



European Asylum Support Office - Newsletter - July / August 2012

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the July/August edition of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) newsletter. In July EASO published three important reports namely a Country of Origin Information (COI) report on Afghanistan, the COI report methodology, and the 2011 Annual Report on the situation of asylum in the EU and the activities of EASO.

In this edition we will look into what EASO is doing in view of the quickly evolving situation in Syria.

As to EASO training, this month we are introducing the third module within the EAC learning Path, namely the module on *Inclusion* which provides training on the interpretation and use of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the EU Qualification Directive.

Jean-Pierre Schembri
Newsletter Editor
EASO Spokesperson

In the news: 2011 report on the state of asylum in the EU and on the activities of EASO

EASO published its '*2011 Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union and on the Activities of the European Asylum Support Office*'. The report provides a comprehensive description of the situation of asylum in the EU in 2011, with a focus on areas in which EASO was involved in during 2011. The report covers the first year of EASO operation and looks into various topics such as: international developments, effects on member States and EASO tools and responses; developments related to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS); and EASO's network of institutional partners and stakeholders.

It also includes a number of annexes including relevant statistics and the EASO financial report for 2011.

More information can be obtained by clicking on:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/european-asylum-support-office/index_en.htm

In the news: EASO publishes its first country of origin information report

On 10 May 2012, EASO published its first Country of Origin Information (COI) Report entitled '*Afghanistan: Taliban Strategies - Recruitment*'. COI refers to information on countries from which asylum seekers originate. The availability of and the expertise on COI is one of the cornerstones of decision-making in the asylum process and as such can enhance harmonisation.

The continuous support in the field of COI is an important tool in achieving a Common European Asylum System. The purpose of this report is to provide information supporting COI Experts, Decision and Policy Makers active in the Refugee Status Determination Procedures. EASO also published a report on *COI Report Methodology*. The COI Report Methodology sets standards and guidelines for writing COI reports.

EASO chose Afghanistan for its first COI report in view of its history of conflicts, the large number of afghan asylum seekers in the EU, and the differences in the first instance negative decision rates for Afghan asylum seekers in the EU Member States.

The two main conclusions of the report are:

- In general, recruitment is organised locally, by local actors, such as the village military commander or local mullah.
- The use of direct force or coercion for recruitment by Taliban commanders or fighters is exceptional

Other important findings concern the recruitment of different ethnicities and use of minors as fighters, helpers or even suicide attackers.

More information can be obtained by clicking on:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/european-asylum-support-office/index_en.htm

Watch the press conference on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/player/streaming.cfm?type=ebplus&sid=20738>

EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

- Administrative Assistant (Temporary Agent, AST1) - (Closing Date 13 August)
- Logistics and Facility Officer (Contract Agent, FGIV) - (Closing Date 13 August)
- Driver/Mail Clerk (Contract Agent, FGI) - (Closing Date 13 August)
- Human Resources Assistant (Contract Agent, FGIII) - (Closing Date 13 August)

More information can be obtained by clicking on:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/european-asylum-support-office/index_en.htm

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Perspectives on Syria - EASO Practical Cooperation Workshop, 28 & 29 June 2012

In response to the emerging situation in Syria and its effects on EU Member States, and following a general request made during the hand-over EURASIL plenary held in March, EASO organised a workshop on Syria, in cooperation with Landinfo (Norway), on 28/29 June in Valletta, Malta.

The inaugural EASO Practical Cooperation Workshop on Syria spanned over one day and a half, and, for the first time, this meeting brought together Country of Origin Information (COI) specialists and policy practitioners on Syria. The workshop focused on a number of themes. This article attempts to better inform the reader about the situation in Syria by bringing together key elements discussed at the workshop together with data from EASO's early warning and preparedness system. The humanitarian situation in Syria is constantly deteriorating and no immediate end to the escalating violence is yet in sight. Important increases in flows towards the EU could be expected, in particular, if large influx of refugees in Turkey are relocated close of the EU external borders. This increased flow is likely to affect mostly the Greek-Turkish borders and possibly also Cyprus. An overview of the security situation shows a general breakdown of the security situation due to an escalation of repression, militarisation, army defection, organisation of the armed opposition, bombing and massacres. All elements combined seem to indicate that the security situation has reached a threshold of indiscriminate violence and "internal armed conflict".



Photo: Participants at the EASO Practical Cooperation workshop on Syria

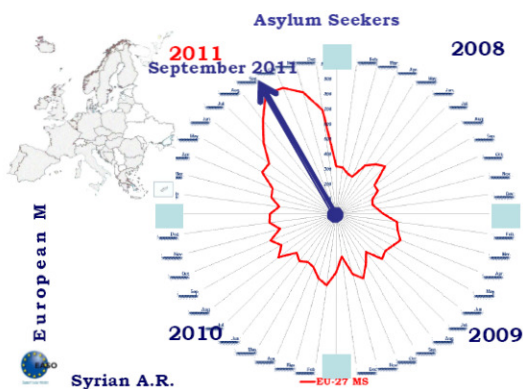


Figure 1

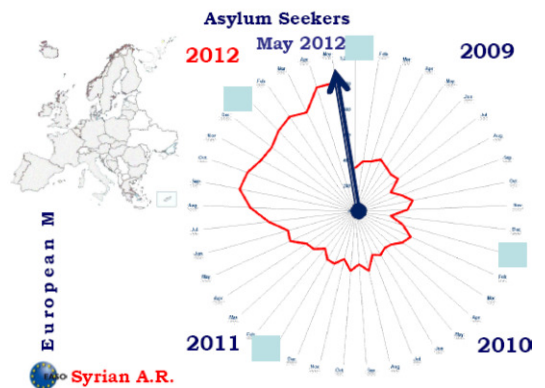


Figure 2

UNHCR state that 95,000 Syrian refugees are registered with them. Humanitarian needs are on the increase. Borders of neighbouring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq) remain open. The Turkish state responded to Syrian arrivals by adopting a temporary protection regime: declaring an open border policy, admitting of arrivals into Turkish territory, providing physical and legal protection and providing guarantees against non-refoulement.

Syrian asylum seekers in the EU numbered 935 as at September 2011 (Figure 1) whereas the total of asylum applications in May 2012 was 1025 (Figure 2). The overall negative decision rate in the EU (Figure 3) in 2011 was 55% compared to 60% in 2010 and 85% in 2009. In all EU Member States, there were 8,160 pending cases as at December 2011. It is worth noting that whilst the influx increased in September 2011, the negative decision rate decreased.

Kurds represent the majority of asylum claimants, in most Member States but there are some noticeable exceptions. Profile of Kurdish applicants varies. Claims from Syrian Kurds are currently assessed in a similar way as any other Syrian claims. Applicants are more likely to claim to be Ajnabi. Most stateless Kurds are Yazidis living on both side of the Syria-Turkey border. "**Sur place**" claims represents a relevant share of the Syrian caseload. Participation to a demonstration in front of an embassy or opening a blog is broadly understood as an activity which can qualify for a refugee status. In assessing refugee *sur place* claims, it was generally stated that Member states do not differentiate between ethnicities or religious affiliation as the retaliation capacity of the regime or of its proxies seems to extend to all social, ethnic and religious groups in Syria. Due to the current volatile situation in Syria and according to available information, the criteria for **Internal Flight Alternative** are not fulfilled and therefore IFA is not applicable at this moment. According to the available information, it is extremely difficult for Syrians to relocate in an area that is practically, safely, and legally accessible to the individual.

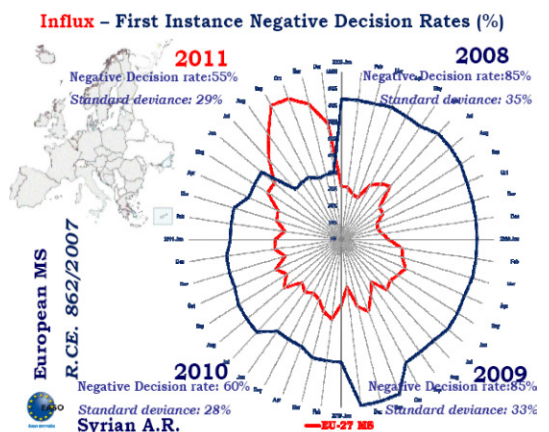


Figure 3

Recent Developments in EASO Training

By the time you will be reading this edition of EASO's newsletter all the regular EASO training activities for this semester would have been concluded. The last training session on *Inclusion and Interviewing Children* was concluded with the face to face sessions in Malta during the second week of June.

During the month of July EASO organised a specific training session on Interviewing Children within the framework of EASO's work on unaccompanied minors. During this period EASO also organised an extra training session on *Interviewing Techniques* in Athens (see picture).



Apart from above mentioned training sessions, since May 2012, EASO has been updating the existing EAC module on *Interviewing Techniques* to increase its consistency with two other, recently developed, EAC modules on *Interviewing Children* and *Interviewing Vulnerable Persons*.

The new version of the module should be ready by the end of the year. Right after the summer, EASO will also launch the development of a new **module on the Common European Asylum System**, which will be based on the existing EAC module *Introduction to EU Asylum Law and Policy* (introduced to you in our May newsletter).

Furthermore, EASO will focus on preparing its second training semester which will start in September. The first EAC training sessions that will start immediately after the summer period are ***Drafting and Decision Making*** and ***Interviewing Vulnerable Persons***.

You can now register for both training sessions. We encourage you to do so, as soon as possible as there are only a few places available.

Get to know EAC Learning path and EAC Modules - Inclusion

The third module within the EAC learning path is the module on *Inclusion* which provides training on the interpretation and use of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the EU Qualification Directive.

This module specifically includes the definition of and the qualification criteria for granting refugee status and subsidiary protection; definitions of persecution according to UNHCR's Handbook and the EU Qualification Directive; the nexus between persecution (well-founded fear) and Convention reasons (such as race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and particular social group); the principle of non-refoulement under Article 33 and other topics.

At the end of the training, participants would be able to understand the legal framework of the different protection regimes and would be able to apply these principles in their actual day to day work.

EASO in pictures

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On 18 July, EASO hosted the UNHCR-EASO Senior Management consultations meeting, with the participation of Dr Robert K. Visser, EASO's Executive Director and Mr Daniel Endres, Director of the UNHCR Bureau for Europe



On 23 July, an informal JHA Council was held in Lefkosia (Nicosia). The Council discussed the topics of immigration, asylum and cybercrime. During the meeting EASO made a presentation on asylum trends. Photo: Cyprus Presidency.



A first glimpse of the new EASO offices: works on the new EASO premises are nearing completion.



June 2012: Participants at the EASO training on interviewing children, Malta.



17 July 2012: EASO met the International Association of Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ) to explore modalities of cooperation for the development of training available to members of courts and tribunals in the EU.



10 July 2012: Dr Visser, EASO Executive Director addressing a press conference on the COI report Afghanistan. Watch the press conference on <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/player/streaming.cfm?type=ebplus&sid=20738>