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Senior Officials discuss how to respond to significant reception challenges in Europe



The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) represented by its Executive Director **Ms. Nina GREGORI**, together with the Minister for Social Affairs and Integration of the German Land of Hessen, **Mr. Kai KLOSE**, hosted a high-level panel on the "Challenges and Perspectives on Reception", including the European Commission's Deputy Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs, **Ms. Beate GMINDER**, and the Chair of the EUAA Management Board **Mr. Mikael RIBBENVIK**, and the Secretary General of the Finnish Red Cross **Ms. Kristiina KUMPULA.**

Speaking during the 2nd day of a Special Meeting for Senior Officials of EU Reception Authorities, an event that provided Directors and Directors-General in charge of reception in Europe the opportunity to hold strategic discussions, the Executive Director took stock of the reception-related challenges the EU faces. In 2022, EU+ countries recorded around 1 million asylum applications, in addition to over 4 million displaced persons from Ukraine, who benefit from Temporary Protection. Under the Temporary Protection Directive, its beneficiaries have immediate access to accommodation, healthcare, and the labour market.

The Executive Director praised the excellent cooperation and work of reception authorities in coping with the humanitarian consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Accommodation is being provided under enormous pressure and reception authorities are often a key partner in this response, together with other national stakeholders, regional and local authorities.

Ms. Gregori outlined the operational support the EUAA currently provides to 13 EU Member States, as well as the work the Agency is doing to implement the conclusions of the special European Council in February. The EUAA has been rapidly gaining experience in the field of reception since the publication of its Strategy on Reception in 2021. Beyond its work on guidance and practical tools, it supports national authorities in reception-related activities such as strategic planning, site design, information provision, social work, and vulnerability assessments, strengthening their capabilities to handle the influx of displaced persons.

Ms. Gminder stressed the fact that fair and efficient asylum procedures where key to the good functioning of reception systems across Europe. Ongoing discussions on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which reached a critical juncture with the supportive vote of the European Parliament earlier this week, aim to considerably improve the efficiency of the Common European Asylum System. **Mr. Ribbenvik** put emphasis on the fact that the EUAA's future Monitoring Mechanism would be an essential component of the future system and would have to be based on mutual trust. **Ms. Kumpula** presented the perspective of the Red Cross and reminded the audience of the importance of trust and transparency towards local authorities and host communities.

On behalf of the Member States attending, Senior Managers outlined some of the challenges they face, including:

- Scaling-up reception capacity to cope with increased numbers of arrivals.
- Securing local community acceptance for hosting asylum-seekers.
- Finding qualified and sufficient staff to manage reception facilities.
- Identifying affordable subsequent housing for successful asylum seekers.

To address some of these challenges the EUAA announced, amongst other initiatives, the organisation for the first time of a common National Contact Points meeting for the EUAA Reception and the Asylum Processes networks in November 2023. This joint meeting will look at how interactions between asylum and reception authorities can be made more efficient.



Background

The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) established a Network of Reception Authorities in 2016 – the **EUAA Reception Network** – which gathers representatives of national agencies and administrations responsible for reception matters. Through it, the Agency seeks to promote practical cooperation between EU countries and converge national practices by developing operational standards, guidance, and practical tools.

The high-level panel discussion on "Challenges and Perspectives on Reception" took place as part of the 3rd annual "Special Meeting for Senior Officials of Reception Authorities" of the network. This regularly-organised event brings together the most senior management officials having the end-responsibility for implementing national reception policies and strategies – usually at Directors-General level.

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