

Study on conflicts in refugee accommodation facilities:

Results

We wanted our study to find out what conflicts there are in accommodation facilities and how these could be avoided in the future. For this purpose, we visited 33 accommodation facilities in total in North Rhine-Westphalia, and spoke with over 220 people, among which were residents, staff, security personnel, cleaning staff, municipal employees, and staff from advisory organisations.

Building on the results of our study, we have developed these recommendations for better co-habitation and passed them on to politicians, administrators and operators of accommodation facilities:

Accommodation in apartments or residential units and transparent organisation of asylum process

Many conflicts arise due to housing in large shared accommodation facilities and the asylum process. We therefore recommend accommodation in apartments or in closed residential units with self-catering facilities. It is imperative to ensure that refugees actually receive all the necessary information on the asylum process and can understand the process. The processes must also take place significantly faster, as uncertainty represents a substantial psychological burden.

Support co-determination and autonomy

In many accommodation facilities there is no possibility for residents to participate in decision-making processes. This leads to frustration for the residents and a feeling of helplessness. Residents should, however, be able to help shape their lives in the accommodation facilities independently, and their needs must be taken seriously. That also includes, for example, participating in setting up the rooms, and what food is on offer. All residents should have the possibility to bring their complaints against an entity, independently from the accommodation supervisors, in their own language if desired, so that abuse of power can be prevented and complaints do not founder due to language difficulties.

Create quality standards

Minimum structural standards are required for accommodation facilities. The qualification of all staff members should correspond to the statutory requirements for their occupation, and the possibility of further training should be offered. Information on residents (e.g. illnesses), which has already been acquired by state institutions, must be passed on by state to municipal accommodation facilities using standardised forms to avoid misunderstandings and prevent any additional burden for residents and staff.

Guarantee equal treatment

All residents must be treated equally. Respectful interaction, clear communication, and a professional distance between staff and residents should prevail. Support programmes (e.g. language courses) must also be open to all residents. The rules for dealing with infringements must be clear to all people and apply equally.

Protection for victims

When it comes to violence, particularly domestic and sexualised violence, all victims must receive professional help. There should be no place which residents feel is unsafe (e.g. shower facilities that cannot be locked, dark and isolated areas) in the accommodation facilities. Where there are such places, these must be urgently structurally altered.

Our study has already been reported on in various newspapers and online. We will continue to speak with staff in accommodation facilities, administrative employees, and politicians in order to improve life in accommodation facilities.

We would like to thank all those who took part in our study most sincerely!

If you have any further questions, you can reach us here:

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