

**Brief exploration of the state of the art regarding access to housing for  
asylum seekers and refugees as a mechanism for preventing  
revictimization and secondary victimization, as well as prevention of potential  
delinquency / recidivism <sup>1</sup>**

1

Despite the myths and stereotypes in this regard spread in political spheres and on social networks, various scientific studies have highlighted how the immigration and refugee status of people is related, not to criminal activities, but rather with an unfair criminalization, a revictimization and secondary victimization (Varona, Zuloaga and Francés, 2019; Varona, 2020). Revictimization refers to the possibility of suffering other victimizations, that is, criminal acts or damages, beyond the initial victimization in their countries, generally very serious, sometimes classified as international crimes, which causes the person to flee from one country and apply for asylum in another. On numerous occasions, due to the conditions of vulnerability caused by this forced departure from the country and arrival in another, people are subjected to crimes of gender violence, including human trafficking, as well as other types of interpersonal and violent crimes and crimes against property. We speak thus of a poly-victimization in that these people can suffer different forms of crime. These conditions of vulnerability imposed by their life history as asylum seekers and refugees also prevent or hinder the reporting of crimes suffered, inside and outside the host country and, therefore, Directive 2012/29 / EU on the rights of victims considers that refugees deserve special protection and calls for avoiding the additional damage that an inadequate response may cause on the part of the different authorities that are related to them (what is known as secondary victimization).

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<sup>1</sup>Bibliographic review and independent systematization carried out by Gema Varona Martínez, permanent research doctor at the IVAC / KREI and Professor of Victimology and Criminal Policy at the Law School of the UPV / EHU. An exploratory review has been considered following a specific thematic analysis of the most recent titles, particularly in the dominant Anglo-Saxon literature applicable to our environment, in this type of empirical studies, regarding “refugees +

Specifically, access to a home has been empirically associated as a protective factor against victimization, as well as potential criminal commission, recidivism or withdrawal from continuing criminal activities (a term currently used as more appropriate and specific than recidivism, for evaluating the impact of social insertion and reintegration interventions) (Griffith and Tita, 2009; Vlachadi et al, 2021; Chalkia, 2021; van der Boor et al., 2020). In addition, as it also occurs in the area of victimization mentioned above, access to housing is a preventive factor that acts not only on an individual level (attentive to gender and intersectional considerations) but also family and community (Phillimore, 2020), particularly in families with minors in their care (Flanagan et al., 2020; Byrow et al, 2020) and in neighbourhoods of social conflict with different problems (García, 2016; Kourachanis, 2021). In this way, the criminological literature speaks of access to housing, together with access to work (Aaltonen et al., 2013), among others, as one of the elements that create social capital or a positive or inclusive feeling of belonging, avoiding harmful stigmatization (Leasure and Martin, 2013; Somers et al. 2017; DEHOS, 2021). This element, together with others, makes informal social control mechanisms work and be more effective, less expensive and less harmful than a criminal legal control, within a conception of social prevention demanded, as basic international standards, by specialized organizations of the United Nations (Heikkilä et al., 2020) and also of the European Union (EC, 2006).

In conclusion, not every project is preventive per se in this area, but every project informed by the available criminological evidence, which complies with the aforementioned international standards, which include the evaluation of its execution

as long as it helps to facilitate access to housing for asylum seekers or refugees, entails; in the short, medium and long term; an efficient investment of public resources, to avoid revictimization and social damage, in addition to being among the most promising lines of effective compliance with human rights in this area that involve different professionals and administrations. In fact, at the next International Symposium on Victimology (Donostia / San Sebastián, June 5-9, 2022, <https://www.symposiumvictimology.com/>), the best practices in this matter will be exposed and debated, giving the opportunity to delve into them.

3

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