

Collective Centers and Communal Housing standards – technical guidelines for Poland

The following recommendations have been developed by the members of the Poland Shelter/Housing/Accommodation Sector. These recommendations are intended to support a harmonized approach amongst actors in Poland for the delivery of assistance in collective centers and communal houses. The table compile international Shelter, CCCM and WASH standards in collective centers (Sphere standards^[1], UNHCR Emergency standards^[2], and Camp Management minimum standards^[3]) and the Polish Law, aiming to guide relevant authorities, stakeholders and partners involved in management of collective centers accommodation assistance.

The aim should always be to reach at least the minimum standards and indicators establish in these guidelines recognizing that shelter is a process and conditions can be improved in steps. Not reaching the minimum indicators should not be an impediment to provide shelter support to people in need. Saving lives and alleviating suffering should be the priority. A clear plan on how and when the standards will be reached can help as justification in case standards cannot be reached at once.

1. Key terms:

- **Collective Centre** – An open space where refugees find accommodation on a mid-term basis (**up to 3 months**) in pre-existing buildings (which were not likely constructed as accommodation) for example school, factories, barracks, community centers, gymnasiums, hotels, warehouses, etc. Refugees share sleeping and living areas and services such as MHPSS, Protection, Social Support, Healthcare are provided. The collective centers are managed by authorities (municipality, voivodships), as well as NGO and private entities.
- **Communal Housing** – A “dormitory style” facility where refugees find accommodation on a mid- long-term basis (**longer than 3 months**). These facilities include dormitories, hotels, adapted non-residential spaces as offices and have separate sleeping / living rooms per family with communal spaces shared as toilet, kitchen, etc. The communal houses are managed by authorities (municipality, voivodships), as well as NGO and private entities, which could be providing different level of services in the facility or outside the facility.

2. Standards:

Experience has shown that relevant authorities are often flexible in applying codes and standards in emergency situations. However the authorities have to be involved from the very beginning and authorize any temporarily flexible interpretation of the regulation.

Standard 1 / PLANNING, SAFETY and MAINTENANCE
The planning of temporary collective center /communal houses enables dignified, safe and secure from harm or violence use of accommodation and essential services by the refugees.
Indicators:
S.1. I.1. All existing building adjusted for collective accommodation (more than 20 people) should be inspected and/or verified, according to the Special Act on refugees from Ukraine (March 2022), by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ district inspector of building supervision▪ district (municipal) commander of the State Fire Service▪ state district sanitary inspector
S.2. I.2 Fire risks have been considered, according to the local regulations, including fire breaks, escape routes, assembly point and other fire hazard prevention measures
S.1. I.3. Fire prevention and first aid equipment available: 1 FA kit + fire extinguishing system / CC (1 kg of extinguishing agent per 25 m2 of area)
S.1. I.4. Presence of safety devices (such as smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, stair gates and window guards)
S1. I.5. Safety audits directly integrated into site maintenance and improvement plans
S1. I.6. Repairs and replacements needed within the housing are carried out
S1. I.7. Residents have the possibility to report the need for maintenance and repairs.
S1. I.6. Planning should include an exit strategy for scaling down and/or decommissioning of the facility.
Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Care and maintenance of the site's infrastructure are ensured, including through community-based projects</i>• <i>With service providers, site planners and community governance structures, undertake regular observational and safety audits of the site, evaluating both physical infrastructure (including privacy concerns) in compliance with the Polish Law, as well as community behavior.</i>• <i>Develop a response plan to address "red flags" found during safety audits</i>• <i>Promote equal distribution between women and men of care work, maintenance, and food preparation in the CC</i>• <i>Regularly check on site security and the well-being of women, girls and other at-risk groups to ensure the risks of GBV and trafficking are proactively mitigated</i>

Standard 2 / LOCATION

The collective center /communal house location enables access to essential services by the refugees.

Indicators:

S.2. I.1 Land Use: The facility lie within a residential area or mixed-use area.

S.2. I.2 Urban Zone - The facility lie within the Urban Planning Zone of the area.

S.2. I.3 Ownership is regulated.

S.2. I.4 The maximum distance from the facility to services as follows:

- Hospital: 10 km.
- School: 1 km.
- Markets/Shops (with food supplies): 1 km
- Closest ATM: 1 km
- Public transport access: 1 km

Recommendations:

- *A written consent should be available in a form of a declaration from the local authorities or the owner of the building that it is intended for the purpose of serving the Ukrainian refugees within a given period of time.*
- *The site location should support integration and avoid discrimination. It should therefore be located in areas with access to public transport and good connection to the center of town or urban areas with respective services and facilities. This is especially critical in long-term accommodations. Therefore residential areas should be preferred over remoter areas on the outskirts or in industrial areas.*

Standard 3 / INFRASTRUCTURE

The collective center /communal house building should be structurally solid and intact and properly maintained.

S.3. I.1 Building do not present visible damages of its structural and construction elements (foundations, columns/beams, concrete floors, walls, roofing system, plasters, etc.) as well as the engineering systems.

S.3. I.2 Building do not present leakages.

S.3. I.3 The external approaches such as paths or drives have a firm, level surface.

Recommendations:

- *Regular observational and safety audits of the site evaluating physical infrastructure should be conducted and documented.*

<p>Standard 4 / MINIMUM SPACE Refugees should have enough, safe and adequate space within collective centers /communal houses with facilities for essential services, to facilitate daily activities.</p>
<p>Indicators:</p>
<p>S.4. I.1 Basement and uninsulated attics are not to be considered for accommodation</p>
<p>S.4. I.2. Floor level of the building I should be equal to or higher than the ground level adjacent to the building</p>
<p>S.4. I.3. For collective centers and communal houses minimum space in sleeping areas is 5 m²/person and 45m²/person including common spaces People sleep in separate lockable rooms with 2 to 4 beds in one room providing adequate personal privacy and safety Families are placed together in a separate unit (which can have several rooms). If not practically feasible to meet this indicator, alternative ways should be found to ensure privacy.</p>
<p>S.4. I.4. Residents have an individual cupboard or locker within their sleeping space to store their belongings safely, or a key to their room</p>
<p>S.4. I.5. For individual housing units, national accommodation standard required: 12.5 m²/person + extra common area weighted surface of 35 m²/family. Each unit should has an usable floor area of not less than 25 m².</p>
<p>S.4. I.6. Minimum height of living spaces and bedrooms, according to Polish law should be minimum 2,5m, except bathrooms where the height can be minimized to 2.2m if they are equipped with mechanical ventilation.</p>
<p>S.4. I.7. Doors have a minimum height of 2.00m and minimum width of 0.80m. Fire escape doors and internal doors for people with disabilities have a minimum width of 0.9 m, as well as corridors. Bathroom doors for people with disabilities have a minimum width 1 m.</p>
<p>S.4. I.8. Rooms or sleeping areas are separated by gender or households and no access is possible for applicants of the opposite sex.</p>
<p>S.4. I.9. Space for recreational activities / women / child friendly spaces - are available and clearly demarked</p>
<p>S.4. I.10. Lockers and door handles to ensure privacy of displaced people are operational</p>
<p>S.4. I.11. For communal houses, dedicated space for kitchen and storage of food / NFIs it is available (it is not forbidden to cook??)</p>
<p>S.4. I.12. Women, girls, LGBTIQ+ persons, people with disabilities, and other at-risk groups are consulted on what type of shelter/room arrangement would feel safest</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Management should regularly monitor overall capacity VS current occupancy</i> • <i>Measures are in place to provide privacy and safety between ages and genders as culturally appropriate</i> • <i>The use of carpets is not recommended.</i> • <i>Consultation with women, girls, LGBTIQ+ persons and other risk groups for accommodation arrangements/options to ensure safe and dignified accommodation options are available – specific personal needs and barriers to access are considered and GBV risks are mitigated</i>

- Establish a system for the community to provide feedback about accommodation-related safety issues
- Establish a helpdesk/information point
- A welcome and information area (recommended a dedicated room) should provide basic information of operating procedures and “housekeeping rules” of the collective center.. All information should be accessible and understandable by anyone regardless of language, age, gender, educational background (illiterate) or disability. Consider translation into several languages and preferably use simple pictograms or images.
- Space for a basic healthcare facility should be foreseen (e.g. a container) as well as a designated isolation area or quarantine area for individuals suspicious to have an infectious disease. This may include as well independent toilets and eating space
- Food can be cooked and served collectively by a catering service.

- Suggested list of facilities for collective centers:

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| ○ Security room | 1 office for security staff |
| ○ Registration | Registration and security can be joined in LT |
| ○ Information | Can be a desk |
| ○ Distribution with storage area | independent access for goods |
| ○ Administration, management and office for staff | 4 m ² / staff |
| ○ Health care / First aid | with wash basin |
| ○ Isolation area | with toilets |
| ○ Psychological support / social care | 1 office |
| ○ Canteen or dining room | min 1 m ² / pers |
| ○ Collective leisure rooms | min 2 m ² / pers |
| ○ Space for children | min 2 m ² /child |
| ○ Space for women | |
| ○ Space for men | |
| ○ Teaching area | e.g. for language classes |
| ○ Praying room | can be integrated within other space |
| ○ Warehouse | Approx. 10% of total surface |
| ○ Outdoor leisure space (Inc. Sports) | min 2 m ² /pers |
| ○ Functional / technical rooms | |
| ○ Housekeeping and maintenance | |
| ○ Lockable deposit for valuables | |
| ○ Laundry room | |

Standard 5 / VENTILATION + LIGHTING

Collective center / communal house should provide fresh air and adequate ventilation and lighting

Indicators:

S.5. I.1. Natural ventilation and good airflow (windows) is present at a rate of 20–30 m³ per person per hour.

S.5. I.2. There is no presence of mold

S.5. I.3. Living rooms and bedrooms have natural light being the windows' surface area must at least 10% of the room's surface area.

S.5. I.4. Artificial lighting is available in rooms and communal spaces (toilets , washing facilities, cooking areas, surroundings etc.) to ensure protection and a safe execution of activities or services.

S.5. I.5. Common areas such as corridors, staircases etc. have emergency lightning

Recommendations:

- *To conduct regular checks and maintenance of mechanical ventilation systems*
- *When natural ventilation is not possible , for instance in bathrooms, complimentary ventilation mechanical systems should be in place.*
- *Artificial lighting should be provided during night time as required for protection issues, especially for access to toilets and showers as well as other communal services.*
- *Heaters or air conditioning have enough capacity to maintain ambient temperature at a comfortable level (ambient temperature should ideally be 16–21°C)*

Standard 6 / ELECTRICAL SUPPLY + HEATING

Collective center / communal house should provide sufficient thermal comfort and adequate electrical supply

Indicators:

S.6. I.1. Electricity is functional, expertise on the electricity based on certification of electrical safety is in place

S.6. I.2 Building have safety valves (relays) on the electrical board and comply with the current electricity regulations.

S.6. I.2. Heating system has enough capacity to maintain ambient temperature at a comfortable level (ideally 18–21 C)

S.6. I.3. Refugees have access to a sufficient number of electric power sockets, being 15 sockets per 100 inhabitants considered as absolute minimum.

Recommendations:

- *Temperatures should be high enough to protect residents from the of cold: 18 °C is a safe and well balanced indoor temperature and not less than +22 °C for premises of a corner type (premises that have 2 external walls, i.e., rooms that are located at the corner of the building)*
- *Vulnerable people such as elderly and children should be granted with warmer temperatures*
- *Assess and mitigate potential risks from the use of heaters or other electric devices.*

Standard 7 / WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

7.1. Refugees have safe and equitable access to a sufficient quantity of water for drinking, cooking and personal, menstrual and domestic hygiene.

7.2. Refugees have adequate, appropriate and acceptable toilet facilities, sufficiently close to their shelter, to allow rapid, safe and secure access at all times, day and night.

Indicators:

S.7.1. I.1. At least 15 liters of water of sufficient quality are available per person per day if stay is more than one day (at least 3 liters per person per day if stay is limited to day-time)

S.7.1. I.2. At least 3 liters of water of sufficient quality are available per person per day if stay is limited to day-time

S.7.1. I.3. Water is available at all times (no shortages or ration)

S.7.1. I.4. Quality of water is sufficient

S.7.2. I.1. There are enough, well-lit and secure lockable toilettes, showers and sinks accessible 24 / 7 with the following minimum, according with Polish regulations for communal spaces:

- 1 toilet per 10 women
- 1 toilet and 1 urinal per 20 men
- 1 washbasin per 5 people
- 1 shower facility per 15 people with hot water and locks on doors. If more than one shower is located in the bathroom, visual separation is ensured.

S.7.2. I.2. Toilettes are divided by gender, including consideration for MHM and if possible adjusted to the needs of people with disabilities and children.

S.7.2. I.3. Maximum distance to toilettes from sleeping space is 50 m with routes properly lit.

S.7.2. I.4. Washing facilities that allow laundry are available , 1 per 12 people.

S.7.2. I.5. The areas are cleaned at least daily or as often as necessary.

S.7.2. I.6. In-depth cleaning of the areas takes place regularly.

Recommendations:

- *WASH actors should systematically implement accessibility and safety audits for WASH infrastructure in communal sites considering gender, age, and diversity dimensions*
- *There are available showers for persons with difficulties to move around, see and their support person and for children with guards, who might feel insecure in adult showers*

Standard 8 / WASTE MANAGEMENT

Refugees have the means to dispose their waste conveniently and effectively.

S.8. I.1 There are designated areas for the residents to dispose garbage, including discrete disposal of used menstrual hygiene materials

S.8. I.2 At least there is present 100L garbage disposal per 10 HHs

S.8. I.3 A 2.5-person maintenance team should be available per 1,000 persons

S.8. I.4 At least 1 disposal bin (120 L) should be allocated for clinical and hazardous

Recommendations:

- *All waste generated by populations living in settlements is removed from the immediate living environment on a daily basis.*
- *There's clearly agreed on solid waste management process on site that include liaising with municipality and agree on collection schedule, have clearly marked waste collection points, etc.*
- *Implement reuse, re-purposing or recycling of solid waste by the community*

Standard 9 / ACCESSIBILITY

The collective center / communal house is accessible by people with disabilities or reduced mobility

Indicators:

S.9. I.1 Every occupant of the facility could access commonspaces such evacuation pathways, pathways to facilities, toilettes, showers, any distribution or collection area, confidential area or activity area including if needed handrails and avoiding as much as possible steps.

S.9. I.2 At least 2 toilets (one for each gender) are designed for disabled people.

S.9. I.3 Doorways and passageways inside the housing are wide enough for wheelchair users.

S.9. I.4 Grab rails exist for support in rooms and places that are used by residents with reduced mobility.

S.9. I.5 Adapted sanitary infrastructure exists, including, for example, walk-in showers, grab rails, sinks and toilets at an appropriate height for wheelchair users, as well as a surface of bathroom and toilet rooms suitable for wheelchairs.

Recommendations:

- *The following elements of the CCs should be in place and the following requirements should be met: o External ramp with a ratio 1:12 (height:length)*
- *Elevators (also external elevators for each entry to the building, i.e. elevators from the ground level to the level of entrances to the building) with the following parameters of the interior space: width 1.1 m., depth 1.4m*
- *Horizontal bars on doors o width of a kitchen space should be not less than 2.3m o tactile stripes and plates on main surfaces*
- *Complaints on the lack of accessibility and use in autonomy/dignified manner of facilities are monitored / assessed*

Standard 10 / NFI

Refugees have sufficient clothing, blankets, bedding and hygiene items to ensure their personal hygiene, comfort, dignity, health and well-being.

Recommendations:

- Bed 1 unit/pers
- Mattress 1 unit/pers
- Bedding/Sheets 2 unit /pers
- Blanket/Cover/Duvet 1 set/pers
- Pillow 1 unit/pers
- Clothing 2 set/pers
- Footwear 1 pair/pers
- Chair 1 unit/pers
- Table 1 unit / room
- Reading lamp 1 unit/pers
- Paper bin 1 unit /3 pers
- Personal hygiene products
- Washing powder

^[1] See the Sphere Handbook <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch001>

^[2] See UNHCR Emergency Handbook <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/45581/camp-planning-standards-planned-settlements>

^[3] See Minimum standards for Camp Management <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/camp/#ch001>

[PL] See Special act for refugees : <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2022000058301.pdf>

^[4] See [EASO Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators \(ismu.org\)](https://www.ismu.org/)

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