



Resolution 2026 (2014)¹

Final version

Alternatives to Europe's substandard IDP and refugee collective centres

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The collective centres which were first set up in the 1990s to provide temporary shelter in the wake of the conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus continue to be used to house refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in living conditions that are incompatible with human dignity and where the fundamental rights of the individuals, such as the right to adequate housing, are often violated.
2. The number of IDPs in the Council of Europe member States, many of whom live in collective centres, is estimated to be around 2.5 million. However, this figure does not reflect the real situation, given the intrinsic nature of internal displacement and the difficulty in determining the exact number of such centres.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly underlines, in this context, the importance of establishing appropriate population data management to obtain an idea of the number, the location and the living conditions of IDPs, in particular people living in collective centres, so as to be able to meet their needs and protect their rights.
4. The Assembly is also concerned about the steady rise in the number of refugees, many of whom are obliged to live in collective centres; this number is increasing even further as a result of the Syrian conflict.
5. The Assembly recalls Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2006)6 on internally displaced persons, in which it stressed “its commitment to the spirit and provisions of the United Nations guiding principles [Orders concerning collective centres, UNHCR-IOM, 2010] and its willingness to implement them in the member states’ national legislation and policy”.
6. The Assembly also welcomes the initiatives taken by the Council of Europe Development Bank and, in particular, the Sarajevo Process on Refugees and Displaced Persons. It also recalls the donors’ conference which was held in Sarajevo in April 2012 to consider the situation of refugees and IDPs in the Balkans, during which Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia reasserted their commitment to finding lasting solutions for refugees and IDPs.
7. The Assembly nevertheless regrets that, despite all the initiatives taken, the living conditions in many collective centres continue to be deplorable and that these centres present serious public health and safety risks for the people living there. Moreover, not all countries always offer guarantees of security of tenure, including legal protection against eviction from these centres, which amounts to an infringement of the right to adequate housing and creates insecurity which is detrimental to the fulfilment of sustainable solutions for displaced persons.
8. The Assembly would also like to draw attention to vulnerable groups and in particular to the specific situation of elderly people and of women, children, minority groups and persons with disabilities in collective centres, who need more assistance. Women are often victims of sexual and domestic violence, while the children do not always have access to education.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 18 November 2014 (see Doc. 13507, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr René Rouquet).*

9. The Assembly believes that, in view of these findings, there is an urgent need for governments to take the necessary steps to resolve the problems that exist in these centres, particularly with regard to the quality of housing.
10. Consequently, the Assembly invites the member States of the Council of Europe:
 - 10.1. with regard to collective centres, to:
 - 10.1.1. take careful stock of the situation and of the number of IDPs and refugees in official and unofficial collective centres, and establish a strategy vis-à-vis such centres and their occupants;
 - 10.1.2. identify alternative solutions and facilitate the closure of centres which do not meet minimal requirements in terms of safety and quality of life, ensuring the full and meaningful participation of IDPs in the decision-making process;
 - 10.1.3. insofar as possible, make it easier for the occupants to become owners of their collective centres and ensure that these meet minimum safety standards;
 - 10.1.4. regularise unofficial collective centres and ensure that the residents are given adequate protection against any risk of eviction;
 - 10.1.5. provide for alternative housing measures according to the different settlement options chosen by the displaced persons, irrespective of whether these are integration in the local community or voluntary and safe returns, through the allocation of new housing, social housing or, in exceptional circumstances, the allocation of abandoned housing;
 - 10.1.6. inform the people living in collective centres of their rights and of the possible alternatives in a language they understand;
 - 10.1.7. provide legal assistance and financial resources in cases where IDPs have lodged complaints concerning the restitution of their property or reparation for losses incurred;
 - 10.1.8. take specific steps to help elderly people, women, children, persons with disabilities, minority groups and others with specific needs;
 - 10.2. with regard to a global approach to:
 - 10.2.1. prepare a global strategy concerning in particular sustainable solutions for the rehousing and reintegration of displaced persons, in keeping with the United Nations Guiding Principles, and in consultation with relevant international organisations;
 - 10.2.2. set up a national co-ordination centre for IDPs and refugees and ensure that it has sufficient administrative and financial resources to help IDPs in the countries concerned;
 - 10.2.3. implement a durable strategy, in collaboration with relevant actors, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to encourage access to livelihoods and independence so that refugees and IDPs no longer depend on State support, and to improve their job prospects, for example by offering specialised training courses, micro-credit and tax exemptions.
11. The Assembly also recommends that, insofar as possible, the Council of Europe Development Bank and member States of the Council of Europe provide financial support in the form of donations or loans, as was done in the context of the Sarajevo Process.