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1.5. Common areas

Introductory remarks

In the framework of this guidance, the term ‘common areas’ refers to a space where applicants eat and spend their leisure time. The size and set-up of the common area, as well as its functionality, depend on the type of housing in which the applicants are located. As such, ‘common areas’ might refer to one or more rooms which can be used by the applicants.

With regards to bigger housing facilities, ‘common areas’ might refer to a number of different rooms which each fulfil multiple purposes, i.e. to eat, to carry out leisure activities or to take part in other collective activities (e.g. language classes, information provision). At the same time, smaller facilities might have one multi-purpose room which can be turned into a dining/living room or a room for carrying out leisure activities, depending on the need and time of the day. Provided that sufficient privacy can be ensured, the common area of smaller facilities, or parts of it, could equally serve for applicants to meet with social workers or legal advisers.

Importantly, the term ‘leisure activities’ refers to activities involving not only children but also adults. This is based on the important link existing between the applicants’ possibility to engage in leisure activities and their mental health. The existence of space for leisure activities or the possibility for applicants to engage in collective actions (e. g. language classes, group information sessions or sport activities) serves an important purpose as it helps to bring more structure to their day and thus can help to decrease tensions arising from spending too much time without anything to do. This is particularly relevant during the initial phases of the asylum procedure when applicants might not (yet) be able to access the labour market or engage in formal training.

Standards and indicators

STANDARD 12: Ensure that applicants have sufficient space to eat.

Indicator 12.1: All applicants have the possibility to eat in a designated space.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *It is possible for all applicants to eat in a canteen (in a bigger facility) or in a room where there is a table and a sufficient number of chairs. The place for*

eating could have other functions as well, as long as it is available for eating at certain times.

STANDARD 13: Ensure that applicants have sufficient space for leisure and group activities.

Indicator 13.1: An area which is suitable for leisure activities exists inside the housing or nearby within public space.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *Gender, age and the cultural and religious needs of the applicants should be taken into account when setting up rooms for leisure activities in collective housing. If possible, this could involve separate rooms or hours during which rooms designated for leisure activities can be used.*

Indicator 13.2: Where group activities are organised by the Member State, sufficient and adequate space, for example in the form of a separate room, is available.

- ***Additional remarks:*** *The term 'group activity' refers, for example, to language classes, group information sessions, sport activities, etc.*

Indicator 13.3: If the facility hosts children, a safe room/area exists for them to play and to engage in open air activities in the housing itself or within public space nearby.

Good practice with regards to common areas

It is considered good practice to provide for the supervised presence of children in child-friendly spaces during the time the parents are taking part in group activities.

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