



European Asylum Support Office

Newsletter - April 2015

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the April edition of the EASO newsletter. April has been a sad month for asylum and migration in the EU. On behalf of EASO and all its staff, I would like to convey our deepest condolences to the families of all those who lost their life seeking a better future.

Amongst other things, in this edition we look at the 10 point action plan on migration and the Conclusions of the European Council of 23 April, in particular the role of EASO (see page 5). We introduce two new EASO Practical Guides (see page 9) and update you on the EASO seminar for Moroccan MPs (see page 5). As usual, we also look at the latest asylum trends in the EU (see page 2). Our latest trends show that in March 2015, the total number of applicants recorded by EU+ countries declined by 6 % compared to February, falling to a level close to that of January 2015 (68 592 applicants).

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EASO Spokesperson
Newsletter Editor

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EASO stands ready to use all tools at its disposal to make an immediate difference to ensure better management of asylum in the EU



Special European Council Meeting, 23 April 2015
Mediterranean. The plan received the full

The tragic events which happened in the Mediterranean sea in April and which resulted in the death of hundreds of migrants have put asylum and migration further on top of the EU agenda.

On 20 April, at a joint meeting of Foreign and Interior Ministers, chaired by High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini and held in Luxembourg, Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner Avramopoulos presented a 10 point plan of the immediate actions to be taken in response to the crisis situation in the Mediterranean. The plan received the full backing of Foreign and Interior Ministers.

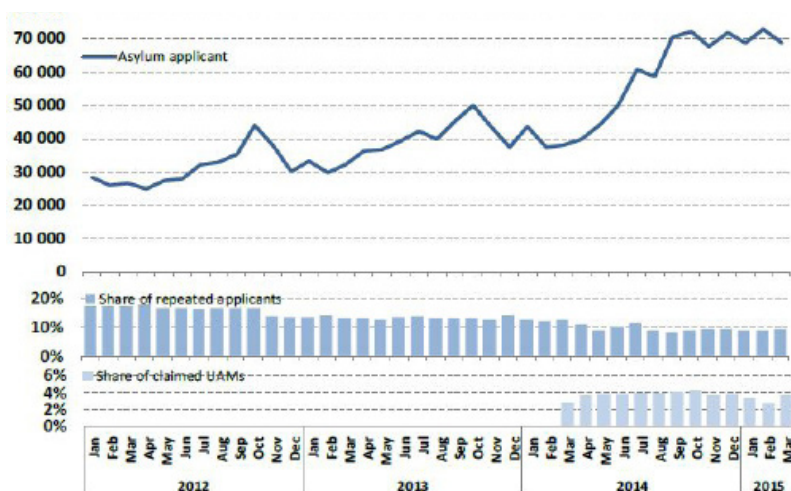
Following the plan, President Tusk called for a special meeting of the European Council which was held on 23 April. The conclusions of the European Council build upon the proposals mentioned in the 10 point plan.

EASO will have an important role to play in the implementation of a number of initiatives which are included in both the 10 point plan and the European Council Conclusions. **Read more on page 6.**

Latest asylum trends and main countries of origin

1. Number of applicants for international protection in EU+¹

In March 2015, the total number of applicants recorded by EU+ countries declined by 6 % compared to February, falling to a level close to that of January 2015 (68 592 applicants). This drop diverged from the last two years, when the rise from February to March marked the start of an increasing trend in the number of asylum applicants. As shown in the chart below, the levels have fluctuated around 70 000 total asylum applicants per month over the last 7 months, in contrast with the seasonal declines of roughly 20 % over the winter period in 2012-13 and 2013-14. The current levels are around 75 % higher than at the beginning of 2014.

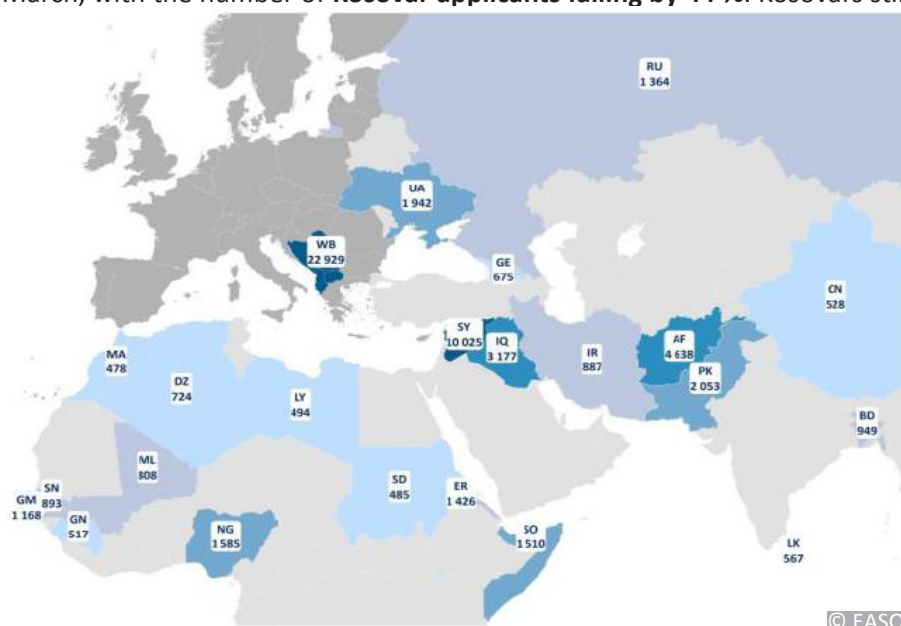


The monthly share of repeated applicants reported by EU+ countries has remained stable since August 2014, and represented less than 10 % of total applicants.

The number of claimed unaccompanied minors (UAMs) at the moment of lodging an asylum application rose to 2 500 in March, a 28 % increase compared to February. The share of UAMs, which had fallen in February, rose again in March to just below 4 %. Afghan nationals continued to be the main group of claimed UAM applicants and accounted for 33 % of the monthly total of UAM applicants. Somali and Syrians ranked second and third in the top three main nationalities of claimed UAMs.

2. Main countries of origin of applicants in EU+ countries in March 2015

The map below shows the main nationalities of asylum applicants recorded by EU+ countries in March 2015. As in February, citizens of the six Western Balkan countries (considered together) were by far the most numerous and accounted for 33 % of the monthly total. Compared to February, the total for this group decreased by 27 % in March, with the number of Kosovar applicants falling by 44 %. Kosovars still represented the highest share of applicants, with 58 %.



After five consecutive months of decline, the number of Syrian applicants rose by 13 % (exceeding once again 10 000 applicants), while the number of applicants from Afghanistan also rose by 5 %. Following six months of relative stability, the number of Iraqi applicants grew by 23 % compared to February and reached the highest monthly level since the beginning of data collection in 2008.

Syria – in March 2015, EU+ countries registered 10 025 Syrian applicants, an increase of 13 % compared to February and 64 % more than the total registered in March 2014. While Germany remained the main destination country for Syrian applicants, the number of applicants in Hungary doubled in March compared to February,

¹ The EU+ is composed of EU-28 plus Norway and Switzerland. The share of repeated applicants is the proportion of repeated applicants in the total number of applicants for international protection. The share of UAM (unaccompanied minors) represents the proportion of asylum applicants claiming to be below the age of 18 years in the total number of applicants. It is important to emphasise that this term 'unaccompanied minor' here refers to applicants claiming to be minors and for whom an age assessment has not necessarily been carried out before provision of the data.

making Hungary the second ranked country for Syrian applicants in the EU+. With regard to the distribution of applicants, a total of 16 EU+ countries reported Syria in their national top three main countries of origin in March, three countries less than in February.

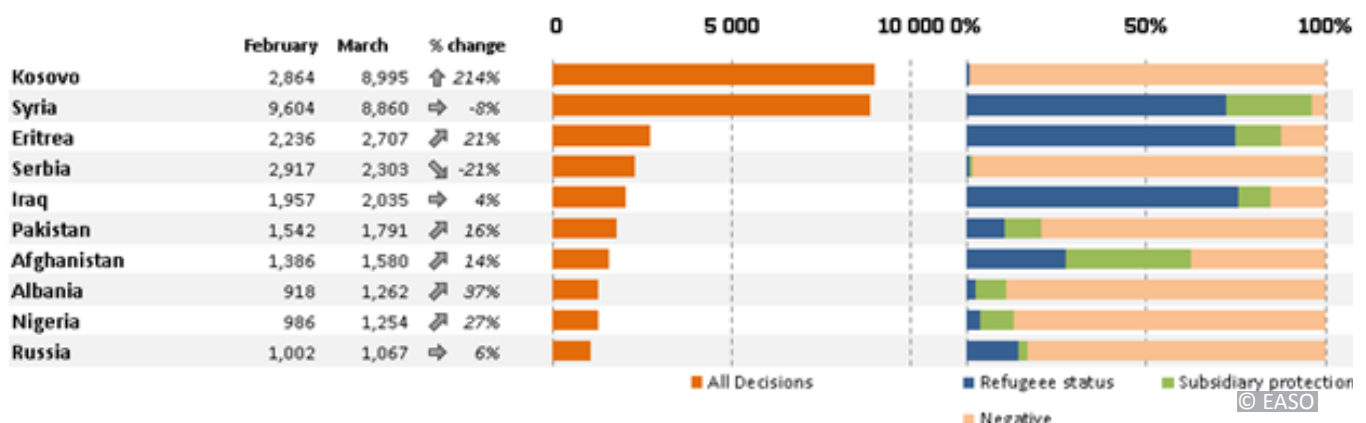
Western Balkan nationals (WB) – A total of 22 929 WB nationals lodged an application for asylum in the EU+ in March 2015. This represents a contraction of 27 % compared to February due largely to the 97 % decrease in the number of Kosovar² applicants in Hungary compared to last month. Applicants from Kosovo remain the largest citizenship within the WB group (58 %) and mainly applied in Germany. Apart from Serbian nationals, registrations of applicants from all other WB countries increased compared to February, with Albanian applicants rising most (+54 %).

Afghanistan – After falling for two months, the number of Afghan applicants increased in March and totalled 4 638. Hungary remained the main destination country followed by Germany and Austria. Compared to March 2014, the total number of applicants from Afghanistan more than doubled.

Iraq – In March 2015, the number of Iraqi applicants (3 177) rose by 23 % compared to February after six months of fluctuation around 2 500 applicants per month. The number of repeated applicants has remained stable over the last four months, while the number of first-time applicants has increased. Of all Iraqis registered in the EU+ countries in March 2015, 90 % were first-time applicants.

3. Latest country of origin trends

In response to the high number of Kosovar applicants over recent months, the number of decisions on Kosovar applications continued to increase in several EU+ countries, in some countries through the use of fast-track procedures. At EU+ level, decisions on Kosovar applications in March more than tripled compared to February (+



214 %) and Kosovars became the largest group of applicants for which decisions were issued. In March, 99 % of all first instance decisions issued to Kosovars were negative.

While in March the number of decisions issued to Syrian applicants went down by 8% compared to February, the monthly average for the first three months of 2015 was 60 % higher than the monthly average for 2014, reflecting a high number of decisions on Syrian cases in many EU+ countries. For the EU+ as a whole, 72 % of all decisions issued on Syrian cases granted refugee status and 24 % granted subsidiary protection, resulting in a 96 % recognition rate³. This is the highest recognition rate for any single country of origin. In March 2015, 85 % of all decisions issued to Iraqis resulted in a positive outcome, compared to 59 % in March 2014. Among the main citizenships of applicants in the EU+, the annual growth in recognition rate was the highest for Iraqi applicants.

Additional data and reports

Quarterly reports are available here: easo.europa.eu/asylum-trends-analysis/quarterly-report

Other EASO documentation is available here: easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Kosovo declaration of independence. .

³ Recognition rate refers to the proportion of positive decisions granting EU-regulated international protection in overall first instance decisions, including only refugee status and subsidiary protection status, but excluding authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection.

Country of Origin Information Seminar on the Russian Federation

On 22 April 2015, EASO held a Country of Origin Information (COI) seminar on the Russian Federation for members of the EASO COI Specialist Network on the Russian Federation. COI experts from 14 different EU+ countries (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) attended the seminar, as well as an expert from the International Crisis Group, an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict (www.crisisgroup.org).

Although the number of asylum seekers from the Russian Federation decreased by more than 50% in 2014 compared to 2013 (from about 42,000 in 2013 to 20,000 in 2014), the need for objective and accurate information remains high.

The majority of Russian asylum seekers in EU+ countries still originate from the North Caucasus, mostly from Chechnya, which is why the meeting focused on the general and human rights situation in this area.



The grounds most commonly cited by applicants for international protection are linked to the insurgency (persons suspected of aiding insurgents or forced to join the “Kadyrovtsy”). There are also an important number of female applicants basing their application on domestic violence. There are only a limited number of applications by LGBT persons or political opponents.

In addition to comprehensive presentations by, and discussions with, the International Crisis Group expert, the network members also discussed past and ongoing activities and future forms of cooperation in the field of COI on the Russian Federation.

EASO Country of Origin Information Strategic Network Meeting

On 28 and 29 April 2015, the EASO COI Strategic Network (StratNet) held its fifth bi-annual meeting. The StratNet consists of heads of national Country of Origin Information (COI) units or persons otherwise responsible for COI in national asylum administrations and provides strategic input into EASO’s COI activities. Also UNHCR attends StratNet meetings.

During the meeting, EASO updated the StratNet about recent and ongoing COI activities and invited the network to take note of or provide feedback on selected issues related to the COI Specialist Networks, country-specific Practical Cooperation meetings, the Common European COI Portal, topical activities related to COI and LGBT, recently published EASO COI products, and EASO operational support in the field of COI.

After a presentation of recent data collected in the context of the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS), the StratNet discussed the impact of recent data trends on COI needs.

Two sessions were devoted to discussions on Input and Feedback from Non-State Actors. Both EASO and EU+ countries exchanged experiences with regard to input, feedback and criticism from individuals, academics, civil society, international organisations and media on COI products and COI research in general. Breakout discussions were held on opportunities and challenges related to publicity of COI and transparency of COI work processes, the importance of disclaimers, introductions and sections on methodology in COI products, and the possible effects of partnership with non-state actors on the quality of COI products.

The StratNet also provided feedback on EASO plans for surveying the quality and use of COI products, for updating the EASO COI Report Methodology and for future EASO COI production.

Finally, the StratNet was informed about EASO’s Information and Documentation System (IDS).

EASO delivers a seminar on International protection and EU acquis on asylum for Moroccan Members of Parliament

Within the framework of EASO's external action project entitled Promoting the participation of Jordan in the work of EASO as well as the participation of Morocco and Tunisia in the work of EASO and FRONTEX, and in the context of the upcoming discussion in Morocco's Parliament on their new law on asylum, experts from Belgium and the Netherlands delivered a seminar on International Protection law and on European acquis on asylum to Moroccan Members of Parliament (MPs). Moreover, the seminar brought together representatives from three countries, Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco, to share information and expertise on the situation of asylum and international protection law in the region.

The seminar provided Moroccan Members of Parliament with the opportunity to enhance their capacities on international protection law and to gain a better understanding of European experiences (Belgium and the Netherlands in particular) in the field of asylum law. Moroccan MPs also gained improved knowledge about the overall situation of international protection and asylum matters in other countries in the region, namely Tunisia and Jordan. Representatives from Morocco and Jordan gave presentations on their countries' internal processes and structures related to asylum and international protection. The Moroccan inter-ministerial sub-commission on asylum – body responsible for compiling the draft law on asylum presented to Parliamentary voting – gave an overview of the draft law as presented for Parliament's voting. Finally, UNHCR High Representative to Morocco gave participants a compared picture on international protection mechanisms currently in place in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

This capacity building event is of particular importance for Moroccan MPs as they prepare for the Parliament's spring session. It is during this session that they will have on the table the new Moroccan law on asylum as a priority. The seminar is also important for EASO since this is a key action in which the agency is engaging in within the external dimension of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) following the adoption of the EASO External Action Strategy in November 2013.

5th meeting of the Group for the Provision of Statistics

The 5th meeting of the Group for the Provision of Statistics (GPS) was held on 23 and 24 April 2015 at EASO. Member States were provided with an overview of the statistical data collection in the Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) over the first 13 months of EPS Stage II, including an update on the latest asylum trends. There was also a presentation of the new format of the EASO Monthly Trend Analysis Report and the revised monthly factsheet (available on the EASO website). EASO provided a summary of two draft guidance documents that were distributed to GPS Members concerning Article 6 of the Asylum Procedures Directive and Article 10(d) of the Eurodac Regulation, which will enter into force in July.

The main aim of the meeting, and most of the discussions that took place, focussed on EASO's proposal for Stage III of EPS which would expand the EASO EPS data collection to include data on access to procedure, Dublin, reception and returns.

During the afternoon of the first day, GPS Members took part in sessions dedicated to clarifying pending issues with regard to the proposed scope and definition of the indicators.

On the second day of the meeting, EASO presented the outcomes of the pilot project that was conducted in January 2015 with GPS Members to assess the size of the phenomenon of family reunification with a beneficiary of international protection.

Also during the second day, as a follow-up to the discussion in the last GPS meeting in November 2014, EASO made a proposal to refine the operational definition of Palestinian and "Stateless" persons utilised in EPS and Eurostat statistical reporting.

EASO stands ready to use all tools at its disposal to make an immediate difference to ensure better management of asylum in the EU

Continued from page 1.

The ten points mentioned in the action plan are:

-Reinforce the Joint Operations in the Mediterranean, namely Triton and Poseidon, by increasing the financial resources and the number of assets. We will also extend their operational area, allowing us to intervene further, within the mandate of Frontex;

-A systematic effort to capture and destroy vessels used by the smugglers. The positive results obtained with the Atalanta operation should inspire us to similar operations against smugglers in the Mediterranean;

- EUROPOL, FRONTEX, EASO and EUROJUST will meet regularly and work closely to gather information on smugglers modus operandi, to trace their funds and to assist in their investigation;

-EASO to deploy teams in Italy and Greece for joint processing of asylum applications;

-Member States to ensure fingerprinting of all migrants;

-Consider options for an emergency relocation mechanism;

-A EU wide voluntary pilot project on resettlement, offering a number of places to persons in need of protection;

-Establish a new return programme for rapid return of irregular migrants coordinated by Frontex from frontline Member States;

-Engagement with countries surrounding Libya through a joined effort between the Commission and the EEAS; initiatives in Niger have to be stepped up.

-Deploy Immigration Liaison Officers (ILO) in key third countries, to gather intelligence on migratory flows and strengthen the role of the EU Delegations.

Following the plan, European Council President, Donald Tusk called for a special meeting of the European Council which was held on 23 April.

The conclusions of the European Council build upon the proposals mentioned in the 10 point plan. In order to manage asylum and migration better, the European Council has come up with a number of initiatives aimed at preventing further

loss of life at sea and to tackle the root causes of the human emergency that we face, in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit. These include initiatives aimed at: strengthening the EU presence at sea; fighting traffickers in accordance with international law; preventing illegal migration flows and reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility.

EASO is specifically mentioned in the following:

‘disrupt trafficking networks, bring the perpetrators to justice and seize their assets, through swift action by Member State authorities in co-operation with EUROPOL, FRONTEX, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and EUROJUST, as well as through increased intelligence and police-cooperation with third countries;’

‘deploy EASO teams in frontline Member States for joint processing of asylum applications, including registration and finger-printing’

It is pertinent to note that in both areas (trafficking networks and joint processing) EASO has already established experience.

Concerning the phenomenon of **facilitation of irregular migrants**, together with Frontex, Europol and Eurojust, EASO conducted a pilot project in Malta and Italy aimed at extracting aggregate and anonymous data from the information provided by asylum seekers about the routes taken and the conditions they experienced on their way to Europe. The information collected through the method applied in pilot project added new knowledge to the phenomenon of facilitation and the working methods used by facilitators.

Moreover, EASO conducted a number of **joint processing pilots** with the involvement of 20 European States. EASO took a practical, gradual and bottom up approach focused on specific steps of the asylum process where support by Member States’ and EASO experts could provide added value to the host Member State. EASO conducted a set of preliminary pilots and a second generation of more complex joint processing pilots, focusing on asylum applications, asylum determination and vulnerability assessment. These pilot projects demonstrated that there are various aspects of the asylum procedure that can be done jointly and that many technical aspects contain similar elements.

The Council conclusions also mention a number of other initiatives where EASO can play an important role, such as ‘a first voluntary pilot project on **resettlement** across the EU, offering places to persons qualifying for protection’ and ‘increase emergency aid to frontline Member States and consider options for organising emergency **relocation** between all Member States on a voluntary basis. EASO will now work on the implementation of many of these measures and it stands ready to use all tools at its disposal ‘to make an immediate difference’ and improve the management of asylum and migration.

Update on the EASO support to Cyprus

As part of the EASO Special Support Plan to Cyprus, a support activity was implemented from 14 to 24 April 2015 on the **identification of persons with special needs in the Cypriot asylum and reception procedure**.

Cyprus is currently in the process of transposing the recast Directive on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (2013/32/EU) and the recast Directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (2013/33/EU) into national law. In this context, support was requested on discussing the outline of a future intra-institutional mechanism with relevant Cypriot stakeholders and providing induction training on the core provisions of the said Directives.

During the **needs assessment**, the expert team had the opportunity to meet with different Cypriot institutions and to visit the Reception Centre Kofinou as well as the Detention Centre Menogia to get a better insight into the current screening mechanism.



Visit to the Reception Centre Kofinou

In all meetings, the strong motivation of staff involved was evident. The collaboration between the authorities facilitates in most cases the identification of vulnerable persons and the provision of adequate support measures.

On 22 and 23 April 2015, two induction trainings were organised with a focus on the identification on persons with special needs. In this regard, special procedural guarantees and reception needs were explained and available tools were introduced.

During interactive sessions, participants were asked to list types of vulnerable persons and to assign afterwards possible characteristics and special needs.



Training session on 23 April 2015

Reference was made, inter alia, to the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in *M.S.S. against Belgium and Greece*, which stated that applicants for international protection are a vulnerable group in itself.



Exercise on possible signs of vulnerability

In total, around 40 Cypriot officers from the following services participated in the training:

- Asylum Service
- Social Welfare Services
- Immigration Police
- Labour Department
- Ministry of Health
- Refugee Reviewing Authority

The training offered an excellent opportunity to exchange information and to discuss the role and obligations of the Cypriot institutions in the screening and identification process, in line with the new EU asylum acquis.

EASO Training Curriculum

Training activities

In the upcoming weeks the last two train-the-trainer sessions of this training semester will be organised in Malta. The online part of the newly developed module on *Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation* will start on 4 May and the online part of the module on *Inclusion* will start on 11 May. The face-to-face sessions for these two modules will be organised on 9 – 12 June at the EASO premises.

If you wish to register for any of these training sessions, you are encouraged to do so by sending your registration form to training@easo.europa.eu.

Additionally in June EASO will organise the first regional training session of this year. The regional training session will take place between 2 – 5 June in the premises of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in the modules on *Inclusion and Evidence Assessment*. The content part of the module on *Inclusion* will be held in German language, while the module on *Evidence Assessment* will be held in English language. There are still places available for the train-the-trainer session in the module on *Inclusion*. If you wish to register for this training session, kindly submit your registration form to training@easo.europa.eu by 4 May.

First EASO Certification and Accreditation Working Group meeting

The EASO Work Programme 2015 establishes that a European certification of the EASO training curriculum will be developed. The EASO Certification and Accreditation Working Group (CAWG) has been established to achieve this objective. EASO would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to Member States for nominating members to this group. The meeting of 24-25 March was the first of four expert meetings planned for 2015. The purpose of the meetings is to proceed with the certification of the EASO Training Curriculum in accordance with the Work Programme. In total, 13 Member States were represented at the first meeting.

EASO's Executive Director opened and introduced the meeting via a video message to the working group. He welcomed the participants to EASO's Headquarters in Malta and announced the special

occasion of starting a new process that constituted the next stage of development for EASO's training approach.

The members of the group were given an overview of the Certification and Accreditation Project and of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) context in which the Certification is being undertaken. An independent consultant familiarised the group with the relationship between the European Qualification Framework and the concept of Learning Outcomes.



EASO Certification and Accreditation Working Group (CAWG)

The initial objective for the CAWG is to actively contribute to the development of learning outcomes that can be related to level descriptors of the EQF. To support this objective, work has been undertaken to review the EASO Training Curriculum, to suggest concrete learning outcomes based on the current modules, to explore the potential relationship with the EQF and to develop guidance for the group.

An independent expert has been commissioned by EASO to review existing EASO Training materials in order to inform the "shift to learning outcomes" and to provisionally identify the EQF level that may most closely relate to each module's learning outcomes, making explicit reference to knowledge, skills and competences. Instructions were developed for the working group on the development of learning outcomes and the assessment thereof.

The independent expert led the first working session on applying learning outcomes to the *Interview techniques* module. This discussion allowed members of the working group to understand the methodology behind applying learning outcomes while considering the relationship to European Qualifications Framework level descriptors. The discussion also addressed the assessment of Learning Outcomes.

The working group discussed the results of the review of the EASO Training module *Interview Techniques* and the provisional relationship with the most appropriate level of the European Qualification Framework. The

group also discussed and improved the extent to which unambiguous relationships to the European Qualifications Framework level descriptors may be defined. Agreement was reached on the most effective approach which was to revise and update learning outcomes at module level. Further to the work undertaken in plenary, sub-groups used the same process to review the modules *Inclusion, COI and CEAS*. Additionally, one module was allocated to each sub-group to process (Exclusion, APD and Gender & SOGI) before the second working group meeting takes place in Malta on 26-27 May 2015.

EASO Cooperation with courts and tribunals

Workshop for judicial trainers on the implementation of the Judicial Analysis on Article 15(c)

On 23-24 April 2015, 18 judges from 14 Member States met at the EASO premises in Malta to participate in a professional development workshop for members of courts and tribunals on the subject of subsidiary protection under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. EASO, through close collaboration with its network of court and tribunal members, has developed and published a Judicial Analysis on this subject, which forms the basis for a professional development workshop aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement further workshops on the national level. Under the expert stewardship of Judges Michael Hoppe (DE) and Julian Phillips (UK), the participants considered not only substantive legal considerations related to the application of



Article 15(c), but also discussed questions related to professional methodology and how best to implement a national level workshop on this subject. Similar judicial analyses are currently being developed within the EASO curriculum for court and tribunal members and as they become available further workshops will be offered.

Article 15(c) Qualification Directive – A judicial analysis is available here: <http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>

EASO Practical Guides Series

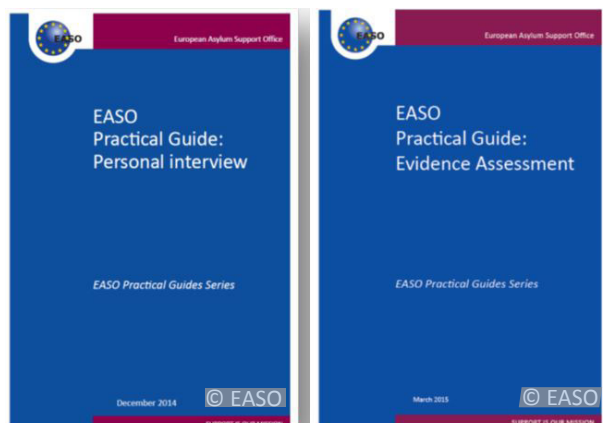
In April 2015 EASO published two Practical Guides developed under the Quality Matrix process:

EASO Practical Guide: Personal Interview

EASO Practical Guide: Evidence Assessment

Both Guides are practical interactive tools which aim to support the case officers on the ground in their core daily tasks. **The Practical Guide on the personal interview** suggests a structured approach leading the case officer from the phase of preparation for the interview through to the activities after the interview. **The Practical Guide on evidence assessment** suggests a three-step approach to evidence assessment and guides the user through the stages of gathering information, credibility assessment and risk assessment.

The Practical Guides are designed as checklists linked to brief guidance and aim at promoting common quality standards through translating the legal requirements and good practices, shared through the Quality Matrix mapping process,



into practical advice. They were developed by Member States' experts, with valuable input from the European Commission, UNHCR and ECRE, and have been consulted with all Member States.

EASO would like to take this opportunity to thank once again all experts who contributed in this process.

The Practical Guides are available at www.easo.europa.eu.

The Practical Guides and other EASO publications are available here: <http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>

Development of a practical guide on identification of persons with special needs

The development of the practical tool on identification of persons with special needs is an important quality project which EASO is working on in 2015. Following the need expressed by Member States to prioritise this development, the process started in September 2014. EASO, together with experts from Member States, and with valuable input from the European Commission, UNHCR and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), embarked upon the development of a tool that would address the issue of identification of persons with special procedural and/or reception needs in a comprehensive, yet practical, way. The tool will be designed as a web-based interactive solution, allowing for the individual identification of the potential special needs of the asylum applicant.

The current draft of the tool envisages identification on the basis of groups of indicators, including age, sex, family status, gender identity and sexual orientation, physical indicators, psychosocial indicators, and environmental indicators. The marking of those indicators by the user would highlight the potential relevance of certain categories. The categories included in the tool are those mentioned in Article 21 of the revised Reception Conditions Directive, as well as LGBTI persons and persons with gender-related special needs.

In addition to its main aim of identification, the tool also develops a generic response to the potential special needs of the applicant in the form of a checklist. It outlines the relevant guarantees at the stages of first contact and making the application, lodging the application (formal start of the asylum procedure), personal interview (also including preparation and post-interview actions) and end of the first-instance asylum procedure, as well as the relevant reception support.

In February-March 2015 the draft material that would be the basis of this interactive tool was consulted with the EASO Quality Reference Group and with interested members of the EASO Consultative Forum. We would like to thank all organisations which took part in this consultation for sharing their expertise and contributing to this important development namely: Association Européenne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme European (AEDH), Asylum Aid, Belgian Refugee Council, Caritas International, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Greek Council for Refugees, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), International Network to Analyze, Communicate and Transform the Campaign against FGM/C (INTACT), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Rehabilitation Council for

Torture Victims (IRCT), Jesuit Refugee Service Malta (JRS), Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), Red Cross, Save the Children, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) and the European Commission.

It is envisaged that a draft version of the practical tool will be shared for input with all Member States in June 2015, before its launch in July/August 2015.

EASO Quality Matrix Thematic Meeting on the Dublin Procedure

On 24-25 March 2015, EASO organised the Eighth Thematic Meeting in its Quality Matrix process. The meeting was held in Brussels, back-to-back with the Contact Committee on the Dublin III Regulation. It focused on the topic of the Dublin procedure and built upon the key findings of the mapping exercise, presenting information on current practices and applicable guidance in EU+ States (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland). The meeting was organised in the three sessions: 1. Organisational and procedural aspects of determining the responsible Member State; 2. Determining the responsible Member State: Guarantees for minors, family unity and dependent



persons. Discretionary clauses; 3. Procedures for take charge and take back transfers. The meeting was attended by more than 65 participants from 30 EU+ States, as well the European Commission, the



Participants discussed current practices, common challenges and potential solutions, with presentations by EASO, the European Commission and UNHCR, and with shared examples from the practice of Austria, Belgium, Hungary, and Poland, as well as active contributions by all Member States through workshops and plenary discussions.

The meeting was highly evaluated as an opportunity to exchange expertise and enhance practical cooperation in the area of the Dublin procedure, which depends on mutual trust and cooperation.

EASO Expert Meeting on 'Trafficking of Children' and on 'Family Tracing' (7-8 May)

EASO Expert Meetings on 'Trafficking of Children' and on 'Family Tracing' will be organised back to back with EASO's Expert Meeting on 'Identification of victims of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) who may be in need of International Protection' (to be held on 6 and 7 May). Both meetings will share a common session (morning session on 7th May) on 'the Identification of Children victims of THB'.

As foreseen in the EASO Work Programme for 2015, and agreed in previous meetings including the last Annual Conference, EASO will publish in 2015 a 'Practical Guide on Family Tracing' to support national administrations in the implementation of the children related aspects of the Common European Asylum System. The tool is currently under development and will be consulted and discussed during the meeting.

The meeting is aimed at officials responsible for developing policy or addressing issues related to children, especially unaccompanied children but it is also open to other relevant experts who may be interested in the topic, international organisations and representatives from the civil society.

For further information and to confirm your participation in one or both meetings please contact Vulnerablegroups@easo.europa.eu

University of Malta students visit EASO

On 14 April EASO welcomed a group of International Relations students from the University of Malta. The students were informed on the work of EASO and discussed asylum in the EU.



Tilburg Law School students visit EASO

On 20-23 April, EASO welcomed a group of students from the Tilburg law school which organised a 'law clinic' to EASO. The students were informed on EASO's tools and activities and presented a number of academic papers to EASO. The students showed great interest and engagement in the various discussions on EASO and the state of asylum in the European Union.



Danish students visit EASO

On 15 April, a group of Danish students from Tønder Gymnasium (Denmark) visited EASO. The students were informed on the work of EASO and had informal discussions with EASO staff.



EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

Open Calls		
Reference Number	Title	Closing Date
EASO/2015/TA/002	Senior Researcher/Analyst (AD 7)	11 May 2015

For more information please visit our website on easo.europa.eu/working-for-easo

Your opinion is important to us! Visit the EASO consultation calendar, to keep updated on EASO consultations:

easo.europa.eu/easo-consultative-forum/open-consultations

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