

SAFE HOMES

A PRACTITIONERS
HANDBOOK



Funded by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The importance of private accommodation schemes

Private accommodation schemes (i.e. hosting and hosting assistance programmes) can provide important accommodation options for displaced people, with **benefits that extend beyond just accommodation**. Hosts may, out of goodwill, provide support in addition to shelter, including food, emotional support and friendship, ad hoc translation, childcare, orientation, help navigating access to services and employment opportunities and connections through their social and professional networks. **The capacity and resilience of hosts should therefore be carefully supported to avoid them feeling overburdened or pressurised**. This support can come from organisations and public bodies involved in delivering hosting assistance and extend to **hosts, guests and the wider host community**. **The capacities, vulnerabilities and needs of these three different groups must be carefully considered in the design of any scheme and subsequent support**.

The main components of private accommodation schemes

Assistance can include the following components:

- Information
- Accommodation improvement and adaptation
- Safeguarding
- Host orientation, training and network support
- Financial support or incentives for hosts and/or guests
- Complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support (case management for hosts and hosted people, employability support, wider host community support, onward accommodation support, etc.)

To avoid harm, all private accommodation schemes should provide, **as a minimum, safeguarding risk management** and support, such as the **vetting of hosts** and **checks on the habitability and safety of accommodation**.

Recognising that much hosting happens organically

Hosting people in need is one of the oldest forms of humanitarian response and **often occurs organically through relatives or friends**. Host households are often the first responders to those displaced in times of crisis. In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022, a significant proportion of hosting was arranged by hosts and guests connecting directly outside of “official” government-led private accommodation scheme matching processes, usually through citizen-led or civil society-led hosting initiatives. **Formal official private accommodation schemes should remain open and accessible to such organic arrangements, with outreach efforts to connect with guests and hosts who find each other independently**.

Important considerations when designing and implementing a hosting assistance programme

- Hosting is just one important part of the menu of accommodation options, and it **may not be an appropriate option for all displaced people**. This may be the case when displaced people have significant needs, viable exit strategies have not been identified or a hosted arrangement does not adequately meet needs or could put an excessive strain on the host household.
- The **capacities, vulnerabilities and needs of the three different groups (hosts, guests and the wider host community) must be considered when establishing**



Photo: Luxembourg Red Cross

- a programme** and designing the support offered to facilitate the hosted arrangement.
- **Managing the expectations of hosts and guests can be crucial**, including consideration of the variety of host and guest profiles, the likely impact of hosting and the time needed for vetting, assessment and matching processes. It may be necessary to ensure adequate alternative accommodation capacity (through reception centres, for example) while these processes are being completed.
 - **Successful hosting assistance requires a multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral response** with national and local government, civil society organisations (CSOs) and entities such as the Red Cross delivering different aspects of support in a coordinated and complementary manner.
 - **Successful matching requires staff with social or care work expertise.** Registration system algorithms can complement but not replace such expertise, as the capacities, vulnerabilities and needs of guests and hosts should be properly assessed and understood, preferably by caseworkers familiar with the context. For this reason, **matching should be carried out at local level where possible.**
 - **Case management by trained and supported caseworkers is key** to successful hosting to ensure hosts and guests are appropriately supported, to check for and avoid exploitative relationships and to support guests in their integration and exit from hosting.
 - **Financial support for hosts and guests needs to be carefully considered** in order to establish what is sustainable, what is administratively efficient and how households can best be supported. Wherever possible, the amount of financial support paid to hosts should be similar to the cost of hosting, rather than risk creating perverse incentives.
 - **The scaling of hosting assistance requires an information management system** that can include a customer relationship management system. This will require time to develop and is therefore recommended as a preparedness activity where possible.
 - **Exit strategies** to allow guests to move on from hosting, become self-reliant and have access to adequate housing **need to be planned from the outset of a hosting assistance programme.** This can involve a wider range of complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support activities, which are crucial to the final outcome of the programme once the hosting period has ended. However, it must be recognised that in contexts where there is a housing crisis, there is only so much that hosting assistance organisations outside of government can do.

I. DEFINITIONS

Hosting = private hosting is the act of offering accommodation in a shared home or vacant property to someone in need of a place to stay. It is one of the oldest forms of humanitarian response.

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Hosting schemes = private accommodation schemes refer to organised programmes, run by the authorities, CSOs or groups of individuals, that provide accommodation, either in a shared or vacant property, and other support to both hosts and guests. In recent times, digital platforms have been established to help connect guests with hosts. These schemes may or may not involve monetary allowances or other types of incentives, such as tax benefits for hosts, as a contribution towards food or utilities, for example. In some countries, this is called “pledged accommodation” or “citizen accommodation”.

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Hosted arrangement refers to the relationship between host and guest, established through a mutual and voluntary agreement to host or be hosted.

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Hosting assistance organisations refer to organisations involved in supporting guests, hosts and the wider host community in relation to hosting. They include organisations running private accommodation schemes and those operating outside formal hosting schemes.

Exit strategies set out plans to support people in transitioning out of the hosted arrangement into sustainable, long-term accommodation enabling independent living.

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Guests = hosted people are people temporarily accommodated by a host under a hosted arrangement.

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Hosts are the households that accommodate guests and may provide various levels of additional support. Hosts may be relatives, friends or friends of friends/family. However, they are often strangers who have connected with guests through a hosting scheme, a social media platform or a spontaneous encounter.

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Social workers = caseworkers are the people employed to look after the hosting households by providing **social follow-up**. They are central to building and maintaining relationships of trust with both hosts and guests.

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Host community = local community is the community (including hosts) that temporarily hosts and shares private and public resources with displaced people. It includes people in vulnerable situations and excluded groups.

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Reception centres are facilities established by public authorities that provide collective housing for displaced people.

II. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil society organisation
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NACCOM	No Accommodation Network
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
TPD	Temporary Protection Directive – Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency

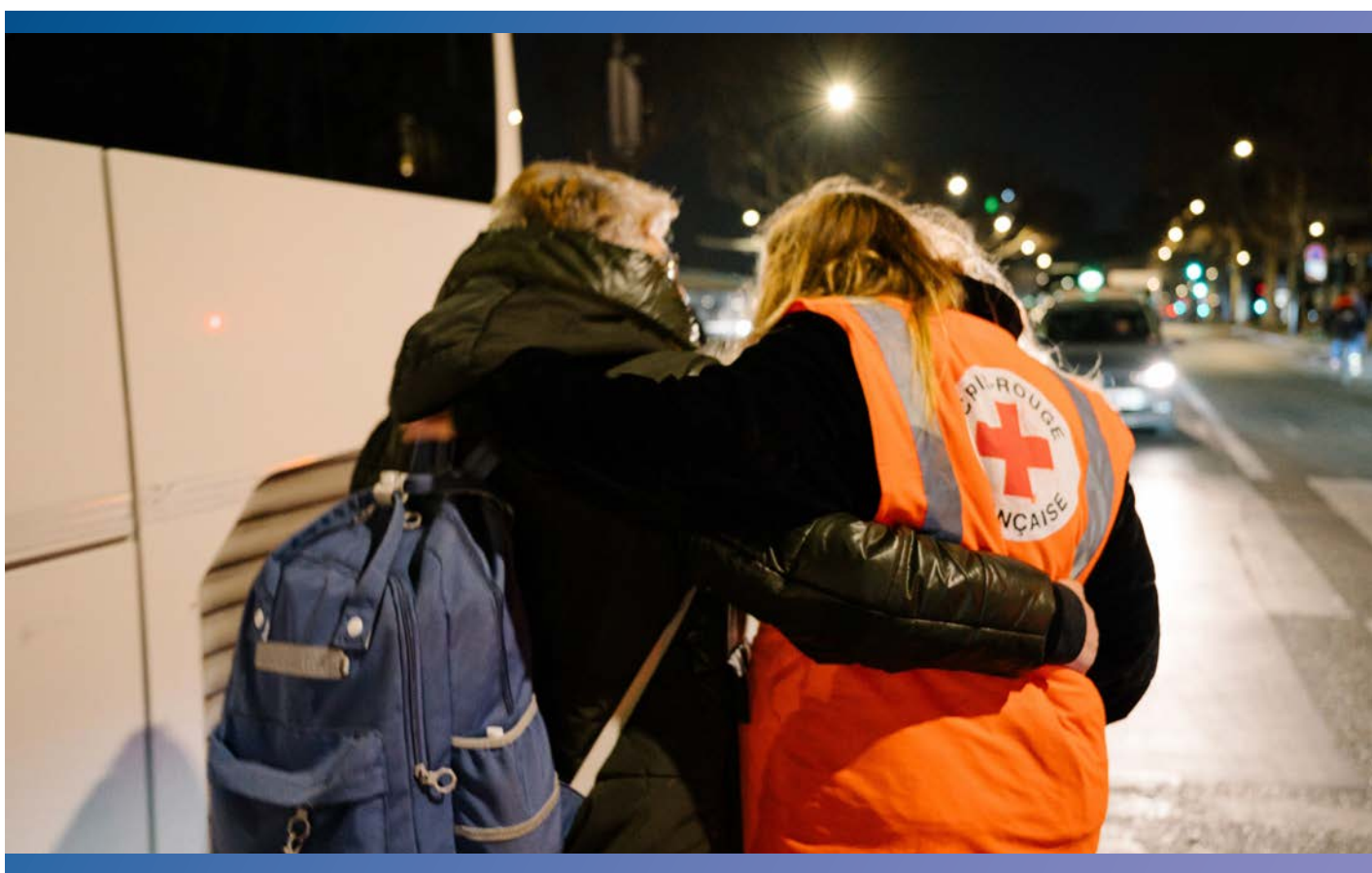


Photo: French Red Cross

III. BACKGROUND

Policy context

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022, many people opened their homes to welcome people displaced from Ukraine. Recognising this grassroots solidarity, the European Commission launched the Safe Homes initiative in March 2022 to support these private initiatives and those involved in organising and running them. In July 2022, the European Commission published **guidance on the provision of accommodation to those fleeing Ukraine as part of the Safe Homes initiative**¹, consolidating good practices from European Union (EU) member states, regional and local authorities and CSOs involved in setting up private hosting schemes.

In the same context, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) issued [practical recommendations](#) on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine².

The EUAA's work has also extended to community welcoming initiatives, such as resettlement and community sponsorship programmes, which share similarities with private accommodation schemes. Under community sponsorship schemes, private citizens collaborate with CSOs to provide moral, practical and/or financial support for the admission and integration of those in need of protection who have come to the EU via safe and legal pathways. While structurally different, the hosting schemes set up under the Safe Homes initiative and community sponsorship schemes both encourage private citizens to actively engage in integrating newcomers into the host society.³ Both can also have a transformative impact on local communities, promote cohesion, reshape narratives and create more welcoming communities.

¹ [Safe Homes initiative: guidance on the provision of accommodation to those fleeing Ukraine, European Website on Integration](#)

² [EU Agency for Asylum: practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine](#)

³ EUAA [community sponsorship programmes](#)

⁴ This list has been formulated to include entitlements similar to those set out in Article 13 of the TPD.

The handbook draws on lessons learned from the hosting response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and additional research. Source information includes existing documents, such as the Safe Homes guidance, discussions with researchers and practitioners from various National Red Cross Societies, a review of national lessons learned reports, presentations, meeting minutes and a review of operational and other guidance documents. Common findings from lessons learned about hosting in EU member states have been generalised and structured in this operational guide.

It was produced with funding from the European Commission under the Safe Homes initiative. As part of the project, a [lessons learned](#) report and [case studies](#) were also produced.

Audience and application

This document is intended for EU member states, regional and local authorities, CSOs and citizens involved in the design and delivery of private accommodation schemes.

It is applicable within the EU and addresses the hosting of migrants granted a status similar to the right to remain/stay. This status entitles migrants to the following:⁴

- Access to suitable accommodation or, if necessary, the means to obtain housing
- the assistance they need in terms of social welfare and means of subsistence
- Authorisation to engage in employment or self-employment for the protection period, subject to the rules applicable to the profession in question

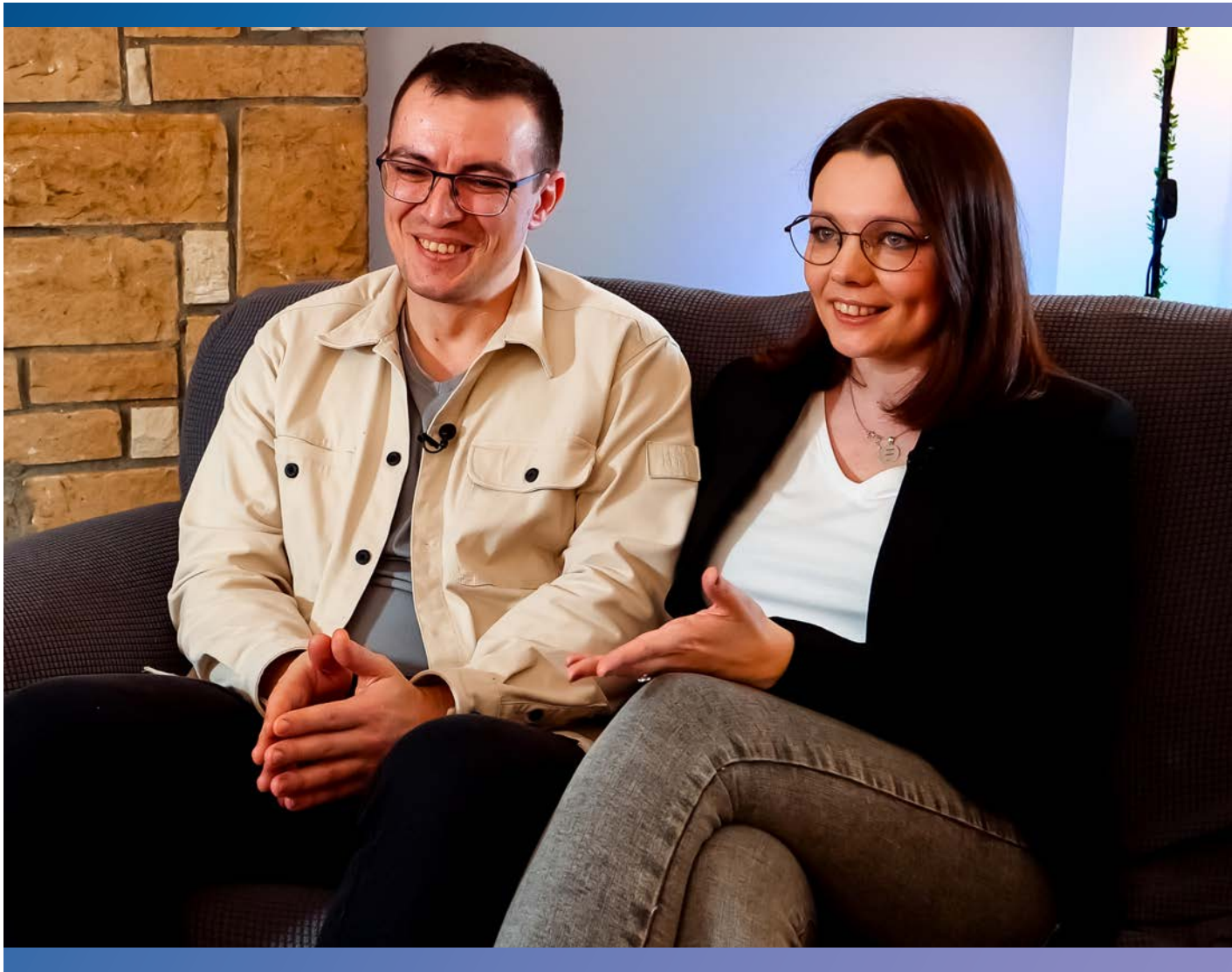


Photo: Irish Red Cross

- Opportunities for adult education, vocational training and practical workplace experience
- Access to the education system for all those under 18 in the same conditions as nationals
- Access to the healthcare system (to some extent)

This handbook is intended for formal government-led private accommodation schemes that involve hosted arrangements, acknowledging that many arrangements occur outside of these schemes, as seen in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It is also relevant in supporting

those other arrangements outside of formal schemes.

Areas outside the scope of the handbook

While “community sponsorship”⁵ schemes share many features with private hosting, they fall outside the scope of this guidance. Hosting assistance organisations should seek out those involved in running community sponsorship schemes to share resources and learning.

The fostering of unaccompanied children also falls outside the scope of this document.

⁵ European Commission (no date), European Migration Network Asylum and Migration Glossary, Definition of “community sponsorship”. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/community-sponsorship_en

A woman with short blonde hair and glasses, wearing a blue and white patterned long-sleeved top and black pants, stands smiling in a kitchen. She is positioned in front of a window with a yellow roller blind. The kitchen features white cabinets, a granite countertop, and various kitchen items like a coffee maker, a yellow thermos, and potted plants. The text 'Section 1 Private accommodation schemes: An introduction' is overlaid on the lower left of the image.

Section 1

Private accommodation schemes: An introduction

Photo: Netherlands Red Cross

The importance of private accommodation schemes

Host households are often the first responders to those displaced in times of crisis, offering accommodation either organically through personal connections or opening their homes to strangers. They can do this by taking part in formal schemes established by CSOs or the government or by offering accommodation directly to strangers at collective centres or transit points (e.g. railway stations). In recent times, digital platforms have been established to assist displaced people in finding hosts and help those willing to host to advertise and connect with people in need.

The following sections can help the reader in advocating for the establishment and/or resourcing of private accommodation schemes and provides insights into the key benefits and challenges of hosting.

1. Key benefits of hosting

There are benefits for guests, hosts, society generally and government, as summarised in the table below.

Group benefiting	Summary of key benefits
Guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to more dignified and stable accommodation of a good standard. • Access to accommodation not otherwise available in the housing market. • Host households where there is “goodwill” may provide additional support including food, water, emotional support, ad hoc translation, childcare, orientation, help navigating access to services and livelihood opportunities, and social and professional connections. • When the accommodation is spread across the host community, guests will have greater access to livelihood opportunities and services. • Where displaced people know their host (extended family, friends, friends of friends/family), they are likely to have a greater sense of belonging and receive more support from them. • Geographically dispersed hosting can increase the “invisibility” and “anonymity” of the displaced, which is not the case when they are concentrated in collective centres.
Hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts have reported that hosting can be a transformational experience. • Hosting allows hosts to directly respond to a humanitarian need and be part of the show of solidarity with displaced people. • Where hosts know the displaced people (extended family, friends, friends of friends/family), there will be an added sense of security and trust.
Host community (i.e. the wider community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the accommodation is spread across the host community, there will be less pressure on public services than when displaced people are concentrated in a particular area (e.g. a collective centre). • Services (e.g. shops and schools) can be revitalised by increased demand. • Hosting can relieve pressure on the rental market. • Hosting can increase empathy between host and displaced communities.
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of private accommodation offered by hosts can reduce pressure on other government-provided accommodation, such as collective centres, hotels and private rental accommodation. Where hosts offer accommodation at no cost and the government does not need to pay substantial incentives to “activate” hosts, it is likely to be cost-effective. • Hosting can potentially result in fewer demands on local authority or civil society caseworkers than accommodating displaced people in collective centres or the private rental sector.

2. Challenges related to hosting

Hosting can also pose challenges for guests, hosts, the host community and government. Anticipating challenges at the programme design stage can help mitigate them. The table below shows the key challenges, largely based on the experience of the 2022 Ukraine hosting response.

Group	Summary of key challenges
Guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing a home with another household will offer less privacy and may require compromises on lifestyle preferences.• It may be harder for guests to access information than if they were in a collective centre. This can be mitigated by caseworkers.• Those in rural private accommodation may feel more isolated than if they were with other families in a collective centre who may have had similar displacement experiences and speak their language. It may also be more difficult to find work when hosted in a rural area.• Guests may feel pressured to share their stories about the event that displaced them, which could be re-traumatising, or feel obligated to join in the host's family events.• Overly proactive hosts may inadvertently undermine their guests' agency and self-reliance.• Some services may only be accessible outside of hosted arrangements. For example, in some municipalities in the Netherlands, Ukrainians granted temporary protection under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) could not be added to the waiting list for "semi-permanent" (e.g. modular) social housing provided by the municipal authorities if they were hosted; they had to return to a collective centre first.• The voluntary nature of hosting means accommodation support may be less reliable, and guests could have less protection against sudden eviction.
Hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosts may have pre-conceived expectations of their guests, leading to tensions if there is a mismatch. For example, in the 2022 Ukraine response, many hosts did not expect families to include men or to be asked to host single men, third-country nationals, non-white people or Ukrainians from the "safer" western part of Ukraine. Some hosts also reported that guests were depressed and unwilling to engage in family life and cultural exchanges (e.g. taking turns to cook) or take employment they deemed suitable.• The personal, emotional and practical cost of sharing their home and cohabitating with their guests contributes to host fatigue.• There may be additional financial costs and support burdens.• Hosts may not understand how to access the services the guest household needs, and external support may be limited.• A lack of clear exit strategies for guests to transition to longer-term housing can make hosts feel obliged to continue hosting or they can feel "betrayed" if dignified housing solutions are not being developed or provided.• There is a small risk that guests may be unable or refuse to leave, and in some cases occupancy rights may be accrued.

Group	Summary of key challenges
Host community (i.e. the wider community)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests may be less visible to local authorities than when they are in collective centres and therefore attract fewer of the resources made available for public services, impacting both guests and the wider host community. • In some contexts, some in the host community may feel that guests do not have the same cultural attitudes and values, resulting in social tensions. • There may be competition for private rental housing or social housing when hosting ends. • In some contexts, there can be increased competition for jobs.
Local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests may be less visible than if they were staying in local authority-run collective centres, and local authorities may have less control generally. • Funding is needed for public services to meet the increased demand associated with guests. Some schemes may be viewed as bringing guests into areas where the local authority does not receive additional funding. • Resources are also needed to support the integration of guests (where desired) to increase the potential for them to become self-reliant.
Central and regional government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some contexts, “recognition” payments to hosts can be costly and difficult to sustain. However, when appropriately set to just cover costs, they can prove cost-effective compared with accommodating a household in a collective centre, a hotel or the private rental sector. • Where the exit strategy relies upon more permanent housing being available, the government needs to play a greater role. • For countries and areas already suffering a housing crisis, there may be limited exit strategies available for guests when hosting ends, and social tensions may increase if it is perceived that more housing support is being given to displaced people than to nationals. • Increased funding is required for public services (such as health, education, public transport and social services) to meet higher demand. However, in some contexts, and depending on how the private accommodation scheme works, the “invisibility” and dispersed nature of hosting can make it more difficult to understand and anticipate where to fund services than when supporting displaced people in a local authority collective centre, for example.

Many of the above challenges can be mitigated by structured communication and support processes. That said, even when government-led or CSO-led private accommodation schemes exist, many hosted arrangements occur outside of these formal structures. Sometimes, it can take time for government or other formal schemes to be established, and in some countries and contexts, most hosts and guests find each other through family or friend networks. Formal schemes should remain open and accessible to such organic arrangements.

Assistance models, approaches and components

1. Models

There are a range of models which vary in terms of who leads on delivering and organising hosting assistance. As a response progresses over time, the predominant approach may shift from a citizen-led model in the initial days and weeks to a CSO-led or government-led model. In any given context, several models may co-exist at the same time, and organisations may work across categories.

Model	Features
1 Citizen-led	<p>a) Individual host households offering support in the form of accommodation to displaced relatives, friends, friends of friends, etc. or to strangers. Strangers might be approached at collective centres or transit points or found informally through Facebook groups without mediation from any group or organisation. In this model, there is no formal coordination.</p> <p>e.g. Hungary-based Facebook group Segítségnyújtás Ukrajna, Kárpátalja</p>
	<p>b) Groups of individual households who are not part of a legal entity (e.g. neighbours, parent-teacher associations, members of religious congregations, etc.) working together to host displaced households with no formal coordination with other groups.</p> <p>e.g. Shelter UKR, a Hungarian peer-to-peer hosting platform, established by citizens working in tech, but not affiliated to tech companies</p>
2 CSO-led	<p>a) Community-based organisations with legal personality working to support displaced households in finding accommodation and accessing services, with varying degrees of formal and informal coordination with other organisations and groups. These organisations may have existing relationships with local authorities and be able to obtain financial and other resources.</p> <p>e.g. Unterkunft.org in Germany, BELRefugees network in Belgium and Stonewall in Poland for LGBTQI+ guests</p>
	<p>b) Medium and large organisations, such as the Red Cross* non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international NGOs and international organisations, playing a greater role in the decisions related to the implementation of the response, supporting the coordination of placements in private accommodation and facilitating access to services for displaced households. In this model, there is some formal coordination between actors such as local authorities and with various smaller civil society-led organisations and citizen-led initiatives.</p> <p>e.g. RefugeeHomeNL in the Netherlands, Irish Red Cross-led consortium in Ireland and Singa in France</p>

Model	Features
3 Government-led	<p>a) Local authorities taking the lead in sourcing accommodation for displaced households, coordinating placements (often via CSOs) and ensuring access to services. Local interventions will generally sit within a national policy and funding framework. The local authorities may coordinate with CSO-led and citizen-led initiatives. While some regional coordination may exist, it is common for ways of working and forms of response to vary significantly between local authorities. e.g. Offer a Home in Ireland (specifically for self-contained accommodation offers)</p> <p>b) National government leading a coordinated and harmonised response, setting standards for hosting and potentially providing protection and social follow-up services. The government not only defines the response framework, but also prescribes more explicitly how it should be implemented, often through local authorities, government agencies or large contracting CSOs. National government-backed hosting platforms may be established to match hosts and guests.</p> <p>c) Similar to the national government-led response (3.b) but with significant coordination and harmonisation of support with neighbouring governments' schemes as part of a broader regional response. This may include, for example, the harmonisation of benefits for both hosts and displaced people in hosted arrangements.</p>

* Note that National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies act as an auxiliary to their national government while remaining an independent entity. For the purposes of defining the different categories in this model, they are considered part of the broader CSO category. They are nevertheless distinct from other NGOs by virtue of the Red Cross or Red Crescent law in their country, under which they might be given a particular mandate that could include leading on the provision of accommodation in times of crisis.



Photo: Hungarian Red Cross

2. Approaches (where people are hosted)

Where and how people are hosted falls broadly under the following framework. There may be multiple approaches being implemented at any one time.

1. **Private host household provides accommodation:**
 - a) **Room in home of host**
 - b) **Self-contained accommodation (vacant house or apartment) provided by host**
2. **Private organisation provides accommodation:**
 - a) **Self-contained accommodation (vacant house or apartment) provided by private organisation**
 - b) **Room in shared accommodation provided by private organisation**

3. Components of support

There are a range of components of support that can be provided by those involved in hosting assistance to help hosts and guests, regardless of the organisation model or where people are hosted. The ways that government, local authorities and CSOs can assist are shown in the table below.

Component of support	Observations/examples
Information	A variety of informational resources for hosts, displaced people and guests, including on how to make a hosted arrangement a success, manage shared space and resolve problems that can arise between hosts and guests. For guests, it can include information on cultural aspects of life and how to navigate the neighbourhood, access services, find work, reduce utility bills, rehome pets, etc. For hosts, it may be information to help them manage expectations, prepare for hosting and understand how they can best inform and assist their guests.
Accommodation checks improvement and adaptation	This includes checks to ensure accommodation is safe and suitable for guests and adaptations ranging from minor electrical or fire safety adjustments to more significant alterations, such as the installation of handrails and grab bars or lighting modifications to accommodate a guest with a disability or supporting hosts to make dilapidated accommodation habitable.
Safeguarding risk support	Protection risk vetting of hosts (and guests), monitoring of protection risks during the hosted period, follow-up of sensitive feedback/complaints and protection-related case management more broadly (including specialised protection services), identification of vulnerabilities in the guest household and protection-related referrals or direct programming.
Orientation, training and network support for hosts ⁶	Helping hosts to understand the commitment they are making, manage expectations and anticipate the impact on their lives. Training can include topics such as cultural understanding, setting ground rules, resolving tensions as they arise and managing the process of guests moving on. Establishing a host network on social media platforms, WhatsApp (or similar) support groups and mentoring by experienced hosts may also assist hosts.

⁶ See also EUAA (forthcoming) Guidelines on the EU approach to community sponsorship



Photo: Romanian Red Cross

Component of support	Observations/examples
Assessment of households, matching, agreements and placement support	Assessing the suitability of hosts and guests, facilitating matches, assisting with household agreements to make living together work and avoid problems and supporting guests in their move. Identifying guest vulnerabilities and making appropriate referrals can be part of this assessment, although this will also occur during hosting via case management (part of complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support).
Financial support and other incentives for hosts and/or guests	Provision of multi-purpose cash assistance. This may be paid to hosts as a form of recognition for hosting efforts, as compensation for some of the hosting costs and/or as an incentive to encourage their engagement in a private accommodation scheme. Alternatively, this can be paid to guests, empowering them to choose how to use the support. Other incentives could include damage or liability insurance, tax breaks for hosts and guarantees in the event of the non-departure of the guest household.
Complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support	Complementary programming refers to different activities and forms of support used to achieve objectives complementary to accommodation support. Integration support helps displaced people to integrate with the host community, while exit strategy support includes casework to assist guests in moving on from the hosted arrangement. Examples include, but are not limited to, provision of household items, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), language lessons, transport support, education and training, employability support, childcare support, grants for deposits and/or guarantor support to assist guests in accessing the private rental sector when exiting hosting and activities with the wider host community.



Section 2

Step-by-step guide

Photo: Slovak Red Cross



1. Context assessment and analysis

1.1 General context assessment

As was seen in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many hosting initiatives are established by private citizens or CSOs, often in a spontaneous and sometimes uncoordinated way. Understanding the context is crucial when establishing a private accommodation scheme and supporting existing initiatives outside of formal government-led schemes in order to appropriately meet the needs of displaced individuals and hosts.

It is one of the most important components and will help to inform decisions on:

- Whether a separate government-led private accommodation scheme is an appropriate response option and whether existing non-government hosting initiatives can and should be supported
- Which organisations can be engaged with to help provide private accommodation
- The components of support for hosting assistance to be included in any private accommodation scheme
- Key programme design features, such as targeting, vetting requirements and minimum duration accepted from those offering accommodation

The following aspects of context analysis are specific to hosting assistance. A wider multi-sectorial context assessment may be undertaken as part of a broader assessment exercise. The point of these considerations is to focus on the key information that will impact the design of the private accommodation scheme.

General context considerations

The most important considerations to take into account in assessing the general context are the following:

- What are the root causes and drivers of displacement? What is happening now? How is the situation expected to evolve?
- In general terms, what are the immediate, medium and longer-term needs and capacities of the displaced people, specifically in terms of accommodation, employment or income generation, health, education, childcare and transport?
- What information is available on displaced people and their short- and long-term intentions?
- What is the ethnic, language, religious and cultural background of the displaced people?
- Are there particular geographical areas that are home to diaspora groups connected to the displaced people and that could act as a pull factor?

Considerations relating to reception accommodation

When designing a private accommodation scheme, it is important to map the reception accommodation landscape, focusing initially on immediate concerns, such as what accommodation options are being used and are available to the displaced? The following should be taken into account:

- Where are displaced people currently (data disaggregated by accommodation type, e.g. private rental housing, hotels, dormitory-type collective centres, open-floor sleeping arrangements in sports halls, tented accommodation, hosted arrangements, other types of reception facilities)? What are the trends? How is this being monitored? How does accommodation relate to the reception route?
- What criteria are there for access to the different types of accommodation available?



Photo: Belgian Red Cross

- Who controls access to the different accommodation options?
- Which people could struggle to access accommodation generally?
- Which people could struggle to access accommodation in a private accommodation scheme?

Mapping of hosting assistance organisations

For hosting to be successful, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed, with government, local authorities, CSOs, private businesses and private citizens (such as hosts) playing a role to support guests. To achieve this, the following questions need to be considered:

1. Who is currently offering hosting assistance? What are they offering and to whom?
2. Who could be involved in offering hosting assistance (not just accommodation support but all the components of hosting)?
3. Who can support guests in their hosting exit pathways?

A simple table can be used to document the mapping, as shown below.

Stakeholder name	Mandate, role, responsibilities, interests, influence and capacity (geographical presence, components of support, etc.), observations	Process for engagement What role they could play in a private accommodation scheme	Prioritisation for engagement

A more in-depth analysis should be carried out for the stakeholders of greatest interest to the programme, looking at their motivations, any existing programme eligibility criteria, risks associated with partnering, etc. The mapping of hosting assistance organisations can also help to determine where to focus resources for this engagement process. For instance, it can help determine if it is best to establish formal partnerships with some organisations while involving others as referral agencies to deliver a specific component of hosting assistance.

Coordination forums

Depending on the size and nature of the displacement event, various actors may be working on hosting and other types of accommodation support, and there may be coordination needs at different levels. Existing coordination processes, such as those used in civil emergencies, may be activated. Legislation may already outline roles and triggers for the establishment of coordination mechanisms. It is important to be aware of any such coordination mechanisms that are functional or could be activated and explore ways to make them more inclusive of CSO-led and citizen-led hosting initiatives.

A national-level interdepartmental coordination body may need to be established, with adequate staffing to coordinate the multiple departments and government agencies involved in accommodation and housing for displaced people. At the local level, areas with significant hosting or hosting potential should establish a local authority-led coordination forum. Such forums are recommended to:

- Keep coordination meetings brief and use them as an opportunity to ask all partners to share information on their hosting-related activities and challenges

- Avoid establishing heavy reporting requirements for CSOs and citizen-led initiatives that may prevent them from engaging in coordination mechanisms
- Consider whether dedicated staff are required for the secretariat of the coordination mechanism

Learning from the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in Poland, where the largest number of displaced people fled, numerous new organisations, often without paid staff, emerged to assist Ukrainians. This led to the creation of parallel platforms for knowledge-sharing and communication, along with overlapping activities. In some cases, there was also an unclear division of responsibilities at the different levels of public administration. In

France, the government assigned prefectures the responsibility of overseeing hosting initiatives, coordinating services and managing funds and grants for activities to support people displaced from Ukraine. To fulfil these responsibilities, local authorities selected NGOs that it could work with to meet guests' needs and support hosts. This helped ensure a coordinated and accountable hosting response. However, outside of the initiatives supported by local authorities, there were also several other organisations supporting hosting with a varying degree of coordination. Some local authorities held monthly meetings as a platform for dialogue with the different stakeholders to help make decisions and proactively adjust strategies related to hosting as the circumstances evolved. They also provided a good opportunity to share information and lessons learned.

Legal, insurance, tax and financial framework related to hosting

Establishing a private accommodation scheme requires a good understanding of the legal, tax, insurance and financial framework related to hosting, including the questions shown in the table below.

Liability of hosts	Will the host's household insurance cover accidental injury to a guest? Is there insurance available for this risk that could be offered to hosts to help them overcome any hesitancy in this respect? What level of due diligence must the scheme manager conduct in checking the safety of the accommodation to manage liability?
Home insurance	What if the guest damages the home? Does normal household insurance exclude cover for long-term guests (similar to lodgers in some respects)? Would it be possible to negotiate with insurance companies to avoid this? Are there insurance products available that could be offered to hosts?
Occupancy rights	Do guests accrue rights (such as tenancy rights) from staying in a property? Is this different for a property shared with the owner and for self-contained accommodation?
Eviction law/processes	If a host makes available a self-contained property and the guests do not leave when requested, what procedures would need to be followed to have the property returned to the host?
Mortgages	Is permission needed from the mortgage company to allow a host to accommodate a person or household over a prolonged period?
Rental housing contracts	Do these specifically exclude hosting another household or person?
Taxes and local authority charges	All levels of taxation (national, regional, local) should be taken into account: what is paid per household and what is paid per person. Can tax rules and local authority charges be adjusted to ensure a host is no worse off when hosting? Is there scope for tax breaks to encourage hosts to come forward and as a reward for their goodwill.
Social welfare payments to hosts	Where hosts claim social welfare payments, such as child allowance or a means-tested pension, will having members of the guest household at the same address result in a reduction in welfare payments.

The aim is to map all this and then develop policy, legislation and guidance or negotiate with the institutions concerned to try to overcome some of these barriers which may deter hosts from coming forward for the scheme. It may also be important to consider the liability of organisations involved in private accommodation schemes.

Economic situation

It is important to understand the economic situation (particularly in relation to inflation, employment and the cost of living) nationally and how this might impact the host community, hosts and guests. Will hosting lead to competition in the labour market or be a value-adding factor for local employers? Is it likely that hosts will be unable to continue hosting without financial support? Will there have to be regular reviews of financial support because of inflation? If guests are in different regions of a country, it may be important to understand the different economic pressures within them.

1.2 Host profile assessment

There will be a diverse range of households willing to host, and it could be useful to consider and develop “archetypes” for the most likely profiles to help inform the scheme design, incentives, likely minimum duration of hosting and communication around the scheme. There may be a wide range of factors that can be used to build archetypes:

- Where people live (urban, peri-urban/ suburban and rural dwellers)
- Socio-economic class
- Housing tenure status (owner-occupiers, renters, owners of summer homes)
- Age (particularly working-age vs. retirees)
- Households with children
- Diaspora connections
- Cultural or religious affiliations
- Minority groups (who feel affiliation with certain groups of displaced people, e.g. LGBTQI+ community).
- Motivations for hosting
- Previous experience of hosting
- Language skills

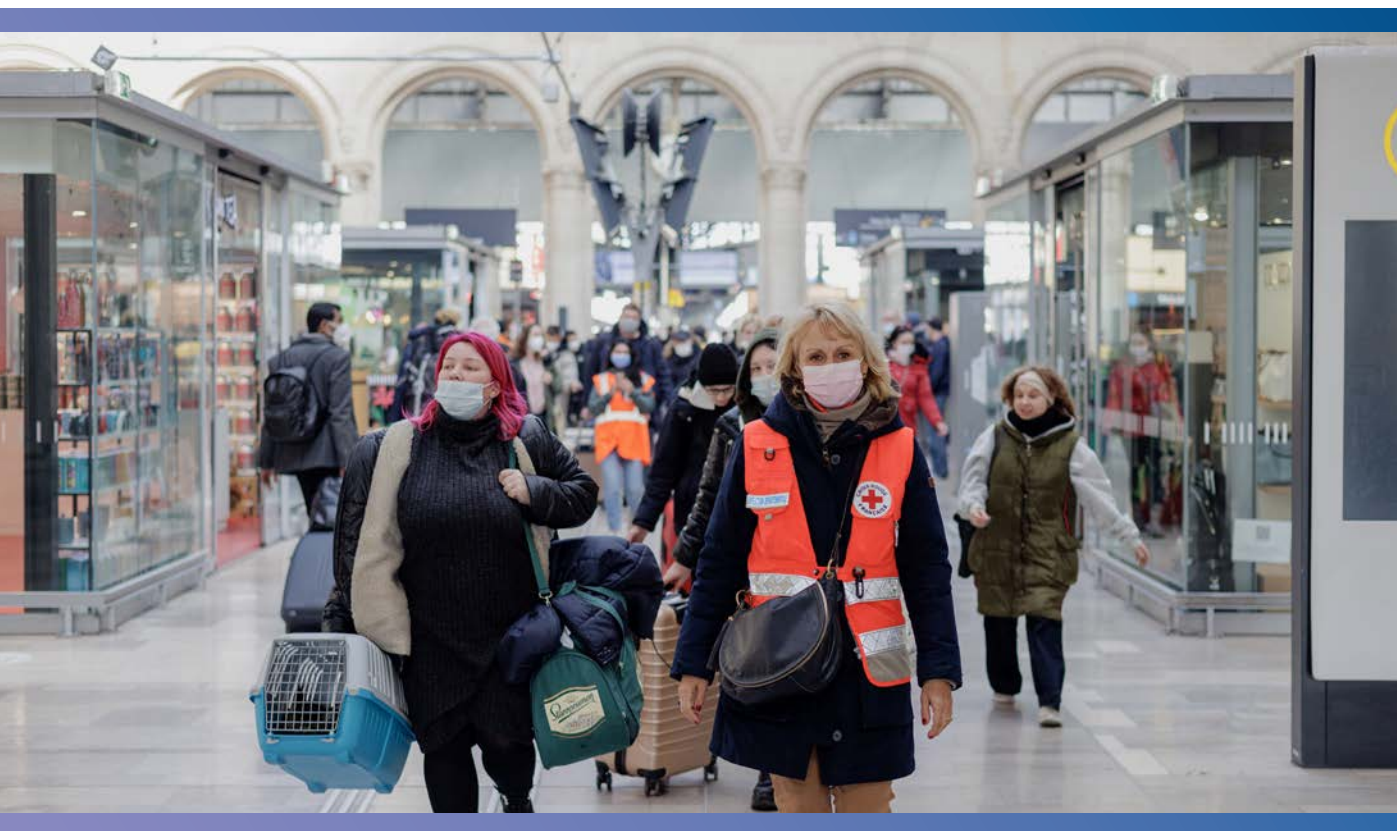


Photo: French Red Cross

For this exercise to be useful, it is recommended to create no more than six archetypes and set out key considerations and problems for each of them. Some examples are shown in the next page.

Archetype	Advantages	Disadvantages	Private accommodation scheme design response
“Empty nesters” People with large family-size homes whose children have left	Spare bedrooms May be good for hosting families with children May have more time to support guest household May have knowledge and connections locally to assist guests	May be less able to help guests navigate access to some services (schools, welfare system, etc.) if they have changed since they last used them Sharing home may heighten host fatigue	Provide additional information to help guest households access services
Households with a spare holiday home (that can be used for hosting)	May be higher-income households able to provide additional financial support to guests or bridging support while government financial support is processed	May be willing to host during non-holiday periods but want property back in the summer months May be less able to help hosted households navigate access to the services they require (healthcare, schools, welfare system, etc.) if they have not lived in the holiday home Hosting assistance organisations may need to support such guests more than those cohabiting with the host	Manage duration expectations at outset. Consider asking for a minimum duration which includes summer months to avoid hosts asking for guests to be rematched Provide additional information to help guest households access services
Second homes not regularly in use or in need of upgrading	Guests have greater degree of independence	Tend to be more remote in terms of access to services	Provide additional information, direct support and links

As the host profile assessment will show, host capacities will vary from one household to another depending on a number of factors including:

- The space they have available for hosting
- The time they are willing to host for
- Their ability, in terms of time and knowledge, to help guests navigate

access to services or find childcare or employment, for example

- Connections to help guest households find employment, a future rental property when they exit hosting and other opportunities to improve their integration
- Their language skills

Host capacity can influence hosting outcomes for guests, such as their ability to successfully exit hosting and become more self-reliant by finding employment and rental accommodation. Any private accommodation scheme design will need to ensure that there are systems in place to provide appropriate support to both guests and hosts, taking into account the varying capacities of hosts.

Research by National Red Cross Societies in various EU member states on the 2022 Ukraine hosting response found that there are a variety of motivations for hosting, including solidarity with displaced people, previous personal or familial experience of migration, social status (desire to be seen to show solidarity with displaced people in times of conflict), cultural enhancement, loneliness, feelings of injustice related to media coverage of displacement and the desire to help in a practical way.

Motivations that are a cause of concern to those managing private accommodation schemes include getting help with elderly parent care (adult children applying to host in their elderly parent's home), childcare or farm work, receiving "recognition" payments from the government or wanting to "find love".

Understanding and anticipating some of the potential motivations of hosts allows those designing the private accommodation scheme to consider how protection risks will be managed, for example, where the guest household feels obligated to provide free labour.

As part of the host profile assessment, it may be useful to look at past hosting responses and how the number of hosts volunteering changed over time. In the 2022 Ukraine response, many households came forward at the start of the conflict to offer to host, but within a few weeks this number fell drastically, and as the months passed and the conflict went on, fewer and fewer hosts came forward. In several EU countries, a significant payment was made to hosts in excess of the cost of hosting in some circumstances. It is worth

noting that while some people will come forward even if there is no payment from government, others will only do so if paid. A payment helps overcome host household hesitancy to take part in the scheme and compensates for some of the costs, but it may compromise the sustainability of the scheme in the longer term if government funding constraints mean that the allowance has to be stopped. It also risks undermining the volunteering spirit of hosting, as those who would have hosted without payment previously might no longer be willing to do so in future hosting responses.

1.3 Accommodation conditions (habitability and safety)

Ensuring accommodation is safe and dignified is vital in any private accommodation scheme. When designing such schemes, it is necessary to establish how this will be done, what conditions are acceptable and how they will be checked and to anticipate what problems might arise.

The EUAA recommendations⁷ provide practical standards related to:

- Compliance with national legislation (related to the habitability and safety of housing)
- Furniture
- Cooking facilities where applicable
- Sanitary infrastructure
- Natural light and ventilation
- Environmental noise
- Accommodating those with mobility impairments
- Security

In addition, the UN-Habitat factsheet [The Right to Adequate Housing](#) makes specific reference to:

- Availability of services
- Habitability (physical safety, adequate space and protection against cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards)

⁷ EUAA (2022), *Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*, Annex I. Available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/private-accommodation-persons-displaced-ukraine.pdf>

- Cultural adequacy
- Location (near to employment opportunities, healthcare services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities and away from polluted and dangerous areas)

The stakeholder mapping may help to identify a partner to assist with this task. In Ireland during the response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Irish Red Cross and others worked with the professional bodies Engineers Ireland and the Institute of Professional Auctioneers & Valuers to create a checklist and inspect accommodation being offered by hosts. This included a system where the members of these professional bodies could sign up to support the response by carrying out inspections. They were trained and sent the mobile phone app created to help them complete and report on their inspections.

When considering housing conditions for hosting in general, those establishing schemes should address the following questions:

1. What housing problems are likely to arise? Will there be different issues for rooms in people's homes and self-contained accommodation?
2. How can a conditions checklist be created, taking into account the national and legal framework related to housing conditions and who should approve it?
3. How will inspections take place and what authorisation do people need to conduct them? Could there be some form of host self-certification or video-call inspections for lower risk profiles?
4. Could supporting documentation be used, such as photos of fire alarms or copies of annual gas boiler service records.

1.4 Guest profile assessment

There will be a diverse range of displaced/guest households to be hosted, although some may be specifically excluded if other accommodation

better meets their needs. To design a successful programme, it is necessary to consider:

- Demographics (e.g. lone young adults between 18 and 21).
- Vulnerabilities relating to age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, health and/or welfare concerns.
- Protection needs (e.g. migration status, survivors of sexual or gender-based violence or torture), health needs, education needs (school-aged children, university students), childcare (so that adults in the household can work), employment and transport.
- Language skills, educational and vocational background, accreditation of qualifications, ability to work and resources (current and savings accounts and remittances).
- Potentially marginalised groups (e.g. guest households with men of fighting age, LGBTQI+ people, Roma, people with disabilities, very elderly people or people with significant mental health needs). The assessment can help when considering how to ensure the inclusion of groups that people may not want to host in the scheme. Alternatively, some people may be directed to other types of accommodation better suited to their needs.
- Social and cultural habits (smoking, sociability, etc.).
- Guest households with pets.

Considering the different profiles can help to ensure the scheme is designed to respond appropriately to the needs of guests. It can also help when designing matching processes. For example, in the 2022 Ukraine hosting response in several countries, the hosting of lone young adults (18–21) proved to be a complex issue because hosts would become invested, sometimes treating them like their own child and feeling responsible for them.

1.5 Host community assessment

A wider host community assessment should consider what services are available and the likely impact of receiving displaced people. This is essential to allow the needs of both the host community and guests to be met and to avoid social tensions. Based on the guest profile assessment, the following should be considered:⁸

- Impact on public services (particularly kindergartens and schools, health services, transport services, social care-related services and social housing).
- Changes in demand for goods and services (i.e. impact on markets) provided by the private •. For example, what will it mean for the private rental sector, which the host community also relies on, when guests try to exit private accommodation schemes?
- Pressure on the labour market. Which sectors will be most impacted both positively and negatively?
- Demographics of the host community. This is relevant if, for example, the displaced are young people with children and the host community is older.
- Poverty rates.
- What services were under pressure pre-crisis?
- What were the pre-crisis pressures on the housing ecosystem (particularly private rental and social housing) and what are the trends?
- What budgetary pressures are there on local authorities and what are the trends?

While some of this data could come from secondary sources, such as census data or

government reports, some information may need to be collected from interviews (especially with local authority staff and CSOs supporting vulnerable host community members in the area).

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Netherlands, municipalities were not directly involved in managing hosting (under private accommodation schemes or outside schemes), which limited visibility and control and their ability to forecast and plan service provision. This highlights the importance of strong engagement between private accommodation scheme providers and government actors and other stakeholders involved in service provision.

1.6 Perceptions and xenophobia

Those designing private accommodation schemes should consider the potential for xenophobia against certain groups, anticipate who might face risks and put measures in place to ensure the safety of those who could be affected, such as specific ethnic groups (e.g. Roma people), people identifying as LGBTQI+ and younger single men.⁹

Perception studies can be used to assess these risks and inform communication strategies around hosting and activities to build empathy, taking into account that perceptions can vary significantly depending on geographical location, urban/rural setting, age and socio-economic and ethnic background.

1.7 Safeguarding risk assessment

See Section 2.11 Safeguarding risk management and support

1.8 Exit strategy assessment

See Section 2.6 Exit strategy planning

⁸ Adapted from IFRC (2012), *Assisting host families and communities after conflict and natural disaster: A step-by-step guide*. Available at: <https://preparecenter.org/resource/assisting-host-families-and-communities-after-conflict-and-natural-disaster/> (accessed December 2023)

⁹ In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, younger single men and male family members of fighting age sometimes encountered a negative attitude from hosts and members of the host community because they considered that they should have stayed at home to fight.



2. Scheme design and planning

2.1 Objectives

The first step in designing any programme is to define the objectives. Where the scheme is being delivered under a consortium, this will contribute to building a common vision.

One methodology is to produce a problem tree and a solution tree to unpack the challenges and consider possible courses of action. This will highlight how some problems are interrelated. For example, if one of the challenges is that many displaced households include women with young children who cannot access childcare services because of a lack of kindergarten places in the wider community, this will affect the guest's ability to get a job, making it difficult for them to become self-reliant and eventually find rental accommodation and exit hosting. In the response

to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some Slovak Red Cross branches established child-friendly places at their offices and in other buildings, where Ukrainian women could offer to share childcare responsibilities with each other. This allowed women to look for a job or accommodation. Children from households in the host community could also use these child-friendly spaces.

The objectives of a hosting programme are likely to include the following:

- Support displaced people in accessing suitable hosted accommodation.
- Support successful host-guest matching and nurture the hosted arrangement.
- Support host communities to prevent negative impacts on public services, markets and livelihoods and foster empathy, understanding and connections with guests. This may also include involving vulnerable members of the host community in some parts of the scheme.
- Support hosts to help them provide a suitable hosting environment and sustain their hosting capacity.

- Support guests in meeting their needs and accessing services, markets and employment.
- Support guests in exiting hosting.
- Support guests in accessing accommodation while they settle in a new country and find a way to generate income so that they can access accommodation independently (e.g. rental accommodation).
- “Buytime” for national and local authorities to develop longer-term accommodation options for the displaced when it is recognised that a significant number of people will be staying.

An example of an overarching objective for hosting assistance that could be included in a planning document is:

“Support displaced individuals in accessing adequate accommodation by facilitating private hosted arrangements (including matching them with suitable host families, providing necessary support and developing exit strategies to enable the transition to more durable housing solutions).”

2.2 Policy considerations related to host accommodation offers

Those designing schemes may also want to consider the following policy decisions:

- If there is a risk of landlords switching properties from long-term private rental to hosting, impacting the rental housing market, they could consider accepting only self-contained accommodation not previously rented out on a long-term let basis for at least six months prior to a landlord signing up to the scheme. This way, the accommodation being offered is more likely to be “new” accommodation in the housing ecosystem and previously underutilised.
- For holiday homes within holiday villages subject to occupancy restrictions under planning regulations, the government could consider relaxing them temporarily.

Those with more straightforward or realistic exit strategies and therefore more likely to stay for a shorter period could be matched with hosts offering rooms in their home, reserving self-contained accommodation for those who may require longer-term hosting. This is discussed in more detail in Section 2.14 Matching.

It is important to determine if there are any organisations (e.g. commercial organisations or CSOs) offering accommodation that may present a reputational risk to the scheme or the other organisations involved in managing the private accommodation scheme.

2.3 Selection of components for hosting assistance

Setting objectives helps with selecting the components of hosting assistance to be incorporated into the private accommodation scheme. See later sections for details on each component. The table below indicates the importance of different components.

A successful private accommodation scheme will probably include most of the components to varying degrees. They can be delivered by national authorities, local authorities and civil

society working in partnership. The extent of each component will depend on the context, the scheme’s objectives and the capacity of the organisations involved.

2.4 Scheme duration and hosting period

Establishing the duration of the hosting scheme and the minimum period hosts must commit to at the start of a displacement crisis can be challenging, but both are very important and inherently connected to:

- The scheme’s objectives in terms of “buying time” for other accommodation options to be developed
- The capacity of hosts
- The scheme’s ability to support existing hosts and bring in new ones
- The context and, in particular, forecast and actual new arrival rates and the expected end date of the crisis that triggered displacement if return is possible
- The ability of guests to complete exit strategies
- The financial sustainability of the scheme

Component of support	Importance
Information	Suggested by not essential
Accommodation improvement and adaptation	Checks on the safety and habitability of the accommodation are essential.
Safeguarding support	Essential
Orientation, training and network support for hosts	Suggested by not essential
Assessment of households, matching, agreements and placement support	Essential
Financial support and other incentives for hosts and/or guests	Suggested by not essential. For example, in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Spanish government mandated that hosts must cover all hosting costs, while guests received financial support to meet their needs.
Complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support	Exit strategy support is essential. Complementary programming and integration support will be context-specific.

Scheme duration and triggers for ending it

If one of the objectives is to “buy time” for national and local authorities to develop longer-term accommodation solutions and options for the displaced, then those managing the private accommodation scheme may consider setting a maximum scheme duration (for example, 18 months) or announcing an end date to help authorities focus on planning for those longer-term options.

It can also be appropriate to set triggers for ending the scheme. For example, in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the consortium of partners engaged in RefugeeHomeNL decided early on that the scheme should end when the following triggers occurred:

- A low number of hosts apply each month
- A low number of displaced people apply to be hosted each month
- Hosting stops being voluntary, that is, hosts report feeling obligated to continue hosting due to limited exit strategies and reluctance to return guests to local authority-managed collective centres
- Local/municipal authorities stop cooperating with RefugeeHomeNL

RefugeeHomeNL recognised that once the decision had been made to end the scheme, it would need to be carefully communicated in advance to hosts.

Hosting period

Setting the minimum period hosts must commit to involves balancing the need to attract more hosts with shorter commitments against minimising disruption for guests and reducing the resources required for rematching. It also depends on timeframes for completing exit strategies. The key reason for setting a longer duration is to enable guests to settle and acclimatise to conditions in the society they are now living in while planning their future accommodation, employment, etc.

Some national schemes, such as Spain’s response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, required a



Photo: Romanian Red Cross

minimum six-month commitment from hosts, while the RefugeeHomeNL scheme only asked for three months (although the average duration of stays was eight months) and others had no fixed minimum commitment.

Generally, a minimum six-month commitment is recommended where possible from the outset. In cases where this might deter potential hosts, then a three-month minimum commitment may be considered.

2.5 Prioritising people for hosting

Like all accommodation options for displaced people, hosting is a finite resource, and the number of households willing to host and complete all the procedures required will be limited. Private accommodation schemes should prioritise displaced households that are most suitable for hosting and decline to enrol unsuitable ones. Prioritisation criteria might change as the crisis evolves (prioritisation is not the same as matching, which is described in Section 2.14).

The following considerations can be used to prioritise displaced households.

Criteria	Considerations
Vulnerability, capacity and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there groups whose needs could place too great a burden on hosts (e.g. chronic healthcare needs, dependency issues or significant trauma)? • Who might thrive better in a hosted arrangement than in other available accommodation, based on their capacities? • Are there households who will struggle to find other accommodation and would benefit from hosting assistance? • Are there households who have the resources to rent accommodation directly and sustainably and should be excluded from the programme?
Suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the displaced household have a language in common with the host community which would make living in a host's home easier and reduce the risk of social tensions? • Some households in certain contexts may be at risk in the host community because of their ethnicity, beliefs or lifestyle, and an accommodation option other than hosting may be more suitable. • Does the household have any pets that could make finding a host difficult.
Realistic exit strategies available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the guest household be able to develop realistic exit strategies during hosting?

As can be seen from the above, those designing a scheme may face the dilemma that hosting may not suit the most vulnerable, especially where there are limited viable exit strategies or difficulties in hosting the household. The hosting assistance organisation has a duty to both hosts and guests. A hosted arrangement is not for everyone, and hosting assistance organisations should make this clear early on. This will affect the enrolment of displaced households in the programme.

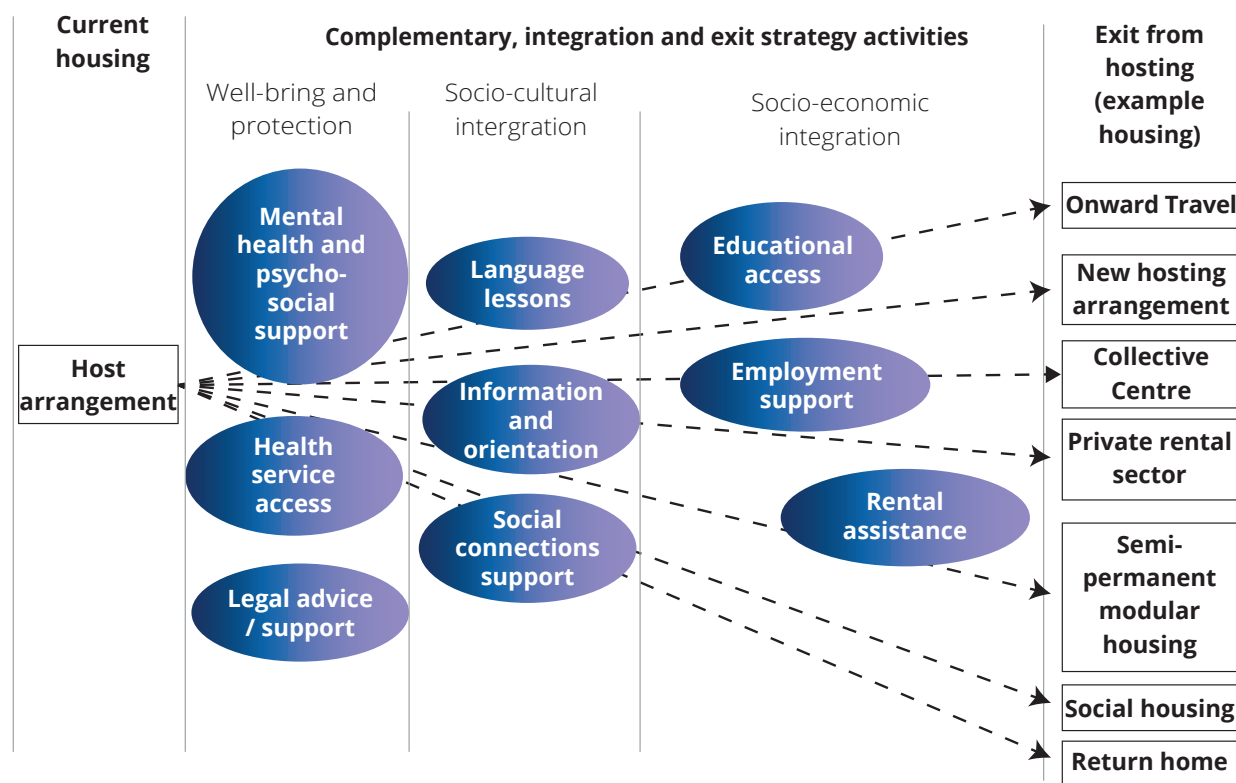
In Spain's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the target group for hosting was initially single mothers with one child, the rationale being that the government did not want to overburden hosts with people who might need more care and support. In Poland, on the other hand, private hosting financial support went to those hosts accommodating families with more than

two children or with a member with a disability. The context evidently influences the targeting of hosting assistance.

2.6 Exit strategy planning

A key part of establishing a private accommodation scheme is the exit strategy which concerns how households will be supported in exiting hosting while maintaining access to adequate housing. In this document, the term "exit pathway" is used to describe the route for exiting hosting, while "exit strategy" is used to refer to activities to support people in achieving their exit pathways. Section 2.19 Complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support describes some of the activities that support exit pathways. The figure below provides an overview.

Figure 1: Exit strategy visualisation with associated complementary, integration and exit strategy activities in hosting assistance



Note that the path is not always linear and the example activities are non-exhaustive

Exit pathways are likely to refer to the following:

- a. Onward travel (outside the country)
- b. New hosted arrangement
- c. Reception centres (collective centres) – although this may not meet the definition of adequate housing
- d. Private rental housing sector
 - i. With rent paid directly by displaced people who have income thanks to restored livelihoods (in rental accommodation found under the programme or otherwise)
 - ii. Absorbed into the government social protection system for rental payment assistance
- e. Semi-permanent modular housing
- f. Access to social housing
 - i. Existing government-owned or housing association-owned housing stock
 - ii. Dilapidated social housing stock repaired to bring it back into use
- g. Return home (to undamaged or repaired/reconstructed homes, rental accommodation or hosting in country of origin)

It is necessary to consider the changing intentions of displaced people over time, consult with displaced people and other stakeholders to better understand the range of exit pathways available and assess barriers, enablers and uncertainty associated with the various pathways for different guest profiles.

While some of the pathways offer a more immediate exit from hosting, others may be more medium term. Longer-term housing strategies, such as addressing the pre-displacement housing crisis, are outside the scope of this guidance.

Those designing a private accommodation scheme may want to make a pessimistic, reasonable and optimistic assessment as to the duration of the crisis. With some crises (e.g. conflict as compared to flooding), this will be difficult. However, it may be possible to consider historical data from previous displacements to the country with a view to developing scenarios to forecast the proportion of displaced people likely to stay in their new location and those likely to return (or travel on). These figures can be important in informing investment decisions on supporting different exit pathways.

All exit strategy planning requires significant engagement and coordination with local, regional and national government bodies and with CSOs which may all be involved in planning for accommodation for those exiting hosting.

Onward travel

Reasons for travelling on include:

- Family reunification: guests may be waiting for visas to join relatives in other countries.
- Displaced people may aspire to reach another location/country where they think their family will have better prospects. For example, during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some people temporarily stayed in the “first ring” of countries closest to Ukraine

In most cases, organisations involved in hosting assistance are unlikely to be in a position or find it appropriate to support onward travel as an exit strategy from hosting.

New hosted arrangement

Some guests may not be able to exit hosting when their current hosted arrangement ends. In such cases, they should be supported in finding another match:

- Where they stay in the same geographic area if they have established connections, such as employment, education and social networks
- Where they move to another geographic area if accommodation, a host and a location that better meets their needs is found
- Where hosting is offered for an extended period, ideally until they can move on naturally to avoid further displacement and disruption

Hosting assistance organisations may choose to rematch within their own pool of potential hosts, but can also refer guests to other schemes. Where it is known in advance that rematching and hosted arrangements will be the exit pathway for many guests, steps should be taken to help them become flexible for matching. For example, language lessons will help them in interactions with future hosts (and have a wide range of other benefits) or they could be helped to rehome pets.

Reception centres

It is recommended that hosting assistance organisations working with local authorities have an emergency accommodation plan for the period that a private assistance scheme is in operation so that those guests who cannot be rematched do not end up homeless. It is recognised that a return/move to a reception centre from a hosted arrangement is the least preferred option, but in some contexts, there may be no choice.

For non-asylum seekers, reception centres in the EU context are often seen as an emergency and transitional accommodation option. They can take many forms, and while they may meet national and EU standards, some may be more suitable for longer-term accommodation than others. Hosting assistance organisations may

want to assess these centres (where they exist) in the area where guests are hosted to identify those that may be suitable for medium or long-term hosting.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the Netherlands, the municipal shelters (collective centres) became important as a “last resort” option for guests and hosts when a hosted arrangement broke down and a new match could not be found. In a few municipalities, displaced people needed to stay in the municipal shelter to be put on social housing waiting lists. In some cases, this meant having to move back to the municipal shelter from a hosted arrangement. Generally, this sort of pull factor drawing people to collective centres should be avoided.

A common predicament echoed in Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands is that hosts may feel a sense of disappointment or see it as a personal failure if guests need to be returned or moved to a municipal shelter (i.e. a collective centre), rather than moving on to rental accommodation or another hosted arrangement.

Private rental housing sector

The private rental housing sector, if accessible, is often the preferred choice for displaced people with the means and ability to rent and can be the first step towards autonomous housing after hosting.

It is recommended to conduct an assessment of the rental market to understand how it works and the barriers to accessing rental accommodation for displaced people. This is essential to avoid harming the rental housing market which the host community also relies on (and to avoid increasing the risk of social tensions).

The following steps are recommended:

1. **Undertake a rental housing market assessment.** This will normally be spread across different geographic areas of interest.
2. If the rental housing market faces supply issues, explore options to boost supply.

For example, for hosts who offered self-contained accommodation (not in their home) and no longer want to continue hosting, consider incentives for them to transition the property into the private rental market with a small grant for habitability improvements, perhaps requiring a minimum two-year rental period.

3. Where the rental housing market is found to be functional, and supporting displaced people to access it will not lead to a significant risk of social tensions with the host community, the following can be considered:

Employment support for guests (part of complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support, Section 2.19) to help them generate enough income for rent

- a. Support for guests in accessing housing allowances for rental accommodation through host government or other social programmes
- b. Cash grant to pay for a deposit
- c. Guarantor support
- d. Partnering/contracting with letting agents to help displaced people find rental accommodation and negotiate with landlords
- e. Financial assistance to pay for the rent and other housing-related costs
- f. Orientation for displaced people to help them understand the rental housing market and rental practices
- g. Accompaniment support to help displaced people with translation and negotiation with potential landlords
- h. As a service to guests, a review of the tenancy agreement and habitability checks prior to the tenant accepting the rental can be offered; this may be part of the conditions where the hosting assistance organisation offers any form of financial assistance or guarantor support
- i. Assistance with household items (including furniture)

This list is not exhaustive; there may be other measures specific to the context that can be included, such as activities to help landlords and letting agents overcome xenophobia.

The Luxembourg Red Cross and other National Red Cross Societies in Europe have been involved in providing rental assistance for many years. The Luxembourg Red Cross applied its assistance scheme to the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, assisting some Ukrainian households in exiting hosting by providing guarantor support and offering the landlord a larger deposit. This helped to overcome some of the barriers related to landlord hesitancy to rent to Ukrainian households. In Hungary, the Lutheran Diaconia and Jesuit Refugee Service extended their rental subsidies programme for Ukrainians granted temporary protection under the TPD, with other agencies, such as Caritas, joining them.

Some countries are facing acute rental housing shortages, leading cities such as Barcelona and New York to start transitioning short-term and

holiday let accommodation (e.g. Airbnb) back into the longer-term rental market. Governments may consider appropriate curtailment of short-term and holiday rentals during crises to quickly adjust the rental stock available (rather than building more). This may have benefits for the wider host community in the long term. Investing in the enforcement of curtailment regulations would be key.

Return home

Depending on the duration of displacement, many may choose to return home to their country of origin voluntarily when it is safe to do so. Organisations engaged in hosting assistance should avoid pressuring or incentivising people to return home.

Nevertheless, there are some intergovernmental organisations that are particularly experienced in [assisted voluntary return](#), and it may be appropriate to connect guests who intend to return home with such organisations.



Photo: Netherlands Red Cross

Where there is movement back and forth between the country of origin and the country of displacement, hosts may need to be briefed in advance to expect this and asked to keep accommodation available for a certain amount of time for their guests.

“Semi-permanent” modular housing

Depending on the context, local authorities and others (for example, CSOs) may be able to establish non-permanent, rapid-build modular housing. Normally, such housing, which is manufactured off-site, would include kitchen and bathroom and be self-contained. Sometimes, they are installed on local authority-owned land (e.g. local authority office car parks) or unused public land. While cheaper and faster than building permanent social housing, it can still involve significant investment and may be less durable than permanent housing. Care should be taken not to concentrate such accommodation in one area, with a view to promoting mixed communities and avoiding ghettoisation. It can be used subsequently as emergency housing in future crises or, if the quality is good, as permanent housing.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, authorities in many European countries, such as Germany and Ireland,¹⁰ established dedicated semi-permanent modular micro-housing.

Social housing

Depending on the context, social housing (owned by the government or housing associations and CSOs) may be an option. However, it is recognised that many countries face significant pressures in terms of social housing availability or do not have any. Care must be taken to avoid tensions with the host community, as displaced people may be seen to be getting ahead on waiting lists. This may require social housing providers to consider activities that increase social housing stock. The Housing Solutions Platform’s 2019 publication *50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness & Housing Exclusion*¹¹ is a useful resource.

Measures to increase housing stock include:

- Repair and refurbishment of unused social housing stock
- Purchase or long-term lease of unused commercial or industrial units to convert them into temporary or permanent social housing
- Engagement with religious institutions and other civil society groups to utilise underused buildings for temporary housing
- Engagement with private citizens who have empty homes in poor condition to offer repairs in return for a long-term lease that would allow them to be used as social housing for a number of years before being returned
- Conversion of collective centres into more appropriate longer-term accommodation as social housing stock (with lower density); this may be particularly viable when collective centre demand falls, but some residents have been unable to leave
- Funding for social housing providers to build more permanent social housing

The building of new social housing and the creation of residential units from commercial or industrial properties will require significant investment.

Hosting assistance organisations may have a limited ability to influence social housing access for those being hosted, but they can advocate for it (as appropriate to context) with social housing providers, inform guests of the options and eligibility criteria for social housing where it exists (this will vary for different guest profiles) and, where appropriate, contribute funds to social housing providers to help them bring dilapidated social housing stock back into use, for example.

¹⁰ Government of Ireland (2022), ‘Rapid Build Housing’. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef882-rapid-build-housing/>. See another example here: <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41158930.html> (both accessed 18 March 2024)

¹¹ Housing Solutions Platform (2019), *50 Out-of-the-Box Housing Solutions to Homelessness & Housing Exclusion*. Available at: <https://www.feantsa.org/en/news/2019/12/11/hsp-publication-50-housing-solutions?bcParent=27>

Other potential housing options to assist people in exiting hosted arrangements include:

- Help guest households to match up with other guest households to look for larger rental accommodation (which may be easier to find and cheaper per person).
- Take into account that people with access to private transport could live in more rural areas not served by public transport. Grants could be considered to support the purchase of bicycles, cargo bicycles or even small second-hand cars, for example.
- Create an enabling environment for turning underused office space into residential accommodation, although office floor plates are normally less than ideal for creating homes and can result in poor quality housing.
- For displaced people with substantial savings and income, there may be bodies that can provide appropriate housing finance products to support them into home ownership.

Creating an exit strategy plan

The following steps are recommended to formulate an exit strategy plan:

1. List the exit pathway options for guests (private rental, social housing, etc.).

For each pathway, list the complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support activities and the investments and partnerships that could be included to assist a guest household. Examine the different guest profiles (Section 1.4) and reassess the activities needed, bearing in mind that some will need different forms of support along the pathway and

that many activities may be useful for multiple pathways (e.g. language classes). Consult with guests and stakeholders on the list of activities.

Based on the mapping of hosting assistance organisations (Section 1.1), engage and coordinate with the stakeholders that can contribute to each activity, taking into account that some activities may only be supported in certain areas by specific organisations.

2. Consider how the activities will be interlinked. For example, will rental assistance with time-limited monthly rental payment support be offered only after a household has completed employment support activities so that they are more likely to be able to make the rental assistance outcome sustainable.
3. Document exit strategy planning in multi-stakeholder-agreed planning documents where possible.

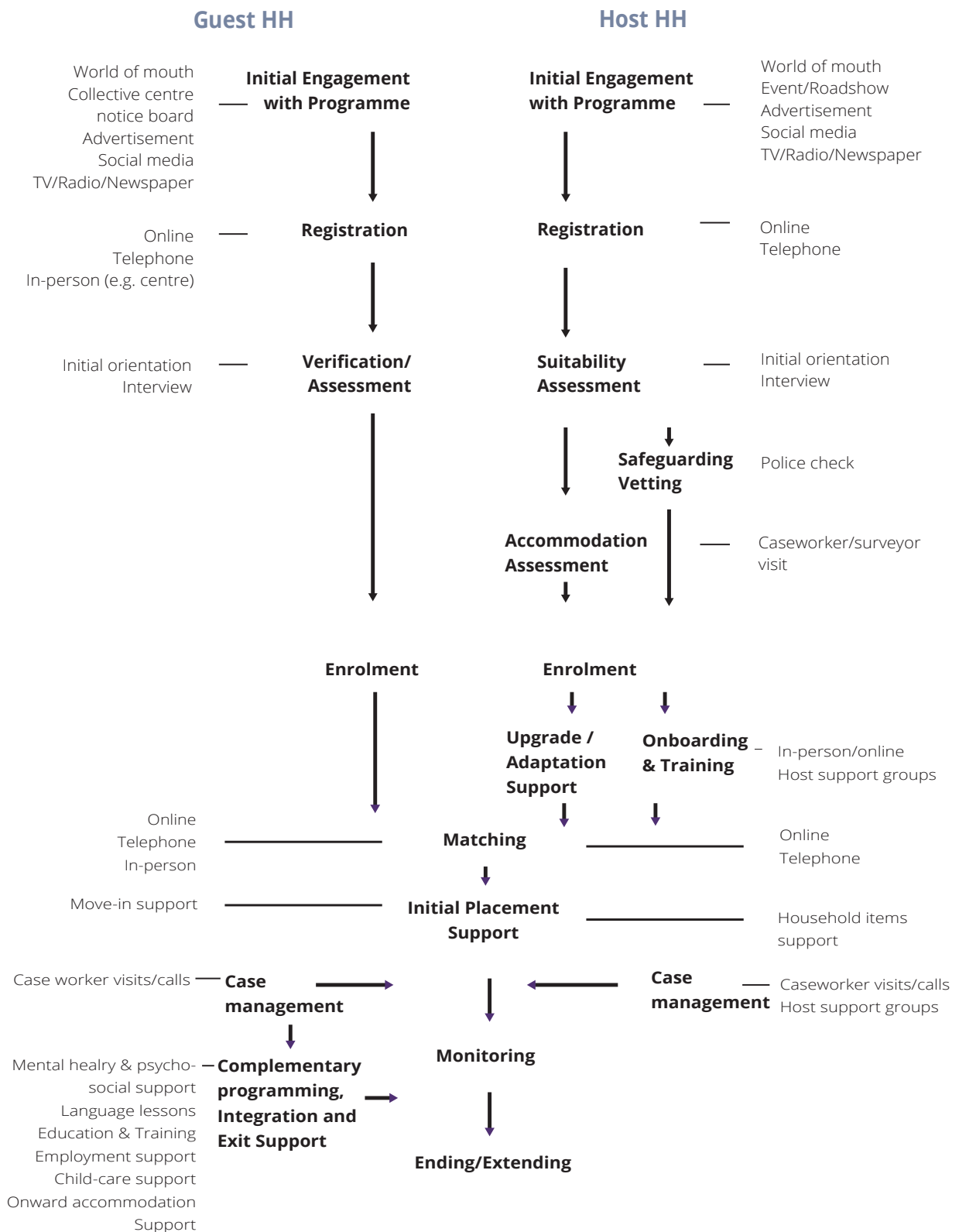
2.7 Programme engagement process for hosts and guests

Once some key elements of the scheme have been decided, it can be useful to consider the process of engagement with a private accommodation scheme from the perspective of hosts and guests. This can help determine what processes need to be designed. Support should be made available to hosts and host networks for the whole duration of the scheme (see Section 2.9).

The figure in the next page shows a typical process, although each scheme will vary.

For private accommodation schemes that have a significant number of activities with the wider host community, it may also be useful to produce a process chart showing them.

Figure 2: Engagement process charts for hosts and guests



2.8 Registration and verification processes

Registration platform

Establishing an online platform to register hosts offering accommodation and guests seeking accommodation can be useful. Key things to consider in this process will be the data (and data protection) for guests and hosts, platform promotion and ensuring accessibility for all users, including those who may need alternative sign-up options to online registration.

The EUAA recommendations,¹² offer some additional tips, including:

- *On the landing page, include information for both hosts and displaced persons on requirements and entitlements under the private accommodation scheme, to be aware before signing up.*
- *Provide a real time view on the platform of the number and profiles of individuals seeking accommodation, as well as on all available places (i.e. size, location, accessibility).*
- *Ensure that the platform offers the possibility for displaced persons to indicate specific needs they might have, such as a preference in location, schooling of children, etc.*
- *Ensure that persons with specific needs, including children (accompanied or separated), single headed female households and persons with disabilities are identified as early as possible. After registration takes place, vulnerabilities must be considered when deciding where to accommodate persons (for example, suitability for persons with disabilities, availability of suitable equipment for babies and toddlers).*

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Irish Red Cross utilised the online platform they had established in 2015 in response to the Syria displacement crisis to register offers of

accommodation. Having a functional platform for accepting offers from hosts assisted the organisation in delivering a timelier response, although it still required significant investment as the accommodation scheme evolved to cater for the large number of hosts and guests attempting to join and procedures for verifying and processing the offers into matches needed to be rapidly scaled up. In the Netherlands, the consortium RefugeeHomeNL included the partner Takecarebnb,¹³ a tech company that had operated a platform before the 2022 Ukraine crisis for connecting refugees (with residence permits) with host families.

Registration questions are further addressed in Section 2.14 Matching.

Verification

It is recommended to conduct a verification process either by phone or in person with both guests and hosts, facilitated by dedicated call centres and/or external volunteer groups properly trained to carry out the verification process. Hosts and guests should be asked to provide identification documents at this stage, although some displaced people may not have civil documentation.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, RefugeeHomeNL initially allowed Ukrainians not in the country to register so that the matching process could start, before restricting it to in-person only registrations. In France, it was found that very few guests had undergone the “pre-admission” interview due to the speed the hosting initiatives were working at.

In the Ukraine response, the Luxembourg Red Cross host verification process included a two-hour interview with professional social workers to determine motivation and suitability and provide them with information on hosting. Selected individuals and families were given 24 hours to think about their final decision and call the Luxembourg Red Cross if they wanted to accept potential guests. The interview included:

¹² EUAA (2022), *Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*. Available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/private-accommodation-persons-displaced-ukraine.pdf>

¹³ <https://takecarebnb.org/en/>



Photo: Luxembourg Red Cross

- Introduction to hosting:
 - Hosting assistance as an act of solidarity and not for financial gain
 - Information on human trafficking
 - The likely length of stay
 - Trauma associated with war and displacement
 - How to avoid tensions in a shared living space
 - Potential impacts on married life and children
 - Impact of hosting on family dynamics and daily lives
 - Ukrainian culture
- Motivations and expectations
- How they envisage hosting will impact their family life, their use of their home and their finances
- Establishing spaces not accessible to guests so that members of the household have a private place to themselves

The motivations and expectations expressed by hosts, in particular, have been used by many hosting assistance organisations to identify red flags indicating the household was unsuitable for hosting. Such interviews can also be useful in informing hosts about different guest profiles and help them overcome pre-conceived ideas or clarify if there are any types of people they would be uncomfortable hosting. The Luxembourg Red Cross estimates that after the interview, 27% of potential hosts withdrew, highlighting how valuable this form of engagement is in avoiding problems in the future.

Offers from commercial landlords and institutions

Businesses and institutions, such as religious and educational institutions, may offer accommodation, and hosting organisations might decide to assign staff to proactively look for and engage with these sectors. In the Ukraine hosting response, the Irish Red Cross employed a dedicated senior staff member to engage with business entities, assess offers and negotiate

the use of accommodation. In Luxembourg, the Red Cross received around 200 houses and apartments at no cost to manage and use for hosting.

2.9 Support for host households

From the outset, hosting assistance organisations should consider and agree the role of hosts in a private accommodation scheme (which may be different from when they host family or friends). While hosts may play a crucial role in supporting their guests, they should not be obligated to do more than providing accommodation and a welcoming environment. Hosting assistance organisations and public bodies should provide the bulk of support to guests to avoid exhausting the goodwill of hosts. Private accommodation schemes should be designed with this in mind from the start.

Orientation and training

Where community sponsorship programmes exist in the country, it may be beneficial to engage with programme administrators to explore the possibility of using their training curriculum and expertise.¹⁴

Orientation can help hosts to:

- Make sure that hosting is really for them and manage their expectations
- Understand their role (and its limits) and how to get support
- Better understand the private accommodation scheme and the support they can expect
- Better support their guests in settling, finding and accessing services and exploring exit strategies, although hosts should not have to shoulder the burden alone; caseworkers – volunteers from the hosting assistance organisations – should play a significant role, and the ultimate responsibility for integration and inclusion lies with the public authorities

- Identify sources of tension between hosts and guests to defuse issues and find solutions
- Develop their communication skills and understand cultural differences in communication
- Understand MHPSS needs

There are a wide range of delivery methods that can be used when orienting and training hosts, including:

- Information material, such as a host handbook, as discussed in Section 2.17 Information support
- Initial online and/or face-to-face meetings, workshops and training events, especially with other hosts
- Online, asynchronous, self-guided learning, such as interactive online courses
- Podcasts or short videos that hosts can listen to/watch in their own time on specific topics (e.g. how to overcome miscommunication with guests)
- Newsletters
- Mentoring of small groups by past or current hosts
- Specific support given by caseworkers to hosts to develop their hosting capacity, including information and more personal one-to-one training, depending on needs

The orientation and training could cover the topics described in “Suggested information for hosts” in Section 2.17. Care should be taken to discuss with hosts what orientation and training is appropriate and how they would prefer to receive it, as needs will vary.

An example from the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is the work of VluchtelingenWerk Nederland and other organisations in the RefugeeHomeNL consortium, including regular webinars on topics such as

¹⁴ An example of a course offered by ComUnidade is available here: <https://www.acomunidade.org/en/event-details/e-curso-capacitacao-para-o-patrocinio-comunitario-de-refugiados-3>

accessing health services, often attended by both guests and hosts. There were also regular newsletters. In France, some prefectures funded NGOs to offer intercultural training and awareness talks for hosts, covering good practices in hosting assistance and lessons learned.

Host peer-to-peer and network support groups

Peer-to-peer support can take the following forms:

- Pairing with a “partner family” to support hosts and mitigate the risk of host fatigue
- Creating committees like those often formed in community sponsorship initiatives to welcome guests and offer peer-to-peer support
- Establishing mentoring arrangements
- Hosting face-to-face or online sharing groups or regular workshops

- Creating online platforms, such as a Facebook group, solely for hosts

In the Ukraine hosting response in Ireland, Helping Irish Hosts¹⁵ established a Facebook Group and appointed a dedicated moderator for discussions. In Luxembourg, the Red Cross organised regular host talking groups around their office kitchen table.

2.10 Accommodation assessment

Establishing minimum standards and a property checklist

Section 1.3 Accommodation conditions (habitability and safety) refers to the EUAA recommendations which set out standards for housing applicants for international protection.¹⁶ Taking into account the context, an assessment form like the one shown below can be developed.

Consideration	Notes
Utilities and heating	Working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms (if gas boiler in home) Gas safety certificate or annual service record (if gas appliances in home) Electrical safety (visual inspection by a trained volunteer and photos and referrals if any concerns) Working heating system Internet access with Wi-Fi available Mobile phone reception available in property Telephone landline
Accessibility	Number of steps (or stairs) to front door Lift Number of stairs from front door to bedroom offered Accessible design (ramps, handles, etc.)
Facilities – bedroom	Size of room Size of bed Storage space Other furniture (such as desk) Privacy and accessibility standards
Facilities – bathroom	Shared or allocated bathroom for guest Number of toilets in household Shower/bath Handrails and grab bars Privacy and accessibility standards

¹⁵ <https://www.helpingirishhosts.com/>

¹⁶ EUAA (2022), *Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*, Annex I. Available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/private-accommodation-persons-displaced-ukraine.pdf>

Consideration	Notes
Facilities – kitchen	Oven/cooker/hob and type (electric, gas) Washing machine Storage space for guest's food
Facilities – communal living areas	Rooms to be shared (living room, dining room, etc.) Communal TV Communal radio Communal desktop PC or laptop with internet access
State of repair/ cleanliness	Observations and issues Signs of damp or mould Signs of structural safety issues (e.g. significant cracking)
Natural light and ventilation	Natural light in rooms Openable windows or air-conditioning in rooms
Environmental noise	Excessive outside or inside noise
Pets and smoking	Host household's pets (what type?) Garden or balcony available for smoking
Security	Lockable external doors and windows Lock on guest room and bathroom Adequate lighting Accessibility
Location	Access to public transport (e.g. nearest public bus stop) Access to educational facilities, health facilities, library, leisure facilities, etc. Away from polluted or dangerous areas
Cultural adequacy	Consider privacy specifically

The above was produced based on various resources including the No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) guidance.¹⁷

A range of methods can be used for assessments, including in-person visits by trained volunteers and staff, online (video call) visits by trained volunteers and staff and self-certification (with photo upload for verification) by hosts working through a form.

Research in Poland on the Ukraine hosting response found that a lot of hosting accommodation was not independently checked, probably because of the large numbers of displaced people arriving in the country. Some guests reported being subjected to unsanitary and cramped conditions, with some

accommodation even lacking basic items, such as a bed.

It may be possible to use third parties, such as surveyors and local letting agents, as was done in Ireland during the Ukraine response, to scale up the assessment of accommodation conditions. A partnership was forged with Engineering Ireland, the professional membership body for Irish Engineers, and the Institute of Professional Auctioneers & Valuers, which has members with a surveying background. Volunteers from these two organisations, local authorities and Irish Red Cross caseworkers and volunteers assessed properties to ensure they were fit for habitation. A mobile phone app-based form (KoboToolbox) was used to record information and also allowed the capture of time-stamped photos and GPS location.

¹⁷ NACCOM (2022), NACCOM's Hosting Good Practice Guide: Part 2, Appendix 5. Available at: https://naccom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/NACCOM-Hosting-Good-Practice-Guide-Part2_2022-05-04_Appendix5.pdf (accessed 20 January 2024)

The Safe Homes guidance also gives examples of how EU member states checked whether accommodation was suitable.¹⁸

2.11 Safeguarding risk management and support

The hosting assistance organisation has a duty of care to both hosts and guests when they are facilitating placements. There are a range of

options available to manage safeguarding risks, and an assessment is necessary to determine the level of management and the procedures required, since it must be balanced with the need to match and place people in a timely manner.

The table below draws on and adds to the recommendations on this subject set out in the Safe Homes guidance,¹⁹ showing the processes that can contribute to protection risk management and safeguarding support.

Process	Observations
Registration and verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility criteria for hosting may exclude some potentially higher-risk host profiles, such as single men. • The verification process should include questions to check suitability and motivation and identify protection risk red flags (e.g. hosts “looking for love”). • Verification questions for guests may also allow potential protection risk red flags to be spotted and further questions asked (e.g. guests with alcohol dependency issues may not be suitable for hosting). See Section 2.8 Registration and verification processes.
Vetting of hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is likely to be some process to check that hosts do not have a known criminal record.
Vetting of guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some contexts (e.g. internal displacement), it may be possible to check that the guest has no known criminal record that could make staying with a host problematic.
Matching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts and guests can meet with each other (e.g. online meeting) before they separately (post-meeting) agree to or decline the hosted arrangement. This helps to pick up on anything that does not feel right for either side.
Case management and monitoring visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people prefer direct communication with a member of staff to report issues. Caseworkers may regularly follow up with households and can identify potential signs of exploitation and abuse, so building trust is key. • A protection referral pathway should be available and communicated regularly to staff and volunteers.
Hotline, complaints and feedback mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can help facilitate the detection of potential issues related to exploitation and abuse for further investigation.

¹⁸ European Commission (2022), *Solidarity and housing: Supporting Safe Homes – Considerations, key principles and practices*, p. 10. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bd25162f-5154-4898-88db-a49edd3b87f0_en

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10 ff.

Assessment

Before designing the programme, it is important to assess any likely safeguarding risks to guests and their families from hosts, and from guests towards hosts and their families.

For guests: Consider the profile (gender, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, language, background, etc.) of hosts and displaced people. For instance, if the displaced people are mostly women with young children fleeing conflict, they should be considered a higher protection risk group.

- Is it likely that adults and adolescents from the host family will be left alone with children?
- Given the social context, is it likely that adults and adolescents who are not members of the host family will access the accommodation?
- Will those being hosted be more socially isolated than others, for example, because they are from a marginalised group or in a specific location (such as a very rural setting)?
- Is there a potential power imbalance (economic, social, decision-making) between host and guest?
- Can guests easily access alternative accommodation of a similar standard if needed or desired?
- Is there adequate space and privacy for hosts and guests?

The replies to these questions depend heavily on the context and profile of hosts and guests but also highlight the need to prevent guests becoming isolated and trapped in terms of accommodation options.

It is important to assess what existing processes could be used to support vetting, such as accessing existing police background checks or requiring a reference from a “person of good standing” in the community working in or retired from a profession included on an approved list.

It may also be important to consider what is appropriate in a particular context in relation to the risk of hosts requiring guests to perform unpaid labour. Red flags related to labour exploitation risks should be established. For example, are the following activities considered exploitation or acceptable activities given the social norms?

- Unpaid housework (cleaning, etc.) in the household in excess of their fair share
- Walking a dog once a day
- Taking care of farm animals once a day when hosted on a farm
- Unpaid childcare
- Unpaid elderly parent care (e.g. when an adult child offers a room in their parents’ home).

For hosts: Assessing the risks to hosts and their families from guests can be difficult. The following questions should be considered:

- Could there be displaced people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) related to the conflict or disaster event? Could this be a risk? How will this risk be managed?
- Could some displaced people have substance abuse issues?
- Could some older hosts be at risk of elder abuse?

Police vetting or reference requests for displaced people may not be feasible, particularly if they have fled from countries that are affected by conflict or lack such processes. Instead, it may be possible to use interviews with guests as part of the assessment and matching process to identify any protection risk red flags.

Other considerations: When considering safeguarding, it is also important to assess risks from the staff and volunteers of agencies engaged in hosting assistance who may come into contact with vulnerable people and put in place appropriate processes to manage them. Where staff and volunteers have been recruited from the

same displaced community, care must be taken to be mindful of any power relationships and be aware that if they themselves have suffered trauma in the course of their displacement, they may be more vulnerable to stress.

Vetting of hosts

Where a hosting assistance organisation is facilitating placements with hosts, it has a duty of care to ensure that vulnerable guests are not at risk. It is, however, impossible to completely eliminate all risk of exploitation and abuse.

The following methods could be considered, depending on the context, feasibility and risk:

1. Police vetting of all adult members of the host household
2. Police vetting of at least one adult member of the host household, normally a man

(Note: depending on the context and safeguarding risk assessment, this may only be required when a child, a lone woman or some other vulnerable guest is to be hosted and there is no adult male family member. However, to build a register of hosts who are suitable for hosting these more vulnerable households, it may be appropriate to assess all those who apply.)

3. Written reference from one neighbour and one “person of good standing” in the community (working in or retired from a profession included on an approved list) who have known the family member applying to host for a minimum of two years²⁰
4. Written reference from an employer

References can be kept simple, consisting of a statement from the referee confirming that they are not aware of any reason why the applicant may not be suitable as a host.

It may be appropriate to ask for both a police check and a written reference. However, there will be a cost, and staff will be needed to process and check references. Any vetting will also take time, which may initially delay matching and placement. Decisions on what procedure is suitable will also reflect the hosting assistance organisation’s appetite for risk and what other safeguarding support (such as casework) will be in place as part of the scheme. Vetting procedures may evolve and be streamlined over time.

In the Ukraine hosting response, the Irish government’s child protection services initially discussed the view that police vetting of hosts was not necessary if the guest household included children with parents, as the parents were responsible for them. The government subsequently changed the advice, requiring all host household members over 16 to be vetted before hosting could proceed, where the guest household had children under the age of 18.

Vetting of guests

This can prove very difficult. For internal displacement, police checks or references may also be an option, but when it is not possible or feasible to communicate with the national authorities in the guest’s country of origin for such checks or references, a risk-based approach is advisable. This could involve avoiding placing single men with households with children or other vulnerable members. It may also be possible to identify safeguarding red flags in interviews as part of the registration and verification process (e.g. identification of drug and/or alcohol dependency).

Case management and monitoring visits

Caseworkers and other people from hosting assistance organisations should be specifically trained to look for signs of exploitation and abuse, build rapport with hosts and guests and ask about concerns. The hosting assistance organisation must also have a procedure in place to further investigate, escalate and act on concerns (including rapidly rehousing a guest).

²⁰ This could include accredited professionals, such as teachers, nurses, pharmacists, doctors, accountants, architects, social workers, local councillors, permanent civil service staff, dentists and engineers.



Photo: Slovak Red Cross

Labour exploitation

It is recommended that both host and guest be briefed during orientation (pre-hosting) as to what it is acceptable to ask of each other. It is not acceptable for hosts to ask the people they are hosting to help with childcare, elderly parent care, pet care, cleaning and housework (including food preparation) in excess of their fair share or to carry out work connected to the occupation of the host (e.g. farming help).

Guests may choose to offer such support, but hosts should ensure that they do not feel obligated to do so. Caseworkers should follow up with guest households to ensure that arrangements where guests offer labour are voluntary.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, research found that some guests in Poland had been compelled to perform tasks such as cleaning and cooking as a condition of their stay with the host.

Anti-trafficking measures

Hosting assistance organisations should connect with organisations in the country involved in anti-trafficking work and train staff, volunteers and hosts to identify signs of trafficking. The Red Cross Red Crescent has a range of resources available at <https://trafficking-response.org/>. The Netherlands Red Cross used anti-trafficking information resources in the Ukraine response to train staff and volunteers and brief hosts and guests.

The EUAA recommendations²¹ highlight that special reception needs, such as in cases of victims of human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence, should be taken into account when assigning accommodation. There may therefore be specific special accommodation options outside of hosting, with appropriate support in place, that hosting assistance organisations should be aware of.

²¹ EUAA (2022), *Practical recommendations on the provision of emergency placement in private accommodation for persons displaced from Ukraine*. Available at: <https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/private-accommodation-persons-displaced-ukraine.pdf>

2.12 Enrolment

Once the procedures to check that hosts and guests are suitable for the private accommodation scheme have been completed, it may be appropriate to officially enrol them. This may include a brief formal agreement between those managing the private accommodation scheme and the host and guest (separately), setting out responsibilities and the terms and conditions of the scheme, including:

- What support can be expected from hosting assistance organisations
- What the host/guest is agreeing to when taking part in the private accommodation scheme, for example, regular monitoring visits from caseworkers

The primary purpose is to establish formal acceptance of the terms and conditions of the private accommodation scheme prior to commencing work on matching and raising the expectations of hosts and guests. For hosts, this step may occur after registration, verification, accommodation assessment and safeguarding risk vetting and allow hosts to take part in orientation and training activities and apply for support to improve and adapt the accommodation. For guests, this may occur after registration, verification and/or matching assessment and indicate that the hosting assistance organisation is actively working to match the guest household with a host. Agreements related to the hosted arrangement itself, once matching has taken place, are described in Section 2.15.

2.13 Accommodation improvement and adaptation

Once accommodation has been assessed and the host has been enrolled in the scheme, it may be appropriate to improve the accommodation to ensure it is safe and habitable, create extra hosting space (such as by subdividing large rooms) or adapt the accommodation for people with specific needs, such as mobility impairments. The main areas of work may relate to safety and security, thermal comfort and ventilation, and decoration (dignity).

There may be some host households that are particularly suited to hosting people with certain impairments, for example, mobility impairments. In this case, it may be appropriate to discuss with the host whether some minor alterations could be made to ensure the property meets their needs satisfactorily. Typical examples include:

- Installing handrails and grab bars in bathrooms or at the property's main entrance
- Improving lighting
- Widening doorway access to particular rooms (for example, the bathroom)

It is likely that a host will only agree to such alterations if they are minor and do not detract from the property value or affect the use of the property by the host

2.14 Matching

This process is key to the success of the scheme and may include:

Assessment of both host and guest, which may be part of the verification and registration processes described in Section 2.8.

- Matching by caseworker, where appropriate, potentially within the initial filtering by algorithm
- Discussion of the potential match with host and guest separately
- Meeting (face-to-face or online) of potentially matched households
- Discussion about concerns with host and guest separately
- Initial placement support (including follow-up on initial work on host-guest relationship)

There are therefore a number of steps that can take time to complete. It is recommended that, where possible, matching be undertaken at a regional or even city level to allow caseworkers to get to know both hosts and guests to increase the chances of successful matches.

Research on the Ukraine hosting response revealed that in some neighbouring countries, such as Poland, due to the high arrival rate, the matching process was completed extremely quickly with very little assessment of hosts and guests and without establishing well-resourced and well-thought-out matching processes. Consequently, successful matches largely depended on luck, and there were reports of exploitation, particularly labour exploitation.

Assessment of hosts and guests

The lists below summarise and add to the guidance in Section 3 of the EUAA recommendations (EUAA, 2022) on matching, which sets out the data that should be gathered on hosts and guests.

Hosts

- Household composition – age, gender and disability disaggregated
- Languages spoken
- Employment status
- Details of the accommodation offered and the maximum length of stay
- Information on whether pets, children and smokers are allowed (as for rental housing)

In addition to these details, which could be recorded on the initial registration form, assessors should ask about:

- A typical week and weekend day for the household
- Any expectations they may have of guests
- Whether there are guest profiles that they would not expect or accept
- How they expect to resolve any issues with guests that might arise during the hosting period (indication of communication and conflict resolution skills)
- The occupations of adults in the household
- Interests and hobbies

Guests

- Household composition – age, gender and disability disaggregated
- Languages spoken
- Expected duration of stay
- Information on smoking, pets and medical conditions

In addition to these details, assessors should ask about:

- Their capacities and strengths (e.g. good at communicating, flexible in finding employment, a dedicated parent)
- Geographic location, interests, needs and priorities
- Employment status
- Intentions in terms of expected duration of stay, finding work and accessing education (for both adults and children)
- Areas of the home they are comfortable with sharing and those they are not
- Whether there are any host profiles they would not accept
- What they expect from the host family
- How they expect to resolve any issues with hosts that might arise during the hosting period?
- Any specific vulnerabilities or needs of the members of the guest household (e.g. mental health needs)
- Whether they have a preference as to urban or rural areas
- Interests and hobbies

It is therefore essential for humans (and not just algorithms) to be involved in the assessment process and to conduct interviews that enable them to pick up on any issues, ask follow-up questions and get an idea of the flexibility of hosts and guests in matching and what they will and will not accept. Any safeguarding red flags on either side can also be identified for further investigation or to be worked on with the household as part of the scheme. Care also needs to be taken at interviews not to build up host and guest expectations for a perfect match that meets all their wants.

Matching process and objectives

The following matching objectives are recommended.

Area	Observations
Treat guest and host households fairly	Treat both the host and guest households as distinct parties that deserve equal treatment in the matching process. Both have needs, capacities, expectations and suitability considerations.
Maximise life chances and potential exit strategies for guests	Consider how the guest's life chances and potential exit strategies (including integration) will be best advanced. This may be difficult in the case of newly arrived guests who have not yet considered their options or decided whether they are likely to return or settle, for example. Specifically, consider the needs of guests in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic location in terms of access to services (healthcare, education, transport) and employment opportunities • Whether the guest has work experience in a field that the host has connections in, as this can increase the chances of the host assisting the guest in finding relevant work • Whether the host will be able to assist the guest with integration or other relevant exit strategies
Similar lifestyles	Ideally match hosts and guests with similar lifestyles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of a similar age • Shared interests and hobbies • Shared likes (e.g. pets) • Structure of a typical week and weekend for host and guest
Reduce potential for multiple displacement	Try to reduce multiple displacement where possible, matching guests intending or needing to stay for a longer duration with hosts who can provide accommodation for longer and matching guests intending to return in a few months with those only able to host for a short period.
Minimise future tensions	Minimise future tensions in the home, for example, by assigning guests with more complex needs (such as larger families) to self-contained accommodation, if available, rather than a shared home. Consider guest preferences and information on who they would not want to be hosted by.

There may be specific groups of people who are more appropriately hosted in specific regions, cities or neighbourhoods. For example, in the Ukraine hosting response in Germany, where there was a system of assigning people fleeing the crisis to different regions across the country, those who self-identified as "trans*" or "inter*" were assigned to Berlin.²² This may be because there are specific services (such as counselling and advice services) available for them in Berlin.

A typical process could be as follows:

1. Algorithm indicates a potential match from the registration data.
2. Verification and assessment of guests and hosts completed by staff member, with review of potential match.
3. Geographical location (city level or village level) of the host accommodation is sent

²² Mayor of Berlin (no date), "Arrival: Important information for refugees from Ukraine". Available at: <https://www.berlin.de/ukraine/en/arrive/> (accessed January 2024)

to guests. In a rural area, information on public transport (i.e. bus timetables and bus stops) and distance to nearest shops needs to be communicated, along with other relevant information on services.

4. Feedback is requested from guests on potential location before continuing further.
5. Calls are made to discuss potential match with host and guest separately. The profile of the other household is described to each party and any other key information indicating why this could be a good match is provided. Any potential issues arising from the assessment information should be discussed.
6. If both sides are interested, an online meeting is convened to introduce the households and allow them to ask questions about each other. Guidance should be offered on relevant questions to guide the conversation.
7. Separate calls are made to both sides the following day when they have had time to think about whether the match is acceptable.
8. Where appropriate, transport is facilitated.
9. Initial placement support is provided.

Some matches may be rejected by the host or the guest. A process must be established to collect feedback on the rejected match and help with future matching for these households.

The importance of matching for exit strategies

Hosts play a significant role in assisting guests in accessing exit pathways and becoming integrated by helping them with language learning, finding employment or finding onward accommodation to rent, for example. The effectiveness of this support often hinges on the host's social network. Evaluating the potential of a host's social capital

can be challenging. However, hosting assistance organisations can inquire during matching assessments about a host's willingness to assist guests with their exit strategy opportunities, without creating an obligation of any kind on the part of the host.

As mentioned above, hosts for unaccompanied young adults will need to be very carefully selected and oriented, as they can become too attached and treat the young person as their own teenager in some cases.

Geographical area demand and supply mismatch

In some contexts, there may be mismatch, with very high demand from guests for specific geographical areas (such as major cities or diaspora areas) where the private accommodation scheme does not have an adequate supply of suitable hosts and/or there are limited onward accommodation exit pathways. To help address this, hosting assistance organisations may want to spend time understanding the concerns of guests and trying to overcome barriers, for example, by making displaced people aware of potential opportunities in other areas. When the area is particularly rural, it will be important to explore and provide information on public transport options that will allow them to find work and access services. However, it is best if guests matched in more rural areas have less demand for services only found in urban areas and are suited to rural life, for example, those who may have an interest to work in agriculture.

2.15 Agreements between the host, guest and/or hosting assistance organisation

Agreements, while generally not legally binding, can be helpful to ensure that hosts, guests and hosting organisations understand their own and the other parties' roles and responsibilities and know what to expect of the hosted arrangement. Agreements can be formal written agreements or informal unwritten agreements.

The terms and conditions of host and guest engagement in the private accommodation

scheme agreed before matching are discussed in Section 2.12 Enrolment, and the hosting assistance organisation may have set out its offer of support at the enrolment stage.

It is generally recommended to establish a written agreement between host and guest that can be referred back to. It should be written in simple language so that guests less proficient in the language can understand it, easily get help to translate it or feed it into an online translator. The commitments of the hosting assistance organisation can be set out in this document or in the terms and conditions of the programme referred to in Section 2.12 Enrolment.

The following information may be included in the agreement:

- Names of the adult members of both the host and guest households and the name of the hosting assistance organisations supporting the placement.
- A commitment from the guest to respect and look after the accommodation being offered.
- Who is responsible for utility and other bills (e.g. municipal taxes), whether the guest is expected to contribute and, if so, how much.
- The intentions of the host household with regard to the duration of hosting.
- The notice period that the host expects to be able to give if the hosted arrangement can no longer be continued.
- A commitment from the guest household to leave when asked to do so.
- Agreed house rules (may be presented as an annex co-drafted with the host and guest) on matters such as use of the kitchen (e.g. times), dish washing and cleaning, who will have house keys, how the house will be secured at night and when it is empty, ensuring the cleanliness of a shared bathroom, ensuring adequate heating and/or adjusting the heating, common food and sharing meals, house guests, household chores, smoking, quiet times, treatment of pets, use of

the internet and telephone and use of common electronic items, such as the TV, shared computer, etc.

- How any issues that arise will be resolved.
- When hosts offer self-contained accommodation, guests may be asked to declare in a written agreement that they will only be temporarily occupying it to protect the rights of the property owner. This may require precise legal wording. Mortgage lenders may also make such a requirement to protect their interests.
- The hosting assistance organisation may make a specific commitment to find emergency accommodation or urgently move the guest if required by the host.
- The hosting assistance organisation may specify what support it intends to provide to guests and hosts.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, most private accommodation schemes used written agreements, which were valued by guests and hosts. In addition to a written agreement, hosting agencies are recommended to advise hosts to discuss expectations and boundaries with guests in advance of hosting. They can be discussed again at a later date and relaxed if appropriate.



Photo: Belgian Red Cross

2.16 Initial placement support

Initial placement support (post-matching) may include:

- Preparing the host to receive a guest household
- Preparing the guest for life in the host household
- Provision of transport to assist the guest household (including pets and belongings) with the move to the host household
- Follow-up in the crucial first few days and weeks of the households living together

2.17 Information support

Information support can be offered to those directly enrolled in the scheme and others outside it. Separate information support can be developed for guests, hosts and other stakeholders assisting with hosted arrangements to fill information gaps. The most appropriate channels for disseminating the information should be carefully selected (through engagement with the target audiences).

This section draws heavily on the resources of [Helping Irish Hosts](#), an Irish organisation set up specifically in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. [NACCOM](#) also offers a large number of relevant information resources.

Suggested information for displaced people

The following could be considered:

- Introduction to the private accommodation scheme, the partners involved in delivering it, their roles and responsibilities, and contact information
- Accommodation options (including hosted arrangements, accessing the rental market, etc.)
- Migration status information (the different types of status, how to apply, what the migration status means in terms of access to services, ability to travel and return, etc.)

- Health (dentists, pharmacy, child health services, pregnancy, special needs and disabilities, primary and secondary healthcare, etc.)
- Education (kindergarten, school, college, university)
- Language classes
- Psychosocial support
- Travel (within country, abroad), particularly local transport
- Information for unaccompanied children
- Restoring family links support
- Pets
- Financial support (e.g. government social protection, organisations offering multi-purpose cash assistance)
- Other support (food, clothing, household items)
- Translation support
- Legal support and obtaining civil documentation
- Connectivity (access to Wi-Fi, internet and SIM card)
- Safety (unsafe situations, child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking)
- Administrative matters (insurance, finances and bank account, driving)
- Work (regulations on working, finding work, work issues and safety)
- Socio-cultural aspects (typical host community traditions, religion, places of worship)
- Leisure (sport, libraries)
- Useful websites and links (social media network for solidarity groups, etc.).

During the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, various information support initiatives were established for displaced people. The Netherlands Red Cross launched the [Helpful Information App](#) (specifically for Ukrainians eligible for temporary protection status), together with a WhatsApp helpline. In the Netherlands, there was also the VluchtelingenWerk website <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/>

refugeehelp.nl/ and a telephone hotline, neither specifically for Ukrainian refugees. In France, the [Pour L'Ukraine](https://pourlukraine.fr/) (For Ukraine) web platform, developed and managed by the Interministerial Delegation for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (DIAIR), caters for displaced people and guests. In Poland, the government established a platform to help Ukrainians (<https://pomagamukrainie.gov.pl/>). The [European Commission also produced practical information for Ukrainians on rights and options in the EU](#).

In addition to the information listed above, a **guest guide** could be produced specifically for households about to start living in a hosted arrangement. It could explain:

- Steps in the process from hosts offering homes to vetting, matching, meeting up, agreements, moving in and follow-up
- How displaced people are vetted (e.g. interview)
- Home sharing agreements
- Ground rules for living in a hosted arrangement
- How to integrate into day-to-day life in a host's home
- Cultural differences and typical areas of friction
- Energy saving
- How to ensure clear communication to avoid misunderstandings
- Host payment/subsidy (if offered by the government)
- Translation support (e.g. Google Translate, DeepL, etc.)

Settling in (this can include the information listed in Section 2.17 and more local neighbourhood-specific information)

Moving on (what options are there after hosting, how to have the "moving on" conversation with the host, how to notify others)

How to resolve any conflicts and who to call for support if the hosted arrangement is not working out?

Suggested information for hosts

Information specifically for **hosts** can include:

- How the hosting programme works (what is provided by the different partners, information on financial payments, how vetting works, legal risks, etc.)
- What to do before the guests arrive:
 - Information on training (online sessions, intercultural training, etc.)
 - Checking for risks around the home (especially if young children will be staying)
 - Seeking donations from neighbours to make the home more appropriate (e.g. plug adaptors, appropriate size clothes, toys, SIM cards) and checking in advance if the guests are likely to have these items already
 - Building a local support network with neighbours
- Home sharing agreement
- Home insurance
- Translation
- Notes on pets
- What to do after the guests arrive
 - Setting ground rules
 - Supporting them in applying for an appropriate migration status if they have not yet done so
 - Helping them access social welfare payments, if appropriate

Information on local services described in Section 2.17

- Building the host-guest relationship²³
- Taking care of yourself (including being conscious of vicarious trauma)
- Resolving issues that arise

²³ NACCOM, *Hosting Good Practice Guide – Part 2: Key Considerations for Hosts and Hosting Organisations* (2020), Building The Guest-Host Relationship, p. 8. Available at: <https://naccom.org.uk/resources/hosting-resources/>



Photo: Hungarian Red Cross

- How to get further support when issues cannot be resolved
- “Moving on” conversation with the guest household (e.g. renewal of hosting, rematching, access to government-provided accommodation, etc.)
- Reductions in service charges by local authorities or utility companies (where government-owned)
- Support related to liabilities or insurance related to hosting

2.18 Financial support

Financial support to hosts and guests can take many forms including:

- Hosts receiving a financial payment to cover the additional costs of hosting or a higher payment to incentivise hosting, often from the government
- Guests receiving a financial payment to cover living costs which includes a portion that should be paid towards the costs of hosting incurred by the host
- Tax reductions (e.g. local authority or central government taxes)

Ideally, hosting should not give rise to financial gain for hosts. However, some governments may choose to pay hosts to incentivise them to come forward to participate in private accommodation schemes and/or to improve the longevity of hosted arrangements. Once financial support has been provided to hosts, it can be difficult to withdraw it without causing some of them to stop hosting. For instance, during the 2022 Ukraine crisis response in Romania, many guests were evicted when the financial support ended. The Safe Homes guidance²⁴ emphasises the importance of EU member states ensuring a smooth phase-out process for programmes providing financial assistance to hosts to avoid abrupt disruption and detrimental consequences for displaced people.

²⁴ European Commission (2022), *Solidarity and housing: Supporting Safe Homes – Considerations, key principles and practices*. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bd25162f-5154-4898-88db-a49edd3b87f0_en

The specifics of the financial support can also have an impact on hosting. For example, does the programme pay per person or per household and does it pay the host or the guest?

In the Ukraine hosting response, the following was found:

- The Romanian government started the 50/20 programme which provided RON 50 per person per day for accommodation and RON 20 per person per day for food to Romanian citizens hosting refugees fleeing from the conflict. A survey conducted by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on the programme found that 17% of the sample were men or women on their own (the majority women) and that one in four of them highlighted that “the landlord would not accept only one person in the accommodations, for financial reasons”.²⁵ The RON 70 paid to hosts is around EUR 14 per person per day (approximately EUR 420 per person per month). From informal discussions²⁶ with other UN agencies and NGOs operating in Romania during the crisis, it is understood that some landlords filled their accommodation with larger families or with one family per room to increase the financial support they received. Many landlords also stopped renting on the private rental housing market to be able to host several displaced Ukrainian families and earn multiples of what they would have received as rent normally, distorting the private rental housing market.
- In Ireland, the government offered a recognition payment, initially set at EUR 400 per month per household and later increased to EUR 800. This substantial subsidy was useful in allowing and incentivising many hosts to extend their hosting, and 81% of guests surveyed said they were not asked to contribute financially to the household. However, the flat payment rate per household meant that hosts accommodating

larger or multiple households in one accommodation unit received the same amount as those hosting a single displaced person.

- In the Netherlands, the government’s financial support went directly to the guests, with hosts encouraged to discuss and agree with guests during the matching process what sort of financial contribution they would be expecting from them. On the other hand, in Slovakia and Ireland, financial support went directly to the hosts and was untaxed.
- In Poland, financial subsidies were provided to hosts initially, with subsequent extensions granted only to certain groups, such as those hosting people with disabilities. However, the implementation of the subsidy scheme posed some challenges, for example, some hosts struggled to gather the documentation required to prove the disability of their guest, and some guests felt obliged to stay with a particular host to allow them to claim the subsidy, despite the accommodation conditions being poor. Although the subsidy was intended to cover food, in many cases, hosts did not provide any. There were also cases where hosts both claimed the subsidy and requested payment for accommodation from the guest.

Another key factor is whether such financial support is tax-free. In general, while it is logical to exempt government benefits from taxation, if the allowance is comparable to rent and also tax-free, it can create perverse incentives for landlords to withdraw from the private housing rental sector, where their income is taxed and they need to offer security of tenure (formal contracts with potentially lengthy legal processes to evict), and instead opt to host, where income is not taxed and security of tenure is not required.

In addition to direct financial support to hosts, it may also be possible to explore other incentives, such as those shown in the table below.

²⁵ UNHCR (2022), *Rapid Survey of the 50/20 Programme*. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97974>

²⁶ David Dalgado (2023), Key informant interviews with one UN agency and one NGO

Category	Observations
Central government – income tax reduction	A reduction (either a percentage or fixed sum) which could be part of the annual tax return, for example, could potentially prove attractive, particularly to higher earners who may also have more space to host.
Local government – municipal tax reduction	It may be possible for local government to offer reductions (either a percentage or fixed sum) to hosts. This is particularly important where charges are set based on the number of people in an accommodation unit to ensure it is not a barrier to hosting.
Utility charge reductions (e.g. solid waste collection, drainage, water, etc.)	Reductions or waivers of charges for services by utilities (especially government-owned) could be offered to hosts to help offset the additional costs of hosting.
Insurance and/or a waiver of liabilities	Liabilities could arise in connection with hosting. Those managing schemes should investigate this and discuss with insurance trade bodies what would be covered by home insurance and what would not. Where appropriate, additional insurance could be offered to hosts. Given that the ultimate responsibility for accommodating people seeking refuge lies with the government, it would be reasonable for it to put such a scheme in place.

In some contexts, hosts may receive social protection payments related to their household composition (e.g. pension, disability benefit, child benefit). This may be calculated based on who is registered at the accommodation unit. It may be necessary to issue or change policy or regulations so that guests are not counted to avoid an adverse impact on the host.

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in Luxembourg, for example, host families came together in September 2023 to draft a letter highlighting, among other concerns, the financial impact of hosting. They proposed several measures to mitigate the financial strain on them:

1. Inclusion of guests in tax classification: Hosts advocated for a revision of tax classifications to include guests, such as Ukrainian refugees, in household demographics. This adjustment aimed to lessen the tax burden on hosts, taking into account the increased household size due to hosting refugees.

2. Compensation for increased utility consumption: Host families sought compensation for greater use of utilities, including water, gas, electricity and fuel oil. They proposed financial support or tax deductions to offset the rising cost of utilities incurred by hosting refugees.

3. Tax deductions for hosting-related expenses: A suggestion was made to introduce tax deductions for expenses directly associated with hosting refugees. However, the letter acknowledges the potential administrative challenges in quantifying and verifying these deductions.

These host families expressed a preference for compensation through tax allowances rather than direct financial payments from the government. This preference for recognition through tax breaks stems from a desire to maintain hosting as an altruistic act.

Support to guests

Guests should be able to cover their basic needs without being dependent on their hosts. This can help to promote self-reliance and address the inherent power imbalance between guests and hosts. Support can take the form of social welfare payments made by the government to the guests or multi-purpose cash assistance from hosting assistance organisations, for example. This support is to help guests cover the cost of food, transport, hygiene items, clothes, education (books, school uniforms, etc.) and minor medical expenses.

There is significant guidance available from organisations such as CALP Network on setting a minimum expenditure basket (MEB).²⁷ However, in some contexts, the amount may be set by the precedent of what is given in the social protection system to the host population.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to also include an allowance for accommodation (e.g. rent and utilities) in the transfer to guests. This can empower guests in the guest-host relationship, but it is important to warn guests that the host may ask for a contribution, advise hosts that this is acceptable and provide some guidance on how much this contribution should be.

A key consideration for hosting assistance organisations in making these payments is how the transfer to guests is made. Guests may need help to set up a bank account to receive the payments (also useful for financial inclusion benefits) and to obtain an accepted form of identification for this purpose. In some cases, alternative transfer mechanisms may need to be explored.

General recommendations

General recommendations on financial support include the following:

- Where possible, establish a financial support package that just covers the additional costs associated with hosting

(such as higher utility bills) and explore other incentives, such as insurance cover. Try not to offer additional financial incentives, except when not enough hosts are coming forward and hosting is considered good value for money compared to other types of accommodation (e.g. rooms in hotels).

- For utility payments (e.g. drainage), municipal service charges (e.g. solid waste collection) and municipal taxes that vary according to the number of people resident in an accommodation unit or are paid per person, try to ensure guests are not counted in the calculation.
- Consider the sustainability of financial support when setting the amount, taking into account that financial support can extend the time that hosts are willing or able to host and will increase the number of people who will agree to host initially. When reducing financial support over time, avoid a “cliff edge” and instead phase in changes to avoid a large number of guests being asked to leave at the same time.
- Pay the majority of the support package when only one person is hosted but increase it for each additional adult and for each child (different rate) by a diminishing amount to take account of larger families or multiple families in one accommodation unit.
- Where there are already pressures on the rental housing market, avoid establishing perverse incentives (support amount too high) which may prompt landlords to withdraw from the rental housing market to host.
- Consider the ease of administering the financial support; it may be more convenient to pay just the host or just the guest household.
- Ideally, pay the amount for the additional costs of hosting to the host directly and a separate allowance to guests to cover their basic needs. This both recognises

²⁷ CALP Network (2020), *Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB): Decision Making Tools*. Available at: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/minimum-expenditure-basket-meb-decision-making-tools-2/>

the support provided by hosts and promotes the self-reliance of guests.

- Ensure that payments made by the government to support hosts and guests are not taxed. Hosting assistance organisations should seek tax exemption for such payments. It is therefore important to present them as a payment to cover reasonable costs rather than as a rental payment which should be taxed according to normal practices.
- Carefully monitor the rental housing market to check that there are no signs of landlords switching to hosting and therefore causing problems for the wider host community and guests trying to exit hosting.
- Avoid making payments to hosts for food, except in specific circumstances where commercial landlords are hosting (at cost) and they only have a commercial

kitchen and could provide this service. Even then, it may be more appropriate to pay the food portion of financial support directly to the guest and let the kitchen charge those who want to receive food from it.

- Carefully check that the host's social protection payments related to the composition of the household will not be adversely impacted by hosting. Adjustments to policy and regulations may be required.

2.19 Complementary programming, integration and exit strategy support

Complementary programming consists of activities and forms of support that contribute (often indirectly) to a programme's objectives and, in the case of hosting assistance, complement the accommodation support offered. Integration



Photo: Irish Red Cross

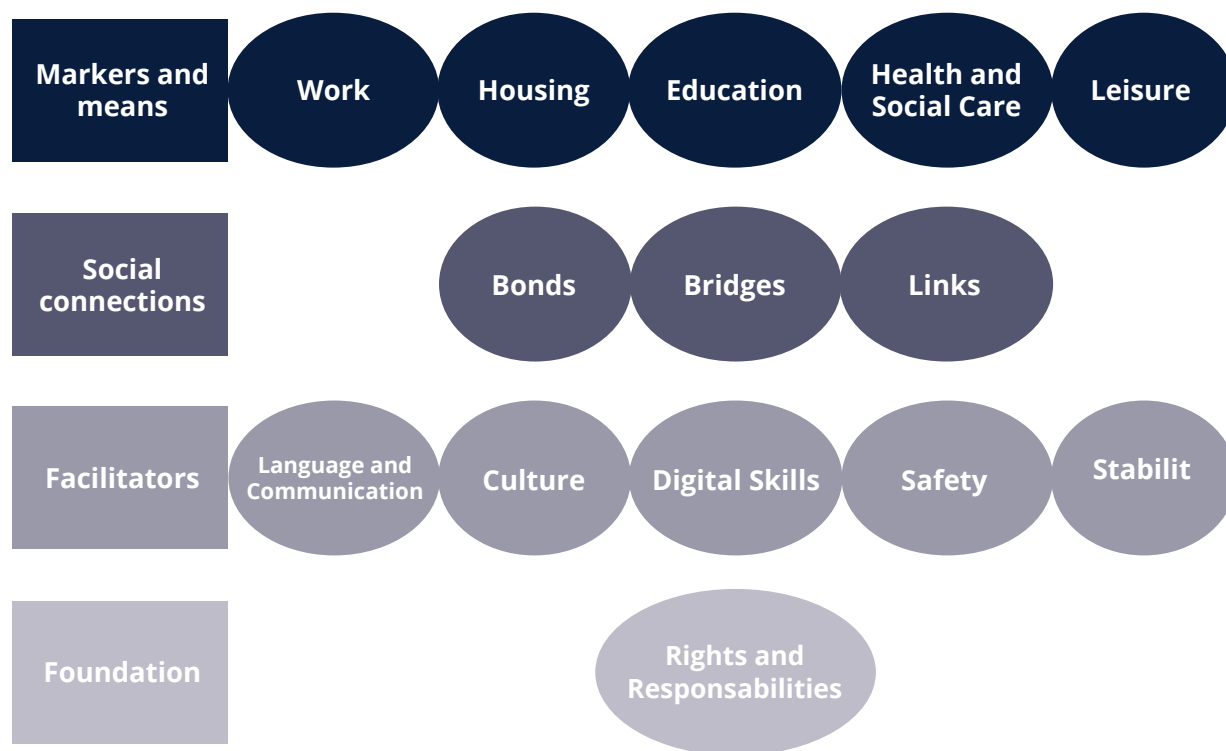
support assists displaced people in becoming integrated into the host community, while exit strategy support helps guests to move on after the hosted arrangement and, where possible, transition to adequate independent housing solutions. Integration may be considered part of exit strategies or an objective in its own right, and many activities that fall under complementary programming may contribute to both integration and exit. These components of support are therefore presented together. The different activities and forms of support

can benefit guests, hosts and the wider host community. The range of activities described in this section is not exhaustive.

Integration frameworks

There are a range of integration frameworks for migrants and refugees, many of which are very similar. One such framework is the United Kingdom Home Office/IOM Indicators of Integration framework 2019²⁸ which considers the domains shown below.

Figure 3: The 14 key domains of the Indicators of Integration framework



Source: United Kingdom Home Office (2019), p. 15

²⁸ United Kingdom Home Office (2019), *Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019*. Available at: <https://unitedkingdom.iom.int/2019-indicators-integration-framework>; IOM (2020), *Guide for Practitioners on the Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework 2019*. Available at: <https://unitedkingdom.iom.int/resources/guide-practitioners-home-office-indicators-integration-framework-2019> (both accessed February 2024)

The guidance from the highlights various activities which can be undertaken as part of integration support.

Warm welcome and orientation support

To support the orientation and settling in process, it is useful to connect guests and hosts to groups of volunteers who can help in this area. Organisations such as HIAS,²⁹ for example, create a “welcome circle” for households. Some National Red Cross Societies also have programmes at local branches where volunteers help to welcome people, including buddy systems where local volunteers are paired with guests. In Belgium’s response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some municipalities appointed single points of contact to help guests, hosts and hosting agencies to understand and access municipal support and services.

Research highlighted that in the Ukraine response in Poland, many guests secured housing arrangements mainly through their social networks, although some did manage to find alternative accommodation with the assistance of private organisations. This emphasises the importance of promoting activities to develop social networks, as they can be an invaluable resource for individuals in times of crisis.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

While hosts may receive training from hosting assistance organisations on empathetic listening, respecting boundaries and refraining from prompting guests to relive traumatic experiences, additional support, ideally from qualified professionals, may also be necessary. State systems may lack experience in dealing with people with PTSD and have a limited capacity to support people with MHPSS needs.

Hosting assistance organisations should establish clear referral pathways for MHPSS services, enabling caseworkers to assist guests in accessing appropriate care. These services should prioritise

cultural sensitivity and involve MHPSS staff in the planning, design and implementation of all activities. Moreover, a variety of MHPSS activities can be explored, including peer support groups, cultural exchange programmes, community-based initiatives for children (including art, music and sport activities) and the establishment of a crisis response team of culturally sensitive and language-proficient MHPSS staff and volunteers.

In the Ukraine hosting response, the Irish Red Cross collaborated with professional Ukrainian psychotherapists who sought refuge in Ireland. These therapists were reaccredited to participate in MHPSS programmes run by the Irish Red Cross and other partner organisations.

Language lessons

Language is one of the most important aspects for integration. Where there are government-run language programmes to help migrants integrate, guests should be referred to them. However, when there are a large number of guests, it may be appropriate to offer more tailored language courses in person or online, although in-person lessons are preferable given that communication is at the heart of language development. Courses should ideally be aligned to a recognised curriculum, which can help improve employability and encourage guests to study further and attain higher levels of language proficiency. Hosting assistance organisations may be able to partner with language learning providers.

Employment support

This is one of the most important areas of assistance that hosting assistance organisations can engage in, as it not only improves the life chances of guests and their family, but is also important for integration and exit strategies.

There are a range of activities that can be considered including:

- Referrals to private sector organisations and charities specialised in employment support

²⁹ Further information can be found in European Commission (2022), *Solidarity and housing: Supporting Safe Homes – Considerations, key principles and practices*, p. 16. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bd25162f-5154-4898-88db-a49edd3b87f0_en

- Translation of academic and professional educational material
- Payments related to medicals if this is required as part of applications for work
- Assisting guests with professional registration in the national system, particularly reaccreditation
- Grants for education and training
- Briefings on employment rights (such as minimum wage)
- Grants for those looking to establish small enterprises
- Training in CV and application writing and coaching in interview techniques
- Grants to support initial employment-related costs, such as the purchase of smart workwear

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Slovak Red Cross undertook an assessment to understand barriers and enablers to accessing employment for displaced people and used the findings to inform its employment support activities. It provided financial support for vocational courses and advice to guests when they did not have regular contracts, making referrals for legal support as appropriate. As part of livelihood support initiatives, the Polish Red Cross offered language lessons, official document translation, vocational training, technical skills development (e.g. obtaining a driving licence), soft skills training (e.g. conflict resolution, people skills) and mentoring and support (including legal support) to start a business.

Onward accommodation support

Such support is determined by the considerations set out in Section 2.6 Exit strategy planning and should be appropriately resourced to ensure success.

Hosting assistance organisations may undertake a range of activities including:

- Assisting people in registering for social housing where appropriate.
- Matching guest households to find future rental accommodation together.

Assisting people with rental assistance. See the activities described in Section 2.6. The Luxembourg Red Cross provides rental guarantees to overcome landlord hesitancy to rent to people in need, offering to guarantee the rent for a maximum of two months if the tenant fails to pay. Only tenants on low income who have difficulties accessing the housing market are eligible. Additionally, the Luxembourg Red Cross accepts donations and low-cost, long-lease properties from the private rental sector, which it manages and rents out at social rents to those on low incomes.³⁰ Another example is the French social rental intermediation system³¹ which facilitates access to the rental market for low-income households and, through a concession introduced in March 2022, for Ukrainians granted temporary protection under the TPD. Certified organisations, such as Habitat for Humanity, Soliha and the French Red Cross, accept or rent housing units from the private rental market and social housing sector and sublet them. A similar initiative has recently begun in Poland under the social rental agency³² framework.

- Older people can be put in touch with CSOs that specifically support older people who may not have the means to pay for their own accommodation.

Host community support plans

Section 1.5 Host community assessment looks at the impact that hosting can have on the host community, which can be both positive and negative. If the negatives (such as greater competition for public services) are not mitigated,

³⁰ The Cellule Logement Encadrement Solidaire (CLES) of the Luxembourg Red Cross promotes integration by housing disadvantaged individuals and families (those granted international protection or temporary protection, elderly people, people losing their independence, young people and marginalised people) and, more generally, all those who cannot access and remain in ordinary housing under normal conditions. Loans and guarantees are provided, respecting the individuality of each person, in collaboration with the business and support services of the Luxembourg Red Cross.

³¹ Government of France, Prefect of the Nord Department (no date), 'L'intermédiation locative'. Available at: <https://www.nord.gouv.fr/Actions-de-l-Etat/Solidarite-hebergement-et-logement/Logement/L-intermediation-locative>

³² Habitat for Humanity Poland (no date), 'Introducing Social Rental Agencies in Poland'. Available at: <https://www.habitat.org/emea/stories/introducing-social-rental-agencies-poland>

social tensions will rise, leading to hostility towards guests, the private accommodation scheme and hosting assistance organisations.

Hosting assistance organisations and local authorities are therefore recommended to develop specific community-level support, potentially involving extra resourcing for public services, and ensure transparent communication about plans for additional capacity while it is being created to mitigate social tensions.

Where possible, vulnerable members of the host community should be included in programme activities originally designed for guests. This also creates opportunities for host and displaced community members to interact. For example, in the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, MHPSS support was provided at migrant integration centres in some EU countries catering for both Ukrainians and vulnerable host community members.

Host community activities to build empathy with displaced people

The assessment activities described in Sections 1.5 and 1.6 may determine that there is a risk of social tensions arising from perceived or real competition for housing, employment, public services, goods and other services. It is important to promote public discourse that humanises migrants and does not criminalise those who provide humanitarian support.

Hosting assistance organisations may consider:

- Activities that promote intercultural dialogue (see resources listed below)
- Media monitoring, including social media
- Working with organisations to publish information that highlights the day-to-day activities, concerns and aspirations of guests that the host community can relate to help overcome negative attitudes towards “otherness”, the contribution that guests make to local community life (e.g. working in the local economy or creating demand in rural schools so that

they stay open) and successful hosted arrangements

In the Ukraine hosting response, some private accommodation schemes in EU member states released regular communications in an attempt to reduce social tensions.

Useful resources include:

- IOM (no date), “Countering Xenophobia”. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/countering-xenophobia>
- IOM (2021), *The Power of Contact: Designing, Facilitating and Evaluating Social Mixing Activities to Strengthen Migrant Integration and Social Cohesion Between Migrants and Local Communities*. Available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/power-contact-designing-facilitating-and-evaluating-social-mixing-activities-strengthen>
- PICUM (2023), *Talking about regularisation: a hope-based approach*. Available at: [Talking-about-regularisation-a-hope-based-approach.pdf \(picum.org\)](https://publications.iom.int/books/power-contact-designing-facilitating-and-evaluating-social-mixing-activities-strengthen)
- UNESCO (no date), “Enabling Intercultural Dialogue”. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/enabling-intercultural-dialogue>.
- UNESCO (2020), *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles*. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370336>

2.20 Case management

Case management primarily involves caseworkers working with both hosts and guests to:

- Support the host in adjusting to living with a guest household and explain how they can best support guests within their limits
- Draw up a personalised development



Photo: Luxembourg Red Cross

plan for guest households (particularly for integration and exit), considering each member of the household and their capacities, vulnerabilities and needs

- Support access to appropriate services by guest households through external or internal referrals, including identifying the specific needs of certain groups, such as people with disabilities, pregnant women, nursing mothers and those facing discrimination

Casework can be resource-intensive for the hosting assistance organisation, and it may be appropriate to prioritise households that require the most attention and who will benefit the most. Some guest households will have significant capacity (resources and resourcefulness) and be able to cope without much support. Some hosts will also have the capacity and be both able and willing to assist the guest household in their needs and development. The casework support needed can be assessed as part of the guest/host

assessment and matching, and different tiers of support can be given.

Key resources:

International Rescue Committee Resettlement & Integration Technical Assistance (no date), “Case Management Strategies”, website providing a broad range of useful resources related to integration and working with refugees. Available at: <https://www.ritaresources.org/resources/library/case-management-strategies/>

In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, research undertaken in France as part of the Safe Homes initiative revealed that when there was a shortage of social workers, hosts found themselves shouldering the burden of social support. This is to be expected in the context of a sudden-onset crisis because roles and responsibilities were not clarified and matching and placement processes were carried out in a hurry.

Caseworkers can play several key roles, including those listed in the table below.

For guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess capacities, vulnerabilities and needs of guest household members• Provide referrals to appropriate public services and resources• Assess special needs, such as significant trauma and experiences of sexual and gender-based violence that require urgent referral• Help provide orientation and explain availability and eligibility issues and how to navigate and use public services and resources• Help explain cultural norms and aid guests in adjusting the way they communicate where necessary• Advocate for households to access services and resources based on rights• Talk to hosts on behalf of guests who often feel awkward asking questions about the house and living arrangements• Develop a personalised plan to assist the household with their integration and exit strategies• Guide households in pursuing their development plan to cope better, overcome hurdles and increase self-reliance• Follow up and monitor the household's progress in implementing their personalised plan and follow up with referral service providers
For hosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advise hosts on their role and direct them to appropriate resources and services to help them support their guests when needed• Be aware of host fatigue and agree strategies to avoid it
For both hosts and guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolve any tensions and mediate where needed• Identify any potential signs of abuse or exploitative relationships as part of safeguarding risk management• Nurture host-guest relationships to help ensure an extension of the hosted arrangement where possible

From the outset, equal importance must be given to casework with hosts and guests, with clear guidelines on what support can and cannot be offered, what requires referral and what caseworkers cannot be involved in.

Mediation is a key part of a caseworker's activities in a private accommodation scheme. In the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Irish Red Cross engaged an external mediation organisation to handle conflicts, helping to remove caseworkers from the front line of dealing with disputes and ensuring neutrality and efficient resolution. Similarly, in Belgium, Ukrainian Voices³³ deployed a two-person mobile

team with a Ukrainian-speaking counsellor to quickly respond to problems arising in hosted arrangements, deescalate the tension, negotiate between the parties, make appropriate referrals and take action to resolve the situation. In addition, it would provide administrative support to displaced people.

Caseworkers are key to achieving the objectives of hosting assistance programmes, especially in relation to integration and exit, sustaining hosted arrangements and retaining hosts. Proper training and support for caseworkers is therefore essential to enable these processes to be carried out successfully and avoid fatigue

³³ <https://www.facebook.com/p/Ukrainian-Voices-RC-100085097783323/>

