



EASO SPECIAL SUPPORT PLAN TO BULGARIA

- Amendment No 3 -

The EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria is in force since 5 December 2014, signed by the Executive Director of EASO and the Minister of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria, for a duration up to the end of October 2017.

As stated in Amendment No 2., EASO and the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees agreed to work on an extension of the duration of the Plan and to adjust needs in the scope of the support measures. The amendments (marked in *Italics*), as described in Annex I, are hereby agreed.

EASO shall send a copy of the amendment to the Members of the EASO Management Board.

Malta/Sofia, 27 October 2017

The Executive Director
of the European Asylum
Support Office

Mr Jose Carreira
[Signed]

The Deputy Prime Minister for
Judicial Reform and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Bulgaria

Ms Ekaterina Zaharieva
[Signed]



Annex I

This Special Support Plan lays down the conditions and objectives of EASO’s specific technical and operational assistance to Bulgaria until *31 October 2018* and sets out the conditions for participation in these specific EASO activities.

The implementation period of the EASO Measures is extended until *31 October 2018*.

2.1 Stakeholders

EASO and Bulgaria will jointly establish a Working Arrangement and will each appoint a Plan Manager, Plan Coordinator and Measure Coordinators in view of the implementation of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria. This will occur through an exchange of letters before the end of *November 2017*.

The Bulgarian national authorities involved in the process and their respective roles are the following:

Stakeholders	Role
State Agency for Refugees (SAR)	The State Agency for Refugees is the authority responsible for registering, examining, and making decisions on applications for international protection. It organizes the admission and temporary accommodation of foreign nationals who have applied for [...] <i>international protection</i> [...] and issues documents for certification purposes <i>during the asylum procedure</i> . In cooperation with the central government bodies of the executive power, the Bulgarian Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations, it organizes the activities relating to the provision of social, medical and psychological assistance to asylum seekers and assists in the integration of persons who have been granted protection. The State Agency for Refugees is <i>one of the main beneficiaries of the assistance under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)</i> .
Ministry of Interior, <i>including</i> Chief Directorate Border Police [...] Migration Directorate <i>International Projects Directorate</i> <i>Directorate for Communication and Information Systems</i>	The Chief Directorate Border Police (CDBP) at the Ministry of the Interior is a specialized police service responsible for border control and surveillance. It operates within the 30km border area, the area of the border checkpoints, the international airports and seaports, the internal seaways, territorial sea, adjacent zone, continental shelf, the Bulgarian part of the Danube River and the other border rivers and water basins. CDBP is one of the main beneficiaries of the assistance under the [...] <i>Internal Security Fund in the part Borders</i> . The Migration Directorate [...] at the [...] Ministry of Interior is a specialized department on national level responsible for the administrative control of the residence of foreign nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria. The Migration Directorate is also in charge for the issuance, rejection/denial and deprivation of long-term residence permits of foreign citizens. It is

	<p>responsible for the coordination in the area of migration policy and interacts with other state authorities, NGOs and international organizations. The Migration Directorate is in charge of the management, maintenance and security of specialized facilities for temporary accommodation of third country nationals who are subject to return. The Migration Directorate is one of the main beneficiaries of the assistance under the [...] <i>Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)</i>.</p> <p><i>The International Projects Directorate is a structure of the Ministry of Interior responsible for the management of programmes and projects financed by the EU and within the framework of other international programmes and contracts. The Directorate carries out the functions of a Responsible Authority for the management of EU funds and supports the Minister of the Interior in coordinating activities related to the preparation and implementation of projects and programmes, partially or fully financed by EU funds and other international programmes and contracts. It monitors the additionality and prevention of double funding of projects and conducts, within its sphere of competence, methodical guidance, assistance and control in the structures of the Ministry of Interior.</i></p> <p><i>The Directorate for Communication and Information Systems is a structure within the Ministry of Interior which ensures the functioning and development of communication and information systems of the Ministry and other state bodies by: building, maintaining and developing communication systems for the management of the Ministry; exploring and proposing new technological tools and systems; designing, developing and maintaining automated information systems in the Ministry; creating and developing software.</i></p>
[...]	[...]
National Institute of Justice	The National Institute of Justice <i>provides</i> professional training for magistrates.

'2.2 Ongoing activities' chapter will be replaced by the following text:

2.3. State of play

Reception

Two types of centers for accommodation of foreigners exist in Bulgaria: special centers for temporary accommodation for foreigners (SCTAFs) within the structures of the Migration Directorate under the Ministry of the Interior and reception centers of the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) for accommodation of asylum seekers. The Bulgarian asylum system includes the reception centers within SAR. SAR has four territorial units:

Center capacity:



TC-Pastrogor - 320 places (ongoing transformation from an open into a closed type of center);

RRC-Banya - 70 places;

RRC-Harmanli - 2 710 places;

RRC-Sofia has four accommodation sites:

- Ovcha Kupel district - 860 places;

- Vrazhdebna district - 370 places, plus 60 places in premises of a closed type within RRC-Busmantsi;

- Voenna Rampa district - 800 places.

- closed center in Busmantsi village - 60 places.

The overall accommodation capacity of SAR is 5190 places, 60 of which in closed premises. If necessary, a container settlement with a total of 400 places can be used in RRC-Harmanli.

TC-Pastrogor and building 1 of RRC-Harmanli are currently being transformed from an open to a closed type of premises. No construction of new territorial units of SAR in the country is envisaged.

International protection system

The total number of caseworkers in the territorial units of the State Agency for Refugees is 37. Many of them are junior experts. The total average capacity to process applications for international protection is 414 applications per week. However, this figure varies and is in direct co-relation with the number of asylum seekers entering the country and the number of applicants accommodated in the center during different periods of the calendar year.

3. Measure

EASO will provide technical support to experts participating in the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria with the aim of ensuring that the products developed make good use of the expertise and information already available to EASO. All intellectual property rights of the work of the experts performed in the context of the Special Support Plan vest in EASO. Selected products developed under the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria may be published, *unless otherwise agreed between EASO and the supported MS.*

EASO Measure BG 1¹: Support in complying with the EU Asylum Acquis and practical application of quality tools in the asylum procedure	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees Ministry of Interior
Current situation	<i>The State Agency for Refugees organizes the quality control in accordance with the Internal rules for quality checking of the procedure for international protection.</i>
Objective(s)	<i>Improving quality control of the procedure for international protection by continuing and facilitating the application of quality control tools and exchanging Member States' good practices on the application of EU law in the field of international protection.</i>
Pre-conditions(s)	– <i>BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</i>

¹ This measure is a revised version of former BG 1.



	– <i>BG will make relevant national legislation available in English.</i>
EASO support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>5 activities/ 2 experts/ 5 calendar days each</i> 2. <i>translation and publication of 5 EASO documents into Bulgarian</i>
Implementation	<i>2017: Q4; 2018: Q1-Q3.</i>
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Sharing Member States’ good practices on the quality control of the international protection system in accordance with the EU law in the field of international protection;</i> <i>Provision of information and clarification in connection with the application of the EU acquis;</i> 2. <i>Translation of EASO quality tools and practical guides into Bulgarian language.</i>

EASO Measure BG 2²: Support for vulnerability assessment, in particular unaccompanied minors	
Responsible Authorities	<p><i>State Agency for Refugees</i></p> <p><i>[...]</i></p>
Current situation	<p><i>Bulgaria would appreciate the exchange of information and experience in relation to the screening of persons with special needs (vulnerable categories and unaccompanied minors in particular).</i></p> <p><i>Following different projects run by EASO, various tools (manual, checklist) have been developed.</i></p> <p><i>There is a need to implement the lessons learnt via practical training of SAR staff in open and closed reception facilities.</i></p> <p><i>The Bulgarian authorities have been receiving support from EASO in relation to issues of meeting the needs of unaccompanied minors, including guardianship and age assessment.</i></p>
Objective(s)	<p><i>Improved capacity to identify and refer vulnerable asylum applicants, including unaccompanied minors, and accumulated experience to respond to their special procedural and reception needs.</i></p> <p><i>Ensured efficient identification of special needs and early referral to relevant services.</i></p>
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Ensured participation of staff responsible for subject-related topics</i> – <i>Access to all open and closed type SAR facilities hosting persons applying for international protection.</i>
EASO support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>10 activities /2 experts / 5 calendar days practical training on vulnerability assessment</i>
Implementation	<i>2017: Q4; 2018: Q1-Q3.</i>

² This measure is a revised version of former BG 2.



Deliverable(s)	<p>1. <i>The national referral mechanism put in place to be implemented.</i></p> <p><i>Implementing guidelines for the staff of different stakeholders, which describe the procedure on the identification of persons with special needs.</i></p> <p><i>Practical training provided to Bulgarian reception staff.</i></p>
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EASO Measure BG 3³: Support in the field of open and closed type of reception	
Responsible authorities	<i>State Agency for Refugees</i>
Current situation	<i>The reception capacity and conditions have been under constant development since 2013. At the moment there is sufficient reception capacity to manage current flows, as well as some emergency capacity. However, there is a need for developing contingency measures for maintaining and improving quality standards even in the time of stretched capacity. SAR is currently working on a specialized facility for UAMs, 24/7 availability of social workers under negotiations with NGOs. Since September 2016 SAR has been entrusted with the task of managing premises of a closed type within RRCs and needs to build up capacities in this field.</i>
Objective(s)	<i>Enhance the capacity of the State Agency for Refugees in managing and developing improved reception facilities in order to maintain the necessary capacity to fulfil national and international obligations in the field of reception of asylum seekers.</i>
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</i> – <i>Access to all open and closed SAR facilities hosting persons applying for international protection.</i>
EASO support	<i>10 activities /2 experts /5 calendar days providing practical training on reception</i>
Implementation	<i>2017: Q4; 2018: Q1-Q3.</i>
Deliverable (s)	<p><i>Building on the results of the EASO Operating Plan and the Special Support Plan to Bulgaria, the aim of the measure is to provide hands-on support as well as practical and strategic advice on managing and developing improved reception facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Expected deliverables include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Internal normative documents are developed on management of the closed type of reception premises</i> – <i>Relevant stakeholders are provided with practical support as well as training in the use and application of the already developed internal normative documents</i> – <i>Practical training of reception centre staff is delivered regarding management of daily tasks.</i>

EASO Measure BG 4⁴: Professional development activities and study visits
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³ This measure is a revised version of former BG 3.

⁴ The new BG 4., is a revised and merged version of former BG 7., 8. and 9. measures.



<i>Responsible authorities</i>	<p><i>State Agency for Refugees</i></p> <p><i>Ministry of Interior: Chief Directorate Border Police, International Projects Directorate</i></p> <p><i>National Institute of Justice</i></p> <p><i>Relevant Administrative Courts</i></p>
<i>Current situation</i>	<p><i>The responsible authorities are in the process of further strengthening their capacity in the field of asylum.</i></p>
<i>Objective(s)</i>	<p><i>Reinforce the capacity and further develop the skills and abilities of stakeholders involved in asylum-related matters at 1st instance and the judicial instance.</i></p>
<i>Pre-condition(s)</i>	<p>– <i>BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</i></p>
<i>EASO support</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. 30 training activities organised by EASO / 1 BG expert / 5 calendar days</i> <i>2. 12 national trainings organized with the assistance of EASO experts</i> <i>3. 6 study visits / 10 BG participants / 5 days each</i> <i>4. Participation in 50 EASO activities (e.g. workshops, thematic networks and seminars) / 1 expert / 5 calendar days</i> <i>5. 5 activities/ 1 expert/ 5-10 calendar days is deployed at the International Projects Directorate for consulting on EU+ funding</i> <i>6. 1 activity/ 1 expert/ 30 calendar days (extendable) deployed for SAR to provide knowhow on grant management of EU+ funds</i>
<i>Implementation</i>	<p><i>2017: Q4; 2018 : Q1-Q3.</i></p>
<i>Deliverable(s)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. 30 Bulgarian experts are trained in the EASO Training Curriculum modules, attending the training courses organised in 2017-2018, for which the rules on reimbursement of costs applicable are foreseen in the EASO Management Board Decision No 16 of 23 November 2012, amended;</i> <i>2. EASO assistance is provided with the organization of 12 national trainings under the EASO training modules;</i> <i>3. Six study visits are organised in a Member State and/or associated country, including study visits on EU+ funding;</i> <i>4. 50 Bulgarian experts are participating in EASO activities related to the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, attending meetings, workshops and seminars organised by EASO, for which the rules on reimbursement of costs applicable are foreseen in the EASO Management Board Decision No 16 of 23 November 2012, amended;</i> <i>5. Good practice on EU+ fund management is shared with special consideration on cost simplified options, monitoring and evaluation of projects and resettlement. As a result, internal guidelines are drafted.</i> <i>6. SAR will have practical support on improving the existing structure of project management. Templates and guidance documents are developed.</i>



EASO Activity BG 5⁵: Support in developing ICT tools and enhancing access for interpretation	
<i>Responsible authorities</i>	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior, Directorate for Communication and Information Systems at the Ministry of the Interior</p> <p>Relevant Administrative Courts</p>
<i>Current situation</i>	<p>There are various fields connected to the asylum procedure which are in need of reinforced ICT development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an electronic case management system for the Dublin procedure (including managing relocation and resettlement files) • Barcode card system for entry/exit/services management in reception centers; • Establishment of an electronic database for uploading judicial and administrative decisions concerning the procedure for international protection in order to ensure equal treatment of similar cases by the caseworkers in the separate territorial units of SAR; • Further developing videoconferencing access points to reception facilities and courts.
<i>Objective(s)</i>	<p>Provide consultancy services for BG to prepare the necessary technical specifications for the relevant ICT tools and assist with their implementation.</p> <p>Facilitate technological transfer from other MS to Bulgaria.</p> <p>Provide ICT tools, developed by EASO.</p> <p>Video-conferencing connection, therefore access to EASO List of Available Languages (LAL) is made available for multiple locations.</p>
<i>Pre-condition(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bulgaria ensures that the developed systems are integrated within the existing national system - Copyrights conditions are previously agreed between Bulgaria, EASO, Other MS and service providers. - Funding of the projects is in line with EU rules.
<i>EASO support</i>	<p>5 activities/ 2 experts/ 5 calendar days</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultancy services are provided for 2 ICT software development. 2. Technological transfer of software from EASO and MS to Bulgaria. 3. LAL is implemented cost-effectively (video-conferencing, instead of deployments).
<i>Implementation</i>	2017: Q4; 2018: Q1-Q3
<i>Deliverable (s)</i>	1. 2 consultancies on software development (technical specifications)

⁵ The new BG 5., is a new measure, replacing former BG 5. measure.



	<p>2. 1 technological transfer from another MS to Bulgaria and 1 technological transfer from EASO to Bulgaria resulting in improved case-management.</p> <p>3. Use of LAL through video-conferencing.</p>
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EASO Measure BG 6⁶: Evaluation of the implementation of the EASO Special support Plan to Bulgaria	
<i>Responsible authority</i>	EASO Relevant Bulgarian stakeholders
<i>Objective(s)</i>	Evaluation of the implementation of the EASO Special support Plan to Bulgaria.
<i>Pre-condition(s)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Indication by the Bulgarian authorities of staff responsible for the thematic areas under the Special Support Plan. – Aggregation and provision of summary of feedback from the Bulgarian authorities. – Ensuring that the evaluation team has access to and has consulted all relevant information and documents related to the implementation of the Special Support Plan.
<i>EASO support</i>	1 activity / 2 experts/ 5 calendar days
<i>Implementation</i>	2018: Q4
<i>Deliverable(s)</i>	Completed final evaluation assessing the full implementation of the activities foreseen in the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria, as well as identifying key lessons learnt and proposing practical recommendations for follow-up actions.

⁶ The new BG 6., is a revised version of former BG 10. measure.