

# HOSTING AS A RECEPTION TOOL?

## When done well, hosting can provide integration opportunities and has many strengths for the wider community

Hosting can offer a favourable environment and valuable connections that enable guests to move on with their lives. Yet, it relies on trust and human interaction, which can be complex and unpredictable, particularly in prolonged hosting relationships. Successful hosting schemes require sufficient public resources to offer social support, prevent exploitative arrangements and address potential protection risks. A crucial aspect of preparedness is having the operational capacity in local authorities and support organisations, including sufficient and trained case workers as well as robust technology and information management infrastructure.

## Access to rights and services is a pre-condition for integration and social inclusion

The swift response to displacement from Ukraine confirmed the benefits of granting newcomers rapid access to education, healthcare, social services, the labour market and freedom of movement. It also served as a stark reminder of the crucial need to strengthen and invest in public housing and health infrastructures as indispensable elements of fostering inclusion and integration, regardless of migration status. Such investments are paramount to avoid anti-migration sentiments and perceived competition for resources.

## Hosting can only be an interim measure to address homelessness and housing exclusion

Like other short-term accommodation options and emergency shelters, hosting can only temporarily fill a gap, be part of a journey, while authorities work on finding long-lasting solutions. Everyone, from case workers to guests and hosts, agrees on the urgent need for public authorities to prioritise investment in innovative housing policies and solutions to address the housing market crisis towards ending homelessness and housing exclusion. Public authorities must step up to this enormous challenge with the kind of leadership that will ultimately help close socioeconomic divides.

## Maintaining a hospitable civil society space is essential, as acts of solidarity spontaneously arise in emergencies

Whether it is offering food, clothing, transport, shelter, or creating communal spaces, people come together during emergencies, with communities stepping up to help. Public authorities should promote and enable a conducive environment for humanitarian support for people in need, regardless of their status. Welcoming sentiments foster more resilient and inclusive societies against division and polarisation.

## Successful hosting schemes must plan for the future

Before launching a hosting scheme, public authorities must address critical questions: How will guests transition to a more permanent solution? What measures need to be in place to facilitate a transition towards autonomy? Without an exit plan, prolonged hosting arrangements risk straining the guest-host relationship and eroding confidence in public institutions.

## Hosting is a versatile option to accommodate people who have lost their homes

People lose their homes for many reasons, from fires and floods to eviction, migration and war. Hosting is a versatile response option, alongside shelters or reception facilities, but might not meet the needs of everyone. So, it is important to consider the suitability and understand the needs of displaced households when designing such schemes. In the future, EU and national budgets should enable a needs-based approach to interim accommodation arrangements, such as hosting, which guarantee adequate options for all regardless of migration or other status.



# KEY LESSONS LEARNED

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Hosting schemes must be designed with clear exit strategies, set up from the start, which enable guests to transition from hosting arrangements

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Hosting is a finite resource: it should prioritise the most suitable households, and adapt to a changing environment

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Clear and updated guidance and awareness raising for interested hosts and guests is key to an informed engagement, because hosting is not for everyone

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A lack of exit strategies can undermine the trust of hosts, stopping them from engaging in hosting in the future

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Financial incentives for hosts can be helpful but need to be carefully designed to ensure sustainability and avoid distorting the housing market

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A written agreement outlining the commitments of hosts, guests and supporting organisations can avoid potential issues and address the lack of formal tenancy rights

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The organisation of hosting requires a multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach, with actors working together to optimise expertise and resources

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Organisations should invest in information management systems to process the large amounts of data associated with hosting, while ensuring compliance with data protection laws

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Hosts provide essential support, but cannot replace the role of social workers and public authorities

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Local authorities and hosting organisations should be provided with additional funding and resources proportional to the demands of receiving newcomers, while also recognising and actively seeking input from established local expertise

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Experienced hosts should be involved in recruiting, guiding and developing support networks for new hosts

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Hosting can offer a favourable environment and valuable connections that can enable guests to move on with their lives, while positively affecting the wider community

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Hosting requires robust social support to guarantee a safe hosting relationship, resolve issues as they arise and prevent hosting fatigue

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Nurturing existing hosting relationships is as important as facilitating new matches, for the ongoing cohabitation as well as for future engagement of hosts and their networks

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Housing allocation should be aligned with people's preferences and availability and access to public services and employment opportunities