



## Workshop Discussion Paper

**Workshop 1:** *Outreach and information provision during the initial steps of the asylum procedure*

**Workshop leads:** *Geert Knockaert, Elisa Freni, Thanos Gatsias (EASO)*

### 1. Background

The complexity that characterizes asylum, both as a legal concept and as an administrative praxis, requires that all actors involved in the process, and especially applicants or potential applicants for international protection have the necessary information to develop an accurate understanding of the process, and the associated rights and obligations. Accurate and accessible information at early stages of the asylum procedure is critical in allowing applicants to distinguish between myths and realities about host countries, to make informed decisions throughout the process, and to counteract the narrative of smugglers or other actors which might have advantage in circulating fake news among applicants. Importantly, for individuals who may be in need of protection, but are not aware of the legal and procedural options for pursuing protection, proactive provision of information, taking into account the specific cognitive gaps, information needs and vulnerabilities of different audience's sub-groups, and practical support to this end may catalyse the very access to the asylum procedure.

Over the past years, civil society actors have undertaken an active role -oftentimes working in cooperation with national authorities- in providing information to applicants for international protection. While focusing on questions related to effective access to procedure and the initial stages of the asylum process, this workshop aims at engaging participants from civil society organizations in a collaborative dialogue to exchange experience-based insights into questions related to the provision of information in these two areas: a) information prior to the asylum request, catalysing access to the asylum process; and b) information provision in the early stages of the asylum process. Drawing from an initial discussion, where they will identify areas in need of improvement, participants will subsequently develop specific recommendations toward addressing existing gaps in information provision in the two abovementioned areas. The discussion will also allow them to share successful methodologies and good practices, identify effective techniques and channels which could bridge the knowledge gap of potential applicants during the early stages of their arrival in the EU territory

## **2. Structure of the workshop**

The workshop will be of participatory nature, through the use of an elicitive methodology to ensure increased participant engagement and ownership of the process. After a short introductory exercise and a presentation of the workshop's methodology by the expert facilitators, the workshop leads will offer a thematic introduction underlying the importance of information provision for applicants and potential applicants for international protection. In this introduction, reference will be also made to previous research, good practices and experience-based insights on the subject matter, as well as to some key questions that are of interest to EASO and workshop participants. After the thematic introduction, participants will offer their suggestions on specific sub-topics related to the workshop's overall theme and will break into up to 10 smaller discussion groups based on their interests. Once the small groups are formed, participants will develop -through collaborative dialogue- detailed, step-by-step recommendations toward addressing existing gaps in information provision. A printed template provided by the expert facilitators will help guide their discussion to this end. After developing their recommendations, each group will offer a short summary of their findings.

## **3. Key questions/issues to be discussed:**

### Question 1

- *At the initial stages of the asylum procedure, drawing from your experience, what challenges gaps have you identified regarding the effective provision of information to (potential) applicants?*

### Question 2

- *What specific recommendations would you have for national authorities toward addressing these challenges?*

### Question 3

- *Which skills or knowledge can your organisation provide to front-line officials involved in the provision of information, to better equip them while they conduct information provision?*