



European Asylum Support Office

Newsletter - March 2015

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the March edition of the EASO newsletter. During the visit of the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos to EASO (see page 6), the EASO Executive Director presented the preliminary results of a number of pilot projects which EASO conducted in the framework of the Task Force Mediterranean. These projects deal with two areas which are of great importance for the development of the Common European Asylum System, namely joint processing activities in the field of asylum and facilitation of irregular migrants. In the months to come, EASO will step-up its work in these two fields and we will keep you updated with developments. This month was also particularly important since EASO and Italy signed a new Support Plan which provides for EASO tailor-made support to Italy to be implemented over a period of 12 months. (see page 5).

Jean-Pierre Schembri
EASO Spokesperson
Newsletter editor

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Maltese Minister for Home Affairs and National Security Visits EASO



Hon. Carmelo Abela MP – Maltese Minister for Home Affairs and National Security visited EASO on 18 March 2015. During his visit, the Minister met with EASO's Executive Director. The two discussed the situation of asylum in the EU, with a focus on the situation in Malta.

Commissioner Avramopoulos visits EASO

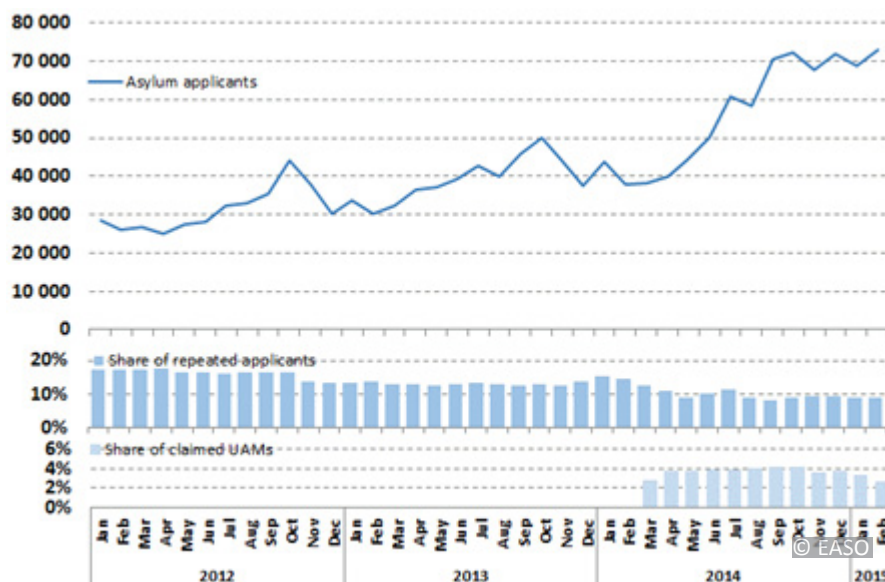


On 26 March, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos visited the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to discuss the work of EASO in enhancing the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, and to discuss the findings of two EASO actions conducted within the framework of the Task Force Mediterranean: the pilot project on information gathering in Malta and Italy on the phenomenon of facilitation of irregular migrants and the EASO pilot projects on joint processing activities in the field of asylum. Moreover, EASO's Executive Director gave the Commissioner an update on the latest asylum trends in the European Union. **Read more on page 6.**

Latest asylum trends and main countries of origin

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

In February 2015, the total number of applicants recorded by EU+ countries rose 6 % compared to the first month of 2015 and reached a new highest level (72,973) since European data collection started in 2008. As shown in the trend chart below, the rise in February 2015 was in contrast with the same seasonal period in the last three years, when the number of asylum applicants dropped in February compared to January. The strong rise in the number of Kosovar applicants reported by both Hungary and Germany was a main factor contributing to the continued high numbers of applicants recorded in the EU+ in recent months.

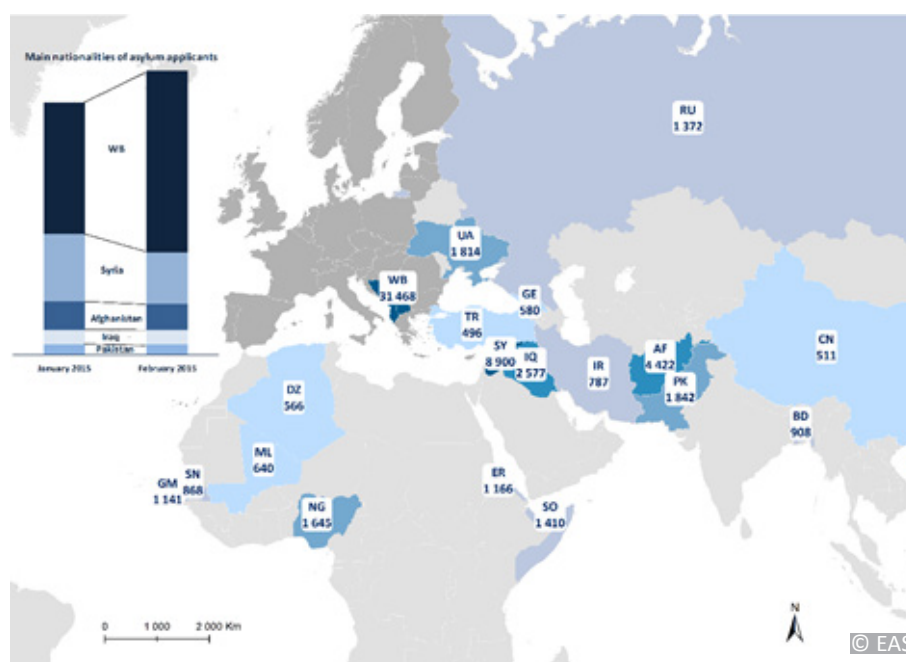


Since August last year, the monthly share of repeated applicants reported by EU+ countries has remained stable and represented less than 10 % of total applicants.

The number of those claiming to be unaccompanied minors (UAMs) at the moment of lodging an asylum application was around 2,000 in February, a decrease of 13 % compared to January 2015. As a result, the share of UAMs fell to less than 3 % in February, the lowest share since March 2014 when collection of this indicator began. Afghan nationals continued to be the main group of claimed UAM applicants and accounted for 30 % of the monthly total of UAM

applicants in February 2015. Syrians and Somali ranked second and third in the top three main nationalities of claimed UAMs.

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



The map shows the main nationalities of asylum applicants recorded by EU+ countries in February 2015. Citizens of all six Western Balkan (WB) countries (considered together) were by far the most numerous and **accounted for 43 % of the monthly total**. Within this group, Kosovars represented the highest share, **76 % of the WB total recorded in February 2015**, with close to 24,000 applicants.

The number of Syrian applicants decreased for the fifth consecutive month, while the number of applicants from Afghanistan also fell by 11 %.

Following two months of decrease, **the number of Ukrainian applicants rose by 23 % compared to January** with applications lodged in almost all EU+ countries.

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.

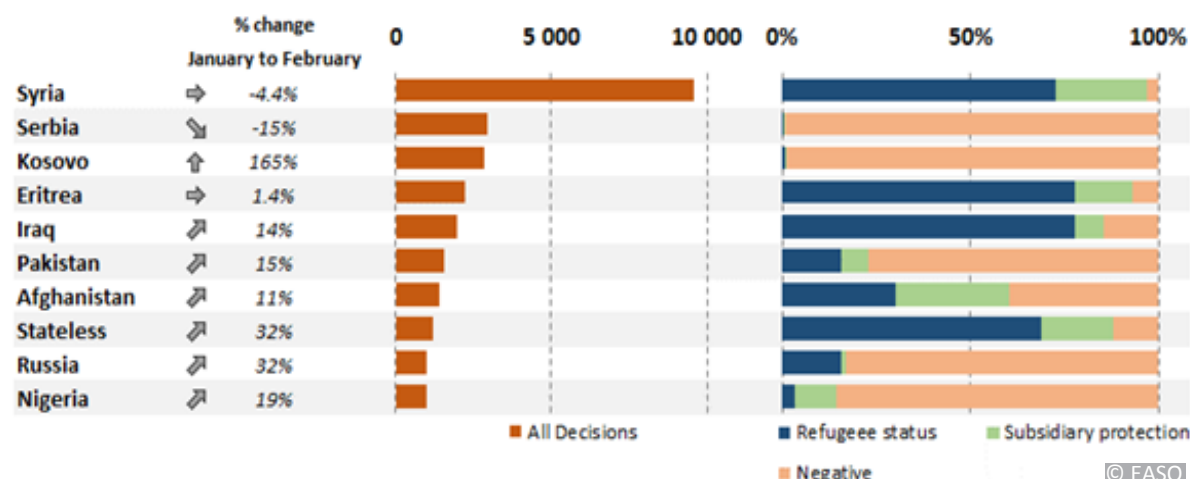
Syria – in February 2015, EU+ countries registered 8,900 Syrian applicants, a decrease of 23 % compared to January 2015, but 42 % more than the total for February 2014. While Germany, Sweden and Austria continued as the main destination countries for Syrian applicants, the Syrian influx remained spread throughout Europe with 19 EU+ countries reporting Syria in their national top three main countries of origin.

Western Balkan nationals (WB) – A total of 31,468 WB nationals lodged an application for asylum in the EU+ in February 2015. This is a rise of 38 % compared to the first month of 2015 and for a large part due to the strong rise in the number of Kosovar² applicants in Hungary and Germany. Given the high number of implicit withdrawals reported by Hungary in the last three months, it could be that an important share of the Kosovars reported by Germany might have previously lodged an asylum application in Hungary, which was subsequently abandoned. The number of Serbian applicants fell for the third consecutive month, but the influx of Serbians remains much higher than at the beginning of 2014.

Afghanistan – After the high level registered in December 2014, the number of Afghan applicants has fallen in the first months of 2015. In February, applicants decreased 11 % compared to January 2015, but the level was still 94 % higher than in February 2014.

Iraq – In February 2015, the number of Iraqi applicants (2,577) remained at the same average level recorded over the last six months – around 2 500 applicants per month. Over this six month period, the number of repeated applicants decreased, while first-time applicants increased. Of all Iraqis registered in the EU+ countries in February 2015, 89 % were first-time applicants.

3. Number and type of decisions issued in first instance in EU+ countries



Although in February 2015 the number of decisions went down by 4 % compared to January, Syrians continued as the largest group of applicants in terms of decisions issued. 73 % of all decisions issued on Syrian cases granted refugee status and 24 % granted subsidiary protection, amounting to a 97 % recognition rate³. This is the highest recognition rate for any single country of origin.

In February 2015, 93 % of all decisions issued to Eritreans resulted in a positive outcome. After Syria, Eritrea is the nationality of applicants with the highest recognition rate.

Following the strong increase in arrivals of Kosovar applicants, in several EU+ countries the number of decisions on Kosovar applications increased, in some cases via fast-track procedures. At EU+ level, decisions on Kosovar applications more than doubled compared to January 2015 (+ 165 %). In February, 99 % of all first instance decisions issued to Kosovars were negative.

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.

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

EASO Practical Cooperation Workshop on Afghanistan

On 19-20 March 2015, EASO organised a Practical Cooperation Workshop on Afghanistan in Brussels, attended by 35 participants from 21 EU+ countries (Member States, Switzerland and Norway) and UNHCR.

This workshop followed the publication, in February 2015, of an EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report on the security situation in Afghanistan (<http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Afghanistan-security-situation-EN.pdf>). On the basis of the information collected in this COI report, the workshop discussed international protection determination policies and practices in EU+ countries with regard to Afghan applicants. The agenda covered:

- Risk profiles and related international protection considerations;
- The security situation in different regions of Afghanistan;
- Indicators for assessing the security situation in light of Art.15 of the Qualification Directive;
- Applicability of internal flight/protection alternatives;
- Scope for more exchange and consultation on country practices.

A number of case studies allowed for in-depth discussions on national interpretations of the security situation in Afghanistan and related decision practices, focusing mainly on indicators for the application of Article 15 of the Qualification Directive. For each case, a drafter of the EASO COI report gave an overview of the current security situation in a selected Afghan province, in terms of numbers of casualties, types of violence, weapons use, victims, and displacement.

Although in general the positive decision rate is high for Afghan applicants, the case studies brought to the surface important divergences in national decision practices and more specifically in the legal reasoning behind these practices. Differences relate to: application of either Art. 15(b) or 15(c) of the Qualification Directive; application of 15(c) for the whole territory, only for selected provinces or regions, or no application at all; the application (or not) of a “sliding scale” when assessing individual circumstances under Art. 15 and the level of individuality required; and the specific conditions under which an Afghan national may be expected to find an internal protection alternative within the country.

EASO will continue to collect information on the situation in Afghanistan, analyse data trends and organise further discussions on policies and practices with the aim of achieving more convergence in light of the Common European Asylum System.

Update of the EASO COI Report on the Security Situation in Afghanistan

In the margins of the Practical Cooperation workshop, members of the drafting team of the recently published EASO COI Report on the Security Situation in Afghanistan met to evaluate the drafting process of the first security report, discuss initial feedback received, and agree upon timeframes, terms of reference and work processes for the update of the report, which will be published by the end of summer 2015.

See EASO's report on the Security Situation in Afghanistan: <http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Afghanistan-security-situation.pdf>

National Common COI Portal Administrators Meeting

On 17 March National Common COI Portal Administrators (NCPAs) met to share experiences on the EASO COI Portal in particular on the aspects of user management, national usage and training.

EASO updated participants on the COI Portal state of play (statistics on usage and most popular documents, new storage of COI from EU institutions, and regional trainings for users) and on the “next generation COI Portal”, foreseen to be launched in early 2016, in which EASO and national COI reports will be publically accessible¹.

During break-out sessions, discussions focused on quality standards for documents and metadata stored in the COI Portal and mechanisms to ensure greater consistency. Participants identified ways in which EASO could facilitate NCPAs' tasks, in particular as relates to quality check and promotion of the COI Portal in their national administrations.

Belgium (Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons/CGRS) presented *Insite*, its new intranet platform, which aims both to merge all documents (such as COI, policy and asylum news) in one single place and to offer a user-oriented approach. The Greek and Slovenian NCPAs provided feedback on the COI Portal training sessions organised in their national offices in 2014 and 2015.

¹ Currently, the EASO COI Portal is a platform for EU+ states' (EU Member States, Switzerland and Norway) national asylum administrations only. See: <http://easo.europa.eu/coiportalnotice/>

EASO and Italy sign agreement to continue EASO support to Italy until April 2016

EASO and Italy signed a new Support Plan which provides for EASO tailor-made support to Italy to be implemented over a period of 12 months. The support focuses on long-term operational support for the Italian Territorial Commissions and Sections in the field of: Country of Origin Information (COI) and administrative preparation of the asylum files; tackling of the existing backlog of pending cases in the Dublin procedure; and strengthening the capacity of reception measures (such as those for unaccompanied minors). Moreover, EASO will continue training personnel employed with the Italian National Asylum Commission and to engage in capacity building measures for the newly established COI Unit.

Due to the high pressure on the Italian asylum and reception system, Italy has asked for continued support in order to ensure sustainability of the good results achieved through the EASO first Support Plan for Italy and to improve its asylum and reception system in line with requirements of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The implementation of the new Support Plan will start in April 2015 and it will be realized over a period of 12 months, ending in April 2016. EASO will continue to support Italy's efforts to improve and strengthen its strategic management, as well as upgrading the standards of its asylum and reception system in the context of the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. EASO shall continue training personnel employed with the Italian National Asylum Commission and will continue to engage in capacity building measures for the newly established COI Unit. Moreover, new EASO support actions will focus on long-term operational support for the Italian Territorial Commissions and Sections in the field of: Country of Origin Information and administrative preparation of the asylum files; tackling of the existing backlog of pending cases in the Dublin procedure; and strengthening the capacity of reception measures (such as those for unaccompanied minors). Support Teams made up of EASO experts and experts from Member States will be set up to collaborate on these endeavors.

Following the signature of this new Support Plan, Dr Visser, EASO Executive Director, noted that: "After the successful implementation of the first Support Plan for Italy in 2013-2014, the new Support Plan

will provide real added value in helping Italy meet its asylum and reception challenges. I am convinced that by working together, we will be able to achieve the objectives of the Special Support Plan and set another example of successful practical solidarity in the EU."

Background

EASO support to Italy dates back to June 2013. Anticipating the implementation of the new European Asylum Package, while facing large fluctuations in the number of arrivals of immigrants, together with the need of keeping high standards in its asylum and reception processes, have motivated Italy to ask EASO for assistance in enhancing its Asylum and Reception Systems. In this context, following a request made by Italy, in June 2013, the EASO Executive Director decided to render Special Support to Italy using the joint expertise of EASO and Member States. The first EASO Support Plan for Italy ran until December 2014, and focused on a number of prioritised areas, such as: data collection and analysis, Country of Origin Information (COI), Dublin system, reception system and emergency capacity, and training of independent judiciary.

As a result of the support provided by EASO under the first Support Plan during 2013-2014, Italy managed to reinforce parts of its international protection and reception system. Italian staff has been trained and Italy developed its COI capacity. Moreover, significant progress was achieved in terms of increasing Italy's capacity for reception and registration of applicants for international protection, as well as their preparedness and reaction capabilities.

Italy, as an EU Member State at the external border, on the southern Mediterranean migration route, continues to be under serious migratory and refugee pressure. The request for continued support by EASO was inspired by Italy's will to ensure sustainability of the good results achieved by EASO through the measure contained in the Operating Plan for Italy so that the current and future challenges can be adequately addressed. The implementation of the new Special Support Plan, will start in April 2015 and it will be realized over a period of 12 months, ending in April 2016.

EASO's Special Support Plan for Italy (2015): <http://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/20150311-SSP-PHASE-2-Italy-DEF.pdf>

EASO Operating Plan for Italy (2013-2014) and its amendments: <http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>

Commissioner Avramopoulos visits EASO

During his visit to EASO on 26 March, the Commissioner met with EASO's Executive Director, Dr Robert K. Visser and EASO staff, to discuss EASO's work and activities, including two EASO actions conducted within the framework of the Task Force Mediterranean: the pilot project on information gathering in Malta and Italy on the phenomenon of facilitation of irregular migrants and the EASO pilot project on joint processing activities in the field of asylum.

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. The pilot project helped to create a systematic data collection system that can be used for long-term strategic analysis. As a next step, EASO proposes to conduct another pilot project in two Member States that are not at the EU external border to learn more about facilitation of secondary movements.



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. Through the experience of these pilot projects, many asylum officials from different Member States experienced a new level of trust when they got access to other Member State's actual cases,

conducted interviews, assessed asylum claims and drafted internal decisions jointly. These projects also helped in creating an atmosphere of solidarity on a very practical level. The pilot projects also showed that Member states can share resources when extra capacity is necessary.

Additionally, the EASO Executive Director gave an update on the latest asylum trends in the European Union. In particular, it was noted that in recent months the total number of applicants recorded by EU+ countries (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) has remained around 70,000 applicants per month. In contrast with previous years, there was no seasonal decline observed towards the end of 2014. According to the EASO's Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data collection, in 2014, more than 650,000 applicants for international protection were registered in the EU+ (a 40% increase compared to 2013 when around 465,000 were recorded). There has been a substantial increase in the number of Kosovar applicants registered since November 2014 through the first weeks of 2015 – arriving principally in Hungary and applying there, and in EU+ countries such as Germany, Austria and France. In February 2015, the Western Balkan countries, Syria and Afghanistan made up the top three countries of origin of applicants registered in the EU+.

Commissioner Avramopoulos held that 'since its launch, the EU Asylum Support Office has established itself as a key actor of European solidarity, fostering greater cooperation with and between Member States and other EU agencies.'

Dr Visser stated 'I am honoured to welcome Commissioner Avramopoulos at EASO. My agency is fully committed to support Member States and the Commission in the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. It is only by working closely together with Member States and the Commission that we achieve a truly Common Asylum Policy based on solidarity, responsibility sharing and mutual trust'.

Watch the **press conference**: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=I101130>

Watch the **arrival and tour of the building**: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I101068>

First meeting of the exclusion working group

On 16 and 17 March 2015, a first meeting took place of the newly constituted working group charged with the task of drawing up professional development materials for members of courts and tribunals on the subject of exclusion from international protection. The materials developed under the trusteeship of the members of this working group will be the second chapter in the EASO curriculum for members of courts and tribunals, following the recent publication of materials related to Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. The working group is made up of judges from France, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom and Norway as well as representatives from the Association of European Administrative Judges (AEAJ) and UNHCR. Once the materials have been developed, and following the completion of a consultative procedure with members of the EASO Consultative Forum, a pilot workshop will be held in late 2015 with a view to testing the materials in the context of a professional development workshop for members of courts and tribunals.

Terms of Reference for the EASO's Training and Expert Pool

EASO has recently published the Terms of Reference for EASO's Training and Expert Pool. The EASO Training and Expert Pool is one of the key elements in ensuring the provisions of quality training and allowing EASO to ensure that the training is conducted by well prepared and experienced experts. The Pool is divided into 3 'sub-pools': EASO training experts' pool, EASO content experts' pool and EASO didactic experts' pool. The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to provide an overview of the Training and Expert Pool, with a special focus on a detailed task description, the knowledge, experience and skills required for trainers, content experts and didactic experts.

The document also includes a summary of the most important training activities, such as train-the-trainer sessions, module developments and module updates in terms of time requirements. The Terms of Reference for EASO's Training and Expert Pool are complemented by the Terms of Reference for the Deployment of Experts within the EASO Training and Expert Pool, which define objective

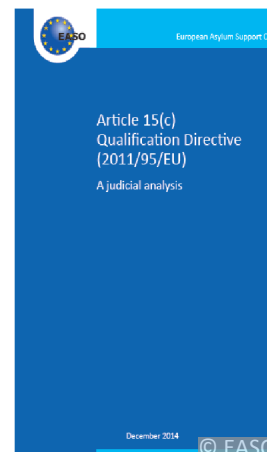
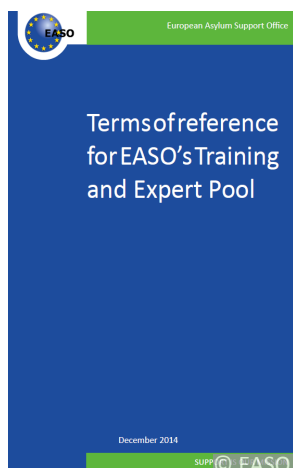
criteria for the deployment of experts requested on an annual basis for a number of training activities, including train-the-trainer sessions, module updates / upgrades / developments and events organised for the purpose of an emergency / special support or External Dimension.

Judicial analysis on Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive

EASO has recently published the first of a new series of publications in the EASO curriculum for members of courts and tribunals: *Article 15(c) Qualification Directive – A judicial analysis*. The purpose of this analysis is to put at the disposal of courts and tribunals dealing with international protection cases, a helpful tool for the understanding of protection issues arising in relation to Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive (QD). This provision, which by its nature can potentially affect the outcome of many cases dealing with international protection, has not proved easy for judges to apply. Studies

conducted by EASO and others have shown that in different Member States there have been divergent interpretations. This judicial analysis is intended to provide an understanding of this aspect of the QD through the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union as well as that of the European Court of Human Rights and relevant decisions of the courts and tribunals of the Member

States. The content has been drafted by a working group consisting of judges drawn from a range of Member States and Associated Countries. In addition, representatives of UNHCR made a valuable contribution to the content produced by the working group. The working group met on 3 occasions in April, June and September 2014 in Malta. Comments on a discussion draft were received from individual members of the EASO network of courts and tribunal members as well as from several members of the EASO Consultative Forum. This analysis deals with just one limb of Article 15 of the Qualification Directive which contains three categories for persons in need of subsidiary protection who are otherwise not entitled to protection under the Refugee Convention. In due course, further chapters will be produced.



The *Terms of Reference for EASO's Training and Expert Pool* publication is available here: <http://easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation/>

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

EASO conducted mapping exercise for Hungary

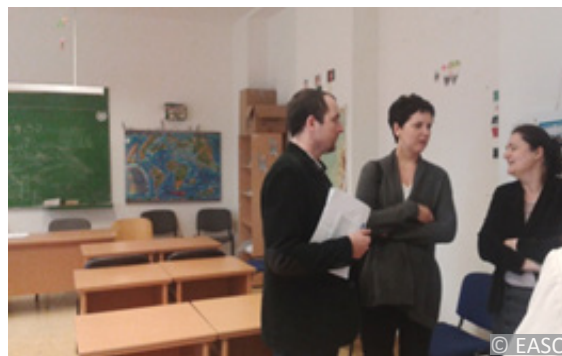
Upon request of the Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN), EASO organised a mapping mission to Hungary from 16 to 20 March 2015. Three expert teams, comprised of EASO and Member State experts, explored the institutional and legal framework as well as the operational procedures in place in order to provide a neutral overview of the Hungarian asylum and reception system.



The expert teams conducted three days of field visits and interviews with key stakeholders at the different departments of OIN. The central offices in Budapest, all regional directorates distributed over the country as well as two courts in Budapest and Debrecen, UNHCR and representatives of NGOs were visited. The teams also conducted a desk review on the different provisions in national law, policies, and procedures that shape the Hungarian asylum and reception system.



Expert team on the 'Asylum determination process' in the Regional Directorate of Budapest and Pest Country



Expert team on 'Reception' in Debrecen

The consultations allowed the experts to gain an in-depth insight into the current procedures and practices applied in the Hungarian asylum and reception system.



Closing meeting at the Office of Immigration and Nationality

The mapping report will be delivered to the Hungarian authorities in early April.

EASO expressed its sincere gratitude to the Hungarian authorities for their excellent cooperation and transparency shown, as well as to the many Member States' experts for contributing with their valuable expertise to the implementation of the mapping exercise.

Update on the EASO support to Cyprus

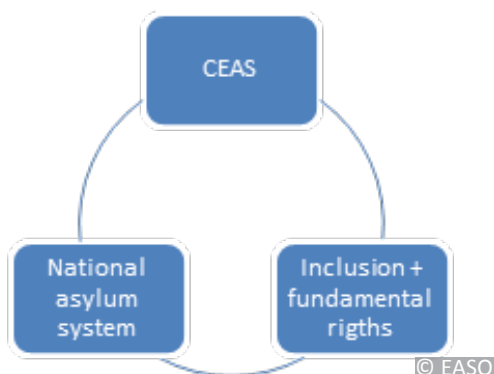
Upon request of the Cypriot authorities, EASO organised, from 12 to 13 March 2015, two tailor-made trainings on international protection in Cyprus. The sessions took place simultaneously for two groups of employees assigned from seven different services:

- Social Welfare Services
- Immigration Police
- Migration Department
- Labour Department
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Health
- Refugee Reviewing Authority



Group exercise on the core principles of CEAS

More than 50 Cypriot officers with a mixed background attended the training. It focused on the following three areas: the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), National asylum system and inclusion plus fundamental rights.



During the training, participants were able to recognise the importance of the EU context in their daily work and to understand how the Common European Asylum System is developing through legislation, case law and practical cooperation.

In addition, the path of an applicant for international protection from the moment of access to the procedure through registration, the Dublin procedure, reception, personal interview and the final decision was explained in theory and in practice based on the example of the Cypriot asylum system.

Update on EASO activities in joint processing

After the positive results of the Asylum Application Pilot in Poland, EASO launched the second joint processing exercise. The Asylum Determination Pilot (23 February – 13 March) took place in the Netherlands with the participation of Belgian and Swedish experts.



PST members and the IND colleagues in the closing event

Processing Support Team (PST) experts were deployed in Den Bosch at the premises of the Dutch IND. Their task was to perform in-merit personal interviews and based on the results, prepare the draft decisions.

The Belgian members of the Processing Support Team performed their tasks in Dutch, while the Swedish expert used the English language (including recording the minutes of the interview).

PST members had an orientation session held by IND representatives and an on-the-job training as observers in the asylum interviews. Due to the high qualification of the experts and the similarities of the workflow between the Netherlands and the PST members' sending countries, each expert started working independently on their assigned cases within the first days of the exercise.

The nationalities of the applicants whose cases were processed by the deployed experts came from various countries: Syria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Congo (BR), Ukraine and Nigeria.

One of the key findings was – similar to the first pilot in Poland (see February edition of the Newsletter) – that language is an obstacle that is overestimated and in practice it can be usually overcome.

The closing event of the pilot took place in Den Bosch on 13 March 2015. Based on the preliminary conclusions, the Asylum Determination Pilot project achieved its goal and proved that the asylum case-workers under specific circumstances are able to process asylum cases in other Member States.

The key significance of the exercise lies on the fact that it was successfully testing the highest added value target of joint processing – performing asylum interviews.

One of the lessons learned is that there are no universal solutions. In future operations many factors need to be assessed to assure the success of deployment. Choosing experts from MS with similar asylum structure and culture is considerably increasing the chances of success.

EASO will continue to carry out further joint processing pilot activities and publish a final report on the findings of the second generation of joint processing pilot projects in the second half of 2015.



Renger Visser, Asylum Director of the Dutch IND and Claus Folden, Head of EASO's Centre for Operational Support

Study visit to Nuremberg

In preparation of EASO's support framework to Italy, EASO invited members of the Italian National Asylum Commission and the Territorial Commissions for the recognition of the international protection to a study visit to the German Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in Nuremberg on 12-13 March 2015, where they have got acquainted with the CEAS challenges and shared best practices in addressing the new EU Acquis.

On 12 March 2015, a visual presentation of the procedure for international protection was made, followed by practical examples of distribution of cases, as part of the EASY system.

The Italian delegation showed an interest in learning from the current German practice on quality rules to be applied in the daily management of asylum cases, as well as the internal guidelines for case workers and decision officers.



On 13 March 2015, a practical visit was paid to BAMF Branch Office in Zindorf, where the daily workflow of the procedure of international protection was presented. Best practices were shared on how the interviews are performed.



Both institutions (BAMF and NAC) mentioned the cooperation with EASO and the importance of further strengthening it. The study visit has proven an in-depth analysis of the daily workflow in both institutions and lots of food for thought for the Italian NAC in addressing new methods while implementing the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).



EASO Training Curriculum

EASO Training for police officers in Melilla and Ceuta



Head of EASO's Centre for Training Quality and Expertise, Representative of Spanish Asylum Office and Head of Police in Melilla (on the border with Morocco)

On 9 and 11 March, EASO was involved in a training session organized in Melilla and Ceuta for police officers in charge of handling the interviews of applicants for international protection. The training sessions were organized in view of the inauguration, on 17 March, by the Spanish Minister of Interior of the new border offices for international protection in Ceuta and in Melilla.

Ceuta and Melilla are two autonomous Spanish cities located in North African territory (border with Morocco) well known for their difficult situation on migratory routes for access towards the EU territory. These two cities are the unique borders of the EU in the African territory.

Since September 2014 Spain has decided to reinforce with a special regime the system of international protection by the establishment, in Ceuta and Melilla, of border offices where applications for international protection can be lodged. After the application is lodged, an interview of the applicant is performed by the police officers in charge for the border. The decision on international protection, based on the interview, has to be made in Madrid within 4 days after the interview by the Office for Asylum and Refugees of the Ministry of Interior.

Ultimately, Spain is receiving (particularly in Melilla) an increasing number of applications for international protection, mainly from Syria (UNHCR figures: 3,098 in 2014 and already 1,353 in 2015, to compare with 2,445 and 320 Sub-Saharan respectively in 2014 and 2015).

EASO was asked to deliver, in a practical way, a training session on the interview techniques for international protection. The same training session was intended for two groups of policemen (about

25 each), both in Melilla and in Ceuta.

The same training session was also attended by a trainer from the Spanish Office for Asylum and Refugees of the Ministry of Interior. UNHCR was also attending the training sessions, with the possibilities to actively participate in the discussions.

The main tools used for this training were the EASO Training Curriculum handbooks for Interview Techniques and for Interviewing Vulnerable Persons. Furthermore, the EASO Practical Guide on the Personal Interview was also a useful reference tool.

The experience was very fruitful from both sides and could possibly lead to further developments.

Kick-off meeting on the Didactic Module

Between 10 and 13 March EASO organised a kick-off meeting of the content expert group developing a new EASO Training Module, namely the Module on Didactics. The Module on Didactics is one of three modules which will be developed in 2015. The need for a specific training module on didactics has been emphasised by the Training National Contact Points as well as trainers delivering train-the-trainer sessions at various occasions. The e-learning part of the module will focus on knowledge, issues and skills with learning outcomes inspired by the current training on didactics, while the face-to-face will be more connected to the particular EASO training module for which a train-the-trainer session is organised. Various scenarios are considered and will be discussed during the meeting of the Training National Contact Points, which will be held in May.

The development of the new module is foreseen for 12 months, the next meeting of the content expert group being scheduled on 18, 19 and 20 May.

EASO Expert Meeting on the 'Identification of Victims of Trafficking of Human Beings who may be in need of International Protection'

On 6 and 7 May 2015, EASO will host an Expert Meeting on the 'Identification of Victims of Trafficking of Human Beings who may be in need of International Protection'.

One of EASO's objectives for 2015 is supporting a better identification of vulnerable persons. It was also acknowledged during the first Expert meeting on Trafficking of Human Beings (THB) which EASO hosted in March 2014 that the issue of identification was one of the main challenges to be faced by asylum policy and case officers when entering in contact with a victim or potential victim of trafficking. Good practices and main pitfalls will be addressed. During the meeting, the structure and scope of future 'EASO activities on THB Platform' will be discussed, together with the establishment of the EASO Expert Network on Activities on THB (THB-EASOnet).

The meeting is mainly aimed at asylum officers and policy makers from EU Member States and associated countries, but it is open also to other relevant experts who may be interested, international organisations and representatives from civil society. It is foreseen that Ms Myria Vassiliadou, the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, will participate in the meeting. The registration is open and the deadline for registering is 17th April. The meeting will be held back to back with an Expert Meeting on 'Trafficking of Children' and on 'Family Tracing' (7 and 8 May) with a shared morning session focused on the 'identification of children victims of trafficking'.

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

JHA Press Officers and Communication Multipliers meeting

On 30th March a meeting of press officers and communication multipliers was held at EASO in Malta.

In order to be able to reach out to asylum officials in the Member States, EASO has set up a 'communication multipliers' network composed of representatives of the Member States. The function of this group is to ensure that all EASO press-related information (such as EASO press releases and newsletters) and EASO publications (such as the annual report on the situation of asylum in the EU and the Country of Origin Information (COI) reports) reach the intended end users (including Ministry officials, case workers and COI experts). The communication multipliers can also act as EASO ambassadors in Member States and inform their colleagues on EASO's work and activities, in particular during the EASO info day.



The meeting discussed EASO's communication plan for 2015, EASO's Info Day (which EASO will hold on 19 June in the Member States), EASO's corporate video and the use of videos in communicating important messages, cooperation in the distribution of EASO press material and publications, latest EASO products, enhancing stakeholders relationships, and preparing for interviews with press members.

CPH West Gymnasium (Denmark) visits EASO

On 13th of March, EASO welcomed a group of 20 students and teachers from CPH West Gymnasium (Denmark). The group had the opportunity to familiarise with EASO's mission, and the students showed a greater interest and engagement in a discussion about the state of asylum in the European Union.



EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

Open Calls		
Reference Number	Title	Closing Date
EASO/2015/CA/004	Document Management Officer (FG IV)	30 April 2015
EASO/2015/CA/003	Data Collection and Processing Officer (FG IV)	7 April 2015
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

EASO Research Programme - Ex ante publication

EASO has issued an ex ante publicity (<http://easo.europa.eu/finance/procurement/>) in regard to 2 low-value negotiated procedures for **1) a literature review of significant pull/push factors determining asylum-related migration and 2) a survey of methodologies used in the quantitative assessment of the phenomenon of asylum-related migration.**

These lots constitute the beginning of an outsourced EASO Research Programme which has the eventual aim of constructing an empirical model of asylum-seeking, identifying most relevant push and pull factors for a limited number of “typical” flow types. It is foreseen that the programme will involve a large-scale interview-based consultation of beneficiaries of asylum in the EU as well as failed asylum seekers to identify the key factors that influenced their decision to migrate and seek asylum in the EU, as well as their choice of destination country. Organisations with the relevant expertise in asylum-related migration are encouraged to express their interest in participating in one or more of the lots via the procedure described on the relevant page of the EASO website.

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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