

Refugee reception and integration

This briefing discusses recent research from the Mediterranean Migration Research Programme, focusing on the reception of refugees and migrants and their integration in host states. It examines the ways in which reception is understood both in international and European law and in practice as it relates to asylum. It also considers the operation of reception systems structures in the main countries of arrival such as Italy and Greece, and countries of eventual settlement elsewhere in the European Union.

Key findings

The idea of reception itself is not a well-defined concept though it has been interpreted in European human rights case law. The Charter of Fundamental Rights sets out rights and freedoms, including the right to asylum under Article 18 and the Common European Asylum System seeks to ensure comparable living conditions for applicants for international protection throughout the EU. Most relevant is the Recast Reception Conditions Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. In spite of these provisions, conditions vary considerably between and within countries and a complex system has emerged which is difficult for applicants and international actors to understand.

EU law affirms that reception begins once an asylum application is made. In practice, many are denied the opportunity to file an application as a result of profiling and narrowly defined categories of protection. This represents a gap between the operation of European law and best practices in international protection which recognise the human rights of all migrants, including the right to apply for asylum.

Migrants in 'hot-spots', which were inaugurated by the EU in the second half of 2015 as a tool for the better management of migration with the support of EU agencies

Policy implications

- To ensure that all those in need of international protection are treated with dignity and respect, all governments and European Union agencies should affirm the human rights of migrants and their commitments under international and European Union law. Host governments should discontinue the practice of housing migrants and refugees in dangerous and inhumane reception centres and allowing makeshift camps and unsuitable dwellings to sprout as a result of political neglect.
- To ensure that those in the reception system enjoy the full range of protection services and appropriate information regarding the asylum and relocation processes, host governments should coordinate provision more closely with the UNHCR and its implementing partners and share information on migrants profiles with other EU destination states participating in the relocation programme.
- To improve the reception experience and advance integration the European Commission should instruct EASO in consultation with UNHCR to develop new guidelines which standardise and improve the quality of reception across the European Union.

Key findings continued

such as Frontex, EASO and Europol, have been established on the Greek islands of Chios, Kos, Lesbos, Leros, Samos are processed and often detained at length. This is in contrast to those in Lampedusa, Pozzallo, and Trapani in Italy where they are moved on quickly. Many human rights violations have occurred in these hot-spots, above all the separation of people on the basis of nationality - the key criteria used to determine international protection status. Further exclusionary registration procedures deny many the right to apply for asylum.

The nature of reception centres is highly differentiated. In Greece institutions include camp-like settings and private and state managed accommodation. Since summer 2016 UNHCR has financed an urban accommodation scheme on the mainland, primarily for those waiting to

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be relocated and/or classified as vulnerable. In Italy there are formal differences between types of reception centres (sites near disembarkation; collective centres set up under a Ministerial decree; and ones for individuals who have already filed a claim for asylum and managed by local authorities), though in practice there is little distinction. In addition migrants have been housed in squalid informal settlements across Europe. Researchers witnessed the eviction and destruction of living spaces and breaking up of communities in the 'jungle' in Calais; the Lycée Jean-Quarré in Paris, informal camps in the railway station and in parks in Milan.

The Reception Directive has listed categories of asylum-seekers who are considered to be particularly vulnerable and should be identified rapidly so that their specific needs can be met. These include unaccompanied minors, single parents with minor children, pregnant women or those who have recently given birth; incurable or serious illnesses those with a disability; the elderly or those with post-traumatic disorder; who have experienced, rape or serious exploitation. However identification may be slow or not done and individuals with less visible markers, such as mental health problems may not be identified and

therefore do not receive priority processing or access to required services.

While many criticise the slowness of transfers to other member States, (7,016 individuals relocated from Italy and 14,297 from Greece as of 15 June 2017), the numbers eligible for relocation are lower than the potential total as a result of the rigid formula, based on the average for the EU of those granted international protection in the previous quarter. The only nationalities with large numbers of those eligible for relocation, that is an average rate of 75% recognition across the EU, are now Eritreans and Syrians. Even among those eligible, a number are rejected by states on the general ground of security. The slow rate of relocation of unaccompanied minors, especially from Italy, where only 5 had been relocated by June 2017, is an issue of utmost concern. And as growing numbers begin to apply for asylum in Greece and Italy, these countries will have to begin to provide appropriate conditions for integration, including education for young people and labour market opportunities.

References and further information

For information about the Mediterranean Migration Research Programme, including the methodology and evidence base for the research, see: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/mmrp/about/>

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