



European Asylum Support Office

Newsletter — October 2012

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the October edition of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) newsletter.

In this edition we look into various topics, including the publication of the 2013 EASO work programme which illustrates EASO's activities for next year. We also look into the EASO-FRONTEX working arrangement which was signed on 26 September. We also update you on the outcome of the expert meetings on unaccompanied minors and age assessment which were held on 9/10 October and inform you on the upcoming EASO conference on Afghanistan. As to EASO training, this month we are introducing the Country of Origin Information module. This module provides participants with an adequate understanding of the importance of Country of Origin Information in the asylum determination process.

Jean-Pierre Schembri
Newsletter Editor
EASO Spokesperson

IN THE NEWS: MEP Triantaphyllides visits EASO to discuss intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum

On 25 September, EASO Executive Director, met with Mr Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Member of the European Parliament, at the headquarters of the European Asylum Support Office in Malta, to discuss the European Parliament resolution on enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum.

Mr Triantaphyllides, who was the European Parliament's rapporteur on the resolution explained the content on his report, which was adopted by the European Parliament at its Plenary meeting in September. Mr Triantaphyllides said that "the European Asylum Support Office has tremendous potential in promoting closer practical cooperation among Member States. All actions undertaken by EASO depend on Member States' goodwill as they are the ones who provide the biggest share of personnel and resources. It is for this reason that we suggest introducing structural safeguards within EASO's mandate so as to ensure that practical cooperation and technical assistance are provided where necessary, regardless of Member States' willingness."

Dr Visser, held that "EASO is fully committed to promote closer cooperation among Member States and coordinate and support common action to assist countries which are subject to particular pressures. As regards to EASO's participation in any future mechanisms/policy tool related to relocation, we will remain at the disposal on the European Commission, Parliament, Council and Member States and are willing to get involved in line with EASO's founding regulation".

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EASO Consultative Forum Plenary Session on 25/26 November 2012. See more on page 6.

IN THE NEWS: EASO publishes its 2013 working programme

EASO has recently published its Work Programme for 2013. During its third year of operations, EASO plans to further consolidate its operations. In 2013 EASO shall **provide operational emergency support to the asylum systems in Greece and other Member States in need**. Emergency Support in case of particular pressure in a Member State will be given on the request of a Member State, after an assessment of the situation by EASO. Hereto, experts of EU Member States who are part of the so-called *Asylum Intervention Pool* could be deployed in the EU Member State under particular pressure. EASO will develop an EU tailor-made '**Early warning and Preparedness System**' on asylum, providing asylum trend analysis and risk scenarios in accordance with the EASO Regulation, as well as in view of the upcoming implementation of the Article 31 of the Dublin Regulation. Using the Early warning and Preparedness System, EASO provides forecasts of potential flows from third countries. Moreover, constant data collection on asylum from Member States allows for the assessment of the capacity of Member States to cope with the influx of asylum seekers they are receiving, enables the early detection of gaps and needs; thus allowing efficient and timely action. Moreover, EASO shall **further develop high quality common asylum training across the EU**. EASO training activities will be carried out within the framework of EASO's Training Strategy developed in 2012. The two main instruments of EASO training are: the development and the dissemination of a common European learning material; and the organisation of common European training sessions for EASO trainers as well as the organisation of trainings for the purposes of special support and emergency support programmes.

EASO will also **provide a common level of Country of Origin Information (COI) across the EU and issue regular COI reports**. The availability of and the expertise on Country of Origin Information is one of the cornerstones of decision-making in asylum cases and as such can enhance harmonisation. In addition, during 2013 EASO will **further consolidate its organisation**. In this context, EASO will recruit new staff members, essentially consisting of experts in the field of asylum. As to relocation, EASO will **support any further development of relocation activities among Member States** building upon experiences from the evaluation of EUREMA and other bi-lateral relocation activities from Malta. The EASO 2013 Working Programme can be accessed via the EASO website: www.easo.europa.eu

EASO and FRONTEX sign working arrangement

On 26 September 2012 Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) signed a Working Arrangement at Frontex's Warsaw HQ. The Working Arrangement formalises existing cooperation between the two Agencies and will provide a framework for developing closer ties and mutual support in future.

A number of EU policy documents, including the Stockholm Programme and a range of Council Conclusions and Commission Communications stress the importance of genuine and practical solidarity towards Member States facing particular pressures on their asylum and border management systems and underline the need for ever closer cooperation between the two Agencies. In particular, the Stockholm Programme stresses that it is essential that the activities of Frontex and EASO are coordinated when it comes to the reception of migrants at the EU's external borders and to the identification of those in need of international protection. According to the Working Arrangement, this coordination will be articulated in the following areas:

- the Agencies' commitment to cooperate and coordinate their assessments and operational responses when assisting Member States; in particular in view of deployment of European Border Guard Teams and/or Asylum Support Teams;
- the Agencies cooperate to develop methods to better identify those in need of international protection in the context of mixed migration flows;
- the exchange of information on the profiles and compositions of expert pools as well as sharing best practices on the functioning of those pools;
- exploring the possibilities for establishing common or mixed teams of border management and asylum experts;
- exchanging best practices and methodologies on data collection and exchange, as well as on information-gathering and the production and sharing of statistics and analyses;
- engagement in establishing and implementing specific mechanisms for joint Third Country Monitoring;

- holding consultations on the development of training materials, developing training strategies and plans and exploring the possibilities for mutual participation in training activities.



The two Agencies have already cooperated on an ad hoc basis across a wide range of activities encompassing Frontex and EASO operations, risk analysis, and training. Frontex regularly participates as an observer in EASO's Management Board and EASO is mandated in the revised Frontex regulation to be a permanent member of the Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights. "This arrangement is a milestone for Frontex," said Frontex Executive Director Ilkka Laitinen. "This is an important document setting out a framework for future cooperation. The convergence between Frontex and EASO's missions makes them fully complementary when supporting the EU Member States from an operational and capacity-building perspective. I very much look forward to sharing our expertise and experience to further improve the raising and harmonising of European standards in these crucial areas," he added.

Dr Visser, held that "EASO and Frontex are sister EU Agencies in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. Bilateral Cooperation between the two Agencies is already ongoing, at different levels, on a regular basis. This Working Arrangement enables for a more structured cooperation, in the field of international protection in the context of mixed migration flows. It structures and enhances this cooperation, enabling further joint activities both in the strategic and the operational field. This agreement should be seen as the beginning of a long-term partnership between the two agencies."

EASO Training

Recent Developments in EASO Training

As highlighted in the EASO Training Plan for 2012, EASO training courses have now picked up after the summer vacation. The face to face sessions on the EAC modules **Drafting and Decision Making** as well as **Interviewing Vulnerable Persons** were successfully organised in Malta early during this month. Participants came from various EU administrations, including the Netherlands, Greece, Austria, France and Estonia. The EAC modules on the Asylum Procedure Directive and the module on the Dublin Regulation are now scheduled to start with the on-line sessions during this month. EASO is fully committed to use the versions of the newly updated EAC modules, starting this year with Drafting and Decision Making as well as the Dublin Regulation. Both modules are used for the first time in their new version in the abovementioned train the trainer sessions in Malta.

The last train the trainer sessions for this year, will be **Interview Techniques** and **Country of Origin Information (COI)**. For both modules the online course will start on 5 November and thereby conclude the 2012 year's training activities. The train the trainer sessions on Interview Techniques and COI are still open for registration. If you are interested, send your registration by e-mail to eac-training@asylum-curriculum.eu by 22 November.

EASO will be also be organising its annual **Didactic Seminar** (23-24 October) and **Training NCP Meeting** (25-26 October) both taking place in Malta. All invitations have been sent out and invited participants are encouraged to register on the EASO website for registrations.

Get to know EAC Learning path and EAC Modules – Country of Origin Information

The main aim of this module - is to provide participants with an adequate understanding of the importance of Country of Origin Information (COI) in the asylum determination process.

This module will provide case officers and decision makers with practical experience on how to work with COI and how to assess the sources of information. Case officers will learn to conduct research related to political, social, cultural, economic, humanitarian and human rights situation in the applicant's country of origin. In this regard, knowing how to research and assess COI is a valuable instrument which will assist case officers in assessing credibility and objective fear of persecution and/or serious harm and therefore whether a claim for international protection is well founded. This training module will also assist participants in learning how to assess quality standards, including issues such as transparency, objectivity and credibility of sources when using COI research. COI and its relation to standards of proof in both first and subsequent asylum procedures will be also highlighted during this training module. This self-study online comprise of case studies, exercises, self-assessment tests and written assignments, hence ensures a practical approach. This approach combined with the face-to-face session, allows participants to delve deeply into the topics by using discussions and group exercises. The COI module will surely prove to be a basic tool, for both newly recruited asylum determination officer as well as more experienced officers, allowing participants to get a practical approach to the use of COI. This train the trainer session is still open for registration.

Expert Meetings on Unaccompanied Minors (9/10 October) – *final session to be held on 13 November.*

On 9 and 10 October, EASO held the 4th and 5th, form a series of 6, expert meetings on unaccompanied minors and age assessment. The meeting held on 9 October focused on different legal aspects, including the role of courts and tribunals in age determination; the judicial implementation of the best interests of the child principle; evidence assessment; and the application of the benefit of the doubt in the age determination procedure. Participants further discussed good practices in the provision and content of guardianship.

The meeting on 10 October was organised in eight workshops, during which participants shared information and exchanged expertise on different aspects of age assessment. The topics included: the legal consequences of assessed age; age assessment within the Dublin procedure; child-focused procedures; transition status; accommodation of age-disputed cases; gender and culture sensitivity; age assessment and detention; and the dilemma of providing protection to children who claim to be adults.

EASO is grateful for the support and valuable contribution of Member States and a number of committed partners including FRA, UNHCR, Save the Children, France Terre d'Asile and The German Association for Unaccompanied Minors (BUMF) to these meetings; which were organised in the framework of the Commission Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors.

This series of meetings will be concluded with the organisation of a final session in Malta on 13 November 2012. The final session will be an opportunity for Member States and other experts to come together and reflect upon the discussions held on the issue with a view to defining the scope and content of a handbook on age assessment that EASO is planning to release in 2013.

EASO Conference on Afghanistan – 8 & 9 November 2012

Afghans continue to constitute one of the most significant caseloads of asylum seekers in the European Union, and consequently have a considerable impact on the asylum procedures in many Member States. This is widely reflected in the focus on Afghanistan in the production and use of COI in all its aspects. But the impact of the Afghan caseload goes far beyond the COI scope; it also touches upon policies and practice such as for example; application of the Qualifications Directive Art. 15 and Internal Flight Alternative, Unaccompanied Minors, use of statistical data in monitoring flows and the interaction between Member States and other stakeholders in handling the cases.

EASO published its first COI report on Afghanistan and the COI methodology in 2012 and is currently in the process of drafting its second report on the same country. Keeping the focus and momentum on dealing with Afghanistan, we would like to inform you that **EASO is organising a conference on Afghanistan on 8 and 9 November 2012. Besides Member States experts, the conference will attract members of courts and tribunals, academics and NGOs specialising on Afghanistan.**

The conference will feature presentations by key experts on Afghanistan, break out sessions on a wide range of topics as well as discussions on how to keep on developing methodologies and tools to refine the involvement of all those concerned by the Afghan caseload. Break out session topics include application of article 15 C of the Qualification Directive, Internal Flight Alternative, the use of EASO COI reports, and COI research on conflict zones.

Participation is by invitation only.
Registration on www.easomanagementboard.net
and is open until 29 October 2012.

EASO in Pictures



On 26 September 2012 Frontex and EASO signed a Working Arrangement. Above EASO's Executive Director and Frontex Executive Director Ilkka Laitinen.



On 25 September, MEP Kyriacos Triantaphyllides met with EASO's Executive Director to discuss enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum.



MEP Kyriacos Triantaphyllides with Dr Visser addressing a joint press conference following their meeting on enhanced intra-EU solidarity in the field of asylum.



Participants at the train the trainer session on *Interviewing Vulnerable Persons and Drafting and Decision Making*, Malta, October 2012.



Participants at the EASO expert meeting and workshops on unaccompanied minors and age assessment, 9-10 October 2012, Malta.



On 26 September, EASO's Executive Director participated as a panelist at a public debate, entitled 'Burden Sharing in Asylum', organized by the European Parliament Office in Malta. Other panelists included MEP Busuttill and MEP Triantaphyllides. Picture: European Parliament Office. Malta.

EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

- ICT Officer (Contract Agent, FG IV) (Closing Date : 31 October)
- Clerical Support Staff (Contract Agent, FG I) (Closing Date : 31 October)
- Senior Finance Assistant (Temporary Agent, AST 3) (Closing Date : 19 October)
- Seconded National Expert in the field of Trends and Analysis (Closing date: 5 November 2012).

More information can be obtained by clicking on: www.easo.europa.eu and click on working with EASO

EASO Consultative Forum Plenary - 25 & 26 November 2012

EASO maintains a close dialogue with relevant civil society organisations and competent bodies operating in the field of asylum. IGOs, NGOs, academics and members of tribunals and courts are invited to become part of the EASO Consultative Forum Register (ECFR). EASO will be holding the second plenary session of its Consultative Forum on **25 and 26 November 2012 in Valletta, Malta**. Besides four breakout sessions dealing with various areas of EASO's work, EASO will present its first Consultative Forum Operational Plan. Places are limited. Only Member States and civil society organisations registered in the ECFR can be considered for participation. To become part of the ECFR, please visit: www.easo.europa.eu and click on 'about us'.

EASO Meeting on Quality – 8 & 9 November 2012

In line with its working programmes for 2012 and 2013, EASO will be undertaking an assessment of the implementation of the common EU standards in the field of asylum. In this context, a meeting on 'Quality', will be held on 8-9 November in Valletta, Malta. The meeting will provide an opportunity for EASO to share its vision and strategy regarding quality in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and for Member States to share their experience, expertise and expectations. Member States are invited to play a prominent role in developing EASO's quality mapping tools and methodology with the objective of establishing the current state of affairs, identifying good practices in ensuring high standards of quality in the asylum systems of Member States and in the CEAS and providing relevant support.

Learn more about EASO: please visit www.easo.europa.eu

EASO newsletter

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