

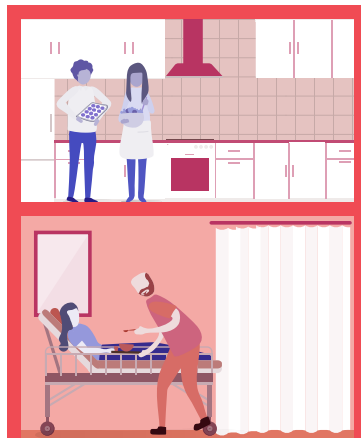
Dignified and resilient asylum reception to support inclusive societies



Implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum brings both risks and opportunities. When asylum systems are well-resourced and inclusive, people seeking protection can access the services they are entitled to and begin to rebuild their lives with dignity. The flexibility offered by EU law in how reception is organised can be used by Member States to raise standards by creating reception systems that are resilient, fair, and responsive to the long-term, predictable nature of migration.



EU Member States and other European countries have a clear legal obligation under the UN Refugee Convention to ensure dignified reception conditions for people seeking international protection. This obligation is also embedded in EU law and includes a set of rights: From the right to access shelter, healthcare, food, and other essential services, to rights that support social integration, such as access to information, education, employment, medical care, and legal assistance.



Yet in practice, reception conditions across Europe are often inadequate, unequal, and unprepared for fluctuations in the number of people arriving. Prioritising quality standards and inclusion benefits people in migration by enabling their quick integration, strengthening communities and social cohesion.



National Red Cross Societies are present at every step of the reception chain, providing short and long-term accommodation, as well as facilitating access to healthcare, education, language courses, employment, family reunification and legal and psychosocial support. Through their purely humanitarian approach, they maintain trust and help to build bridges, understanding and mutual respect for more inclusive societies.



RED CROSS
EU OFFICE

Three recommendations for humane reception systems across Europe:



Ensure access to adequate reception conditions for all asylum seekers

Authorities must uphold their legal commitments by ensuring access to housing, food, healthcare, and other essentials from the moment people seek protection – without unnecessary delays or administrative barriers. Delaying or denying reception conditions puts additional strain on social services, risks creating social tensions, and can lead people to destitution. In this context, detention must be avoided given its harmful consequences on people's physical and mental health. Children should never be detained.

Long-term investment in reception capacity, trained staff and early warning mechanisms create robust systems capable of withstanding potential crisis situations.



Put people at the centre

A positive reception experience starts with safe, supportive spaces that help people recover and feel part of the community. However, not everyone has the same needs. Accommodation and other services must be tailored to individuals, including specialised care for people experiencing heightened vulnerability. Authorities should provide trauma-informed social support and intercultural mediation to help asylum seekers navigate procedures and realise their rights. People should also have access to free legal aid, time to prepare for interviews and appeals, and support from expert organisations.

Accompanying people at each step of their process helps reduce stress, builds trust and connects them with public services.



Continue support after reception

Leaving the reception system – whether after a positive or negative asylum decision – can be difficult. The availability and quality of rights and services are key to helping people transition into independent living. Authorities should ensure early access to housing and social services, including rental subsidies, social benefits and counselling. Support should be available for people who are not granted status to secure their rights and avoid marginalisation, including alternative pathways to residency.

Providing ongoing assistance can foster resilience and encourage positive outcomes, regardless of the decision.