs. 1, sentences 1 and 2 of the Asylum Act). The AZR number is also stated (Section 31 subs. 7 of the Asylum Act).

6.1 Data cross-check during asylum application examination

A new cross-check with previously collected data is not triggered at the interview. However, information from these data cross-checks from the previous process steps may become of new relevance at this point. For example, the supreme Land authorities can inform the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of personal data on physical, mental, psychological or sensory impairments of the asylum applicants, knowledge of which is necessary for the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to conduct the interview properly (Section 8 subs. 1b of the Asylum Act).

This information can be used, for example, to organise a barrier-free arrival and departure or to appoint specially-commissioned case-officers for the interview of vulnerable persons.

6.2 Information and data access for asylum seekers

Applicants are informed at the interview that any subsequent submission of facts and circumstances regarding their reasons for fleeing or obstacles to removal may be disregarded if the decision of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees would otherwise be delayed (Section 25 subs. 3 of the Asylum Act). The applicants as well as the interpreters are informed that the interview is not open to the public and that they are not allowed to record it and that they would otherwise be liable to prosecution (Section 25 subs. 6 of the Asylum Act).

In addition, interviews can now be conducted with the help of video interpretation for all countries of origin and was used especially during the pandemic, whereby the consent of the asylum applicants is obtained beforehand, but is not mandatory. Applicants with speech, visual and hearing impairments are excluded from video interpretation. The interpreters involved are always informed of their duty of confidentiality before the asylum interview begins. For the general requirements on information, amendment and deletion of stored personal data of asylum applicants, cf. Chapter 7.2 on data protection.

Training of staff

The case officer at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are informed in particular by means of corresponding service regulations about the specific procedures for data collection and storage, the data protection requirements as well as information and instruction requirements vis-à-vis the asylum applicants. In addition, the employees undergo appropriate training and further education.

7 Data quality and safeguards

Within the framework of digitisation of individual process steps of the asylum procedure the accuracy and completeness of the recorded data, for which quality assurance measures have been taken, especially at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are essential (Chapter 7.1). At the same time, all measures must comply with data protection regulations (Chapter 7.2).

7.1 Data quality management

Various data quality assurance measures have been built into the asylum procedure to help improve the accuracy, timeliness, completeness, consistency and validity of the data collected. At this point, not all individual measures can be described, rather, some are presented by way of example.

7.1.1 Phases of quality assurance

In the meantime, quality assurance already begins at the time of the initial registration by recording the data via the PIK station or the police recording systems and thus automatically creating the respective data record in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS as well as the associated register cross-checks. In this way, possible incorrect data entries, multiple registrations, previous stays and possible safety-relevant alerts can be identified at the earliest possible point in time. Since in the meantime the same data record of the person can be accessed in the subsequent processes – if the technical requirements for Fast-ID matching are met – and the identity of a person concerned can be verified directly via the fingerprint, all further procedural steps are also to be seen as quality assurance measures, in that the data can be checked, corrected if necessary and supplemented.

7.1.2 Quality assurance tools

Important tools and methods of quality assurance in data management in the framework of the asylum

procedure are the IDM-S tools of name transliteration and analysis or web-based transcription service, language biometrics, image biometrics and analysis of mobile devices described in this study (cf. in particular Chapters 2.2 and 4.1). They support the identification and plausibility check of information provided by asylum seekers and asylum applicants, ensure uniform data recording and notation at the earliest possible stage and reduce the need for subsequent corrections and synchronisation in the applications/databases and among the authorities, may provide information on multiple registrations or false statements and thus also include a security policy component (BAMF 2019b; BAMF 2020a).

Another important element of quality assurance is the physical and technical document examination. For years, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has carried out the document examination in a three-stage procedure. “In the first step, specialists of the Asylum Procedure Secretariat conduct an initial examination of the documents handed over the branch offices and arrival centres (in particular machine-readable documents and for documents from nine important countries of origin)” (Tangermann 2017: 29). Any documents which are suspected to be counterfeit will be examined in detail by specially trained staff. “If there are still grounds for suspicion, a final examination, whose results can be used in court, is conducted by document experts at the head office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. These experts have been trained for several years by the Federal Criminal Police Office and have specialised on examining documents” (Tangermann 2017: 29).

7.1.3 Interoperability in the event of changes to personal data

With the continuous expansion of the core data system, the Central Register of Foreigners, 16 000 public authorities and organisations and more than 150 000 individual users have been connected, each of whom have role-specific access to the data legally intended for them (BMI 2020a: 44). In this way, interoperability between the authorities could be significantly facilitated, both with regard to the exchange of data, but

also with regard to the subsequent modification of data. If, for example, in a follow-up process, individual authorities receive information on changing basic data or new or different identity documents of the asylum seeker, asylum applicant or person entitled to protection, they can change the data if it is the authority that first stored the data in the Central Register of Foreigners or if it is the authority keeping the file (usually the competent local foreigners authority). If neither of the two conditions apply, the relevant authority can send a request for a change to the Federal Office of Administration, which will check and amend the change. If data are changed in the Central Register of Foreigners, the authority that first stored the data and the registry authority – in the case of the Central Register of Foreigners, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 38 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners) – are always informed. In the course of the data change, new register cross-checks are also initiated (e.g. Asylkon for persons who have filed an asylum application and the asylum procedure has not yet been completed), as is already the case with the initial registration and subsequent processes. Thus, under certain circumstances, new indications of multiple registrations or criminal offences may come to light due to this new or changed information.

7.2 Data protection

In Germany and the EU, the right to informational self-determination applies to German and European citizens as well as to third-country nationals. Legal protection is provided by the GDPR⁴⁴ and the national Federal Data Protection Act (BDSG). These also affect the European, national and regional processing of data in the asylum procedure. The initial instruction on data protection law is provided by the competent authorities within the framework of data collection and processing in the respective process steps (cf. Chapter 3.2, Chapter 5.2 and especially Annex 8).

7.2.1 Data protection control

At the European level, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) monitors the EU institutions with regard to data protection requirements enshrined in European law for data processing in general as well as in relation to asylum in particular. For example, the “control over the processing of personal data in Eurodac [...] is carried out by the European Data Protection Supervisor in accordance with Art. 31 Eurodac Regulation” (Giegerich/Schmitt/Kreß 2016: 247). The European Data Protection Supervisor is a member of the European Data Protection Board, whose task is the uniform application of the GDPR in the Member States (Article 68ff. of the GDPR Regulation).

The currently planned extensions of the Eurodac system to include one further group of persons (third-country nationals apprehended in connection with an unauthorised stay) as well as the extensions and closer interconnection (interoperability) of the many EU-wide databases (see outlook in Chapter 9) will again be accompanied, examined and commented on by data protection supervisory groups composed of representatives of the EDPS and the national data protection authorities.

At the national level in Germany, the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (BfDI) is responsible for monitoring data protection-relevant processes in the asylum procedure, which also includes the implementation of European and international law by national authorities.

On the one hand, the Federal Commissioner accompanies corresponding national legislative procedures that affect the processing of personal data in asylum procedures. In recent years, these have included the first Data Sharing Improvement Act (entry into force: 5 February 2016), the ‘Act on Better Enforcement of the Obligation to Leave the Country’ (entry into force: 29 July 2017) and the second Data Sharing Improvement Act (entry into force: 9 August 2019). On the other hand, the Federal Commissioner also conducts advisory and monitoring visits to individual authorities and facilities involved in the asylum procedure in order to review compliance with the data protection regulations in the processes and data exchange with other authorities, including several times the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (cf. advisory and monitoring visit to the Berlin branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, BfDI 2017a; advisory and monitoring visit in the

⁴⁴ The GDPR serves in particular to implement Article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. “This deals with the protection of personal data and stipulates that such data may only be processed fairly for specified purposes and with the consent of the data subject or on a lawful basis. The guarantee of data protection within Europe is monitored by independent bodies” (BfDI 2021a).

headquarter of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in 2017 and 2019, BfDI 2017b; BfDI 2019b).

At the Land level, the Land data protection commissioners are responsible for monitoring the processing of personal data in the asylum procedure by Land authorities and actors, such as the Länder reception centres. Finally, the individual authorities involved also have their own data protection officers, including the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. For example, the data protection officer of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees must be involved in all specific change processes of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees before they are piloted or implemented if they affect data protection regulations.

7.2.2 Data protection assessment of the databases used

In its 2017/2018 activity report, the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information noted “with concern [...] above all the progressive softening of the ban on the unrestricted use of the Central Register of Foreigners number”. Thus, there is a danger that “a uniform personal identification number is gradually being created” and that constitutional law or constitutional court requirements are thus “disregarded” (BfDI 2019: 65). The criticism regarding the Central Register of Foreigners number was also debated in the public hearing on the second Data Sharing Improvement Act of the Committee on the Interior and Home Affairs of the German Bundestag on 13 May 2019. The then Vice-President of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Markus Richter, responded to the constitutional concerns regarding the extended and inter-agency use of the Central Register of Foreigners number by stating that it was not intended “that the number be attached to a person in a completely misappropriated general way, but rather be used for a specific purpose as a sectoral classification feature” and be used in contact with the Central Register of Foreigners and assigned to the corresponding data (Deutscher Bundestag 2019d: 8). It is not a matter of “virtually all data collected by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, for example, being made available to other authorities at once via such a classification feature. Of course, data such as hearing protocols or other things are still only available to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees within the framework of the legal mandate. It is the same with the legal mandate of the foreigners authorities and other authorities involved. But the fact that we create a reference here, within the framework of core data or

basic data, via a classification characteristic is – from my point of view – just necessary with regard to data quality, data economy and also efficiency,” Richter continued in his statement (Deutscher Bundestag 2019d: 8).

The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information also criticised the fact that with the expansion of access rights to various authorities, authorities that do not process procedures under the law on foreigners and asylum were also granted access in some cases (BfDI 2019a: 65). With regard, for example, to authorities and actors involved in the integration process who have been given access to the Central Register of Foreigners, Markus Richter noted in the above committee meeting that it is to be welcomed that “integration is supported at an early stage and the various institutions involved are also provided with the data. This part, especially with regard to labour market integration, was also a subject of the first Data Sharing Improvement Act at a very early stage, where the Federal Employment Agency was given extended access to the Central Register of Foreigners” (Deutscher Bundestag 2019d: 21).

In a statement on the draft of the 2nd Act on the Central Register of Foreigners, the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information repeated his criticism of the extension of the use of the Central Register of Foreigners number “by public bodies also for communication with each other until the granting of a settlement permit or a EU long-term residence permit”, which was planned and ultimately implemented at the time in the 2nd Act on the Central Register of Foreigners (BfDI 2019a: 2). Although the reasons for the expansion of the offices authorised to access the data, the implementation of further storage circumstances and the expansion of the purposes of data use and a link with the Central Register of Foreigners number are understandable, “the right to informational self-determination also applies to foreigners due to its derivation from the general right to privacy, so that it must be considered when weighing up whether such a far-reaching regulation would also be created for nationals in a comparable situation” (BfDI 2019a: 3).

In addition, the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information criticised that the restriction of use “in the automated procedure to certain legally assigned tasks” in Section 22 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners “and automated access to the Central Register of Foreigners for any retrieval within the framework of the

statutory performance of tasks” should be dropped for the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Military Counter-Intelligence Service. Section 22 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners (AZRG) was amended to include the second sentence of paragraph 1. This provides that an authorisation for retrieval in the automated procedure for the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the Länder, the Military Counter-Intelligence Service and the Federal Intelligence Service requires the consent of the respective supreme federal or Länder authority responsible for the storing and retrieving agency. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, as the registering authority, must in turn inform the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information of the approval, notifying certain GDPR requirements (Articles 24, 25 and 32).

In practice, public bodies wishing to be authorised to use the Central Register of Foreigners in an automated procedure must apply for and justify the authorisation (BVA 2021d) and submit a written declaration on the implementation of data protection measures (BVA 2021e). Furthermore, the responsibility for the admissibility of the individual retrieval lies with the retrieving agency. The registry authority checks the admissibility of the retrievals by means of suitable random sampling procedures as well as when there is cause to do so. The retrieving agency shall provide for an authorisation concept, which shall be coordinated with the respective data protection officer of the retrieving agency (Section 22 subs. 3 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners).

7.2.3 Right of access, rectification and deletion of personal data in practice

Right to information

All foreign nationals have the right to apply to the Federal Administrative Office for information about the data stored on their person (Section 34 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). “If the granting of information is refused, the person concerned can turn to the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information with the request for a review” (BfDI 2021b). A right to information also follows from Article 15 of the GDPR. In addition, asylum seekers and applicants can authorise other persons to inspect their stored data and the status of their asylum procedure per se (Section 14 subs. 1 of the Administrative Procedure Act).

Rectification

If third-country nationals wish to rectify their personal data and can credibly prove the accuracy of the changes or if the registry authority of the Central Register of Foreigners is otherwise informed of the incorrectness of certain data on a person, the registry authority must correct the data if they are incorrect (Section 35 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners in conjunction with Article 16 GDPR). The registry authority is the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, whereby the Federal Office of Administration processes the stored data on behalf of and according to the instructions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees does not process the data itself (Section 1 subs. 1 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). If, for example, data was collected in the context of registration and an asylum applicant presents a passport on the occasion of the asylum application or in the asylum interview, which is not objected to after examination, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, as the asylum authority, changes the (personal) data in MARiS and subsequently transmits the data to the Central Register of Foreigners. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees then informs the authorities involved about the data change. In addition, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees stores the passport data in MARiS and in the Central Register of Foreigners. Data changes outside of the asylum procedure are the responsibility of, for example, the local foreigners authorities or the other public agencies linked to and storing data in the core data system (cf. Chapter 7.1.3).

Erasure deadlines

In principle, data shall only be stored for as long as it is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed (Article 5 para. 1 letter e GDPR). The asylum procedure files of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees must be destroyed and deleted from the data processing systems of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees no later than ten years after the uncontested decision of the asylum procedure (Section 7 subs. 3 of the Asylum Act). Furthermore, the data must be deleted immediately if the person concerned acquires German citizenship before the ten-year storage period expires (Section 36 subs. 2 sentence 1 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). Fingerprint data, photos and voice recordings taken in the course of an identification measure when an asylum seeker expresses their intention to apply for asylum will be deleted after ten years following the uncontested conclusion of the asylum procedure (Section 16 subs. 6

in conjunction with subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). Apart from that, fingerprint data collected by means of a PIK station, for example, are not stored on them in the first place, so that they do not have to be deleted again. The biometric data collected during the reading of a passport, passport substitute or other identity document for the purpose of verifying the authenticity of the document or the identity of the person concerned shall be deleted after the verification of the authenticity of the document or the identity has been completed (Section 16 subs. 6 in conjunction with subs. 1a of the Asylum Act).

The findings that there are no medical reservations against admission to a shared accommodation facility (Section 3 subs. 2 no. 10 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners) and the information on the performance of vaccinations with the type, place and date of the respective vaccination (Section 3 subs. 2 no. 11 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners), which are also stored in the Central Register of Foreigners, are to be deleted by the registry authority after twelve months (Section 18 subs. 3 sentence 1 no. 3 of the Implementing Regulation of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners). Information on the health status of asylum applicants that has been forwarded by the supreme Land authorities or the bodies designated by them to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for the proper conduct of the asylum interview must be deleted after the interview has been concluded (Section 8 subs. 1b of the Asylum Act).

Transmission blocks

At the request of persons seeking asylum or applying for asylum, a transfer block is stored in the Central Register of Foreigners if the person makes a credible case that their interests worthy of protection or those of another person could be impaired by a transfer of data to non-public authorities, to authorities of other states or to intergovernmental authorities (for example, family members in the country of origin). The application must be submitted to the registry authority, the organisational unit responsible for the asylum procedure in the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees or the foreigners authorities. They shall decide on the application (Section 4 subs. 1 of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners).

8 Challenges and best practices in data management

The described current state of data management in the asylum procedure in Germany is the result of a dynamic development in recent years. The starting point and impetus was a multitude of challenges that arose in the course of the high influx of refugees in 2015 and 2016 and temporarily led to an administrative overload.⁴⁵ Scientific, administrative, political and civil society actors identified as neuralgic points, among other things, lengthy and at times confusing procedures from the asylum application to the formal acceptance of the application, different registration procedures at the individual authorities involved as well as the documents issued in this context, a lack of up-to-date data exchange processes between authorities and the associated multiple registrations as well as, in some cases, status and benefit uncertainties for the asylum applicants and authorities involved (BfDI 2016; Deutscher Bundestag 2016b: 14730ff.; Ehmann/Brunner 2016; Flüchtlingsrat Berlin 2015; BMI 2015; Nationaler Normenkontrollrat 2015). As a result, numerous reforms were initiated, of which data management in the asylum procedure was an essential component. Both the challenges and the reforms concern very specific areas of data management or very specific technical details or sub-processes. In the following, some of the main challenges are outlined and then some important reforms with regard to data management are presented.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For an overview of the developments during this phase and the various challenges and overloads faced by different authorities and sectors of society, see Grote (2018).

⁴⁶ More comprehensive descriptions of the numerous reforms can be found with regard to the digitisation of the asylum procedure in the BAMF's Digitisation Agenda 2020 (BAMF 2019), with regard to the development of the core data system as well as the interfaces between the authorities in the evaluation report of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Construction and Home Affairs on the first Data Sharing Improvement Act (BMI 2020), as well as with regard to the broader catalogue of reforms including data management, but also beyond this and the interlocking of the various reforms in Grote (2018).

8.1 Data management challenges since 2014

Staff shortage

- Particularly in 2015 and 2016, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees experienced overloads due to the high influx of asylum seekers and associated delays in the formal acceptance, interviews and examination of asylum applications, despite strong staffing increases (Grote 2018: 33f.).
- From July 2015 until around spring 2016, there was a temporary overload of data exchange between the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the Federal Criminal Police for cross-checks with data bases of the security authorities and identity determination, which in turn led to delayed feedback effects on individual asylum process steps (Grote 2018: 33).

Legal obstacles

- In the early years of the high influx of asylum seekers, among other things, there was a lack of a legal basis for the collection of certain data categories by other authorities in specific phases (e.g. fingerprints, integration data) for the extended exchange of data between the authorities (e.g. for the further development of the Central Register of Foreigners into a core data system and the issuing of the uniform proof of arrival), for personalised traceability from the making of an asylum application at the border to registration, as well as for extended automated register cross-checks (e.g. use of the Fast-ID procedure with the help of the PIK stations; cf. First and Second Data Sharing Improvement Act) (1st DAVG and 2nd DAVG; IT-Planungsrat 2018a: 1ff.).

Cooperation between national authorities

- From July 2015 to spring 2016 in particular, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees had to

carry out time-consuming tracing and address determination procedures, partly due to the delayed acceptance of asylum applications and the resulting distribution of asylum seekers and asylum applications from the initial reception centres to the municipalities, and partly due to the fact that the new addresses were not transmitted to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Grote 2018: 33).

Interoperability of databases

- Until 2016 and partly beyond, the identification measures as well as a fingerprint cross-checks of asylum seekers were associated with a high effort for some authorities, as these could not be recorded digitally by all actors involved (Grote 2018: 34).
- Inter-authority and, in particular, automated data exchange between the various authorities involved in the asylum process in the federal system did not yet exist in the years of high influx of refugees. The individual authorities generally used their own databases and corresponding interfaces between these systems were only set up to a limited extent (Grote 2018: 49). In addition, there was a lack of “a uniform classification feature” for the exchange of data, which was created with the Central Register of Foreigners number (IT Planning Council 2018a: 1). This sometimes led repeated collection of the basic data as well as to multiple registrations of similar basic data, since, for example, different spellings of the names of asylum seekers and applicants were difficult to recognise and the information in the various data systems at federal, Land and municipal level could not be automatically reconciled or could not access a central data set (Bundesrat 2019: 1; Grote 2018: 34).
- Even beyond the years of high refugee influx, challenges in the interoperability of communication systems and databases in the federal structure of the German “fragmented system landscape” became apparent (Fridgen et al. 2019: 4). This also applies to the asylum procedure, where “different process variants and workflows [exist], particularly at Land level, which makes central control by a single workflow management system virtually impossible” (Fridgen et al. 2019: 4). Thus, in corresponding evaluations, the communication channels of the federal and Land authorities involved in the asylum procedure proved to be “ineffective”, “time-consuming, prone to errors and, overall, do not necessarily enable optimal processing of the procedure” (Fridgen et al. 2019: 10).

Technical limitations in data processing

- At the beginning of the high influx of refugees in 2015 and 2016 in particular, the authorities involved in the initial registration process lacked uniform technical equipment for documenting the asylum applications made in order to record, for example, biometric and other data of the asylum seekers according to uniform standards and specifications and to store them in corresponding databases that could subsequently be further used by other authorities. As a result, asylum seekers had to go through multiple identification measures and provide their data repeatedly.
- The electronic interfaces between public authorities and the Central Register of Foreigners were and are continuously not based on IT standards for data exchange in public administration (XÖV standard), which are binding for all users of the Central Register of Foreigners. “As a result, the public administration incurs costs for the maintenance and upkeep of a large number of interfaces that fulfil the same technical purpose” (Bundesrat 2019: 2)

Other

- The basic data collected was repeatedly insufficient for the task fulfilment of requesting authorities in follow-up processes (Bundesrat 2019: 2).

8.2 Data management reforms

With regard to data management in the asylum procedure, two legal changes in particular were decisive in addressing the previously mentioned challenges: The First and Second Data Sharing Improvement Acts. They provided the legal basis for the expansion of the Central Register of Foreigners into a core data system and the associated simplified requirements for storing additional data and forwarding data to other public authorities. In this way, the existing IT systems of the individual authorities involved were interconnected at the federal level, the Länder and the municipalities. Interfaces were created for communication and role-specific access to the data from the respective other systems.

In addition, the field of data quality management and the associated function of a data quality officer were created at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees at the end of 2017. The establishment of

a uniform, cross-organisational data quality management (DQM) at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees contributes to improving the quality of the data available in the specialised procedures and the data to be newly recorded. This is accompanied by an improvement in the data quality of the facts transmitted to the Central Register of Foreigners within the framework of the asylum procedure. The DQM initiates and supports short- and long-term measures. The goal is to make the data available to all departments and external users at a high level in the long term and to ensure data quality throughout the entire life cycle of the data. Raising the awareness of staff responsible for data collection and processing in the asylum procedure was identified as a particularly important field of action.

In parallel, work on data cleansing in the Central Register of Foreigners has been ongoing since 2017 under the leadership of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and, in the first year, with the close involvement of the Commissioner for Refugee Management, with the aim of feeding in current data, supplementing incomplete data, identifying and correcting erroneous data and data records, and merging duplicates (multiple registrations) (Destatis 2019: 5ff.). Such data cleansing became particularly necessary in the aftermath of the high influx of refugees in 2015 and 2016. Since then, a 'Guideline for Improving Data Quality in the Central Register of Foreigners' has been drafted (Deutscher Bundestag 2017: 9ff.), an 'automatic programme technical plausibility check during data transmission' and random checks of the transmitted data by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for consistency have been introduced (Deutscher Bundestag 2017: 11), a procedure for the automated correction of multiple entries has been simplified (Bundesrat 2018: 2) and cooperation in data correction between the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the Federal Office of Administration and the authorities involved in the asylum procedure and transmitting data has been intensified (Destatis 2019: 6). In addition, the "abolition of participation obligations before cleaning up multiple entries in the Central Register of Foreigners [...] reduces the administrative burden on the Federal Office of Administration and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees" (Bundesrat 2018: 3).

Decisive for the practical guarantee of interoperability of the respective authority systems was the technical equipment of the individual authorities involved in the asylum procedure. Thus, from the beginning of 2016, the reception centres of the Länder

as well as the branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees were equipped with the PIK stations, from mid-2016 the border police authorities and police forces of the Länder have been connected to the core data system with their police recording systems and in 2018 the foreigners authorities were equipped with one PIK station each. The uniform technical infrastructure (fingerprint scanner, camera, passport scanner, software for data collection) ensured uniform quality standards for data collection, the immediate entry of personal and biometric data in the Central Register of Foreigners and in MARiS, and the immediate forwarding and cross-checking with relevant national and international databases (Asylkon, Ausländerdatei A, Eurodac, resident register, SIS II, VIS, visa file) in real time. In this context, the uniform standard XAusländer was successively established in the data exchange format on further interfaces of the Central Register of Foreigners to official systems of the local foreigners authorities and reception centres and finally established as binding by the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act. "This enables data to be transmitted via standardised interfaces to public authorities, which can process it without further effort" (Bundesrat 2019: 4). An expansion of the XAusländer standard outside the Central Register of Foreigners as a generic substructure, e.g. within the BAMF systems and at the local foreigners authorities and reception centres or Land offices, will ensure interoperable structured data and better data quality across authorities in the medium term.

Furthermore, according to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees specialist unit, "with the planning of a uniform so-called data set for the foreigners affairs – in addition to the standards of the interior administration – the aim is to describe the existing data fields in semantic and structural detail. This will create a clear understanding of their use in all specialised procedures at the federal, Land and local levels and improve data quality. The foreigners affairs requires clear and unambiguous semantics and specifications for the use of data, not least because of the advancing digitalisation and networking of individual administrative jurisdictions, including with the business sector. Ambiguous use increases the risk of, among other things, confusion and double entries, which can have critical consequences, especially in the case of personal data records. Clear record descriptions and naming conventions are intended to counteract this risk."

Another important building block concerned the quality assurance of the collected data, which could

be supported and improved in particular by the IDM-S tools. In addition, a considerable expansion of the Central Register of Foreigners as a core data system is planned, which is to include, for example, the expansion of storage subjects and authorities authorised to access as well as the possibility to also store documents (cf. Outlook in Chapter 9).

8.2.1 Reforms in the course of prioritisation, the cluster and accelerated asylum procedures

In times of high influx of refugees, particularly in 2015 and 2016 and in the first years afterwards, the measures regarding the prioritisation of certain countries of origin, the division into clusters proved to be useful and helpful to reduce the backlog in the asylum procedure. However, they were not continued in their former form. Rather, they were replaced by reforms, the majority of which aimed at a holistic approach and made prioritisation superfluous: the digitalisation of all process steps in the asylum procedure, the facilitated exchange of data between the numerous authorities involved in and outside the asylum procedure and thus the acceleration, the saving of resources as well as the increase of data quality and security.

8.2.2 Changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic

In the branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the possibility to formally apply for asylum in person during the Covid-19 pandemic was limited. Asylum seekers who wished to formally apply for asylum could do so using a written form application procedure that was developed specifically for the pandemic. For this purpose, the asylum seekers were given a form by the reception centre staff to fill out. Together with a copy of the proof of arrival, the application was sent to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees then issued the certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision, which was handed out with a written instruction by the staff of the reception centre. At times, personal asylum interviews in the branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees were also suspended until appropriate infection control precautions could be taken in the premises and the interview could be resumed (BAMF 2020e: 1).

8.2.3 Crisis measures

The initiated measures have had and have the goal of making the system crisis-proof so that a renewed sharp increase in asylum seekers can be significantly better absorbed by the administration. With regard to data management, data collection, data storage and data exchange have been digitalised and linked among the relevant authorities to such an extent that it is scalable with regard to the number of asylum seekers and applicants – i.e. no delays are to be expected, at least on the system side. At the same time, by front-loading the data collection and the later retrieval of the data records and the accompanying repeated cross-checking of the data records, an important quality control system was introduced, which at the same time saves resources by being able to concentrate on cross-checking the completeness and correctness of the data by the competent reception centre in the subsequent processes after the initial registration and registration.

9 Conclusion

Data management in the asylum procedure in Germany has undergone a dynamic process of change in recent years. With the expansion of the Central Register of Foreigners into a core data system, which now connects 16 000 public offices and organisations and more than 150 000 individual users via a uniform standard for data exchange, a completely new basis for digitalised, partially automated data management was created. Important building blocks for standardisation and quality assurance in data collection and transmission as well as status security were also the equipping of the authorities involved with the PIK station and the issuing of a forgery-proof proof of arrival at the end of the registration process by the competent reception centre. The reform process not only involved the main public authorities relevant to asylum and residence, but also more far-reaching actors who are responsible, for example, for integration policy and practice measures. The linking of the Central Register of Foreigners with the security authorities was also greatly expanded with the justification to enable security-relevant findings at an early stage.

The numerous reforms have significantly facilitated and accelerated the interoperability of the authorities involved in the asylum procedure and their systems, and at the same time strengthened data quality. This process is ongoing and has been expanded with the Second Data Sharing Improvement Act to include more authorities, more storage matters, more process steps and groups of persons, as well as more access and usage rights. The increased plannability for administrative practice, avoidance of multiple registrations, increased reliability and resilience of the individual procedural steps, as well as closer and earlier linkage with, among other things, integration-specific and security-relevant questions and actors, is being critically accompanied by data protection commissioners at European, federal, Land and municipal level, who are expressing data protection concerns with regard to some reforms.

Outlook

The Federal Government plans to further develop the Central Register of Foreigners and establish a 'once-only principle', according to which certain personal data of third-country nationals only have to be

collected once by one authority and are then available to all other authorities as needed and, if necessary, only have to be changed or supplemented. The current practice of individual authorities – such as the foreigners authorities – still storing certain data in their decentralised systems (Ausländerdatei A) is to be made superfluous by the further development of the Central Register of Foreigners into a 'central foreigners file system' by storing the data exclusively in the Central Register of Foreigners in future (Nationaler Normenkontrollrat 2020: 9ff.).

Due to the positive experiences, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is currently examining and planning to make some of the IDM-S tools available to other European countries, in particular the language and dialect recognition and the web-based transcription service (TKS). For example, the TKS is to be made available to other authorities throughout Europe, and for speech and dialect recognition, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is planning "a pilot project with several European countries in which the exchange and analysis of language recordings will be tested. The aim of the project is to establish and test a common process for language recognition and speech analysis. In the long term, it should be possible to make the new solution available to the Member States and authorities of the European Union as well as to partner countries" (BAMF 2020a).

Parallel to the reforms carried out in Germany, processes of increased interoperability of national databases were initiated at the European level, in which Germany actively participated and supported the processes. The reform processes at the European level concern in particular the creation of a 'European Criminal Register Information System' (ECRIS)⁴⁷ and the addition of a 'European Criminal Records Information System for Third Country Nationals' (ECRIS TCN)⁴⁸ as well as the creation of an 'Entry/Exit System'

47 ECRIS is "a decentralised information technology system that networks the existing criminal records of the Member States without changing their content" (BMJV 2000: 1; cf. Annex 1).

48 In the ECRIS TCN "personal alphanumeric and certain biometric data, in particular fingerprints, of legally convicted third-country nationals are stored" (BMJV 2000: 1; cf. Annex 1).

(EES)⁴⁹ and a ‘European Travel Information and Authorisation System’ (ETIAS)⁵⁰. The regulations have already entered into force, but contain multi-year implementation provisions for the Member States, so that implementation is expected partly in 2021, partly in 2022 (cf. the explanations in the glossary in Annex 1).

In addition, an extension of the Eurodac system to include another group of persons (third-country nationals apprehended during an unauthorised stay) as well as the extensions and closer linking of the various EU databases are planned. The implementation of these data exchange reforms at the European level, which are regulated by regulations, also requires four so-called ‘interoperability components’: a European search portal (ESP), a common biometric matching service (BMS), a common identity repository (CIR) and a multiple identity detector (MID), which will be established in the coming years.

In addition, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is working within the framework of the ‘European Blockchain Services Infrastructure’ (EBSI) on transnational networking and cooperation within the framework of national asylum procedures through the use of blockchain technology, which has also been piloted in various asylum process steps in Germany for several years.

49 The EES is an automated IT system in which, as of 2022, both third-country nationals “who are allowed to stay in the territory of the Member States for a short stay and persons who have been refused entry and residence” are to be recorded (Herrmann 2020; cf. also Deutscher Bundestag 2019c: 2; cf. Annex 1).

50 ETIAS “is designed as an automated IT system to identify migration and security risks related to visa-exempt persons travelling to the Schengen area. At the same time, ETIAS is designed to facilitate the crossing of the external borders of the Schengen area for the majority of travellers who do not pose such a risk. All third-country nationals who do not require a visa to enter the Schengen area must apply for a travel authorisation through the ETIAS system before travelling” (COM 2018; cf. Annex 1).

Annex

Annex 1: Key terms and definitions

AFIS-A – Automated Fingerprint Identification System for Foreigners: AFIS is the central, digitised fingerprint and palm print database of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), which is divided into AFIS-A and AFIS-P. “While AFIS-P primarily records suspects who have been subjected to identification services, AFIS-A is used to store asylum seekers who have been subjected to identification services pursuant to Section 16 of the Asylum Act” (Petri 2018: AsylG marginal number 418). AFIS “is based on the coding of the anatomical features (minutiae) mapped in the fingerprint and palm print. The system can automatically recognise the minutiae and cross-check them with the code of the stored fingerprints and traces. [...] Within the framework of the so-called Fast-ID procedure, digitally recorded fingerprints can be searched in the AFIS without delay since 2006” (BKA 2021a). As part of the asylum procedure, the fingerprint data recorded in the registration process are cross-checked with AFIS-A to establish identity. In this process, the Federal Criminal Police provides administrative assistance in the evaluation of fingerprints (Section 16 subs. 3 of the Asylum Act; cf. *Fast-ID, SIS II and SIS AFIS*).

AKN number: The AKN number is the serial number of the proof of arrival (Ankunftsnachweis) and is used to identify the person when exchanging data between various authorities and the AZR (cf. *proof of arrival*).

AmD – Analysis of mobile devices: In 2017, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees was given the possibility to analyse mobile devices of asylum applicants (e.g. smartphones) and to evaluate the data in order to verify the identity and nationality of the applicants, if the purpose cannot be achieved by milder means (Section 15a of the Asylum Act). This method can be used, for example, to determine “to which countries the mobile phone has been used to make calls, and the location data of certain apps can be used to find out where the phone was used” (BAMF 2021c).

AnkER facilities – arrival, decision and return facilities: “The central element of the AnkER concept is the bundling of all functions and responsibilities: from arrival to asylum application and decision to municipal distribution, initial integration preparation measures or the return of asylum seekers. All actors directly involved in the asylum process are represented locally in the AnkER facilities. These are usually the reception centres of the Land, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the foreigners authorities, administrative courts, youth welfare offices and the Federal Employment Agency. No rigid concept is specified for the design of the centres – the Länder can set the priorities that are particularly important to them” (BAMF 2019f; cf. *arrival centres*).

Arrival centres: “The arrival centres are the central access point to the asylum procedure. All steps required for the asylum procedure are carried out in the arrival centres. This includes the medical examination by the Länder, the collection of personal data and the identity check, the application, asylum interview and decision on the asylum application as well as initial integration measures, such as the so-called initial orientation courses by the Federal Office. In addition, initial counselling on labour market access is provided by the local employment agency” (BAMF 2019f). In some Länder, the arrival centres have been replaced by AnkER facilities (cf. *AnkER facilities*).

Asylkon – Asylum consultation procedure: Asylkon refers to a security cross-check procedure that primarily refers to third-country nationals who have made an application for asylum, have entered or are staying in the federal territory without permission, as well as asylum applicants. Asylkon is “initiated automatically after a data record has been created in the Central Register of Foreigners. The security authorities can thus cross-check at an early stage whether there are any terrorism-related findings or other serious security concerns about a person” (BMI 2020b). The security cross-check is carried out automatically by the Federal Office of Administration (BVA) after a data record has been created in the AZR “at the five federal security authorities (Federal Intelligence Service, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Military Counter-Intelligence Service, Federal Criminal Police Office and Customs Criminal Police Office).

The result of the cross-check is usually transmitted to the competent authorities [including the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the competent local foreigners authorities] within a few minutes” (Niedersächsischer Landtag 2017: 1; note by the author). Asylkon was introduced by Section 73 subs. 1a of the Residence Act as part of the first Data Sharing Improvement Act and has been applied since 15 May 2017 (BMI 2020a: 34; cf. *AFIS-A*, *AZR* and *Fast-ID*).

AZR – Ausländerzentralregister (Central Register of Foreigners): The AZR is “one of the very large automated registers of the public administration of the Federal Republic of Germany with around 26 million personal data records. The general data stock contains the data of foreigners who live or have lived in Germany not only temporarily (at least 3 months)” (BVA 2021a). The AZR can be used as a source of information by 16 000 public authorities and organisations and more than 150 000 individual users (BMI 2020a: 44). The registry authority is the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The Federal Office of Administration is entrusted with the operation of the register and, among other things, provides information and assumes certain data processing and maintenance tasks (see also *visa file*).

AZR number: The registry authority assigns the AZR number as a reference number when data on a foreigner is stored in the general database for the first time. The reference number must not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the data of the person concerned. It is automatically assigned to the data record (cf. *AZR*; Section 2 of the *AZRG-DV*).

BVA Register Portal: “The Register Portal of the Federal Office of Administration is a web portal that provides authorised authorities with access to various registers and IT applications, including: Central Register of Foreigners (AZR), National Weapons Register (NWR), Visa Information System (VIS)” (BVA 2021b). The register portal is used by authorities in automated procedures. For the asylum procedure, the interfaces to the AZR and the VIS are of particular importance. “Advantages of the register portal at a glance: Provision of all relevant specialised procedures and services via a central platform; Secure and protected communication connections; Comprehensive authentication and authorisation; Use of secure administrative networks; Access via a uniform user interface; High level of user comfort due to intuitive user guidance and configuration options; Regular further development and expansion of the Register Portal platform; Constantly growing user numbers and new procedures show the success of the model” (BVA 2021b).

Certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision (Aufenthaltsgestattung): A certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision is the right to stay in Germany in order to conduct an asylum procedure. Permission to remain pending the asylum decision is granted as soon as the proof of arrival is issued, i.e. as soon as the person is registered at a reception centre or a branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 55 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act). Certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*) is also the name of the certificate issued to persons who have submitted a formal asylum application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany (Die Bundesregierung 2021).

Certificate of registration as an asylum seeker (Anlaufbescheinigung): “The so-called certificate of registration as an asylum seeker (*Anlaufbescheinigung*) is a document that is not regulated in either the Asylum Act or the Residence Act and merely certifies that the person seeking protection is not in Germany illegally but for the purpose of applying for asylum” (Hügel/Eichler 2016: 11). The certificate of registration as an asylum seeker is primarily issued by border and police authorities and the foreigners authorities when asylum seekers are transferred to a reception centre, as well as a ticket to the destination if the person has no funds (Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten Berlin 2021). The reception centres of the Länder or branch offices of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees also issue asylum seekers with a certificate of registration as an asylum seeker under certain circumstances, provided that they are not the competent reception centre or the competent branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the asylum seekers must first be forwarded to the competent reception centre (cf. *certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision*, *EASY distribution*, *proof of arrival*).

Dactyloscopy/dactylosopic: “Dactyloscopy is a forensic procedure for identifying persons on the basis of the papillary ridge images (also called papillary lines) of fingers, palms and, in rare cases, soles of feet. Depending on the examination material, a distinction is made between ten-fingerprint and trace dactyloscopy” (BKA 2021b; cf. *D-number*).

D-number – Dactyloscopic number: Every person who has been treated for identification purposes receives a twelve-digit ‘D-number’ after the fingerprints have been evaluated. The D-number is retained for every further identification measure of the person (cf. *INPOL*; *dactyloscopy*).

DVDV – German Administrative Services Directory: “The German Administrative Services Directory (DVDV) is the interdisciplinary and inter-administrative infrastructure component for the secure and reliable addressing of automated services and specialised procedures for communication between and with public administration authorities in Germany. It thus opens up the possibility of offering e-government transactions on the basis of service-oriented architectures in a secure and legally binding manner” (Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Informationstechnik 2021).

EASY – Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers: EASY is an IT application for the preliminary distribution of asylum seekers across the Länder. “The allocation to a particular reception centre is decided according to which branch of the Federal Office processes the asylum seeker’s respective country of origin. In addition, EASY is based on the ‘Königstein Key’ (see there) (BAMF 2019h).

ECRIS – European Criminal Register Information System: ECRIS “is a decentralised information technology system that links the existing criminal records of the Member States without changing their content. With the help of ECRIS, all criminal convictions of citizens of the European Union handed down in the European Union are transmitted to the respective home state and stored centrally there. In this way, a quick and efficient search of previous convictions is possible” (BMJV 2020: 1; cf. *ECRIS-TCN*).

ECRIS-TCN – European Criminal Records Information System for Third Country Nationals: So far, a central storage and efficient retrieval of criminal records of third country nationals within the EU Member States is not possible. “Currently, convictions are only stored in the criminal record of the state in which the conviction was handed down. As a result, it is not necessarily apparent to the registry authorities of the other Member States that a conviction has been handed down there. [...] In order to ensure this, Regulation (EU) 2019/816 provides⁵¹ for the establishment of the central system ECRIS-TCN [...]. In this system, personal alphanumeric and certain biometric data, in particular fingerprints, of legally convicted third-country nationals are stored” (BMJV 2020: 1;

cf. ECRIS). The corresponding regulation came into force on 11 June 2019, with the Member States being given 36 months to implement it. In order to transpose the Directive into national law, a ‘Draft Law on the Implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/816 and on the Amendment of Other Provisions’ was available at the time of completion of this study.

EES – Entry/Exit Entry System: The EES is an automated IT system of the European Union, in which both third-country nationals “who are authorised to stay for a short period on the territory of the Member States and persons who have been refused entry and stay are to be recorded from 2022 onwards. The date and place of entry as well as the duration of the authorised stay will be stored. The central storage of this information is primarily intended to help identify ‘overstayers’, i.e. persons who have entered the Schengen area with a valid visa but do not leave again after the visa has expired. In addition to a person’s identification data, the entry-exit system also records biometric information, in this case four fingerprints and a facial image. This is intended to make document forgery more difficult. The entry-exit system and the Visa Information System are also to be linked, i.e. they are to allow direct access to the respective data” (Herrmann 2020; cf. also Deutscher Bundestag 2019c: 2).

E-number – identification measure number: The E-number is the reference to an identification measure (ED-Behandlung), which is stored in the AZR for asylum seekers and irregular staying residents and irregular entries (cf. *identification measures; D-number; AZR*).

ETIAS – European Travel Information and Authorisation System: “ETIAS is designed as an automated IT system to identify migration and security risks related to visa-exempt persons travelling to the Schengen area. At the same time, ETIAS is designed to facilitate the crossing of the external borders of the Schengen area for the majority of travellers who do not pose such a risk. All third-country nationals who do not require a visa to enter the Schengen area must apply for a travel authorisation through the ETIAS system before travelling. The information collected through ETIAS will help to identify possible migration and security risks in advance of the journey, while fully respecting fundamental rights and data protection principles” (COM 2018). The corresponding, EU Regulations (EU) No 2018/1241 and (EU) No 2018/1241 entered into force on 9 October 2018, allowing the implementation phase to begin. ETIAS is expected to be operational from 2022.

51 Regulation (EU) No 2019/816 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 establishing a centralised system for the identification of Member States holding information on convictions of third-country nationals and stateless persons (ECRIS-TCN), supplementing the European Criminal Register Information System and amending Regulation (EU) No 2018/1726.

Eurodac – European Dactyloscopy: Eurodac is an information system whose purpose is to assist in determining the EU Member State responsible for examining an asylum application pursuant to the Dublin III Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013)⁵² by storing, transmitting and cross-checking fingerprints (cf. EMN 2018: 117). With Eurodac, fingerprints of asylum seekers (as well as persons entering or residing irregularly) are cross-checked in the SIS AFIS fingerprint database across Europe (27 EU Member States plus Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). During the electronic cross-check of fingerprints, only “whether matching fingerprint data already exist or not [...] is communicated. In the event of a match, the aforementioned procedural data are also transmitted” (BfDI 2021c). As of 30 November 2020, 5 829 679 fingerprint sheets were stored in Eurodac (Deutscher Bundestag 2021: 4). In the course of the revision of the Eurodac Regulation, the storage and cross-checking of further biometric data (such as facial images) in Eurodac is being discussed (COM 2020; cf. *dactyloscopy*; *SIS AFIS*).

Eurodac number: The fingerprint data stored in Eurodac or in the Automated Fingerprint System (SIS AFIS) are assigned a unique number. Among other things, it serves to identify the Member State, as the first two digits contain the international country code of the Member State (cf. *Eurodac*; *SIS AFIS*).

Fast-ID – Fast Identification: Fast-ID enables a fingerprint scan to be cross-checked against linked databases within a short time (a few minutes) (cf. *Asylkon*, *AFIS-A* and *Eurodac*). Fast-ID can be used to establish identity, initiate security cross-checks with databases of national and European security authorities and cross-check fingerprints in the Eurodac system within the framework of the Dublin Regulation (cf. *Eurodac*). The fingerprint data is not stored on the local devices for Fast-ID cross-checks (BAMF 2018: 17).

Identification measures in the asylum procedure

(ED-Behandlung): Identification measures in the asylum procedure are regulated under Section 16 of

the Asylum Act. According to this, the identity of a person applying for asylum is to be secured by means of identification measures, whereby only photographs and prints of all ten fingers may be taken. Until end of March 2021, in the case of persons who had not yet reached the age of 14, only photographs were to be taken. From 1 April 2021, fingerprints will also be taken and stored for children from the age of six. In order to determine the person’s country or region of origin, the spoken word may be recorded on audio or data devices outside the person’s formal asylum interview, provided that the person has been informed of this data collection in advance. The voice recordings are stored at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 14 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act).

IDM-S – Integrated Identity Management – Plausibility checks, data quality and security

aspects: “To increase the process efficiency of the asylum procedure, the so-called Integrated Identity Management (IDM) was introduced in 2016. The IDM-S programme, which follows on from this, qualifies and tests innovative tools with which the case officers can classify the information collected during registration and check the plausibility of information provided in the asylum procedure” (BAMF 2019i: 41). The so-called IDM-S tools include name transcription, language biometrics, image biometrics and the analysis of mobile devices.

Image biometrics: “In addition to the cross-check of fingerprints, image biometrics serves as a further means of identification. With the help of special software, a photo cross-check is carried out to ensure that the person has not already been registered under another file number or name” (BAMF 2021c).

INPOL – Police Information Network: INPOL is the central police information system of the federal and Land police forces. INPOL consists of several individual databases or so-called case files, such as AFIS-A, which is relevant for the asylum procedure, INPOL tracing of stolen property (property search) as well as DNA analysis file. INPOL contains “more than 5.8 million photographs of approx. 3.6 million persons and approx. 3.5 million personal descriptions from identification measures (as of March 2020). Through direct access to INPOL, the photographs and personal descriptions are immediately available to all German police stations” (BKA 2021b). In addition, automated cross-checks with individual databases also take place within the framework of the asylum procedure (cf. *AFIS-A*, *INPOL tracing of stolen property*, *DNA analysis file*).

52 Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 concerning the establishment of Eurodac for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of Council Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person and on law enforcement applications for comparison with Eurodac data by Member States’ and Europol’s law enforcement authorities and amending Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 establishing a European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice.

INPOL tracing of stolen property: INPOL tracing of stolen property records items wanted in connection with possible criminal offences. As of 1 April 2020, 21.8 million objects were recorded in the INPOL tracing of stolen property file, including 10 million documents (identity papers, driving licences and the like) (BMI 2021). In the asylum procedure, the cross-check of passport and substitute passport documents serves the purpose, for example, of cross-checking whether the personal document is subject to an alert. The authority issuing the alert is informed about the discovery of the document.

Königstein Key: “According to the so-called ‘Königstein Key’, it is determined how many asylum seekers a Land must take in. This is based on tax revenue (2/3 share in the assessment) and population size (1/3 share in the assessment). The quota is recalculated annually” (BAMF 2021b).

Language biometrics: “If applicants are not able to present identification documents, it is possible to narrow down the region the person comes from by means of a language sample using automated digital evaluation” (BAMF 2021c). The language biometrics support the assignment of regional origin and are currently available for five Arabic dialects (Maghrebi, Egyptian, Iraqi, Levantine and Gulf).

MARiS – Migration Asylum Integration System: MARiS is the electronic workflow and document management system of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for processing all asylum procedures (asylum and Dublin procedures). MARiS has been further developed in recent years to enable complete electronic processing of all process steps and to automate routine activities. “Parallel processing in paper files does not take place; ‘document folders’ are only kept for evidence purposes and for the temporary storage of identity documents” (BAMF 2021a).

MILo database – Migration InfoLogistics database: MILo is a country information system of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The database contains “specific information on the situation in migrants’ countries of origin as well as in other receiving and transit countries and general findings on the individual nations. The information contained comes from a variety of national and international sources: Country information and analyses from the Federal Office and other asylum authorities, information and expert opinions, reports from humanitarian organisations, court decisions” (BAMF 2019j: 3). The Federal Office’s Information Centre for Asylum

and Migration (IZAM) is the central information and documentation centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and is responsible for data maintenance (BAMF 2007: 1).

PassTa – Passport Tracking: “The application is used to record and cross-check original documents for the purpose of establishing identity and securing evidence in the asylum procedure, and to document the course of transmission. The verification status of a document or where identity documents were forwarded to in the last processing step is transparent” (IT Planning Council 2018b: 10).

PIK station: The ‘PIK’ is the so-called personalisation infrastructure component and the ‘PIK station’ is a hardware and software solution for capturing the PIK. The PIK station consists of a fingerprint scanner, a camera for capturing facial images, a passport scanner for reading out personal documents, software for data storing and a printer for issuing a proof of arrival (BMI 2020a: 14). The PIK station enables, amongst other things, the automated storage of personal data in MARiS and in the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR). At the same time, the fingerprint data is stored in the Central Register of Foreigners and for the purpose of cross-checking with Eurodac, an automatic security cross-check (Asylkon procedure) takes place and Land authorities that have doubts about the identity of the persons can initiate an identity cross-check more easily and quickly (cf. *Asylkon*, *AZR*, *Eurodac*, *MARiS*).

Proof of arrival (Ankunftsnachweis): The proof of arrival is issued to asylum seekers when they register, before they formally submit their asylum application to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Section 63a of the Asylum Act). It entitles the holder to receive social benefits and is usually issued by the competent reception centre of the Länder. The proof of arrival is limited to a maximum of six months, but can be extended by another three months, for example, if no appointment to file an asylum application with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has been granted within the six-month period. The proof of arrival replaced the ‘certificate of registration as an asylum seeker (BÜMA)’, which was “informal and varied from Land to Land” until mid-2019 (BAMF 2019g). The residence of asylum seekers is considered permitted from the time the proof of arrival is issued, even if the ‘certificate confirming permission to remain pending the asylum decision’ is only issued by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in the course of the formal asylum application.

PTU – physical-technical examination of documents:

“The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees examines and assesses the authenticity of documents submitted in the asylum procedure as part of the clarification of the facts and determination of identity. For this purpose, the staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, among others, specially trained document experts” (BAMF 2021c).

SIS II – Schengen Information System II: SIS II is a common search and information system which so far can be accessed in particular by police authorities from 30 countries (27 EU Member States except Ireland and Cyprus as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). SIS II enables the storage of fingerprints, palm prints, facial images and DNA profiles (Deutscher Bundestag 2020c: 1). In order to ensure the functionality as well as the national and international exchange of information of the SIS, so-called central offices (SIRENE) were established in the participating states (BKA 2021d). As of 1 May 2020, 41 306 persons for arrest with a view to extradition, 523 128 third-country nationals for refusal of entry, 117 543 data relating to missing persons to be taken into custody, 125 365 persons for notification of encounter, 90 838 305 objects for seizure or preservation of evidence and 280 854 fingerprints relating to wanted persons were stored in SIS II (BMI 2021a). “By the end of 2021, three new EU regulations are also to be implemented (Regulations (EU) No 2018/1860⁵³, No 2018/1861⁵⁴ and No 2018/1862⁵⁵), which have a direct SIS connection. As a result, thousands of additional authorities in Germany will be connected to the SIS, including, among others, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, foreigners authorities, the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Aviation Authority and the registration offices for water and motor vehicles. In addition, weapons, naturalisation and judicial authorities will be connected, although this will not be technically implemented until after 2021” (Deutscher

Bundestag 2020d: 2). The new regulations make it possible to search the SIS with fingerprints and palm prints of unknown suspects, for which the EU Commission set up an automated fingerprint identification system in 2018 (cf. SIS AFIS).

SIS AFIS – Automated Fingerprint Identification

System: SIS AFIS is a “biometric identification system that uses digital image technology to obtain, store and analyse fingerprint data and is used in the Eurodac system for the automatic enrolment and cross-check of fingerprints” (EMN 2018: 63; cf. Eurodac). As of the end of 2020, SIS AFIS is in the implementation phase and will already be used in parts by authorities from Germany, a majority of other states and the EU agencies EASO and Europol by the end of 2021 (as of the end of 2020) before the mandatory implementation of the underlying EU regulations (Regulation (EU) No 2018/1861 and (EU) No 2018/1862. Full implementation is planned for the end of 2021 (COM 2020b: 6ff.). As of 31 December 2020, “286 195 fingerprints and 724 505 photographs (persons and objects) were stored in SIS AFIS” (Deutscher Bundestag 2021a: 4).

TraLitA – name transcription and name analysis:

“By means of an automated programme, Arabic names are uniformly transcribed into the Latin alphabet. This avoids name confusion and registrations under different spellings. Furthermore, an analysis of the distribution of the name in the various countries and regions of origin is carried out” (BAMF 2021c).

VIS – VISA Information System: “The VIS is used for the Europe-wide exchange of data on visas issued for a short stay in the Schengen area. Its purpose is to help prevent threats to public security, to prevent visa fraud, to facilitate controls at the external borders and on the territory of the Member States, and to enable the identification and return of illegal immigrants”. It is⁵⁶ operated on the basis of the VIS Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 767/2008). The data stored includes a photograph, visa application details and fingerprints. In order to be able to fulfil the above-mentioned purposes, the VIS has in particular an automated fingerprint identification system, the “Biometric Matching System (BMS)” (BVA 2021c), for the identification and verification of foreigners subject to visa requirements. As of 31 December 2020, the VIS had “73.2 million application records, 64.3 million of which contain fingerprints” (Deutscher Bundestag 2021a: 3).

53 Regulation (EU) No 2018/1860 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the use of the Schengen Information System for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.

54 Regulation (EU) No 2018/1861 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in the field of border control, amending the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement and amending and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1987/2006.

55 Regulation (EU) No 2018/1862 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 November 2018 on the establishment, operation and use of the Schengen Information System (SIS) in the field of police cooperation and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, amending and repealing Council Decision 2007/533/JHA and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1986/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Decision 2010/261/EU.

56 Regulation (EC) No 767/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 concerning the Visa Information System (VIS) and the exchange of data between Member States on short-stay visas (VIS Regulation).

Visa file (national): The visa file stores the data of third-country nationals “who have applied for a visa at a German mission abroad. The visa file essentially contains information on the person apply-ing for a visa and on the decisions taken. In addition, the German missions abroad keep independent visa files on the visas and airport transit visas they issue” (BfDI 2021a). The visa file is kept separately in the Central Register of Foreigners (cf. AZR).

XAusländer: “The XAusländer standard is a data exchange format based on XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and promotes the electronic exchange of identical data between the authorities in the foreigners administration in Germany. The standard simplifies and accelerates processes, standardises procedures and significantly improves the quality of data. XAusländer thus contributes to easing the burden in everyday work” (BAMF 2021d). Since November 2019, XAusländer has also been applied to the asylum sector and connects the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees with the foreigners authorities, the central foreigners authorities and reception centres via the standard, further digitalising, standardising and automating here as well.

Annex 3: Notification letter upon asylum application (Section 20 subs. 1 of the Asylum Act)

ENGLISCH

Aufgreifende Dienststelle

AZ der aufgreifenden Dienststelle

WICHTIGE MITTEILUNG

(Belehrung nach § 20 Abs. 1 AsylG)

IMPORTANT NOTICE

(Instruction pursuant to section 20, paragraph 1, of the AsylG)

Name | Surname

Geburtsdatum | Date of birth

Vorname | First name

Staatsangehörigkeit | Nationality

Sehr geehrte/r Asylbewerber/in,

Sie haben in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland um die Gewährung von Asyl nachgesucht. Damit machen Sie geltend, hier Schutz vor Verfolgung oder einer drohenden ernsthaften Gefahr zu suchen.

Eine Prüfung Ihres Asylbegehrens und eine Anerkennung als Asylberechtigte(r) ist nur möglich, wenn Sie einen förmlichen Asylantrag stellen. Sie sind verpflichtet, diesen Antrag persönlich bei der zuständigen Außenstelle des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge zu stellen. Erst dann wird das Asylverfahren durchgeführt. Im Rahmen einer Anhörung erhalten Sie dort Gelegenheit, Ihren Asylantrag zu begründen.

Nachdem Sie Ihren Antrag dort gestellt haben, erhalten Sie zur Durchführung des Asylverfahrens eine Aufenthaltsgestattung, die es Ihnen erlaubt, sich in dem Bezirk der Aufnahmeeinrichtung aufzuhalten.

Sie werden zunächst an eine Aufnahmeeinrichtung weitergeleitet, die der Unterkunft von Asylbewerbern während der Durchführung des Asylverfahrens dient. Dort werden Sie entweder aufgenommen oder Sie werden an eine andere Aufnahmeeinrichtung weitergeleitet, die für Ihre Aufnahme zuständig ist. In der Aufnahmeeinrichtung wird Ihnen auch die Außenstelle des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge genannt, bei der Sie Ihren Asylantrag stellen müssen.

Dear Asylum Seeker,

You have applied for asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany. In so doing, you claim to be seeking protection from persecution or an imminent serious danger.

An examination of your asylum application and recognition as a person entitled to asylum is only possible if you submit a formal asylum application. You are obliged to submit this application in person to the responsible branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Only then will the asylum proceedings be carried out. You will be given the opportunity to justify your asylum application within the framework of a hearing.

After you have submitted your application there, you will receive a residence permit to pursue the asylum proceedings, which allows you to stay in the district of the admission centre.

You will first be transferred to an admission centre, which serves as a residence for asylum seekers during their asylum proceedings. There, you will either be admitted or you will be transferred to another admission centre that is responsible for your admission. At the admission centre, you will also be informed of the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees where you must file your asylum application.

D-Nummer:

Melden Sie sich deshalb bitte unverzüglich, spätestens bis zum
*Therefore, please contact the following admission centre
immediately, at the latest by*

bei folgender Aufnahmeeinrichtung:
Admission centre:

Kommen Sie dieser Aufforderung nicht nach, so gilt Ihr Asylgesuch als zurückgenommen und es wird kein Asylverfahren durchgeführt. Ist ein anderer europäischer Staat für die Prüfung Ihres Schutzersuchens zuständig, entscheidet das Bundesamt, dass Sie dorthin überstellt werden. Diese Entscheidung ergeht auch dann, wenn Sie nicht persönlich zu dem oben genannten Termin erscheinen.
If you do not comply with this request, your asylum application will be considered withdrawn and no asylum proceedings will be carried out. If another European country is responsible for examining your request for protection, the Federal Office will decide that you will be transferred there. This decision will also be made if you do not appear in person at the above appointment.

Diese Belehrung habe ich heute erhalten.
I received this instruction today.

Den Inhalt habe ich verstanden.
I understand the content.

Ort | *Place*

Datum | *Date*

Unterschrift des/der Antragsteller(s)/in bzw. gesetzl. Vertreter(s)/in
Signature of the applicant/legal representative



D-Nummer:

Annex 4: Printed form: Storage of documents

Behörde/Dienststelle

Ort, Datum

Telefon

Fax

Sachbearbeiter/-in

Vorgangsnummer

E-Mail

Bescheinigung über die Inverwahrnahme von Ausweispapieren, Urkunden und sonstigen Unterlagen gemäß § 21 Abs. 1 Asylgesetz

Name:

Vorname:

Geburtsdatum/-ort:

Staatsangehörigkeit:

D-Nummer:

In Verwahrung genommene Dokumente:

Die Dokumente werden unverzüglich weitergegeben an:

D-Nummer:

Unterschrift der Besitzerin/des Besitzers

Unterschrift und Amtsbezeichnung

Annex 5: Instruction by the competent reception centre (Section 14 subs. 1 and Section 23 subs. 2 of the Asylum Act)

Belehrung nach § 14 Abs. 1 und § 23 Abs. 2 AsylG - Englisch

Processing office:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

(Instruction pursuant to section 14, paragraph 1, and section 23, paragraph 2, of the AsylG)

Surname:
First name:
Date of birth:
Nationality:

File number:
(Please specify)

--

Dear Asylum Seeker,

You have applied for asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany. In so doing, you claim to be seeking protection from persecution or an imminent serious danger.

You are currently in an admission centre which only accommodates asylum seekers. The asylum proceedings do not take place here, but in the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees responsible for you.

Please appear in person at on in the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees,

.....,

to file your asylum application.

An examination of your asylum application is only possible if you submit a formal application in person. You are obliged to submit this application in person to the above-mentioned branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Only then will the asylum proceedings be carried out. You will be given the opportunity to justify your asylum application within the framework of a hearing.

After you have submitted your application there, you will receive a residence permit to conduct the asylum proceedings, which will allow you to stay in the district of the admission centre. Please

Belehrung nach § 14 Abs. 1 und § 23 Abs. 2 AsylG - Englisch

make sure you keep this appointment or inform the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees or your admission centre immediately if you are unable to keep the appointment.

If your asylum application is ultimately rejected or if you withdraw your asylum application during the asylum proceedings, you can only be granted a residence permit in accordance with chapter 2, section 5, of the AufenthG. After that, a residence permit can only be issued for international law, humanitarian or political reasons, but no longer for other purposes (e.g. for the purpose of gainful employment or training), unless a right to a residence permit exists. If your application is ultimately rejected as seemingly unjustified, no residence permit will be issued unless there is a right to a residence permit.

If you do not submit your asylum application in person to the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on the above-mentioned date, your asylum application will be deemed withdrawn and no asylum proceedings will be carried out. If another European country is responsible for examining your request for protection, the Federal Office will decide that you will be transferred there. This decision will also be made if you do not appear in person at the above appointment.

I received this instruction today.

The instruction was translated into today and I understand the content.

.....
Place Date

.....
Signature of the applicant/legal representative

Annex 6: Information sheet on the formal asylum application



Bundesamt
für Migration
und Flüchtlinge

Wichtige Mitteilung für Erstantragsteller – Englisch

Bearbeitende Stelle:
Referat Zeile1BAFIOrg

Hausanschrift: BAFIHausStrasse
BAFIHausPLZOrt
Postanschrift: BAFIPostStrasse
BAFIPostPLZOrt
Tel.: BAFITelefon
Fax: BAFIFax

IMPORTANT NOTICE

- Instruction for first-time applicants on obligation to cooperate and
- General proceedings information

Name:	AstName
First name:	AstVorname
Date of birth:	AstGebDatum
Nationality:	AstStaatsang

Reference number:

(Please quote in all correspondence)

BAFIAz

Dear Applicant,

You have applied for asylum. This application will be processed at the branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees that you have been notified of.

During the asylum proceedings, you are generally obliged to reside in an admission centre that is assigned to the branch office of the Federal Office for a maximum period of 18 months; for minor children and their parents or other legal guardians as well as their adult unmarried siblings, this period can be up to six months at the longest. It is possible that the decision on your asylum application is not made until after your stay at the admission centre has ended.

If you come from a safe country of origin, you are obliged to reside in the admission centre responsible for your admission until a decision has been made on your asylum application. If your asylum application is rejected as seemingly unjustified or inadmissible, this obligation applies until you leave the country or until the threat or order of deportation has been executed. In such cases, the residence obligation may last longer than 18 months. This does not apply to minor children and their parents or other legal guardian as well as their adult unmarried siblings. An overview of all safe countries of origin can be found in the annex.

Even if you do not come from a safe country of origin, you may be obliged to reside at the admission centre until the Federal Office has decided on your asylum application. If the asylum application is rejected as seemingly unjustified or inadmissible, this obligation can be extended

D O C U M E N T

D O C U M E N T

D0396

Wichtige Mitteilung für Erstantragsteller – Englisch

until you leave the country or until the threat or order of deportation has been executed. In these cases, the residence obligation can last up to 24 months in total.

You may not engage in any gainful activity for as long as you are required to reside in an admission centre. If no final decision has been reached regarding your asylum proceedings within nine months of submitting your application, you may – under certain circumstances – be allowed to practise gainful employment.

If you live in an admission centre, you must find out when and where the official mail is distributed. This happens on a working day at certain times. You will receive your mail there from an employee of the admission centre. If you do not pick up the mail there at these times, it will stay there for three days. The mail is then returned to the authority. The authorities will then proceed as if you had received the letter.

Inform them whether family members are already in Germany, where they live and whether they are pursuing or have pursued asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany.

In order to carry out your asylum proceedings, you will receive a residence permit which allows you to stay in a limited area of the Federal Republic of Germany. This area is named in your residence permit. You must always carry your residence permit with you.

You generally need a permit if you wish to leave the area named in the residence permit **temporarily**.

Obligation to cooperate

The Federal Office relies on your cooperation to review whether you require protection. Therefore you are obliged to cooperate pursuant to section 15 of the AsylG. You must, for example, provide the necessary information orally or in writing. If you are in possession of a passport or other identification documents, you must present them and leave them with the Federal Office for examination. This also applies to any other certificates or documents which may be of relevance to the asylum proceedings. If you do not have a valid passport or passport replacement, you must cooperate in obtaining an identification document. In addition, in this case, you must also present, hand over and surrender to the Federal Office – upon request – all mobile data carriers (e.g. mobile telephones) which may be of significance for establishing your identity and nationality. These can be read and analysed by the Federal Office (section 15a of the AsylG in conjunction with section 48, paragraph 3a, of the AufenthG).

The fulfilment of the obligation to cooperate is extremely important for you. Failure to comply with your obligation to cooperate may constitute failure to pursue the proceedings, which leads to the suspension of the asylum proceedings. Furthermore, failure to comply with your obligation to cooperate will lead to a reduction of your benefits as an asylum seeker. Under certain circumstances, failure to comply with your obligation to cooperate could lead to you being required to reside in an admission centre for longer than 18 months.

Photos of you as well as fingerprints will be taken. You are obliged to tolerate these measures.

Hearing

You will be given a hearing appointment by the Federal Office. You are obliged to attend this appointment in person.

Please be sure to attend the hearing.

If you are unable to attend the appointment, please inform the Federal Office in writing in good time. You will be heard by an employee of the Federal Office on your grounds for asylum. This employee is familiar with the conditions in your country of origin. An interpreter will also be available for the hearing. You are entitled to call in a suitable interpreter of your choice at your own expense. During the hearing, you will be given the opportunity to state the reasons for your asylum application. You must state the reasons why you are afraid of persecution or serious harm and therefore apply for asylum as well as what other facts and circumstances prevent you from returning to your country of origin. It is important that you fully and truthfully explain your

Wichtige Mitteilung für Erstantragsteller – Englisch

personal fate and the concrete dangers threatening you when you return. You must also state how you came to Germany and where you have already applied for asylum. You are obliged to submit all necessary documents that you possess. The facts or incidents which you do not present during the hearing may not be taken into account later, neither by the Federal Office nor in court proceedings. This also applies to documents that you do not present at the hearing.

If a mobile data carrier has been read, analysed and added to the procedural file in your hearing in compliance with the legal provisions, the results can be used in the asylum proceedings to determine your identity and nationality.

If you have communication problems or cannot follow the hearing for health reasons, please inform the employee of the Federal Office.

Note:

If it is necessary for you for personal reasons, the hearing may – as far as possible – be conducted or continued by a person of the same sex with the assistance of a same-sex interpreter. The Federal Office has specially trained decision makers in the field of gender-specific human rights violations (e.g. rape, other sexual abuse, impending genital mutilation). Please make your request as early as possible before the hearing.

A record shall be drawn up of the content of the hearing, setting out the main reasons for your submission. The transcript may be corrected for misunderstandings during the re-translation from the German language. This will either be given to you at the end of the hearing or sent to you by post.

If you have filed a joint asylum application with your spouse and your children, and you live with these persons at the same address, the Federal Office may summarise notifications and decisions for your entire family in a letter and send them to a spouse or parent.

Failure to pursue the proceedings

If you do not pursue your asylum proceedings, your asylum application will be withdrawn.

It is presumed that you are not pursuing your asylum proceedings if you fail to comply with your obligation to cooperate in submitting the information essential for the asylum application or if you fail to attend the hearing. The same applies if you go into hiding, violate the territorial restriction in the accelerated proceedings or travel to your country of origin during the asylum proceedings.

The presumption of non-pursuit does not apply if you prove to the Federal Office immediately that your failure or your action is due to circumstances over which you had no influence.

If the asylum application is deemed to have been withdrawn, the Federal Office will discontinue the proceedings and decide without further hearing whether there is a prohibition of deportation on the basis of the files available.

If another European country is responsible for examining your request for protection, the Federal Office will decide that you will be transferred there. This decision will also be made if you fail to comply with your obligation to cooperate in submitting the information essential for the asylum application or if you fail to attend the hearing.

If the asylum proceedings are discontinued due to non-compliance with the procedure, you have the opportunity once to submit an application for readmission within nine months to the branch office of the Federal Office which is assigned to the admission centre in which you were obliged to reside before the discontinuation of the proceedings.

The **decision of the Federal Office** on your asylum application is made in the form of a written decision, which is sent to you. If you have appointed a lawyer, they will be notified of the Federal Office's decision.

You have the right to challenge the decision of the Federal Office before the administrative court.

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If you have limited your asylum application to the granting of international protection, the Federal Office does not make a decision on recognition as an asylum seeker, even if there are grounds for recognition. A subsequent recognition of asylum is only possible if new grounds arise as a result of a change in the factual or legal situation and these are asserted in good time with a new asylum application.

Please pay attention to the information on legal remedies attached to the decision, in particular to the time limits stated therein. Only within these time limits can you appeal the decision to the specified administrative court.

If your decision states a time period for leaving the country voluntarily, this time period begins only at the end of the period for lodging an appeal or, if an appeal is lodged in due time, only upon notification of the administrative court's negative decision. No deportation will be carried out before the expiry of the period for leaving the country, and you may not be detained for the purpose of deportation before the expiry of the period.

You can also until that time appeal any change that has occurred after the issuance of the threat of deportation which may have a significant impact on the assessment of your situation, and in principle you will continue to enjoy the rights under the Reception Directive 2013/33 (for example material benefits, basic healthcare, access to employment, primary and secondary education of minors).

In asylum proceedings, the Federal Office, the aliens authority and, in the case of court proceedings, the administrative court must send you notifications, summonses or decisions. The consignment is always be sent to the last address notified to the authority or court.

Therefore, you must immediately inform the Federal Office, the aliens authority and, in the case of court proceedings, the administrative court of any change of residence.

If your address has changed without these bodies being aware of it, the notification/summons/decision will be sent to your old address.

The law stipulates that this notice/summons/decision is effective even if you no longer live there and therefore receive no knowledge of its contents.

Failure to notify of a change of residence can have serious consequences for you, for example:

- The Federal Office may decide on your application without having heard you on your grounds for persecution.
- Your asylum application could be deemed withdrawn.
- The decision of the Federal Office becomes incontestable if you miss the deadline for lodging an appeal with the court for this reason. The time limits for appeals, which absolutely must be observed, are calculated in such a way that you may have to take immediate action (e.g. contact a lawyer). Otherwise, you may be deported immediately if the Federal Office makes an incontestable decision.

Important:

Inform the above-mentioned authorities of any change of residence. This also applies if you have been assigned a new place of residence and accommodation by a government agency, because the allocation authorities are usually different authorities.

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An extract from the AsylG (section 10, section 15, paragraphs 1 and 2, section 25, section 33, paragraphs 1 and 3, section 36, paragraph 4 (3), and annex II of section 29a, paragraph 2) is reproduced below.

If you have any questions, please contact the Federal Office or a person you trust immediately.

<p style="text-align: center;">§ 10 Asylgesetz Zustellungsvorschriften</p> <p>(1) Der Ausländer hat während der Dauer des Asylverfahrens vorzulegen, dass ihn Mitteilungen des Bundesamtes, der zuständigen Ausländerbehörde und der angerufenen Gerichte stets erreichen können; insbesondere hat er jeden Wechsel seiner Anschrift den genannten Stellen unverzüglich anzuzeigen.</p> <p>(2) Der Ausländer muss Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen unter der letzten Anschrift, die der jeweiligen Stelle auf Grund seines Asylantrages oder seiner Mitteilung bekannt ist, gegen sich gelten lassen, wenn er für das Verfahren weder einen Bevollmächtigten bestellt noch einen Empfangsberechtigten benannt hat oder diesen nicht zugestellt werden kann. Das Gleiche gilt, wenn die Letzte bekannte Anschrift, unter der der Ausländer wohnt oder zu wohnen verpflichtet ist, durch eine öffentliche Stelle mitgeteilt worden ist. Der Ausländer muss Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen anderer als der in Absatz 1 bezeichneten öffentlichen Stellen unter der Anschrift gegen sich gelten lassen, unter der er nach den Sätzen 1 und 2 Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen des Bundesamtes gegen sich gelten lassen muss. Kann die Sendung dem Ausländer nicht zugestellt werden, so gilt die Zustellung mit der Aufgabe zur Post als bewirkt, selbst wenn die Sendung als unzustellbar zurück kommt.</p> <p>(3) Betreiben Familienangehörige im Sinne des § 26 Absatz 1 bis 3 ein gemeinsames Asylverfahren und ist nach Absatz 2 für alle Familienangehörigen dieselbe Anschrift maßgebend, können für sie bestimmte Entscheidungen und Mitteilungen in einem Bescheid oder einer Mitteilung zusammengefasst und einem Familienangehörigen zugestellt werden, sofern er volljährig ist. In der Anschrift sind alle volljährigen Familienangehörigen zu nennen, für die die Entscheidung oder Mitteilung bestimmt ist. In der Entscheidung oder Mitteilung ist ausdrücklich darauf hinzuweisen, gegenüber welchem Familienangehörigen sie gilt.</p> <p>(4) In einer Aufnahmeeinrichtung hat diese Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen an die Ausländer, die nach Maßgabe des Absatzes 2 Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen unter der Anschrift der Aufnahmeeinrichtung gegen sich gelten lassen müssen, vorzunehmen. Postausgabe und Postverteilungszeiten sind für jeden Werktag durch Aushang bekannt zu machen. Der Ausländer hat sicherzustellen, dass ihm Posteingänge während der Postausgabe- und Postverteilungszeiten in der Aufnahmeeinrichtung ausgehändigt werden können. Zustellungen und formlose Mitteilungen sind mit der Aushändigung an den Ausländer bewirkt; im Übrigen gelten sie am dritten Tag nach der Übergabe an die Aufnahmeeinrichtung als bewirkt.</p> <p>(5) Die Vorschriften über die Ersatzzustellung bleiben unberührt.</p> <p>(6) Müsste eine Zustellung außerhalb des Bundesgebietes erfolgen, ist durch öffentliche Bekanntmachung zuzustellen. Die Vorschriften des § 10 Abs. 1 Satz 2 und Abs. 2 des Verwaltungszustellungsgesetzes finden Anwendung.</p> <p>(7) Der Ausländer ist bei der Antragstellung schriftlich und gegen Empfangsbestätigung auf diese Zustellungsvorschriften hinzuweisen.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ 15 Asylgesetz (Auszug) Allgemeine Mitwirkungspflichten</p> <p>(1) Der Ausländer ist persönlich verpflichtet, bei der Aufklärung des Sachverhalts mitzuwirken. Dies gilt auch, wenn er sich durch einen Bevollmächtigten vertreten lässt.</p>	<p>(2) Er ist insbesondere verpflichtet,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. den mit der Ausführung dieses Gesetzes betrauten Behörden die erforderlichen Angaben mündlich und nach Aufforderung auch schriftlich zu machen; 2. das Bundesamt unverzüglich zu unterrichten, wenn ihm ein Aufenthaltstitel erteilt worden ist; 3. den gesetzlichen und behördlichen Anordnungen, sich bei bestimmten Behörden oder Einrichtungen zu melden oder dort persönlich zu erscheinen, Folge zu leisten; 4. seinen Pass oder Passersatz den mit der Ausführung dieses Gesetzes betrauten Behörden vorzulegen, auszuhändigen und zu überlassen; 5. alle erforderlichen Urkunden und sonstigen Unterlagen, die in seinem Besitz sind, den mit der Ausführung dieses Gesetzes betrauten Behörden vorzulegen, auszuhändigen und zu überlassen; 6. im Falle des Nichtbesitzes eines gültigen Passes oder Passersatzes an der Beschaffung eines Identitätspapiers mitzuwirken und auf Verlangen alle Datenträger, die für die Feststellung seiner Identität und Staatsangehörigkeit von Bedeutung sein können und in deren Besitz er ist, den mit der Ausführung dieses Gesetzes betrauten Behörden vorzulegen, auszuhändigen und zu überlassen; 7. die vorgeschriebenen erkennungsdienstlichen Maßnahmen zu dulden. <p style="text-align: center;">§ 25 Asylgesetz (Auszug) Anhörung</p> <p>(1) Der Ausländer muss selbst die Tatsachen vortragen, die seine Furcht vor Verfolgung oder die Gefahr eines ihm drohenden ernsthaften Schadens begründet, und die erforderlichen Angaben machen. Zu den erforderlichen Angaben gehören auch solche über Wohnsitze, Reiseweg, Aufenthalt in anderen Staaten und darüber ob bereits in anderen Staaten oder im Bundesgebiet ein Verfahren mit dem Ziel der Anerkennung als ausländischer Flüchtling, auf Zuerkennung internationalen Schutzes oder ein Asylverfahren eingeleitet oder durchgeführt ist.</p> <p>(2) Der Ausländer hat alle sonstigen Tatsachen und Umstände anzugeben, die einer Abschiebung oder einer Abschiebung in einen bestimmten Staat entgegenstehen.</p> <p>(3) Ein späteres Vorbringen des Ausländers kann unberücksichtigt bleiben, wenn andernfalls die Entscheidung des Bundesamtes verzögert würde. Der Ausländer ist hierauf und auf § 36 Abs. 4 Satz 3 hinzuweisen.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ 33 Asylgesetz (Auszug) Nichtbetreiben des Verfahrens</p> <p>(1) Der Asylantrag gilt als zurückgenommen, wenn der Ausländer das Verfahren nicht betreibt.</p> <p>(3) Der Asylantrag gilt ferner als zurückgenommen, wenn der Ausländer während des Asylverfahrens in seinen Herkunftsstaat gereist ist.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">§ 36 Abs. 4 Satz 3 Asylgesetz lautet:</p> <p>Ein Vorbringen, das nach § 25 Abs. 3 im Verwaltungsverfahren unberücksichtigt geblieben ist, sowie Tatsachen und Umstände im Sinne des § 25 Abs. 2, die der Ausländer im Verwaltungsverfahren nicht angegeben hat, kann das Gericht unberücksichtigt lassen, wenn andernfalls die Entscheidung verzögert würde.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Anlage II zu § 29a Asylgesetz – Sichere Herkunftsstaaten</p> <p>Albanien, Bosnien und Herzegowina, Ghana, Kosovo, e.j.R. Mazedonien, Montenegro, Senegal, Serbien.</p>
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Annex 7: Information sheet on the asylum interview date



Important information on the interview for asylum applicants

ENGLISCH

The interview

You absolutely must **attend** this appointment **in person**. Bring with you to the interview the summons, your permission to reside (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*) or time-limited suspension of deportation (*Duldung*) and any other personal documents and items of evidence with you which can **prove your grounds for asylum and your identity** and which you have not yet submitted.

Please note: Anything which you do not say or show during the interview might not be able to be taken into consideration later at the Federal Office or in court.

You may also bring along your lawyer and a person enjoying your trust in order to provide assistance. The person enjoying your trust may not however be related to you or be in the asylum procedure themselves.

You will be asked at the interview as to your **personal grounds for asylum**, and will be afforded sufficient time for your answers. The staff at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees are familiar with the circumstances prevailing in your country of origin. An interpreter will also be on hand, who will translate everything. If it is necessary for you for personal reasons, the interview and the interpretation can be carried out by a person of the same sex. If you have not already made this request when applying, please do so as soon as possible.

There are specially-trained, **specially-commissioned case-officers** for interviews with specific groups. They hold the interview or can be involved in the procedure with victims of gender-specific violence, victims of torture or human trafficking and trauma, as well as unaccompanied minors. Please inform the Federal Office as soon as possible if this affects you and you have not yet informed the Office accordingly.

Appointment scheduling on the day of the interview

The Federal Office interviews families with small children, pregnant women, people who are ill or have a disability, unaccompanied minors, single women and those who have travelled a considerable distance first. Please tell the receptionists or the interpreter if you belong to this group. Where possible, this will be taken into account when the appointments are scheduled.

Last-minute appointment cancellations

The interviews at the Federal Office are held **from 8 a.m.** onwards. Please be punctual. You can only cancel your interview appointment for **urgent reasons**, and need to inform the Federal Office **on the day of the interview at the latest**. You will find the telephone number, fax number or e-mail address in the written summons.

If you fail to attend without reason, the Federal Office may cease processing your asylum application without your being asked again as to the reasons why you did not appear!



- **Illness:** If you are unable to attend the interview appointment because you are ill, you need to inform the Federal Office **before 8 a.m.** so that they do not wait for you or so your appointment can be reallocated. You must immediately submit a doctor's note stating that you are **unable to travel and/or attend** ("Reise- und/oder Verhandlungsunfähigkeit").
A **certificate of incapacity for work** („Arbeitsunfähigkeitsbescheinigung“) **is not sufficient.**
- **If you will be late:** Please inform the Federal Office as soon as possible if you are unable to attend your appointment on time, for instance because your train is running late. Please quote your file reference and state when you hope to be able to arrive.

Travel

- **Support:** Please immediately make your arrangements to travel to attend your interview; ask an advice centre (e.g. asylum social counselling) or your lawyer if necessary.
- **Travel expenses:** Please present the letter from the BAMF to the administration of the initial reception centre or collective accommodation facility, and where necessary to the social welfare authority of your municipal administration, so that you can be issued with the correct ticket to travel. The Federal Office unfortunately **cannot** pay your travel expenses.
- **Arriving later in the day:** If you need to travel a considerable distance, please contact the Federal Office in good time and ask whether you can have an interview appointment later in the day. You will find the telephone number, fax number or e-mail address in the written summons.
- **Overnight accommodation:** If you need to travel a considerable distance to reach the Federal Office and therefore need overnight accommodation before or after the interview, it might be possible to stay in the initial reception centre where the interview is held. Please enquire as early as possible before travelling whether the initial reception centre can put you up. Ask your advice centre if they can establish contact with the initial reception centre.

Children aged under 18

Childcare: If your child is not being interviewed in person, and is therefore not invited to attend the interview, please ensure that they can be cared for on the day of your interview. It is not necessary for your child to come with you to the Federal Office. You can also ask in the initial reception centre whether your child can be cared for in the crèche at the initial reception centre on that day (see above for contact details).

If you do not have childcare and come to attend the interview with your wife or husband, you may naturally bring your child along and look after him or her yourself. Since parents are interviewed separately, you can also take turns in caring for your child. Some facilities of the Federal Office also have play areas for children (**no childcare**).

Food and drink

Please note that neither food nor drink is generally on sale in the Federal Office. You will therefore need to bring food and drink with you. If you need to travel a considerable distance, you can ask in advance in the initial reception centre whether you can have lunch there (contact see above).

Annex 8: Information sheet on data processing by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

Wichtige Mitteilung für Erstantragsteller – Englisch

Information on the processing of your data at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (hereafter referred to as 'Federal Office')

The following text provides you with information about how your personal data (e.g. name, date of birth, nationality, health data, biometric data) is processed as well as your rights and responsibilities.

1. Who is responsible for the processing of your data and whom can you contact?

The Federal Office is responsible for the processing of your personal data. The contact information for the Federal Office is as follows:

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
Frankenstrasse 210
90461 Nuremberg, Germany

For specific questions about the protection of your data and your rights in connection with the processing of this data, please contact:

Data Protection Officer
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
Frankenstrasse 210
90461 Nuremberg, Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)911 9430
Email: Datenschutzbeauftragter@bamf.bund.de

2. For which purposes is my data collected and what is the legal basis for its processing?

The Federal Office processes your personal data (including name, date of birth, nationality, health data, religion, biometric data) for the purpose of reviewing your asylum application, for the purpose of the central register of aliens and for the purpose of voluntary return. This includes, among other things:

- the confirmation of your identity
- the determination of the member state of the European Union responsible for you

Within this framework, your personal data will be processed in accordance with the provisions of asylum law and residence law, for example in the Federal Office's internal information systems and in the central register of aliens, and will serve as the basis for the decision on your asylum application. The legal basis results from section 7, paragraph 1 (1), and section 16, paragraph 1 (1), of the AsylG, sections 86 and 86a of the AufenthG, section 6, paragraph 1 (3), of the law on the central register of aliens and Article 9 through 18 of the EU Eurodac regulation.

Wichtige Mitteilung für Erstantragsteller – Englisch

If a mobile data carrier is analysed to determine identity and nationality, this evaluation is carried out in accordance with section 15a of the AsylG in conjunction with section 48, paragraph 3a, of the AufenthG.

Under the aforementioned laws, you are obliged to provide the Federal Office with your personal information. If you do not comply with this obligation, this can – under certain circumstances – lead to the suspension of your asylum proceedings (section 32 of the AsylG), to the rejection of your asylum application (sections 30, 30a, 31 of the AsylG) or to the reduction of benefits under the law on benefits for asylum seekers (AsylbLG; section 1a of the AsylbLG).

3. To whom can your data be transmitted?

Your personal data may be transmitted to courts and authorities of German administration (security authorities, residents' registration offices, immigration authorities, social authorities, employment agencies, etc.) or to the responsible authorities of other member states of the European Union as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, insofar as this is legally permissible (section 8, paragraph 3, of the AsylG, Article III of the Dublin III Regulation).

4. For how long is your data processed?

In general, your data will be deleted at the latest ten years after the conclusion of your asylum proceedings or ten years after you have left the Federal Republic of Germany (section 7, paragraph 3, of the AsylG).

5. What data protection rights can you claim?

You can demand information regarding your personal data stored by the Federal Office. In addition, under the conditions stipulated in the General Data Protection Regulation, you may request correction or limitation of the processing of your data, or object to the processing of your data or exercise your right to data transfer (Articles 15, 16, 17, 18 and 21 of the General Data Protection Regulation).

To do so, you can contact the following office at the Federal Office:

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
Referat LS3
Frankenstrasse 210
90461 Nuremberg, Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)911 9430
Email: poststelle@bamf.bund.de

In addition, pursuant to Article 77 and Article 13, paragraph 2 (d), of the General Data Protection Regulation, you have the right to submit complaints to the data protection supervisory authority:

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	German term	English term/translation
AFIS	Automatisiertes Fingerabdruckidentifizierungssystem	Automated fingerprint identification system
AFIS-A	Automatisiertes Fingerabdruck-Identifizierungs-System für Ausländer	Automated Fingerprint Identification System for Foreigners
AMD	Auslesen von mobilen Datenträgern	Analysis of mobile devices
AnKER	Ankunfts-, Entscheidungs- und Rückkehr-Einrichtungen	Arrival, decision and return facilities
AsylbLG	Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz	Act on Benefits for Asylum Seekers
AsylG	Asylgesetz	Asylum Act
AufenthG	Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet	Resident Act
AufenthV	Aufenthaltsverordnung	Ordinance Governing Residence
AVwV	Allgemeine Verwaltungsvorschrift	General Administrative Regulation
AZR	Ausländerzentralregister	Central Register of Foreigners
AZRG	Gesetz über das Ausländerzentralregister	Act on the Central Register of Foreigners
AZRG-DV	Ausländerzentralregistergesetz-Durchführungsverordnung	Implementing Regulation of the Act on the Central Register of Foreigners
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BDSG	Bundesdatenschutzgesetz	Federal Data Protection Act
BGBI	Bundesgesetzblatt	Federal Gazette
BKA	Bundeskriminalamt	Federal Criminal Police Office
BKAG	Bundeskriminalamtgesetz	Federal Criminal Police Office Act
BMG	Bundesmeldegesetz	Federal Act on Registration
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern	Federal Ministry of the Interior
BMJV	Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz	Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection
BMS	Gemeinsamer Dienst für den Abgleich biometrischer Daten	Biometric Matching Service
BPOL	Bundespolizei	Federal Police
BPoLG	Gesetz über die Bundespolizei	Federal Police Law
BSI	Bundesamts für Sicherheit in der Informations-technik	Federal Office for Information Security
BVA	Bundesverwaltungsamt	Federal Office of Administration
Cf.		Compare (confer)
CIR	Gemeinsamer Speicher für Identitätsdaten	Common Identity Repository
DAVG	Datenaustauschverbesserungsgesetz	Data Sharing Improvement Act
Destatis	Statistisches Bundesamt	German Federal Statistical Office
D-Nummer	Daktyloskopische Nummer	Dactyloscopic number
DSGVO	Datenschutzgrundverordnung	European Data Protection Regulation
EASY	Erstverteilung von Asylbegehrenden	Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers
EC		European Community
ECRIS	Europäisches Strafregisterinformationssystem	European Criminal Register Information System
ECRIS-TCN	Europäisches Strafregisterinformationssystem für Drittstaatsangehörige	European Criminal Records Information System for Third Country Nationals
ED-Behandlung	Erkennungsdienstliche Behandlung	Identification measures
EES	Einreise-/Ausreisensystem	Exit-Entry-System
e.g.		For example (<i>exempli gratia</i>)
EMN	Europäisches Migrationsnetzwerk	European Migration Network
E-Number	Erkennungsdienstliche Nummer	Identification measure number
ETIAS	Europäisches Reiseinformations- und -genehmigungssystem	European Travel Information and Authorisation System
EU	Europäische Union	European Union

Abbreviation	German term	English term/translation
f.	die folgende (z. B. Seite eines Dokuments)	and the following page
FAST-ID	Fast Identification	Fast Identification
ff.	die folgenden (z. B. Seiten eines Dokuments)	and the following pages
GENESIS	Gemeinsames Neues Statistisches Informations-System	Common New Statistical Information System
GETZ	Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum	Joint Centre for Countering Extremism and Terrorism
GTAZ	Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum	Joint Counter-Terrorism Center
Hg.	Herausgeber	Publisher
i.a.		Among other (things) (<i>inter alia</i>)
IDM-S	Integriertes Identitätsmanagement – Plausibilisierung, Datenqualität und Sicherheitsaspekte	Integrated Identity Management – Plausibility check, data quality and security aspects
i.e.		that is (<i>id est</i>)
IOM		International Organization for Migration
INPOL	Informationsnetz Polizei	Police Information Network
IZAM	Informationszentrum Asyl und Migration	Information Centre for Asylum and Migration
MARIS	Migrations-Asyl-Reintegrationssystem	Migration Asylum Integration System
MID	Detektor für Mehrfachidentitäten	Multiple-Identity Detector
MILo-Datenbank	Migrations-InfoLogistik-Datenbank	Migration InfoLogistics database
NGO		Non-Governmental-Organization
No.		Number (numero)
p.		Page
PassTa	Pass-Tracking	Passport Tracking
PIK	Personalisierungsinfrastrukturkomponente	Personalisation infrastructure component
PTU	Physikalisch-technische Untersuchung	Physical and technical examination (of documents)
REG		Return Expert Group
SGB	Sozialgesetzbuch	Social Security Code
SIS	Schengener Informationssystem	Schengen Information System
SIS AFIS	Automatisiertes Fingerabdruck-Identifizierungs-System	Automated Fingerprint Identification System
StBA	Statistisches Bundesamt	German Federal Statistical Office
Subs.		Subsection (of a legal act)
TKS	Transkriptionsservice	Web-based transcription service
TraLitA	Namenstranskription und Namensanalyse	Name transcription and name analysis
UNHCR	Hoher Flüchtlingskommissar der Vereinten Nationen	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VerBIS	Vermittlungs-, Beratungs- und Informationssystem	Placement, Counselling and Information System
VHS	Volkshochschule	Adult education centre
VIS	Visa-Informationssystem	Visa Information System
VO	Verordnung	Ordinance

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Janne Grote | Division FI – International Migration and Migration Governance

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