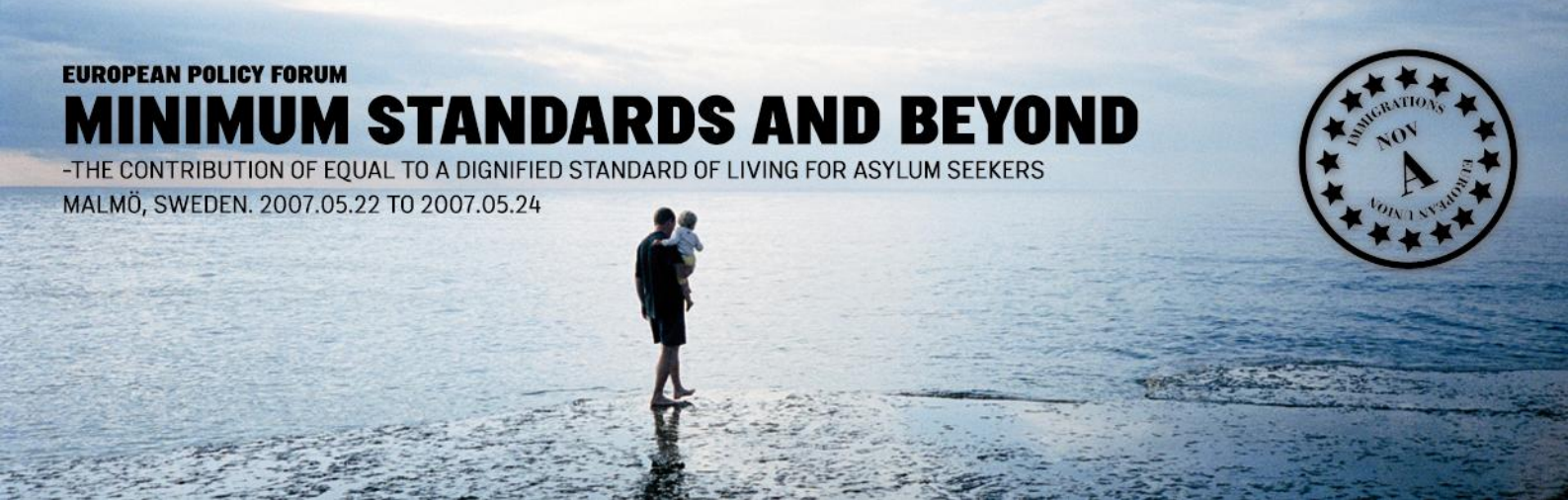


MINIMUM STANDARDS AND BEYOND

-THE CONTRIBUTION OF EQUAL TO A DIGNIFIED STANDARD OF LIVING FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

MALMÖ, SWEDEN. 2007.05.22 TO 2007.05.24



INTRODUCTION

On 6 February 2003, all Member States formally¹ signed up to developing an EU-wide system for hosting asylum seekers throughout Europe, agreeing to guarantee a common quality of reception, services and opportunities for asylum seekers to integrate into their new society while waiting for a decision on their application. The Reception Directive² is part of the much wider EU policy remit called the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), which also includes legislative measures ensuring common procedures for requesting asylum and minimum standards for the qualification and status of persons as refugees.

Being one of the first legislative instruments to be officially agreed as part of the CEAS, the Directive marked quite an important moment in EU history. After its official adoption in February 2003, Member States had two years to transpose the Directive into their national legislation. Since February 2005, countries have worked on making this piece of EU legislation operational and to live up to the practical requirements of the Directive.

One of the EU programmes used to assist the implementation of the Reception Directive is the EQUAL Community Initiative, with one of its main themes focusing specifically on the socio-vocational integration of asylum seekers. Other EU funding, such as the European Refugee Fund, could also be accessed to improve in particular the reception of asylum seekers.

PURPOSE OF THE EUROPEAN ASYLUM POLICY FORUM

Since 2001, EQUAL has funded over 100 partnerships across the EU, to develop innovative approaches that help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers. This Policy Forum draws together the most successful practices from EQUAL and examines their contribution to the practical application of the various minimum conditions set out in the Reception Directive in the Member States. It looks in particular at the many benefits of adopting reception measures that even go beyond the minimum requirements, in terms of access to employment, education and training, and services offered.

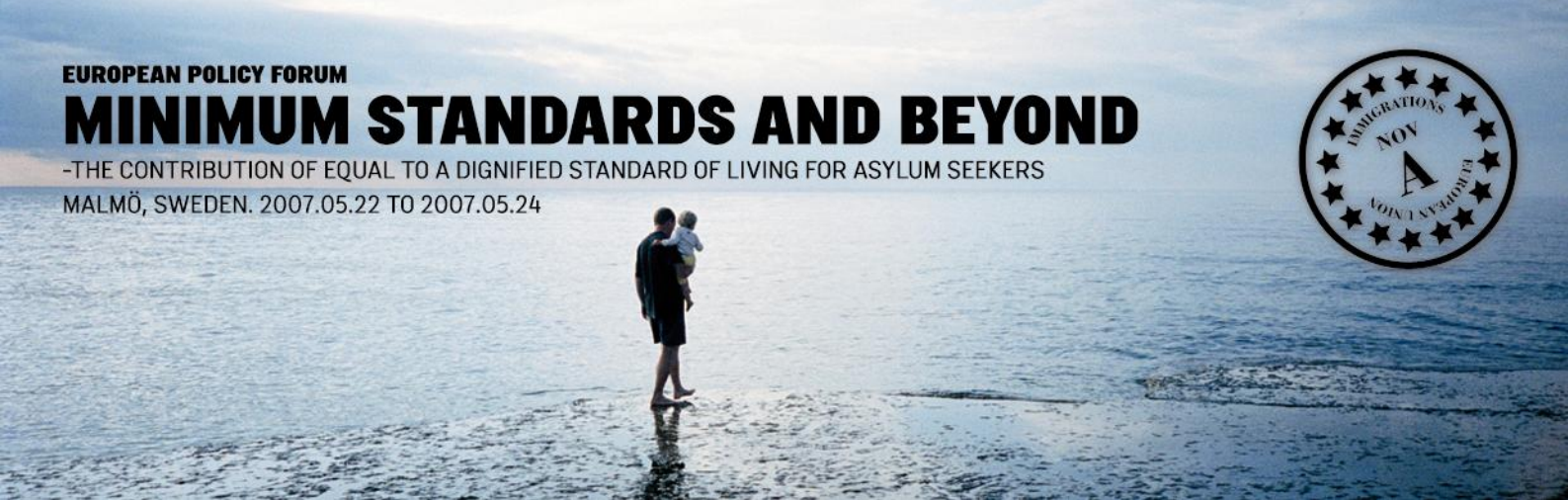
¹ With the exception of Ireland and Denmark

² Short title for Council Directive 2003/9/EC Laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers

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THE POLICY FORUM WILL:

- Present and discuss successful approaches to integrate asylum seekers in different national contexts within the EU;
- Illustrate the benefits of going beyond the minimum standards outlined in the Reception Directive;
- Make the case for a more comprehensive integration of asylum seekers to politicians and decision makers; and,
- Look at future opportunities to help the integration of asylum seekers, European Funds such as the European Social Funds, anti-discrimination and social inclusion processes, etc.

PARTICIPANTS

Policy players from national and international agencies, NGOs, experts and other stakeholders will debate and learn from the successful approaches that are being presented. The Policy Forum will be illustrated by work on the ground, research and policy analysis and be structured around interactive plenary sessions and on-site workshops on the premises of EQUAL partnerships. An exhibition will showcase successful practices within EQUAL and other EU funding programmes from across the Member States.