

From Data to Dignity: Monitoring Accommodation Centres to Foster Autonomy and Participation

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Introduction

Managing migration has been a persistent and politically sensitive challenge for the European Union. After eight years of negotiations, the EU adopted the [Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) in 2024, amending the existing legal framework. The reforms, which must be implemented by June 2026, will reshape migration, asylum, border management and integration policies. Combined with ongoing geopolitical crises, the Pact's implementation marks a critical turning point for the EU.

Our policy report examines the **monitoring of reception conditions** for applicants for international protection, as required under the recast [Reception Conditions Directive](#) (RCD). Effective monitoring is key to ensuring that minimum standards of **dignity and autonomy** are met in the areas of: accommodation, material support and related services. Additionally, any identified gaps must prompt corrective action. Despite a long-standing legal framework, these standards are routinely unmet by Member States (MSs), underscoring the need for **robust, independent monitoring that safeguards rights and strengthens compliance with EU law**, including fundamental rights obligations.

Problem: From Mandate to Missed Opportunities

The RCD sets standards for reception conditions in accommodation centres (used for the collective housing of applicants) and establishes a monitoring mandate to ensure compliance. In theory, this process should create **continuous feedback loops to drive improvements**.

In practice, however, **persistent gaps remain** and reception standards are inconsistent across MSs. These shortcomings stem partly from the legal framework itself and partly from weaknesses in its implementation and enforcement. Monitoring often falls short due to a **lack of independence**, which limits access and impartiality; **insufficient participation** of those directly affected, resulting in missing experiential insights; and **fragmented cooperation** leading to inconsistent interpretation and application of standards. Limited training and capacity **hinder awareness** of systemic issues, as well as culture-sensitive and individual concerns, while **weak accountability** mechanisms mean that recommendations are inconsistently translated into concrete amendments.



Recommendations

To ensure **effective monitoring**, the recommendations below are primarily aimed at MSs and authorities, governmental or non-governmental, tasked with fulfilling the RCD monitoring mandate. In addition, they are relevant to any body operating accommodation centres and seeking to **improve standards and compliance**.

Our policy recommendations are clustered around **five main themes**:



Independence

Guarantee monitors' full autonomy, unannounced visits, unrestricted access, protection from retaliation and confidentiality.



Participation

Involve applicants and staff at all stages through voluntary, safe-guarded and meaningful engagement.



Cooperation

Promote coordination and best-practice sharing among authorities, NGOs, civil society and communities at all governance levels.



Awareness

Train monitors to identify individual and systemic issues, apply consistent yet flexible methods and adapt to diverse needs.



Accountability

Embed follow-up and transparent communication to ensure findings lead to recommendation, remedies and corrective action.

Long-Term Impact

We propose a **systemic shift in how monitoring mandates are implemented** that will: **enhance the dignity and autonomy of applicants, raise living standards** in accommodation centres, **ensure legal compliance** and maximise **operational effectiveness**. Identifying shortcomings early-on will **avoid costly emergency measures**, as well as potential significant costs of non-compliance including litigation and sanctions, while strengthening trust in the EU's commitment to humane and rights-based reception systems.

Awareness Raising Pilot Project: Dignity.Dishes

Dignity.Dishes is an Instagram-based awareness campaign, highlighting the lived realities of applicants in accommodation

centres. The social media account functions supplementarily to the recommendations and highlights our proposal's emphasis on **dignity and autonomy as key monitoring indicators** in reception systems. With a focus on the universal meaning of food, **Dignity.Dishes** illustrates the contrast between restrictive reception conditions and the autonomous, dignified lives applicants could lead if granted greater self-determination in and beyond accommodation centres.

Initiatives such as community kitchens, food festivals and cooking classes have successfully connected individuals across different migration settings. Participants in these culinary activities and partner organisations will co-create the content for the social media posts. Our social media posts will share recipes, highlight factual insights on reception conditions and spotlight events and resources.

