

# MULTISTAKEHOLDER MODELS IN THE CONTEXT OF RECEPTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS

Residence Palace, Brussels, Belgium / Online

22 May 2024



## **Context and Objective of the Conference**

Migration and asylum systems in the European Union (EU) are at a crossroads. Over the past decade, asylum and reception systems have struggled to cope with rising numbers of spontaneous arrivals and asylum applications. The COVID-19 pandemic also upended migration policies, and the displacement of millions of Ukrainians caused by the military invasion of Ukraine strained reception systems. Meanwhile, labour shortages and ageing societies are putting at stake welfare systems across the EU and increasing the need for effective labour market integration policies.

The historic agreement on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum holds promise to address some of these challenges and make asylum and migration systems more resilient for decades to come. In addition, the last years have witnessed a significant amount of innovation and creativity and have shed light on the importance of effective coordination between different stakeholders and levels of governance, in line with the comprehensive approach to migration management put forward by the Global Compact for Migration and the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion, which underscores the importance of robust multi-stakeholder partnerships.

### ***Conference Focus***

In this context, national and local authorities, European Union Agencies, international organisations, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and private entities are developing innovative collaboration models to foster more effective and resilient migration systems. The conference aims to explore multi-stakeholder strategies in three specific areas: reception, information provision, and pre-integration.

### ***Multistakeholder Models for Providing Reception Conditions***

Reception systems across the EU are adapting to rising number of international protection applicants. To address this challenge, policymakers should design flexible systems that can scale up and down based on needs and adapt to changing numbers and profiles. Against this backdrop, the conference will highlight the role of multi-stakeholder cooperation to strengthen reception capacity, create a supportive environment for hosting applicants within local communities, and organise diverse reception facilities<sup>1</sup> tailored to different needs and profiles. The discussion will centre around multi-stakeholder models that can help Member States fulfil their responsibilities under the Reception Conditions Directive (RCD Recast) and enrich the diversity of reception facilities in line with the standards laid down in the Directive, providing flexibility in the organisation and management of their reception systems. Special attention will be given to coordination mechanisms, fostering of a shared responsibility among different stakeholders, addressing special needs, and implementing safeguards to uphold the rights and dignity of applicants for international protection.

### ***Multistakeholder Models for Information Provision***

Member States have the legal obligation to provide comprehensive information to applicants for international protection, which has also been reinforced in the various instruments of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Effective information provision is not only important for asylum seekers, as it allows them to fully

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<sup>1</sup> Reception facility (or accommodation facility) is any place for the housing of applicants, (collective or not). It encompasses accommodation centres as well as private houses, flats, hotels or other premises adapted for housing applicants (as per Article 18(1)(c) RCD (recast)).

understand the different steps in the asylum procedure, but also for the efficiency of the asylum system. Yet, many Member States experience challenges in effectively providing information to international protection applicants. In this context, the conference will explore various models implemented by Member States – in collaboration with various stakeholders – to fulfil their legal responsibility for offering clear information throughout the application process as well as to respond to the communication and information needs of applicants. It will discuss the impact of approaches through mobile teams instead of traditional information desks and explore innovative methods of information provision.

### ***Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Pre-Integration***

Asylum systems across the EU have struggled to keep pace with the number of applications. Consequently, asylum seekers often experience prolonged waits for decisions, leading to adverse effects such as deteriorating mental health, underutilisation of skills, and delays in integration following a positive decision. While integration measures are usually extended to beneficiaries of international protection, certain Member States are now introducing initiatives specifically aimed at integrating applicants during their time in reception. This approach aims to make the most of this period by equipping them with skills and competencies that will aid their future integration into the host society, in case of a positive decision. In this context, the conference will conclude by exploring multi-stakeholder partnerships to foster pre-integration<sup>2</sup>, aligning with the European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027), with a particular focus on initiatives to promote labour market integration and participation in society. The conference will also explore how to foster housing access for individuals who have obtained a positive decision. While ensuring access to housing after the asylum procedure is not part of the obligations of Member States under the Receptions Conditions Directive, access to housing after the asylum procedure has knock-on effects on the capacity of reception systems, as well as the longer-term integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

## **Target Audience**

The conference is co-organised by Fedasil, the Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, and EUAA, the European Union Agency for Asylum, back-to-back with the EUAA Reception National Contact Points meeting (23-24 May) and aims to bring together policymakers and practitioners from international organisations, European Union institutions and Agencies, national and local authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs), private entities, and academia.

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of pre-integration is not described as such in the RCD (recast). Pre-integration measures can take different forms such as language courses, civic education, support in job searching (e.g. how to apply to the employment services, administrative procedures and deadlines), or orientation to local culture, norms and values of the hosting society.

# AGENDA

09:00-09:30 **Registration**

9:30-10:15 **Welcome & Opening remarks: the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration**

- **Nicole DE MOOR**, State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, attached to the Minister for the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal, Belgian Federal Government
- **Pieter SPINNEWIJN**, Director Operational Services, Fedasil
- **Mikael RIBBENVIK CASSAR**, Deputy Executive Director, EUAA
- **Alix MULLER-RAPPARD**, Deputy Head of Unit in Migration Management in DG HOME, European Commission

10:15 – 10:45 **Coffee Break**

10:45 - 12:15 **Session 1: Leveraging Multi-stakeholder Collaboration for More Resilient Reception Systems**

- **Kadri SOOVA**, Head of Migration and Social Inclusion Unit, Red Cross EU Office
- **Caterina GENTILONI-SILVERI**, Deputy Director of the Asylum Department of the French Office for Immigration and Integration, OFII
- **Neelke VERNAILLEN**, Political Advisor of the deputy mayor on poverty reduction, homelessness, health and welfare policies, City of Ghent
- **Paul FAY**, Principal Officer, International Protection Accommodation Services - Future Operating Model, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland

The session will explore the role of multi-stakeholder coordination in supporting reception systems and enhancing the diversity of a reception network. The objective is to explore the opportunities and challenges of various multi-stakeholder approaches, while delving into the operational complexities of these models. Particular emphasis will be placed on addressing the needs of applicants in a situation of vulnerability.

- How can multi-stakeholder collaboration support reception systems, such as by diversifying the network, increasing reception capacity, and enabling reception systems to better cope with rising arrivals?
- How can we leverage the collaboration of multistakeholder governance to organise reception facilities in alignment with the new Pact on Migration and Asylum? How to establish a shared ownership and responsibility among different stakeholders in the reception of asylum seekers?
- What are the challenges of implementing multi-stakeholder reception models, and how can these be addressed?
- What type of governance is needed to promote accountability and transparency within collaborative reception models? How can these models be made sustainable?

- How can multi-stakeholder models balance the interests and needs of both hosting communities and asylum seekers?
- How can engaging different stakeholders facilitate longer-term planning in reception systems?
- How can collaborative reception models adapt to the unique needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and unaccompanied minors?

12:15 - 13:45 **Lunch break**

13:45 - 15:00 **Session 2: Exploring the Role of Multi-stakeholder Cooperation in Enhancing Information for International Protection Applicants**

- **Els KLEIN HOFMEIJER**, Policy Officer Asylum, Dutch Refugee Council
- **Flavia JERCA**, Senior Reception Officer, Reception and Vulnerability Sector, EUAA
- **Maurizio MOLINA**, Senior Protection Associate, UNHCR
- **Koen VAN ROMPAEY**, Head of Service Voluntary Return, Fedasil

This session will delve into information provision and explore diverse methods that Member States can employ to provide information to asylum seekers in cooperation with other stakeholders. It will examine a spectrum of information provision models, understanding their potential complementarity and discuss the advantages and considerations of employing outreach strategies through mobile teams versus traditional information desks.

- What role does collaboration with civil society organisations play in enhancing the effectiveness of information provision?
- How to ensure quality in the information provided in collaborative models? What quality assurance mechanisms should be in place?
- What information provision models are more effective, and what are their benefits and challenges?
- How do cultural and linguistic factors influence the success of information provision models, and what strategies can be used to address cultural and linguistic barriers?
- How can information be made accessible for applicants in a vulnerable situation or with specific communication and information needs?
- How can authorities provide information to hard-to-reach groups, and what role can digital technologies play in information provision efforts?

15:00 - 15:30 **Coffee break**

15:30 - 16:45 **SESSION 3: Pre-integration: Setting the Foundations for Successful Integration**

This session will explore in breakout groups how policymakers can cooperate with other stakeholders to facilitate long-term integration already at the reception stage, with a specific focus on three specific areas: access to the labour market, participation in society, and housing for those who obtain a positive decision.

## **BREAKOUT GROUP 1. Promoting labour market integration during the asylum procedure**

- **Thomas WAUTERS**, General Manager, JobRoad
- **Vincent VANDENAMEELE**, Director, Travi
- **Peter DE CUYPER**, Integration Expert and Research Manager at the Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA), KU Leuven

The first breakout group will examine innovative collaboration models for promoting labour market integration and will reflect on sector-specific approaches to the integration of applicants for international protection. Special attention will be given to safeguarding labour rights and preventing abuse and discrimination within the labour market. Some of the questions that will be discussed include:

- How can policymakers enhance access to the labour market during the asylum procedure, such as by providing assistance in job search, mentoring, or training? What challenges do asylum seekers encounter to access the job market?
- How can cooperation with different stakeholders, including private entities, trade unions or employers' associations support this process? How can authorities prevent and address abuse and discrimination in the labour market?

## **BREAKOUT GROUP 2. Ensuring swift access to housing for beneficiaries of international protection**

- **Julien AERNOUDT**, Policy Officer 'De Nieuwe Buren', ORBIT VZW
- **Catalin HARTWIG**, Mission Lead at Welcome Alliance, ProjectTogether gGmbH
- **Milan COLIC HUMLJAN**, Senior Project Coordinator, HELIOS project, International Organization for Migration

Swift access to housing for those who obtain a positive decision is important both for the long-term integration of beneficiaries of international protection and for the efficiency of reception systems. Against this backdrop, the second breakout group will explore collaborative strategies and innovative models to enhance housing access for individuals who receive a positive decision after the asylum procedure. Questions include:

- What strategies can enhance swift access to housing after a positive decision? What are the advantages and challenges of cooperating with different actors to this aim?
- What examples are there of innovative models to support access to housing for refugees? How can cooperation with different actors bring innovation in housing access and foster sustainable housing solutions?

## **BREAKOUT GROUP 3. Building a sense of home: Fostering participation in society from day one**

- **Hester VAN DIJK DE WAAL**, Policy Director Integration and Participation at the Dutch Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)
- **Farah LAPORTE**, General Coordinator, Refu Interim
- **Louise LIENARD**, Project Coordinator Neighbourhood Initiatives, Fedasil

Participation in society is a key element of successful integration. The third breakout session will explore how policymakers can foster the social participation of applicants of international protection during the asylum procedure, and how cooperation with different stakeholders can support this ambition. Questions that will be discussed include:

- How can policymakers foster the participation in society of asylum seekers, for instance through voluntary work or other social activities?
- What are the benefits of collaborative models between different stakeholders to promote participation in society? What role can different stakeholders play?

17:00-17:30 **Wrap up by Fedasil, EUAA and MPI Europe**

17:30-19:30 **Closing Reception**

All in-person participants are cordially invited to the networking cocktail.

The event will take place in **the Patio** of Residence Palace.