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Structure and format

This document focuses on the guidance, identification, assessment of and response to special reception needs, and the provision of reception conditions to unaccompanied children in national reception systems.It is considered that all standards across these sections are important to ensure the provision of reception conditions in line with the RCD.

Following this introductory part, the guidance opens with a short section on ‘How to read the guidance’, focusing on clarifying the concepts used.Subsequently, the guidance is divided into nine chapters, focusing on the following:

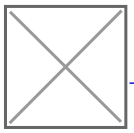
1. **Information, participation and representation of unaccompanied children;**
2. **Special needs and risks;**
3. **Allocation;**
4. **Day-to-day care;**
5. **Staff;**
6. **Healthcare;**
7. **Education;**
8. **Food, clothing and other non-food items, and allowances;**
9. **Housing.**

Each chapter includes specific common ‘standards’, which are applicable to national reception systems across all EU+ States.Each standard is paired with relevant ‘indicators’, which facilitate the assessment as to whether the standard is met.Throughout the guidance, indicators have been integrated into the different subchapters to measure whether adequate arrangements have been made to cater for special needs within the national reception system.Where necessary, further clarification on an indicator can be found in the ‘additional remarks’.

The ultimate responsibility for the application of the standards lies with the EU+ States’ authorities; most of the standards in this guidance would in particular fall within the competence of the national reception authorities.In practice, however, other actors are often involved in the provision of material and non-material reception conditions, including for example other state, regional or local services, intergovernmental organisations or NGOs.

Importantly, in line with the spirit of Article 4 RCD, EU+ States may introduce or retain more favourable provisions in the field of reception conditions for applicants for international protection than those included in this guidance.Under no circumstances should this document be understood as an invitation to lower existing standards, but rather as an encouragement to

reach, as a minimum, the benchmarks developed herein.

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