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**Recommendation on
State Accountability in the Provision of Housing for People on the Move,
Refugees and Asylum Seekers –
A fundamental matter of respect of human rights**

Adopted by the Conference of INGOs
at its General Assembly session of 15 October 2025

Introduction

Complementary to its 'Recommendation for a Global Approach of the Rights of Refugees and Migrants and the Role of Civil Society' (CONF/AG(2023)REC2), the Conference of INGOs (CINGO) Committee on Migration Issues emphasises in its present Recommendation the crucial role of adequate accommodation arrangements and appropriate housing policies for people in migration, in general and in response to specific vulnerabilities. The present Recommendation aims at safeguarding fundamental human rights, dignity, safety and prospects of integration, not only in the direct interest of people on the move, refugees and asylum seekers themselves, but also of societies hosting them.

Considering:

- the **European Convention on Human Rights** (henceforth referred to as ECHR) signed in Rome on November 4, 1950 in its

* **Article 8** on 'the Right to respect for private and family life', stating that 'everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence', and serving as the base for case law of the European Court of Human Rights giving protection to family reunification. In the Court's view, article 8 protects the right to form and maintain ties with one's fellow human beings and with the outside world and encompasses aspects of the individual's social identity, recognizing that the social ties between settled immigrants and the community in which they live form an integral part of the notion of "private life". The Court thus also provides protection against eviction and destruction of dwellings;

* **Article 14** on 'Prohibition of discrimination', stating that 'the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without

discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status'. Article 14 is the basis on which case law of the European Court of Human Rights¹² requires States to ensure that a general policy does not have disproportionately prejudicial effects on a particular group;

- the European Social Charter (henceforth referred to as ESC) adopted in Turin on October 18, 1961, and the Revised European Social Charter (henceforth referred to as rESC) of May 3, 1996, which enshrine the right to housing notably through article 16 on 'the Right of the family to social, legal and economic protection'.

According to the Explanatory Report to the Revised Charter, paragraph 31 stipulating that 'States must endeavour to provide an adequate supply of housing, including a guarantee against unlawful eviction, consider the needs of families and ensure that housing is decent and equipped with essential amenities', decent housing³ being defined as housing that is not insalubrious, offers essential supplies and is of sufficient size for the composition of the family;

* **article 19**, paragraph 4, alinea c on 'the Right to equal treatment of migrant workers regarding social housing', stipulating that 'States must undertake to eliminate all de jure or de facto discrimination as regards access to public and private housing' and further elaborated by decisions⁴ of the European Committee on Social Rights (henceforth referred to as ECSR) that there must be no 'de jure or de facto discriminating restrictions on home ownership, access to subsidised housing, housing subsidies, loans or allowances', while also accepting the principle of a "margin of appreciation" to strike a balance between the general interest and the interests of specific groups;

* **article 31**, paragraph 1 on the notion of 'accommodation of an adequate standard', further elaborated in the in the Explanatory Report to the Revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), Committee of Social Rights, Council of Europe.

- housing of an acceptable standard from a health point of view, more particularly concerning water supply, heating, sanitary facilities, electricity, absence in the structure of lead and asbestos;
- absence of overcrowding, the accommodation's size being proportional to the number of members and composition of the family;
- existence of a legal guarantee of security of tenure;

1 *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, [GC], no. 57325/00, 13 November 2007.

2 *Biao v. Denmark*, [GC], no. 38590/10, 24 May 2016.

3 *Report on the Right to Housing in the Light of European Standards and European Good Practices*, explanatory paragraphs by the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) on Articles 16 and 31 of the Revised European Social Charter, Council of Europe.

4 *ERRC v. Greece*, Complaint No. 15/2003, ECSR, decision on the merits, 8 December 2004; *ERRC v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 31/2005, ECSR, decision on the merits, 18 October 2006; *ERRC v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, ECSR, decision on the merits, 19 October 2009.

* **article 31**, paragraph 2 to ‘prevent and reduce homelessness with a view on its gradual elimination’, further elaborated in ECSR decision⁵ which focus on

- the right to shelter for all persons in a situation of migration, regardless of their status, including undocumented individuals under the country's jurisdiction. The shelter must meet safety, health and hygiene requirements, and be equipped with essential comforts, while safety of the immediate environment is also part of these requirements⁶;
- the right to accommodation for all unaccompanied children, including those referred to as “undocumented”, recognising that this right is closely linked to the right to life and is essential to the respect of the human dignity of every individual. This right is clearly grounded in Article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that any child who is temporarily or permanently deprived of their family environment is entitled to special protection and assistance from the State. Accordingly, member States are called upon to establish care systems that respect the best interests of the child, ensuring safe, stable and appropriate accommodation, in cooperation, where appropriate, with public or private organisations specialised in child protection;

* **article 31**, paragraph 3 on the right to housing for people who do not have the necessary resources to lead a decent life and meet their basic needs satisfactorily. Relevant ECSR decisions⁷ stipulate that States must

- provide social housing, particularly for the most disadvantaged, as well as housing subsidies for people and households on low incomes;
- ensure that waiting times are not too long, and that legal or non-legal remedies are available in the event of refusal to grant such aid or of excessive delays.

Inspired by:

- the Council of Europe Action Plan 2021-2025 on the protection of vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe, which does not contain explicit reference to housing, but proposes several actions focused on non-discrimination and inclusion, particularly in terms of reception conditions, of which accommodation is a crucial part;

5 *FEANTSA v. France*, Complaint No. 39/2006, ECSR, decision on the merits, 5 December 2007; *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), decision on the merits, 19 October 2009

6 *FEANTSA v. France*, Complaint No. 39/2006, ECSR, decision on the merits, 5 December 2007.

7 *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Greece*, Complaint No. 15/2003, ECSR, decision on the merits, 8 December 2004; *FEANTSA v. France*, Complaint No. 27/2004, ECSR, decision on the merits, 5 December 2007; *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 31/2005, European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), decision on the merits, 18 October 2006; *FEANTSA v. France*, Complaint No. 39/2006, ECSR, decision on the merits, 5 December 2007; *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. France*, Complaint No. 51/2008, European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR), decision on the merits, 19 October 2009;

- the paper 'Human rights aspects of immigrants and refugee integration policies', published by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) in 2019, presenting a set of standards and recommendations which inspire the integration policies pursued by various Council of Europe member States;
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2015)1 on intercultural integration and diversity management, promoting the search for innovative approaches to diversity management, an approach described as intercultural integration in the context of “intercultural cities”;
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)10 on improving access of migrants and persons of immigrant background to employment, recognizing the existence of numerous obstacles to access to employment, which may result from recurrent discriminatory practices;
- Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec (2002)4 stating that ‘family reunification is part of a coherent integration policy and in which member States are called upon to grant residence status to the family members of immigrants, as an effective protection against expulsions;
- Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2176 (2017) calling on member states to find lasting solutions to integrating refugees into their societies, condemning all forms of discrimination and recalling the major role of family reunification in successful integration;
- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1686 (2004) to the Committee of Ministers calling for tighter monitoring of member States compliance with international instruments on family reunification;
- the December 2024 Conference on 'Responding to Homelessness through Social Investment', co-organized by the Council of Europe and the Council of Europe Development Bank in Strasbourg, underlining the need for bold and coordinated action to effectively combat homelessness and confirming that the ESC, in particularly in its Articles 16 and 31, provides a guiding framework for defending the right to housing, ensuring that no-one is left behind,

And building on:

- the Conference of International NGOs (henceforth referred to as CINGO) Recommendation for a Global Approach of the Rights of Refugees and Migrants and the Role of Civil Society (CONF/AG(2023) REC2);
- results of extensive consultations within the CINGO and a February 2025 field study trip to Poland, gauging the particular concerns among civil society organisations active in migration related matters,

The Conference of INGOs underscores the following principles which should be at the foundation of housing policies for refugees, asylum seekers and persons in a situation of migration:

1. authorities carry the ultimate responsibility for the provision of appropriate accommodation, not in the least for children and other vulnerable people;
2. accommodation must guarantee human dignity, which implies a minimum of comfort and 'personal space';
3. accommodation must provide security and safety with immediate effect, by means of measures of protection at the level of individuals, families and communities;
4. stability of accommodation is essential for physical and mental integrity in the longer run and is therefore pursued in all relevant policies;
5. accommodation must facilitate a prospect of integration, which requires a two-way dialogue of cultural 'rapprochement' and an acceptance of the fundamental values of the hosting society.

The Conference consequently

A - for the sake of all people on the move, refugees and asylum seekers

- demands that authorities, at all levels, assume the ultimate responsibility, both legally and ethically, for the provision of appropriate accommodation to refugees and persons in a situation of migration, regardless of the role which is attributed to the private sector and civil society organizations at the operational and organisational level. Outsourcing of practical solutions and granting public financial support to private and civil society initiatives, does not discharge public authorities from their responsibility to supervise and guarantee the adequacy of accommodation which is offered, also in terms of the herewith linked supply of essential services, such as health care and educational services, food distribution, legal and labour market advice. In that regard, administrative and financial barriers to medical care should be removed for those populations;
- insists that, in view of guaranteeing human dignity, housing policies must adequately reflect the profound impact which they have on the daily lives of individuals and allow each person to feel safe, while respecting privacy and facilitating positive social interaction, thus avoiding isolation, considering that a "hostile" or 'unwelcoming' environment is bound to reactivate past traumas, and degrade mental health;
- urges member States to establish a formalised, multi-disciplinary system for early vulnerability assessment, taking into account not only medical needs but also psychological, social and family-related factors, to tailor accommodation and support to each person's specific situation from the outset;
- recommends measures to be taken to enhance safety and protection of people

on the move, relying on stability of accommodation, in coherent and consistent action

- at the individual level, by immediate provision of basic medical services, psychological support, and safe living circumstances;
- in terms of family support, with programmes of counselling and assistance to access social services;
- aimed at the creation and consolidation of safe and supportive communities, where children and families can live securely, with access to education, healthcare, and social welfare.

- asks member States to ensure additional emergency accommodation capacity, particularly during winter periods, to prevent people from being left in inhumane conditions and to respond to seasonal peaks in homelessness and vulnerability;
- strongly recommends all authorities involved that accommodation policies for people on the move refugees and asylum seekers be embedded in medium-term budgetary planning, in support of well-thought, consensual and stable housing policy choices, rather than ephemeral experiments based on short-term political motives and temporary financing, in the interest of securing a stable environment which is needed to build a situation of physical integrity and mental balance in the longer run;
- demands member States to take into consideration decisions of the European Court of Human Rights which have strengthened the protection of psychological integrity and have in particular established that detention in inappropriate conditions, or exposure to situations of prolonged stress without adequate support, can constitute violations of the rights protected under the ECHR and in particular its Articles 2, 5 and 8. Member States be reminded that the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence and its tangible and virtual impact on daily life in all its segments, compounds the challenges for physical and mental integrity of individuals and for the integrity of the human mind in general;
- firmly insists that migration policy must contain a prospect of integration into the local community, which implies on one hand the creation of conditions for a two-way dialogue of cultural 'rapprochement', supplemented on the other hand by an acceptance on the side of newcomers of the fundamental values of the welcoming society. It is therefore essential to strengthen integrated cooperation between public services and civil society organisations, creating a coordinated support network to ensure continuous and holistic care for refugees and persons in a situation of migration throughout their reception and integration journey;
- in order to promote the process of integration of refugees, asylum seekers and persons in a situation of migration,
 - * calls upon authorities to assume responsibility towards refugees, asylum seekers and persons in a situation of migration to avoid their geographical isolation, which enters a logic of segregation and de facto detention and is overall to the detriment not only of access to services, but also of chances of societal integration in the longer run;

* demands that authorities at all relevant levels assume responsibility in intervening in the housing market

- by actively identifying, prosecuting and wiping out slumlord practices,
- by enacting policies to counter tenant exploitation in local situations of affordable housing shortage;
- by organising and providing individual and proper housing solutions for refugees, asylum seekers and people on the move,
- by taking lessons from national examples of unchecked privatisation in the housing sector, which have often resulted in delays, payment backlogs and profit-driven practices, and ensure that any private or civil society provider operates under strict public oversight and quality standards that prioritise the well-being and dignity of residents,
- and by financially supporting civil society organisations organising and providing individual and proper housing solutions for refugees and individuals in need of protection and support in the context of migration;

* calls member States to consider that refusal or inability of public authorities to adequately provide accommodation for refugees, asylum seekers and other persons in a situation of migration does not only go counter to the fundamental rights of the latter but also constitutes a threat to public order in the host country. When people in extremely precarious situations are not properly housed, they are forced to live in undignified conditions, often in plain sight, which can cause social tension and fuel feelings of fear, rejection and insecurity within the local community. Therefore, it is crucial for authorities to develop inclusive accommodation policies that meet the needs of all people, including those in migration situations, in order to prevent social unrest and maintain societal cohesion. Effective and humane handling of these issues contributes to social stability and collective harmony, essential elements for peace and security in a society;

* stresses that accommodation also has an impact on ways to facilitate intercultural dialogue, which needs to be conducted in the interest of all sides and in view of societal conflict prevention and a smooth integration process. Intercultural dialogue must be concretely pursued in a structured way, in combination with the active and conscious acceptance by refugees, asylum seekers and other persons in a situation of migration of the fundamental values of the hosting society, such as the separation of state and religion, the non-negotiable protection of democratic decision making and freedom of speech and the rejection of antisemitism, racism, xenophobia, gender-based, purely religious and any other form of discriminations;

* calls on member States to recognise education, vocational training and language learning as integral components of accommodation strategies, enabling individuals — especially but not only youth — to regain self-confidence, overcome past traumas and actively prepare for social and economic integration into the host community;

* encourages authorities and all parties involved in handling migration issues, to recognise that providing proper accommodation is not an isolated objective

embedded in the need for integration but must also be seen in conjunction with the wider array of surrounding arrangements, measures and partnerships. Many urban policies favorable to accommodation demonstrate the primacy of local partnerships between municipalities and associations. These include partner organisations in health, police, fire brigades, voluntary sector organisations and educational services. They can also comprise social cooperatives, volunteer associations or civil society organisations. Many existing urban projects emphasize encouraging cooperation between “professionals” and “volunteers” and highlight the role played by the intercultural mediators of community centres in improving the whole process, the intense work, in local networking, with stakeholders in the sectors of education, justice, health and culture. Local families can also be instrumental in providing a supervised and accompanied reception of people in a situation of migration;

B. Regarding particularly vulnerable groups, asks for specific attention in member States

- for the role which stable and appropriate accommodation is bound to play in the development and integration of women migrant workers, particularly mothers, who face more impediments than native mothers in finding and seeking employment, because of their often low level of education, socio-cultural factors, lacking language skills, and other practical issues;
- urges member States to recognise in their policies that stable and dignified accommodation at a non-isolated location is a crucial element for ensuring that children have the opportunity to develop their individual personality, effectively have adequate access to educational and healthcare services and acquire the necessary skills for their future independent participation in society, whether in the host country or eventually in their country of origin. Including children in migration in educational activity usually also implies a direct involvement of mothers in the process of education, hence of integration;
- regarding children in migration, more specifically demands from member States that
 - the non-negotiable principle remain safeguarded that detention of children can under no circumstances be tolerated and acceptable;
 - children in migration be accommodated in reception centres, where they have adequate access to education, medical care, among other services, rather than in detention centres;
 - there be a provision for the separation of high-risk cases of children, with serious health problems and their families, so that they can be accommodated in more central areas, accessible to public pediatric hospitals;
 - a regulation be created and fully implemented, according to which, regardless of their legal status, children in migration with health problems and new-borns (high risk cases) have immediate and full access to the public medical system;
 - material conditions be created to ensure that children in migration be not exposed to threatening situations caused by physical security issues or absence and restrictions of access to medical care, such as vaccinations,

- dental hygiene, diagnostic and blood tests;
- concrete measures be elaborated and concretely rolled out to end forms of exclusion from the prescription system, practical inability to call National Emergency Centres in case of emergency situations, lack of access to interpretation services and difficulties of access to public transport, in order to go to hospital, rehabilitation centres and other places necessary for medical and rehabilitation care;
- appropriate, stable accommodation be explicitly recognised as a crucial factor in avoiding that children be burdened with adult tasks and adult responsibilities in order to protect and support other, even more vulnerable family members;

- recommends policy makers' consideration for the fact that guaranteeing secure and stable accommodation and the supply of basic goods, food and clothing are an absolute precondition for the successful roll-out of any scheme of psychotherapy made available to children in migration, who are often traumatised and acutely in need of mental health services. A main difficulty encountered in the provision of psychotherapy to children in migration is often the lack of fixed contact persons in charge of interpretation, an issue which is indirectly also related to instability of accommodation. Special attention should be given to the psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults (aged 14–18), particularly those who are unaccompanied or isolated, by strengthening access to age-appropriate mental health care and psychosocial support, which remains critically underdeveloped for this age group in many contexts;

- recommends expanding availability of semi-supported housing schemes for young people, combining independent living with educational and social mentoring, to foster a gradual transition towards autonomy and successful social and economic participation;

- urges member States to step up effective protection measures for women and girls in a situation of migration, particularly vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence, including trafficking for sexual exploitation, labor exploitation and forced marriage, and stresses that countering these vulnerabilities requires the establishment of shelters dedicated to all women and other shelters at a secret location, specifically designed and secured for victims of human trafficking. Once the woman in migration is settled in such temporary accommodation, assistance must ex officio be provided for the regularisation process or, if necessary, in view of the application for international protection. Medical care and psychological support must also be automatically part of such temporary accommodation arrangements. The subsequent objective must be to relocate the victim to a more stimulating housing situation which allows her to become more independent. Requiring her to pay a symbolic rent can be taken into consideration, as this is bound to stimulate her socio-economic independence and to enhance her skills of managing her own finances, especially if she did not have the freedom to do so in her previous life situation;

- calls on member States to accommodate pregnant women in migration in reception centers, rather than in closed, de facto detention centers, for them to have access, among other things, to midwifery services, basic care and hygienic services, as well as childcare;

- insists on the implementation of the 2006 'UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities', stipulating that 'States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters';

- calls for attention to the security issues encountered by refugees and persons in a situation of migration from the LGBTQ+ community who live in collective facilities and are frequently exposed to expressions of intolerance by other residents, including fellow beneficiaries of international protection or migration-related accommodation, as well as staff members. The Committee therefore insists on the importance of developing safe, inclusive daytime spaces and dedicated shelters for LGBTQ+ persons, where they can socialise, build trust in themselves, and flourish without fear of harassment or discrimination, complementing existing housing solutions.

The Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe requests its President to ensure dissemination of the present Recommendation to the other instances of the Council.