Social Work and Social Counselling

1. The Need for Professional Support

Asylum seekers arrive as strangers. They are as equally unfamiliar with the administrative procedures and processes that determine their status as asylum seekers, as they are with the daily rules of organised reception centres and their social and cultural surroundings. Asylum seekers often arrive without any means of support whatsoever, and are therefore necessarily dependent on social support in their country of arrival. At the beginning of the asylum determination procedures, asylum seekers are generally housed in centralised reception centres, which limits their contact to local communities and their possibilities to find their way. The very nature of such reception conditions severely restricts asylum seekers’ ability to navigate the legal, social and cultural expectations in their country of arrival. Restrictions on asylum seekers’ freedom of movement only intensify the isolation imposed by centralised reception centres.

Hand in hand with asylum seekers’ need for orientation and information, language difficulties compound the barriers that asylum seekers face in accessing information and solving problems on their own. Additionally, the traumatic experiences asylum seekers have suffered in their countries of origin or while fleeing often leave them very vulnerable. Asylum seekers need a supportive environment in the country of arrival, in which they can feel secure. Furthermore, they need assistance not only to cope with their past, but with the new challenges in the recipient country. Problems inherent in the system, such as lengthy asylum determination procedures, rejection of asylum applications, uncertainty about one’s security and right to remain, restrictions and outright prohibitions on working, among others, lead to depression and other psychological and psycho-social problems. As a result, even intelligent and normally self-sufficient individuals feel helpless and incapable and need additional support.

Social counselling and advice for asylum seekers plays a critical role in the reception system as well as in the asylum determination procedure itself. Social care supports asylum seekers’ in adapting to the social and cultural expectations of the reception country, to cope with daily life and integration, and to attain some kind of legal status.

Reception countries are also required to provide information and support to asylum seekers to be able to follow the baffling array of legal norms, which they cannot possibly become familiar with on their own.

2. Advice/Counselling and Monitoring in the Reception Directive

The EU Reception Directive does not explicitly require social counselling and advice. Rather, Member States must ensure that asylum seekers receive any and all necessary information, an undertaking that implicitly requires social counselling. Additionally, the Member States must ensure that asylum seekers have access to UNHCR, non-governmental organisations and other legal aid organisations that offer help and assistance.

Member States’ legal obligations are described in Section 11:

“In order to ensure compliance with the minimum procedural guarantees consisting in the opportunity to contact organisations or groups of persons that provide legal assistance, information should be provided on such organisations and groups of persons.”

Article 5 not only requires Member States to provide information in connection with Member States’ reception obligations, but also guarantees asylum seekers’ access to other necessary information regarding additional support.

“Member States shall ensure that applicants are provided with information on organisations or groups of persons that provide specific legal assistance and
organisations that might be able to help or inform them concerning the available reception conditions, including health care.”

The general requirement of Article 17 is also relevant. Article 17 requires Member States to meet the needs of persons identified as particularly vulnerable in an initial interview. Expertise in social work and counselling is required in order to identify particularly vulnerable persons in the first place, as well as for the assessment of the adequacy of particular reception conditions.

With respect to the question of the qualifications of personnel tasked with caring for asylum seekers, Article 24 of the Directive sets a rather low standard. The officials and organisations responsible for implementing the Reception Directive for adult asylum seekers (whether male or female) need only have basic training. Counsellors working with unaccompanied minors must have appropriate training.

As a practical matter, the rights that are provided for in the Reception Directive can only be fully realised if asylum seekers have access to adequate support, for example, access to activities, training or special therapeutic measures. To the extent Member States restrict or deny access to the material reception conditions or require a contribution to the costs, additional steps beyond providing information and explanations may be necessary, including informal or even legal interventions.

Exceptions? Asylum Seekers in Detention/Closed Centres

The Reception Directive requires that

“Legal advisors or counsellors of asylum seekers and representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or non-governmental organisations designated by the latter and recognised by the Member State concerned shall be granted access to accommodation centres and other housing facilities in order to assist the said asylum seekers. Limits on such access may be imposed only on grounds relating to the security of the centres and facilities and of the asylum seekers.” (Art. 14 § 7.)

Under certain conditions, however, Member States may restrict access to even the above named organisations or persons for security reasons. According to Article 14, paragraph (8), Member States may "set modalities for material reception conditions different from those provided for in this Article, for a reasonable period which shall be as short as possible, when," among others, "the asylum seeker is in detention or confined to border posts.” This provision can thus be construed to deny asylum seekers in closed centres access to social or legal assistance. For asylum seekers in deportation detention, the existing system of surveillance and controlled access suggests that Member States will assume that such security measures are necessary. The fact that paragraph (8) includes an exception to what is otherwise a strict guarantee of access to UNHCR representatives and legal advisers, suggests that Member States will undertake similar security measures when asylum seekers are temporarily detained. Although the meaning of “border posts” is sufficiently clear, the term “detention” can be interpreted to include virtually all forms of confinement. The term detention applies to asylum seekers taken into custody on criminal charges as well as to the general confinement of an asylum seeker within a particular place, where she or he is deprived of freedom of movement, (see Art. 2, § (k)). Thus, in exceptional circumstances and for as short a period of time as possible, Member States may house asylum seekers in facilities that are not designed for their reception and care, such as border centres or deportation detention centres, provided that certain basic rights are enforced, including access to information pursuant to Article 5, family unity pursuant to Article 8, access to education and training pursuant to Article 10 or the protection of particularly vulnerable refugees.

In general, non-governmental organisations should have access to asylum seekers in detention. The exceptions provided for in the Directive do not sanction systemic, long-term suspension of asylum seekers’ right to support and legal advice.
A Member State’s existing social services system is not always equipped to deal with the unique needs and problems of asylum seekers. NGOs play a significant role in filling in the gaps in existing social support systems, a fact made clear in the EU Directive itself. NGOs provide services to asylum seekers that the responsible government agencies cannot always provide. NGOs engaged in this work need to be supported, so that asylum seekers can receive genuinely independent advice and counselling, and to ensure that services meet minimum standards.

3. **Duties and Responsibilities of Social Counsellors**

The responsibilities that fall potentially within the field of social counselling are many. The specific responsibilities vary depending on the individual asylum system, the way in which its reception system is set-up, and the benefits and rights to which asylum seekers are entitled. The scope of responsibilities also depends on the extent to which the social counselling system is part of the government or, alternatively, functions independently. Finally, the scope of services offered by any social counselling system are influenced to some extent by social networks, the attitude of the surrounding community and the overall climate with respect to asylum seekers.

**Advising asylum seekers on legal and procedural issues**

Obtaining legal status is critical for asylum seekers. However, asylum seekers are generally unfamiliar with the various administrative and legal processes that affect their status. Additionally, language barriers make it difficult for asylum seekers to protect their legal rights in asylum proceedings.

Advice and counselling in this context encompasses a wide variety of activities, including: providing information about asylum proceedings, residency status, and asylum seekers’ rights in these proceedings; accompanying asylum seekers throughout the entire process, including to interviews with officials or hearings before the court; preparing asylum seekers for their interviews or hearings; helping asylum seekers obtain documents and other evidence; explaining official decisions and the consequences; supporting asylum seekers in exercising their legal rights and connecting asylum seekers to legal advocates. Advice in the legal and procedural arena should also strive to provide asylum seekers with a realistic assessment of their prospects in the host country. Thus, it is also important to clarify any additional aspects of an asylum seeker’s circumstances. Even issues that seem unrelated to the central issue of asylum may in fact be relevant to the asylum proceedings or to the issue of legal status, such as the presence of family members in the host country or another Member State, health problems that may delay or prevent deportation, and questions of age and legal responsibility.

Asylum seekers need to receive advice before they submit an asylum application. Anyone counselling asylum seekers in this situation should clarify the type of protection that is being sought, whether family members will file individual applications and whether the asylum application proceedings should take place in another EU Member State.

Asylum seekers are more likely to develop an open, trusting relationship with independent advisers from NGOs who are committed to ensuring asylum seekers’ basic human rights and for whom the best interests of their clients are the most critical concern, rather than counsellors associated with the government.

**Social counselling and support**

The specific responsibilities of social counselling and support depend largely on the set-up of a State’s reception system and the rights and benefits to which asylum seekers are
entitled. The scope of responsibilities also depends on the extent to which the social counselling system is part of the government or, alternatively, functions independently.

Similar to counselling asylum seekers on legal and procedural questions, social counselling and support encompasses a wide variety of activities, including: helping asylum seekers enforce their rights to benefits, answering questions about work permits, helping asylum seekers looking for work or apartments, providing advice about the labour and housing markets, language courses, training opportunities, child care, kindergarten and school, and medical issues. Because asylum seekers often have difficulty communicating their concerns to asylum and welfare officials effectively, accompanying asylum seekers to meetings with officials may be necessary. Alternatively, social counsellors can also help put asylum seekers in touch with the responsible officials or specialised departments. Asylum seekers also need support adjusting to the culture of their host country, as well as help in handling problems in their immediate surroundings.

Asylum seekers who are particularly vulnerable, not only need specially equipped housing, they will usually also need additional counselling or therapy. Many Member States house unaccompanied minors in separate facilities that are specially designed to meet the heightened needs of unaccompanied refugee children. In most States, an official from children or youth services is generally responsible for protecting an unaccompanied minor’s legal rights. Organisations specially trained to work with torture victims and traumatised refugees frequently adopt a holistic approach that does not separate medical and social issues. Many specialised advice and counselling opportunities focus on women, usually with a particular emphasis on health and nutrition.

Asylum and reception systems often do not distinguish between legal advice, social welfare advice and care in reception facilities. The State can provide all of the above, or the responsibilities can be divided between the State and independent NGOs, such as is the case in Slovakia. In Slovakia, the State’s involvement in social care and counselling is limited to providing for asylum seekers’ basic material needs, responsibilities that are primarily administrative in nature. Such responsibilities include registration and control, distributing food vouchers and sanitary items, making medical appointments, reviewing requests for permission to travel outside the reception centre, and distributing toys, books, etc. NGOs supplement the State’s basic services by offering asylum seekers and refugees on-site advice and counselling about Slovakia, the asylum system and available services. NGOs also step in to fill the gaps that the State leaves in the area of direct services. NGOs are particularly active, for example, in providing clothing.

In Belgium, on the other hand, social support is understood as extensive advice and counselling, including accompanying asylum seekers throughout the entire asylum process. Although provided by the State, the administration internally divides responsibility for the care of asylum seekers’ basic needs, daily accompaniment and advice and counselling regarding the asylum procedure.

Monitoring

The minimum standards for any reception system must ensure humane living conditions and a State’s asylum proceedings must guarantee necessary protection. Asylum seekers are entitled to protection from discriminatory treatment and violations of their rights. Counsellors who work with asylum seekers have an obligation to ensure that these basic rights are protected in practice. NGO staff and volunteers who meet with and advise asylum seekers in reception facilities are often the only independent observers of the asylum reception system. Their unique role brings with it a responsibility to address systemic problems, whether in individual cases or in discussions with the responsible agencies.

Slovakian NGOs monitor the conditions in reception facilities through regular visits. Austrian NGOs frequently report on deplorable conditions in reception facilities that were only addressed after NGOs repeatedly and persistently complained to the responsible agency.
Government officials are required to regularly evaluate their own work, as well as to ensure that any organisations working under contract conform to applicable standards. In Belgium, FEDASIL has developed standards for evaluating reception conditions among asylum seekers and monitors its partners’ compliance. In those reception facilities managed by FEDASIL itself, residents meet in assemblies and form small working groups. These groups, led by social workers or counsellors, make suggestions for improvement in their living and reception conditions.

The regular presence of NGOs and a trusting relationship between asylum seekers and counsellors is critical to uncovering systemic and individual problems in reception facilities. When asylum seekers are informed about their rights and gain knowledge and confidence through social counselling, they will be more likely to speak up about problems in the facilities and in their asylum procedures.

Supporting integration in the host country
Alongside its responsibility to provide information about asylum seekers’ rights and available opportunities with respect to the labour market, vocational training, housing, language training, culture, sport and other issues, social counselling serves, above all, to act as a bridge to the opportunities of the host society. Advice and counselling helps asylum seekers identify the ways in which their own talents, training and goals can fit into the economy and culture of their host country. Often, a key goal of social counselling is to support asylum seekers in regaining confidence and trust that was shattered in their countries of origin, during their journeys or in their countries of arrival. Knowledge of their rights and obligations strengthens asylum seekers’ self-sufficiency. Social counselling works to help asylum seekers recognise their strengths and weaknesses and to practice problem-solving methods that can be used in the future. Strengthening asylum seekers’ self-sufficiency thereby reduces their dependency on outside persons and institutions and increases their ability to solve problems in their host country on their own.

Supporting Reception and Assistance Efforts in the surrounding communities
The willingness of local communities to accept and support refugees cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, over the last several years, attitudes towards refugees have become visibly more aggressive and hostile in numerous countries. The trigger is often prejudice and ignorance about refugees. Anti-foreigner political movements sometimes contribute to open hostility against refugees. In order to more fully integrate refugees into their host communities, advocates must educate the surrounding communities about refugees and asylum seekers. Social counsellors must also consider local conditions and work to ensure a positive environment for asylum seekers’ reception. Familiarity with respective local communities is a significant advantage in any community education work.

Information fairs at which social counsellors can share their experience and knowledge can help allay the fears and prejudices of a local community in which a reception facility has been proposed. Examples of good integration of refugees into the local community highlight the important role of local decision makers. Regular contact between NGOs who work with asylum seekers and operators of reception facilities can help raise awareness among local government officials about the opportunities associated with integration and can ensure that asylum seekers’ needs and interests are taken into consideration.

A strong social counselling system can be created and staffed by volunteers. However, excellent training and support for volunteer counsellors is absolutely critical in order to avoid malpractice by counsellors and to prevent counsellors themselves from becoming overwhelmed or burned out. The presence of volunteer counsellors benefits more than just asylum seekers. It also sets a positive example to others. Their involvement implicitly speaks out against the prejudices and fears of the population. Such fears and
prejudices can be reduced through activities such as “Open Door Days,” festivals and other activities such as sporting or cultural events.

The NGO Forum Refugiés in France, which manages reception facilities and provides counselling to asylum seekers during the entire asylum application process, works with volunteers to provide asylum seekers with a variety of activities designed to help asylum seekers adjust to their host country. On offer are French language classes, information sessions about health, legal rights and other topics, as well as excursions to museums, the theatre, etc. The Integration House in Vienna organises regular training sessions for volunteers to serve as “refugee buddies,” who then accompany asylum seekers to appointments. Volunteers also help organise fundraising events, the proceeds of which supplement the basic, state-provided care offered to asylum seekers who receive services from the Integration House.

4. Minimum Standards for Competent Social Advice and Counselling

Due to asylum seekers’ special needs and problems, social counselling tends not to be limited to traditional institutions or approaches. In traditional counselling and social work settings, asylum seekers tend to be viewed as particularly hard-to-serve clients, largely due to language difficulties and varying levels of socialisation. Asylum seekers’ need for diverse forms of support and services may not be met by traditional service providers due to special conditions or terms of their services. While, on the one hand, there is no question that special training or expertise in working with asylum seekers is necessary, the creation of a completely new “specialty” in social counselling separated from mainstream institutions would also have an isolating and negative effect. Thus, networking with traditional institutions becomes a substantial component of the work of any counsellors working directly with asylum seekers. The social worker becomes a gateway through which asylum seekers are able to access various services according to their needs.

An interdisciplinary focus or approach has particular advantages when working with asylum seekers who need intensive support. It is no surprise, then, that individuals who work with asylum seekers come from a wide variety of professions, including psychologists, lawyers, social workers, teachers. They come from fields as diverse as health, economics and pedagogy, and offer an equally wide variety of language abilities. A team approach allows such diverse experiences and skills to be applied in an effective and targeted manner.

Outreach and Accessibility

Social services must be accessible to asylum seekers. Housing facilities in remote areas with no or poor access to public transportation, restrictions on freedom of movement and transportation costs all limit access to counselling and social services. Transfers of asylum seekers to different reception centres, restrictions on freedom of movement and the use of remote facilities should be avoided. When transfers do occur, asylum seekers should be informed well ahead of time. Finally, precautions should be taken to avoid a reduction in social, medical and legal support during transfers.

Mobile or local service providers work with asylum seekers who live in private housing as well as reception facilities. The counselling and advice is usually implemented by mainstream institutions or government-contracted organisations to provide psychosocial counselling and support.

Since 2000, the social welfare agency in Leipzig has held open office hours twice a week in all homes and receptions facilities. The on-site office hours allow refugees to avoid traveling to the central office for every little request and enable them to save what little money they have, rather than spend it all on transportation for office visits. Allowances
and clothing vouchers are also distributed on-site. A representative from each responsible agency, the social welfare office, a representative of the accommodation centre, and the organisation or agency tasked with providing social counselling (as well as possibly the housing agency), can process virtually all requests and applications on-site. Additionally, a room with a computer and telephone is available to asylum seekers in every home.

*Forum Refugiés* in France has also created a support system for those asylum seekers who are not housed in communal reception facilities, and therefore do not have access to the same support network during the asylum proceedings. *Forum Refugiés* provides such asylum seekers with support and advice for questions of residency status, Dublin proceedings and accelerated asylum proceedings.

In most Austrian states, NGOs provide social counselling and advice services either through mobile social workers/counsellors who visit communal reception facilities or through local sites available to asylum seekers in private housing. When legal questions arise, social workers are able to refer asylum seekers to a legal counsellor provided by the NGO.

**Welfare in Communal Reception Facilities**

The unique challenges associated with communal housing of asylum seekers, such as the fluctuation in the number of residents, the varying languages and countries of origin, the stress of sharing available facilities and the limited availability of job and training opportunities both inside and outside the homes, demand a creative and flexible approach to social counselling.

In reception centres managed by FEDASIL in Belgium, in addition to the counselling and advisory services provided to guide asylum seekers through the procedure, on-site social workers support asylum seekers in all aspects of their daily lives. Their primary objective is to offer practical support to asylum seekers, engage in discussions and assist in resolving conflicts with other residents or with the management of the home. The on-site social workers also provide information about the various facilities and opportunities, promote interactive participation, both of which lead to increased self-sufficiency among asylum seekers. The on-site social workers also coordinate the activities on offer to asylum seekers in the home, including job and training opportunities.

The responsibilities of the social counsellors are not always easily distinguished from the official responsibilities of those charged with managing the facilities. For example, the job description for the state agencies in German federal states responsible for housing asylum seekers includes, among other responsibilities, distribution of cash allowances, ensuring access to adequate education for children, medical care, job training or workfare placements, distributing non-cash benefits, such as clothing vouchers, etc., in other words, a mixture of management and social work.

A glance at the Austrian system reveals social workers preoccupied with questions about school and kindergarten, the distribution of transportation vouchers, cash allowances or clothing assistance. Social workers often find themselves functioning as translators during medical visits. This increasing reliance on social workers to perform what are predominantly administrative tasks results partly from Austria’s use of for-profit companies to manage reception facilities. The role of such companies is often contractually limited to registering asylum seekers and providing for their basic needs (meals, bedding, etc.). It is also, however, partly a result of the inevitable overlap between social work and social support.

The question of whether a completely separate social counselling system, independent of the management of the reception facilities, makes sense depends on the type of reception and welfare system in place. If the day-to-day responsibility for welfare and legal matters remains with state agencies, then a separate and independent social work/social counselling system that is able to provide access to legal assistance makes
more sense. On the other hand, if the responsibility for the day-to-day welfare of asylum seekers has been delegated or contracted out to an NGO, then a single, seamless system is likely to prove more effective and efficient. They may not only concentrate on questions and needs expressed by the asylum-seekers but start intervention as a result of their own observations.

The special needs of particularly vulnerable asylum seekers, such as traumatised refugees or unaccompanied minors, are also better served by a single, all-in-one welfare and social counselling system than by a system that has multiple, individual access points, all with their own responsibilities. Trust plays a much more important role in working with vulnerable asylum seekers and vulnerable asylum seekers require more and more intense support. These conditions are easier to achieve in a single system.

### Resources and Care Ratios

The provision of quality care requires sufficient resources. The ratio of clients to carers viewed as adequate varies among Member States, and even varies internally. For example, Leipzig assumes a ratio of 1 to 200, while the Brandenburg Ministry for Labour, Welfare, Health and Families sets a ratio of 1 to 120, both for migration-specific social services as well as general welfare and care in communal reception facilities.

In Austria, the legal minimum ratio is 1 to 170. Only one federal province has improved upon this ratio. This level and availability of care, already viewed by NGOs as inadequate, is made worse by long travel times to outlying reception centres and the increasing reliance on social workers to implement administrative responsibilities. NGOs attempt to fill the gaps by adding their own resources, which include cash donations, help by young people completing their civil service and interns; although the use of volunteers without sufficient training, background or certification obviously presents professional challenges. Volunteers and interns can be extremely helpful in supporting the work of the social work and counselling teams. However, organisations should be sure to consider the time and energy required to adequately train and supervise volunteers and interns. Insufficient funding not only leads to deficiencies in care and counselling for asylum seekers; burnout among staff leads to high staff turnover, which also in turn negatively affects clients.

### Understanding and Communication

Counselling asylum seekers is often impossible without the assistance of interpreters. Fluency in multiple languages is a definite advantage for social workers or counsellors who work with asylum seekers, particularly because the presence of an interpreter often makes it harder to build up a trusting relationship.

Counsellors and social workers should always make sure to take their clients’ various cultural backgrounds into consideration. Thus, NGOs should be aware of the effect that a counsellor’s cultural or ethnic background or their gender might have on the counselling relationship. Counselling methods should be culturally appropriate. Counsellors must openly discuss the various roles in which they might be asked to serve, as well as boundaries for both counsellors and clients.

### 5. Perspectives

Structural conditions often limit therapeutic and support options in ways that are inconsistent with clients’ needs. The parameters for finding solutions are restricted by legal and procedural considerations. Dublin proceedings are a good example. According to the Dublin Regulation, even asylum seekers with strong connections to a Member...
State are not necessarily given access to the asylum procedure. The application of bureaucratic Dublin rules even takes precedence over the treatment needs of traumatised refugees. This is an area in which social counsellors, whose first obligation is to their clients, should work to find creative and flexible solutions. For example, to avoid further damage and injury caused by forcible returns, traumatised refugees in Austria are sometimes advised to go into hiding until access to the asylum procedure is guaranteed through legal means. This way, advocates can prevent legally dubious and inhumane detention.

A paradigm shift has taken place in the field of social counselling. In the past, the priority for social counsellors working in the field was to secure the access to some form of residency status and equal access to welfare and social support for their clients. Recently, the focus has shifted to dealing with returns and deportations.

EU support programmes such as the European Refugee Fund and Member States’ laws and regulations are increasingly focused on returns – voluntary and forcible – following a rejected asylum application or because an application appears unlikely to succeed. The Austrian laws implementing the EU Directive on Reception Conditions provide for material support and counselling in connection with returns. State agencies increasingly expect and require NGOs, which provide the lion’s share of social counselling under contract, to provide counselling in connection with returns. The demand for counselling on return presents social workers with a conflict of interest: their job is to support asylum seekers in their attempts to remain and integrate, while, at the same time, the State requires them to discuss the possibility of returning while the asylum procedure is still underway.

Social counselling becomes mere social appeasement when treatment and intervention options are severely limited. Reception systems that restrict or completely limit asylum seekers’ integration stunt the development of asylum seekers’ self-sufficiency and potential. Restrictions on asylum seekers’ freedom of movement, insufficient support for asylum seekers to move from communal living facilities into their own apartments, limited access to the labour market all contribute to inhibiting an asylum seeker’s development. Lack of control over their own lives and days filled with uncertainty inevitably lead to dependency and passivity.

6. Recommendations

- Social and legal counselling must be available immediately upon arrival. Asylum seekers must receive advice and counselling before their first interview with asylum officials and must receive regular updates throughout the asylum application procedure. Negative decisions must be explained carefully and in detail. Rules and regulations related to reception conditions must also be explained completely and as early as possible.

- Asylum seekers must have access to legal assistance upon arrival. Legal aid may not be restricted as a result of reception proceedings or restrictions on freedom of movement.

- Reception of asylum seekers is the responsibility of the Member States. However, Member States are poorly positioned to assist asylum seekers in integrating into their host communities. NGOs, refugee assistance organisations and other volunteers can provide an invaluable role in the reception process and their work should be encouraged. NGOs play a key role in helping local communities understand asylum issues and helping asylum seekers adjust to the culture of their host community.

- NGOs and UNHCR must have unrestricted access to all reception and holding centres, both open and closed, in order to monitor and evaluate the conditions in which asylum seekers are housed. The EU Directive on Reception Conditions is riddled with exemptions and reservations that allow Member States to avoid
granting asylum seekers in closed centres access to social counselling, and to keep such closed centres out of public view.

- Social counselling must be independent and must always place the best interest of the client first and foremost. Member States should strive to avoid the intermingling of administrative and counselling responsibilities.
- Social counselling must be provided by professionals who are qualified.
- The ratio of counsellors to clients must take into consideration the labour-intensive nature of counselling asylum seekers.

7. Further information/recources:
- Fedasil: Le Petit Château 2005; Périodique du Centre d’Accueil de Virton
- www.fedasil.be
- www.forumrefugies.org/pages/action/herbergement/
- www.france-terre-asile.org/index
- www.integrationshaus.at
- requested standards for social work with refugees in Jena/Germany see http://www.jena.de/fm/415/amt46_03.pdf
- http://www.brandenburg.de/media/1339/erlass_08_03_06.pdf
- www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/
- tasks and methods of the social work with refugees, see http://www.emhosting.de/kunden/fluechtlingsrat-nrw.de/system/upload/download_581.pdf
- SOI - Sozialarbeit in Österreich 1/05
- Housing and Support Services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. A Good Practice Guide. Published by Chartered Institute of Housing, 2005