

## 7th EASO Consultative Forum

### Concept Paper for the Working Groups on a revised format and structure for the Consultative Forum under the EUAA

The **aim of the Working Groups** is to exchange information and ideas on a possible revised format and structure of the Consultative Forum (CF) under the EUAA. The proposal for the EUAA Regulation foresees several changes to the CF, including:

- **Broadened role:** Next to being *a platform for the exchange of information and sharing of knowledge*, the CF is to *assist/advise<sup>1</sup>* the Executive Director (ED) and the Management Board (MB) in matters related to asylum in accordance with specific needs in areas identified as a priority for the Agency
- **Composition:** The proposal stipulates that *“On a proposal by the Executive Director, the Management Board shall decide on the composition of the Consultative Forum, including thematic or geographic-focused consultation groups, and the modalities of transmission of information to the Consultative Forum”*
- **Type of Activities:** Explicit reference is made to *“thematic and geographic-based consultation meetings”*

Beyond such changes, the proposed text for the new Regulation leaves the exact composition and working methods of the Forum undefined.

With a view of collecting concrete suggestions on what the CF could look like under the EUAA, participants will be invited to discuss three main themes and questions in rounds of approximately 35 minutes each. The topics and questions are as set out below.

#### Round 1: Objectives and Desired outcomes of the CF under the EUAA

During Round 1 of the Working Groups, participants will be asked to reflect on:

- *What are the specific objectives and desired outcomes for the Forum, both for EASO as well as CSOs?*

#### Background

The proposal for the EUAA Regulation defines the CF as a mechanism for the exchange of information and sharing of knowledge, created to: i) establish ‘close’ dialogue between the Agency and civil society, and; ii) to assist/advise the ED and MB in matters related to asylum. The objectives for the Forum are - similar to the current EASO Regulation - broadly formulated and open to interpretation.

With a view of maximising the effectiveness and impact of the CF, participants are encouraged to discuss and further clarify what, in their opinion, the specific objectives and desired outcomes for the Forum should be, both from the perspective of civil society as well as EASO.

#### Round 2: Composition of the Consultative Forum under the EUAA

During Round 2 of the Working Groups, participants will be asked to reflect on the following:

- *How should the CF be composed?*

<sup>1</sup> The Commission’s proposal refers to “assist”, whilst the EP amendments suggest to replace “assist” with “advise”.



- *Should the Registry remain open to all “relevant bodies and organisations operating in the field of asylum”? Or, should the Forum be composed of a closed group of e.g. up to 15 organisations?*
- *How should the Forum be organised and chaired?*

### Background

The proposed text for the EUAA stipulates, similar to the current EASO Regulation, that the CF is open to “relevant CSO’s and relevant competent bodies operating in the field of asylum”. EASO’s practice so far has been to allow any relevant organisation active in the field of asylum to join the CF Registry. The language in the proposal does not, however, prohibit closing the group to an elected few. Participants are therefore encouraged to discuss membership to the CF: Is broad membership preferred or a closed group? What would be the advantages of both?

Concerning organisational support structures, whereas the current EASO Regulation stipulates that the CF is chaired by the ED, the proposal does not specify this. Participants are therefore encouraged to discuss how the Forum should be organised and chaired.

### Round 3: Activities

During Round 3 of the Working Groups, participants will be asked to reflect on the following questions:

- *Which type of activities should the Forum implement and in what quantity?*
- *Which activities do we focus on next year?*

### Background

The proposed text for the EUAA makes explicit reference to “thematic or geographic consultation groups”.

To date, the main methods for cooperation with civil society have included various different types of activities, including:

- Consultative Forum Meetings (both annual plenary meetings as well as since 2016 regional thematic meetings);
- Electronic consultations on key EASO documents;
- The direct involvement of civil society in EASO’s activities (at project level).

Whilst the proposed text for the EUAA does not alter the types of activities, the explicit reference to thematic or geographic consultation groups places more emphasis on the organisation of smaller scale regional/thematic meetings.

Participants are encouraged to review the package of activities, exploring whether similar activities should be maintained or whether the package of activities needs to be extended. In particular, participants are asked to put forward concrete suggestions for activities to be implemented next year.