

# SAFE PASSAGE

## Decent and Adequate Reception Conditions for Persons Seeking International Protection and Access to Asylum Procedures

### What are reception conditions?

Reception conditions are the overall material treatment provided by host countries to asylum seekers and refugees. The term includes a broad spectrum of rights, such as housing, healthcare, education and training, access to information, employment and freedom of movement.

Asylum seekers are legally entitled to a decent standard of living and access to services while they are in the asylum process. Though the Reception Conditions Directive aims at ensuring a common standard of reception conditions across the EU, conditions vary widely across Member States.

### What does access to asylum procedures mean?

The right to seek asylum is an internationally recognised human right, first codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and later spelt out and clarified in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, or Geneva Convention – as well as in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. To exercise this right, it is essential that people who want to claim asylum have access to asylum procedures.

Countries which have ratified the Geneva Convention (all EU countries) are required to have a proper, fair and efficient asylum system. In the EU, the development of a Common European Asylum System is meant to enhance standards and harmonise asylum procedures among Member States. Access to the asylum procedure is regulated by the EU Asylum Procedures Directive.

### Why are they important?

Reception conditions have a strong impact on the integration prospects and process of individuals. Providing adequate conditions which guarantee one's dignity and human rights is paramount to a proper recovery in a place of safety and start of a successful integration process. The harmonisation of reception conditions across Europe is furthermore believed to be one of the most effective tools to limit the phenomenon of secondary movements.

Access to the asylum procedure is the first essential step into the asylum process and must be granted to all individuals who require it. It implies a protection from *refoulement*, the risk of being returned to a place where there are serious threats to one's life.

### What is the current status?

Diverging standards of reception conditions among Member States have led to inadequate levels of reception for asylum seekers in some countries. Furthermore, the increase in asylum applications in 2015 led to a deterioration of reception conditions across the EU, with prolonged use of unfit temporary reception facilities, overcrowding, increased use of detention and risk of destitution.

Access to the asylum procedure is being threatened by an increasingly discriminatory approach to asylum which categorises people by nationality instead of providing a proper and thorough assessment of each individual case, as foreseen by the Geneva Convention.

Both the Reception Conditions Directive and the Asylum Procedures Directive are in the process of being reformed and discussed by the European institutions. For a more detailed analysis of the proposals, read [here](#).