

Review of the 2016 [Report "Reception of female refugees and asylum seekers in the EU. Case study Germany"](#) by Ms. Olesia Kliushina, PhD candidate (RSUH); MA in Cultural Studies (RSUH)

The current research is conducted in order to study application procedures and reception conditions of asylum seekers in Germany with special attention to the most vulnerable groups, such as female asylum seekers and girls.

The conducted research shows a huge increase in the numbers of asylum seekers in the EU in 2015. It also demonstrates that female asylum seekers and girls represent a minority and are in need of special protection and additional attention. Existing regulations and laws are not always sufficient and gender-sensitive enough to cope with current situation. As a result, overcrowding makes the process of registration slow and provokes situations especially dangerous for women and children, including gender-based violence and insufficient health care. Communication issues lead to insufficiently provided information and prolong asylum procedure. In order to improve situation and to protect vulnerable categories of asylum seekers specific and gender-sensitive reception conditions are required, such as separate protected housing and access to schools. Education should be provided to prevent sexual and gender based violence.

In general, women and girls are exposed to serious risks of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) during the migration process. Therefore, they should be treated as vulnerable persons and should be provided with suitable gender-sensitive facilities in reception centres. The asylum procedure and conditions have to become more gender sensitive. Moreover, Member States should ensure that gender-based persecution is accepted as a ground for asylum status. According to the Council of Europe and the UNHCR, gender based persecution is considered to be a ground for international protection. They provide additional guidance for granting female asylum seekers refugee status and ensure gender-sensitive reception conditions.

The legal framework regulating asylum and reception in the EU consists of international and European law instruments. In EU legislation, physical, mental and sexual violence and acts of a gender specific nature are recognized as acts of persecution. In these cases, women can be granted refugee status. They may be granted subsidiarity protection status. The rules concerning reception conditions in the EU are contained in Reception Directive and also in Directive 2013/32/EU. The latter also pays attention to gender differences. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is relevant with regard to the reception of female asylum seekers. Directive 2012/92/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime can also be applied to asylum seekers.

Conducted study shows that female applicants for asylum are less successful than male since their applications are considered to be less credible. Therefore, the asylum application procedures must become more gender-sensitive and woman should have an opportunity to get interviewer and interpreter. Gender-sensitive asylum procedures

(according to Directive 2013/32/EU) are offered in order to improve the success rates of women's asylum applications.

Reception centres have to provide sufficient information about the procedure and specific rights (such as opportunities for individual application for a refugee status), and to organize appropriate conditions for the most vulnerable categories of applicants, including child care and other specific facilities, to ensure women an opportunity to be interviewed privately. Reception conditions should be gender-sensitive in order to prevent violence against women that implies separate housing of asylum seekers. Staff should be aware of gender specific problems and appropriately trained to deal with these issues. Young and unaccompanied girls and single women need extra attention. Private bathing and sanitation facilities should be provided, as well as possibility to lock the rooms in reception centres. In addition, sufficient health-care, including an access to psychological aid, must be provided for women and girls. Children should also have access to education. In reception centres, information should be provided that violence against women is considered to be a crime, and that women who have become victims of (sexual) violence are able to report the crime to the reception staff and the police.

Germany tries to provide specialised facilities for vulnerable groups, especially for unaccompanied minors. The Directive dictates to identify vulnerability only during the interview in the BAMF's office with the help of special qualified officers. Although it is not required by law, Germany tries to provide separate housing and sufficient medical care, but it is not always possible due to overcrowding.

Difficulties regarding the living conditions lead to development of unhealthy environment in the centres which can cause violence. Remote location of the centres obstructs integration of people. Asylum seekers face problems with access to health care due to the shortage of professional medical staff. Education cannot always be provided to children, there are often no childcare facilities in reception centres. Reception centres have a lack of interpreters, most of which are male. That creates communicative difficulties for women and provokes conflicts. Female asylum seekers are often not aware of their rights in Germany, and, consequently, they do not report sexual assault. Overcrowding and the lack of space and privacy provoke sexual assaults against women and children.

In 2015th Germany developed a three-step plan to offer more protection for female asylum seekers and children, which includes investments in reception centres' building and improvement, additional reception staff training, and extra funding for torture victims' centres. In order to improve reception conditions in Germany and to bring it in line with international and European standards the authors recommend to step away from security orientated towards a humanitarian orientated asylum policy.

Based on the results of the study, the authors make further recommendations:

- Situation of vulnerable groups of asylum applicants should be improved, including a proper and gender-sensitive reception conditions, an appropriate level of protection, access to information, medical and psychological help, etc.
- Special attention should be paid to education in reception centres, in order to provide gender equality understanding and respect.
- Related measures should be undertaken against perpetrators of violence against women, independent from their nationality.