

S U M M A R Y

PoMOCna KAWA #51



MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION CENTERS

29 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING: Barka Foundation, Kulawa Warszawa Foundation, Lena Grochowska Foundation, Right to Protection Foundation, SPDN "Krok za krok", Batory Foundation, Mudita Association, OVUM Association, Q Foundation and others...

The first November meeting of PoMOCna Kawa was attended by representatives of two international organizations - Monika Korowajczyk-Sujkowska from IOM Poland and Anna Szlendak from the Danish Refugee Council. The speakers talked about the minimum standards of collective accommodation centers - what exactly they are, who should comply with them and what relationship they have with Polish legislation. The most important conclusions from the meeting are below.

Minimum standards of collective accommodation centers

Collective accommodation centers's management is the process of coordinating and overseeing the delivery of services, protection and support in places where people have been resettled. This process is both technical (e.g. ensuring the availability of drinking water and appropriate infrastructure) and social (e.g. ensuring the integration of the center's residents). Its purpose is to ensure compliance of the services and protection provided with national and international regulations, guidelines and agreed standards. It aims to improve the quality of life while respecting the dignity of people experiencing displacement. **The speakers presented the essence of minimum standards and their importance. They pointed out that due to the same rights of every person, these standards are unchanged and the same for each center. They are to ensure that staying in the centers is safe for health (including mental health) and life.** The standards were constructed based on experience from previous refugee crises.

Structure of minimum standards

The minimum management standards for centers have a common structure that resembles other humanitarian standards. It consists of:

- **key actions:** define specific steps for implementing the minimum standard in practice;
- **key indicators:** serve as measurement tools that indicate whether a given standard is being achieved. They help monitor the program's progress and results against the standard throughout the implementation process.
- **guidance:** provides additional information to support key activities and contains references to other standards, guidance and tools.

The standards are general in nature, but key indicators, like key activities, must be adapted to the specific context and phase of implementation of a given program.

Guidelines for Poland

The speakers presented specific recommendations regarding collective accommodation centers for Poland, taking into account the local context. **They were developed in June 2023 by members of the Housing and Accommodation Sector in cooperation with the Protection Sector for Poland (UNHCR).** The recommendations are in the form of a table that summarizes:

- national, European and international standards for shelter, camp coordination and management;
- water, sanitation and hygiene standards;
- recommendations regarding the gender of residents of collective housing centers;
- recommendations regarding reception conditions;
- Sphere standards;
- the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' emergency standards and minimum camp management standards;
- standards resulting from Polish law.

When creating these guidelines, it was taken into account that at least the minimum standards and indicators set out in this document should always be sought. The process of organizing a shelter is dynamic and conditions can be improved in subsequent phases. Failure to achieve the minimum indicators should not constitute an obstacle to providing support to those in need - the top priority is saving lives and alleviating suffering.

A clear plan specifying how and when standards will be achieved can provide justification in situations where it is not possible to meet the stated standards immediately.

The context of Polish legislation

Minimum standards are not binding law in Poland, therefore there is no formal institution to which you can report their violation. The audience at the meeting raised this topic due to their experiences and observations of collective accommodation for refugees. The lack of a legal basis means that compliance with these standards cannot be enforced. It is worth adding that the legislator in the special act (concerning assistance to citizens of Ukraine) allowed temporary construction facilities that do not meet all the requirements of technical and construction, fire protection and hygiene and sanitary regulations for the purpose of accommodating refugees from Ukraine. This move was aimed at being able to provide any accommodation in times of crisis.

Handbook for humanitarian organizations

In a humanitarian crisis, camps and camp-like facilities (collective residence places) are often the only places where internally displaced persons and refugees can seek protection and assistance. The handbook presents the basic actions that should be taken to ensure the proper operation of refugee shelters. It also discusses issues related to planning and coordination between sectors and organizations, explaining the role of the institution managing the center and working on a daily basis in collective accommodation facilities, and defining the minimum level of quality of such work. The target recipient of the standards described in the handbook are managers of centers and their teams, i.e. staff of collective accommodation centers. The standards are also intended for people working with displaced people where they live, i.e. people working directly with displaced people, planners and policy makers, technical specialists, coordinators, donors, academics and people undertaking advocacy activities and contacts with the media or organizing communications . You can download the handbook [here](#).



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