

10th European Conference on the Reception of  
Asylum Seekers

**Presentation to workshop  
'Practice for all'**

Standards and good practices



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# ECRE

## European Council on Refugees and Exiles

A pan-European alliance of refugee-assisting non-governmental organisations

*...promoting the needs of all individuals seeking protection within Europe*

[www.ecre.org](http://www.ecre.org)

## ECRE believes

*“adequate conditions of reception are essential to the functioning of a fair and efficient asylum procedure”*

Reception conditions must ensure the **independence** and **personal dignity** of each asylum seeker

# Purpose of presentation today

- highlight some of ECRE's concerns about RSD implementation and gaps
- consider human impact of reception conditions
- consider how we can improve standards and promote good practice

# Purpose of establishing reception conditions

...to ensure a **dignified standard of living** and **comparable living conditions**

*Some improvements in standards but ...*

- Several members have not yet transposed – deadline February 2005
- Cases against 6 member states before European Court of Justice

# Practical impact of failure to provide good reception care

- impact on mental and physical health
- impact on ability to integrate
- impact on children's development

# Scope of Directive should include

- everyone seeking asylum and those seeking **subsidiary protection**
- all asylum seekers from the point at which they **express their wish** for protection
- Directive applies to **all** premises including detention centres, transit zones and airport waiting areas – must be monitored

# Residence

- Provision of reception benefits linked to a particular residence should be flexible to allow access to employment, education, etc.

# Education

- All children should have access to education
- Education should be provided in local schools, where possible.
- Language training should be available to adults and children.
- Costs of transport, meals and school books should be provided.

# Employment

- Access to employment should be faster (6 months)
- Limitations imposed by states should be reduced – discretion undermines common standards.

## Other concerns

- Access to healthcare – especially psychological
- Use of detention
  - particularly common where inadequate reception exists
  - length and conditions should be regulated
  - for irregular entry is wrong

# Other concerns

- Broaden definition of vulnerability
- Develop standards for
  - age assessments of minors
  - reception of victims of trafficking

# Material Reception Conditions

- All asylum seekers should have prompt access to support

In 2005 only **16%** in Greece were able to access benefits other than health care (Greek Refugee Council)

In France, only **10%** (Forum Réfugiés and France Terre d'Asile)

# Standards should be better defined

Research by Dutch Council for Refugees found that

*“food allowances are not sufficient for purchasing enough food”*

According to Netherlands Nutrition Centre and National Institute for Budgeting

# How do we change things and improve practice?

- Monitoring and sanctions
- Shared learning and good practice exchanges
- Changing discourse in civic society
- Enabling refugee voices

# What do asylum seekers say?

*'From the fire, into the prison'*

*'I used to fear dying, now I fear going insane'*

*'My spirit has been killed, only my body is still alive'*

Residents in a reception centre, Netherlands  
Study Karin Geuijen, University of Utrecht

# What do asylum seekers say?

*'I am afraid to use the bathroom at night, men hang around in the corridors.'*

Conditions are dehumanising ... people feel powerless, dependent, angry and unsafe.

# Negative discourse

- Dominant discourse is of 'bogus' asylum seekers
- Asylum seekers viewed as a burden and problem

*Policy makers and directors rarely hear the voices of asylum seekers*

# Change?

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Civic society must work in partnership to **change the public discourse** as well as influencing legislative and policy frameworks to ensure we respect the **humanity** and **dignity** of all asylum seekers.