



European Asylum Support Office

Newsletter — May 2013

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May edition of the EASO newsletter. In this edition we will focus on a number of EASO training initiatives and the EASO consultation processes.

As to EASO training, we introduce the Evidence assessment module. Evidence assessment can be defined as the primary method for establishing the facts of an international protection claim through the process of examining and comparing available pieces of evidence. We also look into the joint EASO-FRONTEX pilot training session on nationality establishment and the EASO training national contact point meeting.

In this edition, we also have extensive coverage on the EASO consultation process. EASO engages with civil society to ensure that its products take into consideration all the relevant expertise available. In this context I invite you to look into pages 5 and 6. Happy reading!

Jean-Pierre Schembri
Newsletter Editor
EASO Spokesperson

IN THE NEWS: 11th meeting of the EASO Management Board

On Monday 3 June, the 11th EASO Management Board meeting took place at EASO's premises in Malta. The EASO Management Board is made up of representatives of EU Member States, the European Commission and UNHCR. The EU border agency, Frontex was also represented at the meeting. Among other things, the agenda of the 11th meeting, included a discussion on the draft Annual Report on the situation of asylum in the EU (which will be published at the end of June) and EASO's Annual Activity Report. EASO's general progress and its long-term strategies were also discussed, as well as the general situation of asylum in the European Union.

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In the News: EASO participates in EMN steering meeting

On 16 May EASO participated in the 11th steering board of the European Migration Network (EMN). The meeting was held in Brussels.

EASO has been developing a close relationship with EMN, in particular on issues that touch upon asylum and reception in order to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of work.

In the News: EASO participates in EUROMED Migration III EU ENPI South peer to peer meeting

On 28/29 May, EASO participated in the EUROMED Migration III EU ENPI South peer to peer meeting. The meeting was held in Budapest.

During the meeting, EASO presented its concept of practical cooperation among Member States and how lessons learned from the European model of cooperation could inspire regional cooperation among the southern ENPI countries.

Even though the external dimension is not one of the priorities in this year's EASO work programme, EASO has nevertheless offered its availability to provide training and expertise within the framework of the EU mobility partnership with Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan

Joint EASO-FRONTEX training session on nationality establishment held in Greece

As part of the EASO Operating Plan to Greece Phase II, a joint EASO-FRONTEX pilot training session on nationality establishment was organised in Athens on 29-30 April 2013, for the Greek staff of the Asylum Service and of the First Reception Service. Experts from SI and DE were engaged in the training, together with EASO and FRONTEX training and operational expertise.

23 persons were trained in this pilot training course, on the basis of the training content of FRONTEX (screening interview) and training content of EASO (Evidence Assessment and Interview Techniques).



The training covered the following topics: nationality and identity establishment in the context of refugee status determination; evidence assessment in the asylum context; practical arrangements for the interview; detection and interviewing of vulnerable persons, as well as other country specific information.

The training session received positive appraisal from the participants. The added-value and the complementarity of a training associating both EASO and FRONTEX was

highly valued and underlined in many responses.

This project builds up on the EASO-FRONTEX Working Arrangement, signed on 26 September 2012, which provides a framework for developing closer ties and mutual support between the two agencies in the future. It is an example of an operational joint project associating both EASO and FRONTEX.



EASO activities in Greece will continue with more training sessions in Athens and Thessaloniki (where the Regional Asylum Service will be established).

With a better understanding of the needs of the different target groups and of the mutual content of this pilot project, future trainings will be more focused and better structured.

A number of Member States have already expressed an interest in benefiting from such a joint training in Identity and Nationality establishment.

EASO Training National Contact Point Meeting

On 13 and 14 May, EASO held its Training National Contact Point meeting. The main aim of this meeting was to provide Member States with a comprehensive update on recent developments in EASO Training – including EASO progress in the implementation of its work in the area of training as envisaged in the EASO Work Programme 2013.

This meeting also facilitated sharing of good practices with regard to the implementation of EASO training modules on national level.



EASO presented and facilitated a discussion on the Training Cockpit. Its refined scope and objectives shall better reflect the specific needs of both EASO and Member States in measuring the implementation of EASO's training tools across the EU and to further support Member States in developing and implementing their national training plans using EASO training.

The development of a new EASO training tool, the training handbook, was also presented and discussed during this meeting. The aim of the training handbook is to serve as a reference tool for trainees having completed the on-line and face-to-face training sessions provided by EASO.



This handbook will accompany the asylum practitioner in the course of his/her work by providing the key elements of the theoretical knowledge, skills and competencies acquired during the course of each training module.

Moreover, a panel discussion with representatives from France, Germany and Belgium on translation of EASO training materials was held in order to share good practices in this key element of the implementation of EASO training modules on national level.

EASO Training

Overview of EASO training activities

EASO is now reaching the end of the first training semester 2013. The following training sessions on Interview Techniques, Evidence Assessment, Inclusion, Interviewing Children and Dublin Regulation modules have been concluded. By mid-June the last two training sessions (Drafting and Decision Making and Country of Origin Information) of this semester will be completed.

Altogether 101 participants from 19 EU MS's (DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK) attended these seven training sessions.

The next two train-the-trainer sessions, **International Refugee Law and Human Rights** and **Interviewing Vulnerable Persons** modules will start their on-line parts 9 September, with face to face session in Malta, 8-11 October.

You can register for both training sessions at training@easo.europa.eu. The registration deadline is 20 August 2013.

Getting to know EAC Modules – Evidence Assessment

Evidence assessment can be defined as the primary method for establishing the facts of an international protection claim through the process of examining and comparing available pieces of evidence.

As such, it constitutes an essential part of the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure. The overall aim of the module is to minimise the risk of similar cases not being treated equally due to a different approach to the assessment of evidence in different Member States.

Its purpose is also to provide caseworkers with the knowledge and skills that they need to assess evidence in a fair and consistent manner. The module covers theoretical aspects and relevant legislation from a very practical perspective; promotes the use of a structured approach to the assessment of evidence and provides participants with good practice examples. It also takes a step by step approach and establishes the difference between assessing the credibility of an applicant's testimony (evaluation of past and present facts) and conducting a risk assessment to establish whether he or she has a well-founded fear of return (evaluation of future risk).

EASO is an integral part of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), an independent centre of expertise on asylum that supports the implementation of the CEAS by enhancing practical cooperation among Member States. The key clients of EASO are the Member States and the EU institutions. However, the asylum field includes also other actors, a considerable number of civil society organisations, academics and members of Courts and Tribunals that make a significant contribution to the field, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, EASO engages with civil society to ensure that its products take into consideration all the relevant expertise available. Currently, there are 55 organisations registered in the EASO Consultative Forum, which including NGOs, IGOs, academic institutions, judicial associations and EU Agencies.

We have gradually increased our engagement with civil society over the past two years and since the beginning of this year only, over 30 Consultative Forum member organisations have or are currently involved in our work. Civil society plays a key role in the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and we want to learn from their experience and tap into their expertise. My vision of the relationship with civil society is that of an open two way dialogue based on exchange of information and pooling of knowledge on asylum with full respect of the roles and responsibilities that the respective parties have been established to fulfil. This year we have improved the consultation section on our website to facilitate access and ensure the broadest possible reach. We have started publishing an annual consultation calendar on our website, which we updated on a quarterly basis. Besides a number of specialised consultations, I have also sought feedback on the draft outline of the 2014 Work Programme and made an open request for input on contributions made by Civil Society Organisations to the implementation of the CEAS. I was encouraged by the availability and quality of the input received. I believe that all those organisations that can contribute and be involved in our work should be able to do so. At the end of the day, all parties involved in the CEAS are aiming at the same objective; that of ensuring a fair, efficient and effective common asylum system that provides adequate status to third-country nationals in need of international protection no matter in which Member State an asylum application is lodged. – Dr. Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director

EASO is interested in tapping into the wealth of expertise and experience of relevant organisations through a two-way dialogue and involvement of these organisations in EASO events. EASO is a firm believer in the cross fertilisation of ideas that such a process could yield. EASO opted for a lean and simple system of consultation mostly based on IT solutions as against heavy formal consultation structures that are less efficient, restrictive, time consuming and costly.

EASO training materials are developed by knowledgeable and experienced teams of Member State experts and thoroughly reviewed by EASO Reference Group, consisting of different organisations and also the civil society. The Reference Group consists of permanent representatives from UNHCR, ECRE, EC and IARLJ. Other organisations are invited to contribute based on their specific experience (as ACCORD for COI module, FRA for International Refugee Law and Human Rights module, etc.). It is foreseen that the ad-hoc participation of other specialised members of the EASO Reference Group will be further developed.

As the work of the EASO Content Group of MS experts is always closely followed by the Reference Group – both in the process of updating and development of training materials - the input of the Reference Group is of crucial importance and support for the Content Group in the development of well balanced, comprehensive and quality training materials. In many cases the comments and suggestions made by the Reference group are taken into account by the Content Group during the drafting processes. EASO's experiences in collaboration with the Reference Group are extremely positive and the added value of such collaboration is indisputable. " Adam Kittl, EASO

EASO is especially interested in content-related input. EASO has high expectations with regards to the expertise and experience that civil society can share with EASO. First experiences of consultation have been encouraging. The relationship with organisations that are genuinely willing to share their expertise with EASO have been very positive and mutually beneficial.

EASO is in the process of setting the framework for its support to second instance decision making bodies in line with the mandate provided by the Regulation. As part of the process, EASO has engaged in a constructive and meaningful consultation with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) and the Association of European Administrative Judges (AEAJ). Consultations have been carried out through the joint organisation of a first meeting in December, an open exchange of thoughts and experience and a very active participation in a series of expert meetings organised throughout 2013. The reflections and experience of the Associations as well as the commitment and interest of their individual members have substantially contributed to set the basis for EASO's activities in this area. Consultation has recently been extended to members of the academia and civil society organisations with experience in the development of case-law databases, who have been invited to an open discussion in June with the aim of gathering their views and exploring possible areas of cooperation." Marta Ballester Beltran, EASO

On matters related to process, EASO keeps close contact with the Consultative Forum Advisory Group composed of senior officials from the European Commission, UNHCR, ECRE, Odysseus Network and IARLJ. This group meets at least twice a year.

Civil society input received during the November 2012 Consultative Forum was used in changing the drafting methodology of the Annual Report, which was adopted by the Management Board in February 2013. Still in February 2013, civil society organisations (CSOs), via the Consultative Forum, were also asked by EASO to provide information on any work carried out by civil society in 2012 that was of importance to the CEAS. The relevant contributions have been incorporated in the present Report. In different sections of the 2012 Annual Report selected civil society contributions, such as projects, studies, etc. have been highlighted, and a section has been included with main conclusions of the 2012 Consultative Forum. In the 2013 Consultative Forum, participants will again have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Annual Report and make recommendations for improvement of the 2013 Report. In November 2012, selected civil society organisations have been invited to participate the multi-disciplinary "Conference on Afghanistan – Country of origin information and beyond", which allowed case workers and COI researchers from Member States asylum authorities, refugee law judges, representatives of international organisations (UN, UNHCR, IOM) and non-governmental organisations as well as academics to exchange points of view and learn from each other. Ward Lutin, EASO.

Areas of particular interest for consultation will include early warning and preparedness, training, quality processes, unaccompanied minors, family tracing, gender, vulnerable groups, resettlement, relocation and provision of emergency support to Member States subject to particular pressure. During this year, we will be investing more on IT solutions for consultation and we will be strengthening our consultation channels with civil society. We are confident that more relevant civil society organisations will be available to share their expertise with EASO and thus contribute to the implementation of the CEAS.

You can contact the EASO Consultative Forum Coordination Point (CFCP) on 0035622487531/599 or by email on consultative-forum@easo.europa.eu

EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

Reference Number	Title	Closing date
EASO/2013/SNE/002	Counter-Trafficking Officer	17 June 2013
EASO/2013/SNE/003	Country of Origin Information (COI) Expert (SNE)	24 June 2013
EASO/2013/TA/004	Finance and Budget Team Leader (AD 7)	24 June 2013
EASO/2012/SNE/004	Reception Officer (SNE)	20 June 2013
EASO/2013/SNE/005	Gender and Vulnerable Groups Expert (SNE)	26 June 2013
EASO/2013/CA/005	Finance and Budget Assistant	26 June 2013

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EASO newsletter

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EASO Consultation Calendar

The updated 2013 EASO consultation calendar is now available on www.easo.europa.eu

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