



European Asylum Support Office

EASO Annual General Report 2019

June 2020





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June 2020

SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION

This annual general report describes EASO's activities in 2019 and is prepared in accordance with Article 29(1)(c) of Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office.

This report was adopted by the EASO Management Board on 9 June 2020, and sent to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, the Internal Audit Service and the Court of Auditors.

The annual general report is a public document and is translated into all the official languages of the EU.

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List of abbreviations

AIP	Asylum Intervention Pool
AST	asylum support team
CAWG	Certification and Accreditation Working Group
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CEPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
COI	country of origin information
CSO	civil society organisation
DGMM	Directorate-General of Migration Management (Turkey)
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EMN	European Migration Network
EPRA	European Platform of Reception Agencies
EPS	Early Warning and Preparedness System
EU	European Union
EU+	EU Member States and associate countries
EUAA	EU Agency for Asylum
eu-LISA	European Agency for the Operational Management of Large- Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
Eurojust	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GAS	Greek Asylum Service
IDS	Information and Documentation System
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JHA	justice and home affairs
MedCOI	medical country of origin information
NCP	national contact point
PSP	private sponsorship programmes
RIS	Reception and Identification Service
SOP	standard operating procedure
SSP	special support plan
UAM	unaccompanied minors
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Foreword



Nina Gregori
EASO Executive Director

When I took on the position of Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on 16 June 2019, I was convinced that building on principles of good governance, EASO had the potential to evolve, whilst moving forward in the implementation of its ambitious work programme. In line with this vision, based on the priorities identified for EASO, I proposed a new organisational structure for EASO, which was subsequently endorsed by the EASO Management Board on 26 November 2019.

This new structure, which took effect on 1 January 2020, mirrors the three priority areas for EASO's future development: the strengthening of EASO's operational role; intensifying its training and professional development for asylum experts; and proving EASO's role as a true centre of knowledge and expertise on asylum. The new structure is modelled on a needs-based approach to planning, including human and financial resources required to reinforce the internal governance of EASO, such as corporate planning, internal control and *ex post* control, audits, legal affairs, and quality, amongst others.

This year marks the 10th year anniversary since the adoption of EASO's founding regulation on 19 May 2010; a good a time as ever to look back on how far we have come as an agency in the fulfilment of our mandate. As a centre of expertise, EASO's mission is that of enhancing practical cooperation, stimulating information exchange, ensuring convergence in the assessment of protection needs in the Member States, and in providing operational and technical assistance to Member States subject to pressure on their asylum and reception systems.

EASO's activities in 2019 were designed and tailored to meet the needs on the ground – at the local, regional and national level, and to effectively respond to the evolving trends in migration and asylum. These needs have also shaped EASO's annual and multiannual work programmes.

Operational support remains a core component of EASO's activities, accounting for over 40 % of EASO's 2019 annual budget. EASO has continued to gradually expand its operational support to Member States, both in the level of the assistance provided, as well as in the size of its operations. In 2019 alone, EASO coordinated over 900 personnel, which were deployed in 88 locations across Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta. EASO also supported the implementation of Member States' resettlement efforts in the framework of the European resettlement schemes, in cooperation with the European Commission, UNHCR and other actors.

Expertise employed in the provision of technical support provide a valuable source of output, including through the publication of country of origin and guidance materials; collecting, analysing and distributing asylum data; developing practical tools to achieve common standards and high quality processes; advising on legal obligations, mapping practices in different Member States, and facilitating networks of expertise in different areas of asylum.

EASO also continued to produce new, and update existing training modules, which respond to new developments and changes in the EU asylum field. The training of national asylum officials has ensured a common high level application of the CEAS standards. Based on a common vocational training system covering core aspects of the asylum procedure, EASO has continued to provide training, including through train-the-trainer sessions, to around 6 630 people in 2019 alone.

Meanwhile, EASO continues to build its preparedness for its new mandate under the future regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), to ensure that the agency is operational once the new regulation enters into force. The new mandate will assign new tasks for the agency, enforcing its role as a centre of expertise and support, thus allowing it to play a stronger role in the implementation of the CEAS.

1. Operational support

Over 714 200 applications for international protection were lodged in the EU+ in 2019: a 13 % increase on 2018 ⁽¹⁾. This upward trend was already observed back in the autumn of 2018, progressing into 2019. Consistent with past trends, there were far more applications for asylum than detections at the external border (the ratio was 5 to 1). This increase is largely accounted for by the extensive number of applicants who are exempt from visa requirements when entering the Schengen area, which explains why applications for international protection have increased but detections of illegal entry at the external border have decreased. These visa-free applicants were mostly from Latin America and included, together with Venezuelans, nationals of Colombia, El Salvador and Honduras.

Overall, seven in ten of all applications were lodged in just five EU+ countries, whilst the majority of EU+ countries received more applications than in 2018. This was the first time the volume of asylum applications increased (on a yearly basis) since 2015. Despite this hike in figures, the numbers remained dramatically low when compared to 2015-2016 crisis figures.

Acting within its mandate ⁽²⁾, EASO has continued to provide tailored operational support to Member States subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems. At the request of Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta, support measures by EASO were implemented on the basis of agreed measures set out in mutually agreed country operating plans.

In addition to the support provided through these operating plans, EASO has also been involved in the framework of ad hoc disembarkation and voluntary relocation exercises. These activities were carried out through the year in Italy and Malta. Throughout the process, EASO has worked closely within the framework established by the European Commission.

EASO, together with the European Commission, successfully developed the ‘Messina model’, which

defines the legal basis for such operations (under Dublin Article 17(2)) and includes an agreement on the requirement for all arrivals to be registered as applicants for international protection within the respective national systems and the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac). It also covers the application of selection and matching criteria, used to facilitate the matching of applicants to Member States’ pledges.

Technical SOPs have also been concluded, with contribution from EASO, following the Malta Declaration which further defined, and copper fastened the respective roles and responsibilities of all actors within the framework of disembarkations and voluntary relocations. EASO specifically supported 24 such events in 2019, involving 2 716 applicants.

1.1 Greece

2019 Operating Plan for Greece

Support to Greece continued in accordance with the scope and activities defined in the 2019 Operating Plan. The EASO Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) deployed to the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) and the Appeals Authority generated greater efficiency in the implementation of the asylum procedure. The Reception and Identification Service (RIS) was also supported in the overall coordination, management and operation of its reception centres.

EASO has provided increasing support to the Greek authorities in the processing of applications for international protection; enhancing access to procedure; and improving the capacity of the authorities to manage the reception sites allocated across the country. EASO also assisted in the processing of a growing number of overall outgoing Dublin requests and facilitated the provision of essential information to asylum applicants.

⁽¹⁾ In 2019, The EU+ was composed of 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. Monthly data on applications for international protection were available for 30 EU+ countries until September and for 29 EU+ countries from October onwards.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office, OJ L 132, 29.5.2010.



EASO asylum support teams, North Greece

EASO has significantly supported the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) and the Appeals Authority under the [2019 Operating Plan](#), providing timely and effective assistance in the implementation of the border and regular asylum procedures applicable on mainland Greece and on the islands. In 2019, EASO registration officers conducted over 40 000 (*) registrations – including pre-registrations – thereby facilitating access to the asylum procedure. EASO Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) composed of Member States' experts and locally recruited personnel performed over 8 000 interviews and drafted more than 9 000 (**) concluding remarks on asylum cases.



EASO Asylum Support Teams, Greek islands

Furthermore, at first-instance stage, EASO enhanced the capacity of the Dublin Unit of the GAS with the deployment of embedded staff who handled requests involving 3 000 persons. At second instance, EASO deployed research officers (legal rapporteurs) in the context of the support provided to the Appeals Authority. With their support, an increasing number of essays on appeals (around 2 000 appellants) compared to 2018, were delivered against first-instance decisions by the EASO competent independent Appeals Committees.

(*) EASO Operational Analysis – Greece 2019.

(**) EASO Operational Data.

(*) EASO Operational Analysis – Greece 2019.

(**) EASO Operational Data.

(*) EASO Operational Data.

Information provision

Information is an important tool for facilitating access to asylum procedures. Once again in 2019, EASO played a central role in the provision of information. Member States' experts deployed as mobile information teams conducted over 300 site visits and supported the dedicated hotline, responding to more than 30 000 (*) questions. In May 2019, EASO handed over the task of information provision to the responsible Greek authorities present on the five islands and trained 16 locally recruited staff.



Information provision on the mainland, 2019

With more than 500 (**) personnel deployed under different profiles, EASO has ensured sustained support to the Greek authorities throughout 2019, applying interoperability while adapting its operational support in order to remain result oriented.

With more than 500 (**) personnel deployed under different profiles, EASO has ensured sustained support to the Greek authorities throughout 2019, applying interoperability while adapting its operational support in order to remain result oriented.

One of the main challenges encountered in the implementation of the 2019 operating plan was the decline in Member States' nominations of national experts to fill specific profiles, as defined and described in the Call for Experts. Another challenge is the non-availability of Member States' experts for long-term deployments (over several months), especially during periods of high numbers of arrivals.

Reception

EASO has continued to support national reception authorities with the deployment of specialised child protection officers and reception officers across the islands. Experts on unaccompanied minors

contributed to the development of the National Reception Monitoring Framework (NRFM) and supported the initiation of a reception helpdesk.

For the first time, the 2019 operating plan included two specific measures aimed at enhancing the national reception system through deployments of Member States' experts and interim personnel and related training provision at field and central level. EASO has also contributed to the finalisation and the piloting of the National Reception Monitoring Framework (NRFM) tool. At strategic level, EASO also supported Greece with capacity building in order to implement a multiannual funding and procurement strategy. EASO identified and deployed Member States' experts to the national Reception and Identification Service (RIS) contributing to draft project proposals, supported implementation monitoring and provided training to national staff to enhance sustainability. At first line reception, one of the major contributions for the year 2019 was the establishment of a Reception Helpdesk.

- | Over 40 000 registrations (including pre-registrations) conducted by EASO officers.
- | Asylum Support Teams – composed of Member States' experts and locally recruited personnel perform over 8 000 interviews and draft more than 9 000 concluding remarks on asylum cases.
- | Support to the Greek Dublin Unit to enhance its capacity for outgoing Dublin requests, with more than 230 applications processed each month, and tripled output compared to 2018.

In addition, the first part of the reception handbook was finalised and translated, through which access to legislation on reception in Greece was facilitated. At field level on the islands, support teams of specialised personnel (i.e. child protection officers, reception officers) were deployed to provide expertise on child protection and vulnerability issues, whilst facilitating communication with the communities in the camps. Through pilot projects run in Samos and Chios Safe Zones, EASO deployed experts on cases of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) thereby enhancing the capacity of Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) staff to develop services for UAMs and improve the overall running of the RIC Safe Zones. This is an important element in EASO's support, as it targets the overall improvement of reception conditions and the welfare of UAMs.

In support to second-line reception, EASO deployed personnel to assist with the transfer of people in

northern Greece and Epirus, as well as the referrals to private accommodation, transportation services and/or asylum procedures.



Information provision, Greece (Thessaloniki).

Future cooperation

On 20 December 2019, a new [Operational and Technical Assistance Plan for 2020](#) was agreed between EASO and the Greek authorities. The plan provides for the doubling of EASO's operational support through an innovative embedded model, based on joint planning with the GAS and the RIS.

1.2 Italy

2019 Operating Plan for Italy

Under the 2019 plan, EASO continued to provide technical and operational assistance to Italy, notably in the processing of applications for international protection, and in enhancing the capacity of the Italian authorities to absorb the backlog of pending cases. Support was provided in the processing of applications under the Dublin procedures, and in strengthening the Italian Country of Origin Information Unit, together with the management of its reception system. EASO also continued its support to the Italian Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents with capacity building activities for volunteer guardians.

EASO has been providing support to Italy for over six years, initially through a special support plan (SSP), which operated until the end of March 2016, and thereafter on the basis of mutually agreed annual operating plans.

Under the [2019 Operating Plan for Italy](#), actions were taken to enhance the Italian authorities' expertise, and strengthen its capacity to absorb the backlog of cases pending at the registration and determination stages,

through the processing of applications for international protection and the handling of Dublin cases. EASO also assisted in the development of sustainable asylum and reception workflows and methodologies; strengthening the Italian COI Unit and selected National Asylum Commission activities; and in contributing to the management and monitoring frameworks of the national reception system through the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration.

| 19 722 asylum registrations supported by EASO ASTs

| 26 933 files for the decision-making process in Territorial Commissions and 38 761 files for the pre-interview phase.

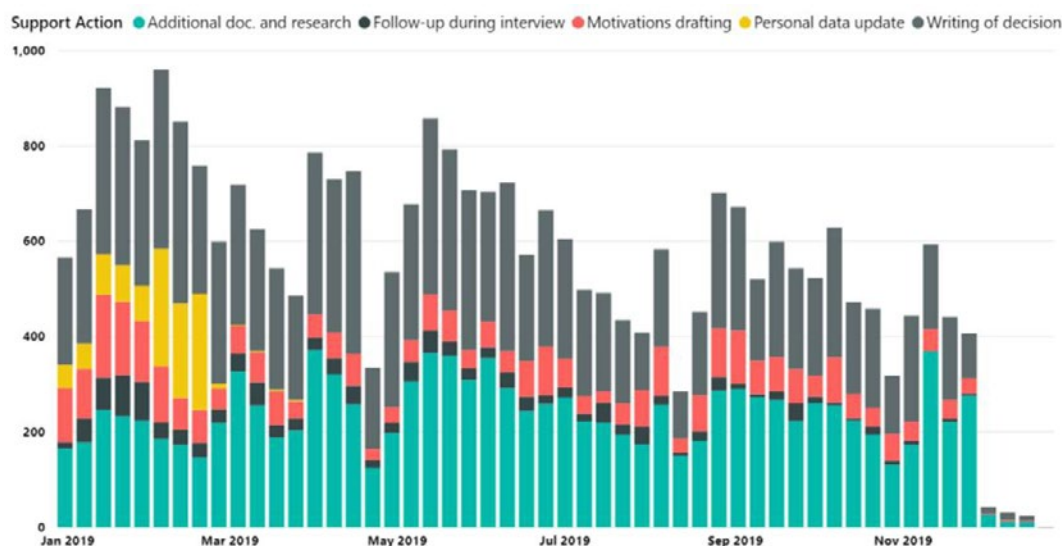
| Reduction of over 30 000 pending cases carried forward from mid-2016.

EASO and the Italian Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents (AGIA) continued to work together on capacity-building activities for volunteer guardians.

Under the Flexibility Clause of the Operating Plan for Italy, EASO also assisted in ad hoc disembarkations and voluntary relocation in 17 separate events, in

accordance with the ‘Messina Model’ and the subsequent Malta Declaration technical SOPs.

In an effort to reduce the backlog of pending cases, EASO ASTs assisted in the registration of 19 722 asylum applicants in 25 local police offices (Questure). Moreover, ASTs deployed in 35 Territorial Commissions, supported the preparation and processing of 26 933 files for the decision-making process, and 38 761 files for the pre-interview phase. The same level of support was provided in the litigation phase, covering around 14 000 persons⁽⁸⁾. Over the course of 2019, the volume of first-instance decisions issued was consistently higher than the number of applications filed. This resulted in a swift reduction of the backlog of pending cases carried forward from mid-2016. At the end of December 2019, an important reduction of some 30 000 cases was achieved with the support of EASO, corresponding to a reduction of more than one third of the 2018 backlog⁽⁹⁾, when at the time, Italy ranked first among the EU+ countries in terms of pending cases (82 311 cases⁽¹⁰⁾). This work was complemented by further structural support from EASO aimed at enhancing the quality of workflows and methodologies used locally. To this end, EASO produced two Handbooks on *Good Practices for registration* and *Case-management at first instance, including Dublin cases*.



Evaluation of EASO support action in 2019

EASO together with UNHCR, trained 351 Italian public officials on the registration phase of the asylum procedure, as well as on the identification and processing of Dublin cases. Furthermore, 49 public

officials attended 12 train-the-trainers sessions on information provision, trafficking in human beings, and status determination, amongst other thematic areas.

⁽⁸⁾ EASO Operational Analysis – Italy 2019.

⁽⁹⁾ EASO Operational Analysis – Italy 2019.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Data provided by Italy under Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data collection system.

- | 12 training activities organised for 351 Italian public officials.
- | 12 train-the-trainer sessions for 49 public officials.
- | 6 training sessions on reception procedures and the quality of reception services for UAMs.

EASO continued to provide structural support for the further strengthening of the Italian reception authorities and related national systems, and the continued development of national reception monitoring frameworks. EASO also supported the *Struttura di Missione* in the organisation of six training sessions for the harmonisation of reception procedures and quality of reception services for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) throughout the national territory. A total of 217 participants attended these sessions. EASO also supported AGIA in the organisation of three training sessions for UAMs voluntary guardians' candidates, and an e-learning platform was developed to standardise sustainably this training.

In 2019, EASO supported 17 ad hoc disembarkation / voluntary relocation events on behalf of pledging Member States, in conjunction with the Italian authorities and under the coordination of the European Commission. The capacity of EASO to adapt to a rapidly changing environment was demonstrated during these events as EASO carried out circa 1 300 interviews, deploying its ASTs within 24/48 hours from the initial request. Aside from its involvement in the registration procedure, EASO's core tasks included support towards the development and application of technical SOPs that provided the basis for proposing distribution lists to the European Commission, which was responsible for the overall coordination of Member States' pledges and the subsequent relocation process.

Insufficient numbers and duration of Member State experts compared to the needs set out in the Operating Plan for Italy, in addition to the language barriers faced by these experts when working directly with local authorities, compelled EASO to rely heavily on interim services for the implementation of the agreed activities. During 2019, out of 295 deployments in Italy, 64 were experts originating from 16 EU+ countries, 11 were EASO staff, and the remaining 220 were interim workers. 360 cultural mediators also supported the registration and processing of asylum applications and ad hoc disembarkation / voluntary relocation exercises.



EASO team supporting the voluntary relocation procedure

From the start of the year, EASO responded rapidly to new disembarkation events once voluntary ad hoc relocations were established after the end of the EU relocation programme in 2018. The main challenge was to design a new workflow and to agree on a new procedure with all relevant actors, including the European Commission, Member States, and the Italian authorities. In order to react rapidly, EASO redeployed human resources in support to the *Questure* to assist with disembarkation procedures, sometimes with multiple events occurring simultaneously (mainly from August – November 2019), putting stress on the logistical implementation of existing measures within the operating plan. Clear guidelines and workflows for EASO support were designed and implemented, smoothing the process of allocating new resources to the team, while ensuring quality and consistency of the activities. An enhanced ad hoc mobile team was dedicated to this activity under the [2020 Operating Plan for Italy](#).

Future cooperation

A new Operating Plan for Italy was signed on 11 December 2019. The 2020 plan continues to build on EASO's existing operational support to Italy with a focus on new support to second instance backlog reduction through increased support to the tribunals across Italy and capacity-building and quality enhancement of asylum and reception systems. The plan therefore includes support towards the standardisation of asylum procedures; improving the quality of the Italian reception system; the reduction of backlog of asylum cases in specialised sections of tribunals; supporting coordination mechanisms amongst Italian asylum authorities; improving the efficiency and standardisation of procedures and data collection through information systems.

1.3 Cyprus

EASO and Cyprus sign Hosting Agreement

On 19 September 2019, EASO and Cyprus signed a Hosting Agreement which reflects the scope and nature of EASO’s operational support to Cyprus, in line with the agreed Operating Plan. The Hosting Agreement allows EASO to continue to provide tangible support to the Cypriot authorities in response to increased pressures on its asylum system and provides legal clarity to the status of EASO in Cyprus, including that of its staff and personnel. The agreement is yet to be ratified by the Parliament.

EASO has been expanding its technical and operational assistance to Cyprus since 2014, in response to increased migratory pressures. In December 2018, a new [Operational and Technical Assistance Plan for 2019](#) was agreed by EASO and Cyprus. The plan would further bolster EASO’s assistance to Cyprus in light of the surge in asylum applications. Under the agreed plan, a Hosting Agreement was later signed between EASO and the Cypriot authorities on 19 September 2019.

In 2019, around 13 000 applications for international protection were lodged in Cyprus, marking – for the second year in a row – an increase of about 70 % on the previous year, ranking it the second highest Member State with per capita applications.

| 7 804 registrations carried out by EASO experts (70% of total number) in four districts.

| 746 interviews conducted, and 532 opinions drafted as a result of enhanced support to first instance processing and the accelerated procedure.

| Individual social support, development of SOPs and volunteer coordination in the Kofinou accommodation centre through full on-site EASO presence.

A first fully-fledged Operating Plan for Cyprus was implemented in 2019. Measures were taken to improve the coherence and quality of the registration processes in Cyprus; SOPs for the registration of applicants for international protection were revised in close consultation with the asylum service and the immigration police, and relevant training was provided. Moreover, the regular and steady presence of EASO registration assistants and interpreters in the Alien and Immigration Units facilitated the provision of information and the registration of applications for international protection.

With the support of six registration experts, 8 704 applications for international protection were registered in four locations during this first year of support to the registration procedure. This number accounts for seven out of ten registrations in Cyprus, an increase of 15 % compared to 2018.

> CAN I TRAVEL?
In case you are still an applicant of international protection and you urgently need to travel for humanitarian reasons, you can apply at the Civil Registry and Migration Department and you may be issued with a relevant travel document.

> USEFUL CONTACTS
Cyprus Refugee Council (Legal assistance)
Strovolos 8, Plot 401, Nicosia
Tel.: 22050959

Caritas Larnaca (Greek, English, Spanish)
Stylakou Lara 2, Larnaca
Tel.: 24320979

Quale (Catholic, English, Spanish, French)
Anghelopoulos Leoniou 1, Larnaca
Tel.: 24000290

Administrative Court for International Protection (Cyprus)
Couti Zolova 5, 1906, Nicosia
Tel.: 22747550

UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees)
2 Cyprus Road, 2nd Floor, Nicosia
Tel.: 22558843

KOM (Commission of Cyprus for Migration)
Neriva Avenue P.C., Nicosia
Tel.: 22722778

Social Welfare Services - Larnaca District Office
23-29, Agiou, Larnaca
Tel.: 24800101

Larnaca (and Famagusta) District Lokouti Office
Dilios, Lokouti, Street, Larnaca
Tel.: 24805323

Welfare Benefits Administrative Service
81, Droussou 2006, MEDCON Tower, Droussou
Tel.: 22 83 8328

Asylum Service - Ministry of Interior
70, Arch. Mikhalou, 11/line, Zolova House, 1077 Nicosia
Tel.: 22446333, 22 1452 72, 22 1452 93

For more information: www.moi.gov.cy/asylum

> AM I ENTITLED TO GUARANTEED MINIMUM INCOME OR SOCIAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE?
Any relative beneficiary of subsidiary protection, whose financial resources are insufficient to satisfy his or her basic and specific needs as defined by law, may seek the provision of a guaranteed minimum income (income: GEM or "Tasbeir") which is provided in the form of financial support and services. To receive this benefit, you must apply and contact the Welfare Benefits Administrative Service.

> WHAT ARE THE ORGANISATIONS PRESENT IN THE CENTER?
Asylum service – continuous reception, registration, maintenance
CODECA – First Office, reception food provision
Takis – social visits, administration
EA SO (European Asylum Support Office) – social work, interpretation, reception support
Red Cross – various leisure activities for children and adults
UNHCR – management support (3 interpreters)
KOM – voluntary return assistance (once in a month)
NGO Kofinou We Care & other volunteer organisations.

RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION CENTER FOR APPLICANTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION
BASIC INFORMATION FOR THE RESIDENTS

> WHERE AM I?
Welcome! You are in the Reception and Accommodation Center for Applicants of International Protection in Kofinou. The center operates under the responsibility of the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior. It has the capacity to accommodate up to 400 people. The center is situated 3.5 km west of Kofinou village. The coordinates are Larnaca District, Limassol District and Nicosia District. For a better orientation in the center, every year, after the map below you can see where exactly you are in the center, offices, kitchen, common space.

For you to be comfortable this leaflet will provide you with the basic information you need to know during your first days here. The center is an open building. This means you can move around freely and enter and leave the center at will. There will be staff officers in reception, registers and agents at the entrance to the center, as you are entering. **Ασφαλεία, ασφάλεια και άνεση** is respected the way you should respect for others.

RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION CENTER FOR APPLICANTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

RECEPTION	RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION CENTER FOR APPLICANTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	RECEPTION
APPLICANTS	APPLICANTS	APPLICANTS
...

RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION CENTER FOR APPLICANTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

RECEPTION	RECEPTION AND ACCOMMODATION CENTER FOR APPLICANTS OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION	RECEPTION
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...

Information flyer for residents at the reception centre in Kofinou

EASO also continued to support the asylum service in Cyprus in the processing of asylum cases at first

instance, thereby alleviating the continuous increase in backlog. In this context, EASO deployed experts to

Nicosia who conducted 746 interviews and drafted 532 concluding remarks covering 27 distinct citizenships.

In the latter part of the year, upon the request of the Cypriot Asylum Service (CAS), EASO experts conducted a further 44 interviews and drafted 42 recommendations under an accelerated procedure for citizens of Georgia, a country considered as a safe country of origin.

Furthermore, EASO together with the CAS and UNHCR worked together on strengthening quality assurance and standards. EASO and the CAS also initiated preparatory work on the digitisation of case files. EASO also delivered two training sessions on vulnerability and exclusion indicators to EASO experts and CAS officers.

EASO resumed activities in the second-line reception centre in Kofinou at the end of 2018. EASO consolidated its presence in 2019 with a permanent team of experts. Together they provided much needed social work and capacity building in the areas of reception centre management, individual case follow-up with social support and referrals and procedures, information provision and coordination of community and volunteer activities.

Support foreseen for the newly established first line reception centre at Pournara was significantly hampered due to delays in construction and renovation works. Nevertheless, EASO deployed staff for the provision of information and to carry out vulnerability assessments. EASO also delivered logistical support for a safe zone for vulnerable groups (to be operational in 2020).

EASO has also started laying the groundwork for new areas of work in Cyprus, including its support to the newly established International Protection Administrative Court and the strengthening of data management and coordination, for example, by

facilitating a reception entry-exit system. To this end, EASO carried out and facilitated four needs-assessment missions and three training initiatives. A new [Operational and Technical Assistance Plan for 2020](#) was also agreed between EASO and the Cypriot authorities.

Future cooperation

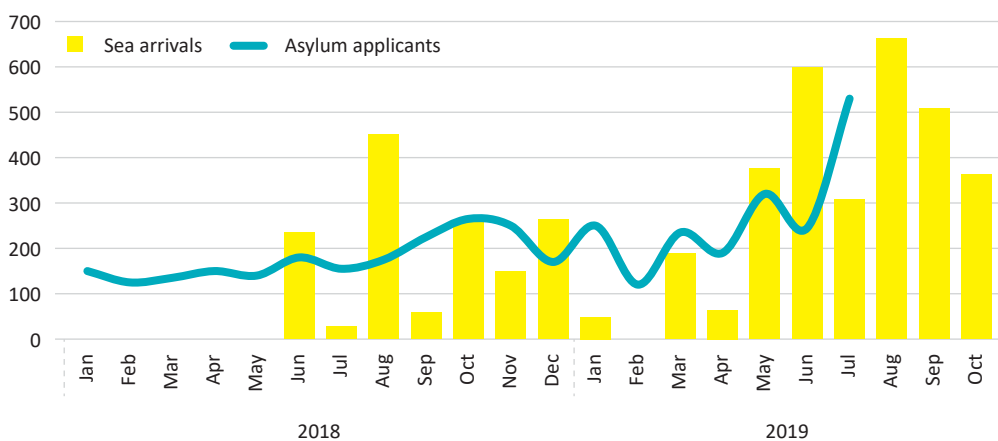
In December 2019, a new Operational and Technical Assistance Plan for 2020 was agreed between EASO and the Cypriot authorities. The plan foresees the doubling of EASO's operational support for the Cypriot Asylum Service and the introduction of a new measure in support of second instance backlog reduction.

1.4 Malta

2019 Operational and Technical Assistance Plan agreed by Malta and EASO

On 24 June 2019, EASO agreed with the Maltese authorities on workflows and processes required to provide support to Malta with the registration of applications for international protection, information provision, and support to the Dublin Unit, interviews and the related drafting of evaluation reports for the Refugee Commissioner Office. The start of the support measures was agreed in phases, ensuring full alignment with other measures put into place by the Maltese authorities.

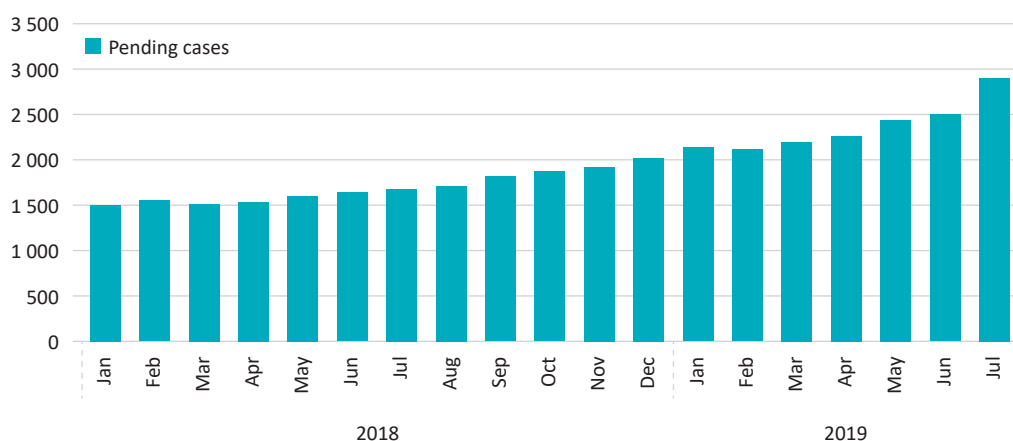
With 1 890 applications for international protection lodged during the first seven months of 2019, the figures were 83 % higher than those recorded during the same period in 2018. Accordingly, the average number of monthly applications increased from 148 to 270.



Sea arrivals (bars) and asylum applications (line), January – October 2019

Eurostat data comprising cases pending at all instances showed that pressure on the Maltese asylum authority continued to increase during 2019. Whilst at the end of January 2018 there were 1 505

applications awaiting a decision, by July 2019 this figure went up to 2 905. The backlog also increased considerably from an average of 47 additional cases per month during 2018 to 126 in 2019.



Evolution of pending cases from January 2018 to July 2019

Following requests received from the Maltese authorities in June 2019 and based on support for ad hoc disembarkation events in the preceding six months, EASO signed an Operating Plan for Malta for six months from July to December 2019. The plan was based on three measures focusing on support for registration, support in first-instance asylum interviews and the drafting of related opinions, and support for the Dublin Unit. According to data from the national Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement, between January and October 2019, sea arrivals in Malta more than doubled compared to the previous year, with 1 445 migrants recorded in 2018 and 3 115 in 2019.

EASO provided support to the Maltese authorities for all voluntary relocation activities, dealing with the registration of applications for international protection, preparing the distribution lists, support to

the delegations of the Member States in relation to their follow-up interviews, as well as to the Dublin Unit in terms of procedural activities for all relocation cases.

EASO delivered operational support through the deployment of 18 Member State experts and 18 temporary agency workers (interims), for a total of 2 229 days. Under the terms agreed in the operational plan, EASO completed 2 008 registrations of asylum applicants, the main nationality being from Sudan, followed by Eritrea and South Sudan.

Significant work also went into establishing and piloting the workflows in support of the planned reduction of the existing backlog, and following from this, EASO scheduled 284 interviews, of which 176 were finalised. A total of 71 concluding remarks were issued.

Finally, in support of the Dublin Unit, 1 827 people received assistance, and 1 003 Dublin examination reports were drafted.

The implementation of the operating plan proceeded as anticipated and built on the successful collaboration within the ad hoc disembarkation workflows in the first six months of the year.

Future cooperation

A new **Operating Plan for Malta** was signed in **December 2019** which covers the doubling of operational support and the expansion of the measures in the Plan to include a specific measure on Reception including support for workflows around vulnerability referral and assessment work within reception and wider support for reception services in Malta.

1.5 External dimension

- | Revised EASO External Cooperation Strategy adopted by the EASO Management Board.
- | Cooperation through the implementation of Roadmaps with Turkey/DGMM, Serbia and North Macedonia.
- | Launch of the EASO Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) in Istanbul, Turkey.

EASO plays an important role in the external dimension of the CEAS by supporting the establishment and/or strengthening of asylum and reception systems as well as by providing support to Member States in their resettlement efforts.

Relevant developments have been achieved in 2019, including the revision of the external cooperation strategy, the increasing capacity-building support provided to key priority geographical areas and the launch of the Resettlement Support Facility pilot project.



External Action Strategy and External Dimension Network

- | Revision of the EASO External Cooperation Strategy. The new Strategy was adopted by the EASO Management Board in February 2019.
- | Consultation process to restructure the External Dimension Network. Agreement reached on the establishment of two separate networks: *Third Country Cooperation Network* and *Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network*.

External cooperation strategy

Given the changes in the wider EU external relation policy framework and in view of the support requested by third countries or discussed with Member States, in 2019 EASO carried out a **wide consultation process with Member States and relevant stakeholders** to revise and update the external action strategy. The EASO Management Board adopted the new strategy – now called **EASO External Cooperation Strategy** – in February 2019.



The revised EASO External Cooperation Strategy:

- defines the approach and general framework within which EASO develops its work related to the external dimension of the CEAS;
- provides strategic direction for the EASO external action;
- sets priorities and focus for the planning of future activities;

- details the type and range of support EASO can provide as well as the geographical priorities.

Activities of the External Dimension Network

The EASO External Dimension Network aims at ensuring efficient and smooth communication on matters related to EASO's external action with Member States, EU institutions, third countries and other stakeholders.

Several activities were implemented in 2019 under this umbrella, including two External Dimension Network meetings held in February and November. Moreover, following the inputs received from Member States, EASO established three dedicated working groups:

- Working group on the cooperation between with the Turkish Directorate-General for Migration Management (DGMM);
- Working group on the cooperation between with Western Balkans;
- Working group on Development of EASO External Dimension Knowledge management tools.

The purpose of these working groups is to gather smaller groups of Member States particularly interested in actively contributing to EASO's work in specific fields. In 2019, EASO held a total of four working group meetings.

Restructuring of the External Dimension Network

Following the conclusions of the External Dimension Network meeting held on 1 February 2019 and of the 9th EU Resettlement Forum held on 11 June 2019, EASO launched a consultation process with relevant stakeholders on the restructuring of the External Dimension Network into two separate networks: Third Country Cooperation Network, and the Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network.

The need for a resettlement-specific network emerged during the consultation process. On the one hand, Member States' resettlement pledges need to be complemented by a support and exchange platform that would better enable them to fulfil their commitments for international solidarity. On the other hand, Member States officials highlighted the need for a platform to address and discuss a number of EU-specific issues, such as the use of Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) monies for resettlement or operational practices in resettlement missions.

Concerning *Third Country Cooperation*, a network fully focused on technical cooperation and capacity-building support to third countries can address the need to more effectively involve Member States and other stakeholders in the definition and implementation of EASO-third countries cooperation frameworks. Additionally, improved information sharing and communication are areas with potential to further enhance the network's added value by creating opportunities for finding synergies and avoiding duplication.

Both Networks were officially launched in Q1 2020.

Third country support

Implementation of the IPA II funded regional project ('Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans') phase 2

- | Two Roadmaps in place with Serbia and North Macedonia.
- | 39 capacity building activities in cooperation with Western Balkan authorities.

Renewal and implementation of the EASO-DGMM Roadmap

- | 28 capacity building activities in cooperation with Turkey/DGMM.

Start of the EASO-Egypt cooperation

- | Development and initiation of a small-scale capacity building project in cooperation with Egypt.

Capacity-building support to third countries on matters related to asylum and reception

EASO's Third Country Support aims at contributing to the establishment and/or strengthening of asylum and reception systems as well as to foster protection-sensitive migration management in key third countries. It is implemented through different degrees of capacity building tailored to the needs and interests in a given Third Country, Member States priorities and EASO's capacity to respond. Planned activities take various forms (training, workshops, study/work visits, on-the-job coaching, contribution to technical documents, etc.).



Throughout the year (and compared to 2018) EASO registered increased interest and need for capacity-building support to the following geographical areas: Western Balkan countries, Turkey and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

In the Western Balkans (WB), EASO implemented, together with EBCGA/Frontex, UNHCR and IOM, the **IPA II funded regional project** ('Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans') targeting the six WB countries and Turkey. Phase I of the Project was completed (September 2016 – June 2019), followed by Phase II (July 2019 – June 2021), which is under implementation.



EASO is supporting **Serbia and North Macedonia** through detailed Roadmap documents focusing on capacity-building activities in the spirit of co-ownership and partnership. Similarly, roadmaps with **Albania** and **Bosnia & Herzegovina** are under discussion.

In Turkey, EASO continued its **support to DGMM**. The cooperation was implemented through a Roadmap document covering February 2018 – June 2019. Following review and consultations with DGMM, **the Roadmap was successfully renewed** for another 2 years (September 2019 – August 2021). With this approach, EASO's cooperation with Turkey is based on

a long-term perspective and provides solid ground to support DGMM and strengthen its capacity.

Concerning the MENA Region, Egyptian national authorities expressed interest in further developing their own asylum legislation in cooperation with EASO. Thus, **small-scale capacity-building support was agreed**. The cooperation started successfully with two capacity-building activities organised in October and November 2019, which will be followed by additional activities in 2020.

Resettlement and other legal pathways to international protection

Establishment of the Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) pilot project based in Istanbul, Turkey

- | 6 Member States supported in their resettlement operations through the RSF.
- | 5 selection missions carried out, including 474 refugees processed.
- | 3 cultural orientation missions carried out, including 466 refugees processed.

Permanent support to Member States in the field of Resettlement and other legal pathways to international protection

- | 4 activities aimed at assisting Member States in the implementation of EU ad hoc schemes.
- | 3 practical cooperation meetings on resettlement and legal pathways to protection organised with relevant stakeholders.

Resettlement to the EU is the transfer of vulnerable refugees from a host country to an EU Member State, where they will be admitted and granted the right to stay and any other rights comparable to those granted to beneficiaries of international protection. **EASO supports the implementation of Member States' resettlement efforts** in the framework of European resettlement schemes, in cooperation with the European Commission, the UNHCR and other relevant actors.

Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) pilot project

Following a feasibility assessment carried out in 2018, and after exhaustive consultations with Member

States, the European Commission and other stakeholders, EASO launched a pilot project for the **establishment of an RSF** based in Istanbul to support Member States resettlement operations from Turkey for a period of 18 months. The RSF has been **operational since June 2019**, providing resettlement services to Member States through a service provider – the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe.



The RSF allows EASO to support Member States' resettlement operations from Turkey in a collaborative and innovative way, by **providing a varied range of resettlement services** at the request of Member States. Services include logistical support for selection and cultural orientation (CO)/pre-departure orientation (PDO) processes of Member States, such as the transport and accommodation of refugees, rooms for interviews and training, childcare and so forth.

Feedback received from Member States was positive, indicating that the logistical support provided by the RSF proved to be efficient and adequately addressing their needs.

Permanent support to Member States

In 2019, EASO supported Member States' resettlement efforts through the implementation of several activities aimed at assisting the EU ad hoc schemes as well as organising practical cooperation meetings on resettlement and legal pathways to protection.

Moreover, within the framework of the EU-Frank Project, EASO developed practical tools to build Member States' capacities in the field of resettlement.

2. Operations planning, evaluation and support tools

2.1 Operational support and operational tools

Strengthening EASO's capacity to respond to and report on operational demands

- | Further implementation and development of EASO's project management methodology and project management cycle for all operations in Member States and in the external dimension.
- | Increased level of satisfaction of the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool (AIP) NCP Network through collaborative activities and deployment management system (EAIPS) functionalities developed for their use.
- | Development of initial concepts and requirements for new horizontal tools, including the further development of the EASO Deployment Management Tool (EAIPS).

An important accomplishment in 2019 was the full development of a harmonised project management methodology, which was implemented across EASO's operations in Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta, and in the external dimension. This contributed to EASO's enhanced capacity to respond to and report on operational demands and therefore to manage the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the relevant operating plans, specific project plans and roadmaps.

Comprehensive and highly effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks were further developed and implemented. Sophisticated budget monitoring systems were also introduced, allowing for a more vigorous monitoring of budgets and related expenditure in real time.

The EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System (EAIPS) – a web-based system for the management of

operational resources – was further enhanced. The new developments allowed for the deployment of experts from Member States to be fully managed through this digital platform and to further facilitate the workflows with the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool (AIP) NCPs. Enhancements to the system included, amongst others, the presentation of real-time needs to NCPs, and the automated generation of deployment letters.

An additional component involving the management of deployments of temporary agency workers has also been developed and implemented into the EAIPS in view of the presence of an important number of temporary agency workers in the ASTs. These further developments will enhance the planning and reporting capabilities of EASO with regard to its deployments.

Two practical cooperation meetings of the AIP NCPs took place in 2019, with participation from EU+ Member States, UNHCR and the European Commission. Participants discussed the EASO operating plans, Member States' experts' deployments, and future planning of nominations, security, and safety and health issues, amongst other topics.

The operational platforms for Greece, Italy and Cyprus, available in the EASO Information and Documentation System (IDS), continued to be updated to reflect activities, locations and guidance relevant to the 2019 operating plans. A platform for the new Malta operation has also been developed. For 2020, a possible change to the technical platform is being envisaged together with a review of its further development.

A number of additional horizontal support tools were also further developed. Two of these tools, involving an entry-exit system to Cyprus and a case scheduling tool, were implemented. The entry-exit system was the first successful technological transfer facilitated by EASO between Hungary and Cyprus. Other requirements for relevant tools were defined and will be followed up in 2020.

2.2 Planning, monitoring and evaluation of operations

- | Strengthening of results-based project cycle management in operations in EU+ countries.
- | Publication of a User Guide on Monitoring of Operations and the implementation of a fidelity monitoring approach across EASO operations.
- | A total of 12 internal and external evaluations carried out and followed up with feedback loops and management responses.

A more robust, results-based planning approach was applied in the implementation of the 2019 operating plans for Greece, Italy, and Cyprus and, for the first time, Malta. This approach brought about greater transparency and accountability when assessing progress and achievements. Building on the introduction of a comprehensive needs-assessment and design phase for the development of new operating plans in 2018 (including a corresponding User Guide), a similar exercise was successfully carried out for the 2019 Operating Plans – and methodology and practices also applied to other EASO interventions.

An innovative fidelity monitoring system was rolled out across all EASO operations, including the launch of a dedicated User Guide on Monitoring of Operations, specific monitoring plans for each intervention and a structure for results and process monitoring. This is the first consolidated approach towards the monitoring of operations in EASO.

To ensure accountability and to allow a reflective feedback loop towards more relevant, effective and efficient operational interventions, EASO carried out nine internal evaluations (both formative and summative evaluations, including midterm reviews, pilot evaluations and final evaluations) and facilitated three external evaluations (2018 Operating Plans for Italy and Greece and 2014-2018 Special Support Plan for Cyprus).

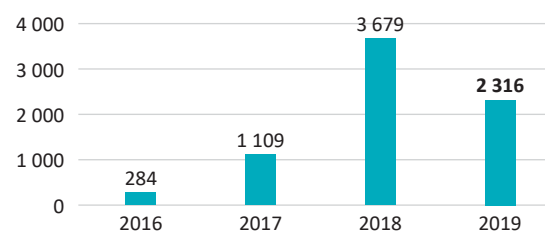
Monthly consumption/payment-based financial monitoring systems were also introduced and further improvements to the overall budget management, budget review and budget monitoring frameworks were developed and applied across all operations during the year.

2.3 Operational training

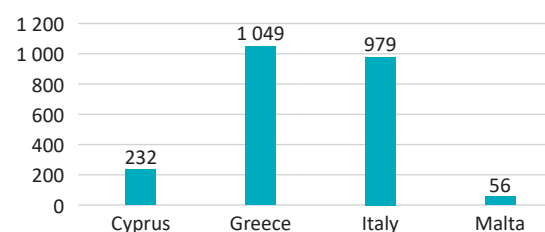
- | EASO delivers 157 operational training sessions, through which 2 316 participants were trained. This number exceeds by far the annual forecast of 80 sessions to 1 000 participants.
- | Continued development and review of EASO training material. 7 training programmes/courses were developed/reviewed, of which 5 were newly developed modules/courses. These covered namely, Communication and Provision of Information to Asylum Seekers; Identification of Potential Dublin Cases; Registration of Applications for International Protection; Identification of Potential Exclusion Cases; and an Induction Session for interims and Member State deployed experts in the context of the Greece Operations.
- | A review of 2 training courses: Operational Training for Team Leaders and Training on Registration.

In line with the agreed operating plans, EASO operational trainings were delivered in Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta.

Number of participations in operational training



Number of participations in operational training: broken down by Member State



In response to increased pressures on the Cypriot authorities, EASO expanded its technical and operational assistance provided to the country since 2014. In 2019, EASO continued to support the Cypriot authorities with the registration of applications for international protection, and in the course of the year significantly increased its capacity to resolve the

backlog of pending cases. In the framework of the Operating Plan for Cyprus, 232 participants have been trained; a significant increase when compared to 2018. The largest target audience were EASO interim case workers, followed by EASO registration assistants.

In Greece, EASO continued to support the national authorities in a wide range of activities, including training of interims, Member States' deployed experts, as well as personnel from the Greek authorities. In the framework of the operating plan for Greece, 1 049 participants were trained, an increase of almost 20 per cent when compared to 2018. The largest target groups for the operational trainings in Greece were the EASO interim caseworkers (420), EASO deployed experts (295), reception officials (RIS) (175), followed by EASO interim team leaders (69). 29 officials from the GAS participated in EASO train-the-trainer sessions, in order for the service to build capacity in terms of national trainers.

In Italy, EASO continued to support the national authorities in the processing of applications, as well as towards enhancing their capacity to absorb the backlog of cases accumulated during the spike of arrivals. The year was characterised by a commitment of the national Italian asylum authority to build-up its own capacity in terms of national trainers. 49 Italian officials participated in EASO train-the-trainer sessions. EASO continued to deliver operational trainings, through which 979 individuals were trained – 586 Italian asylum officials, 264 EASO interims and 129 other EASO staff and Member States' deployed experts. This represents a decrease in the total number of participants attending EASO training when compared to 2018; which difference can be explained by the successful implementation of a backlog management strategy together with EASO's exit strategy.

An operating plan with Malta was signed in June 2019 for a 6-month period. Prior to the signature of the operating plan, EASO was providing the Maltese asylum authorities with ad hoc support in the provision of training for local staff. Within the framework of ad hoc support, seven participants from the Office of the Refugee Commissioner participated in EASO training modules. Whilst under the 2019 operating plan, EASO organised operational training for its staff in support of the implementation of the measures defined in the Operating Plan for Malta.

EASO also developed three ad hoc training plans; two with Spain and one with Malta. In Spain, EASO contributed to the training of authorities in asylum and reception. This was necessary due to the very high number of asylum seekers arriving on the Iberian Peninsula. In the second half of 2019, Spain recorded

the highest number of applications in Europe, the majority arriving from Latin American countries. Through these ad hoc training plans, 50 ad hoc sessions (exceeding the eight forecasted) were organised, reaching 746 participants.

Within the framework of the ad hoc training plan to Malta applicable till June 2019, seven participants from the Office of the Refugee Commissioner participated in the EASO core modules.

In 2019, EASO also finalised the development of a training-needs-assessment methodology, on the basis of which, EASO will be in a position to better identify any gaps in training.

2.4 Quality support to operations

To support the quality in EASO operations in Greece, Italy and Cyprus, new practical tools were developed by EASO, and existing tools refined to address the specific needs of the national asylum administrations of the three countries.

Quality support to EASO operations in Italy

- | Development and introduction of new tools to improve the quality of the asylum procedure.
- | Expert advice and guidance on the establishment of a national quality assessment mechanism, and other various national legal instruments.

Quality **support was provided to Italy** by the Asylum Processes Sector (APS), which included meetings with the National Asylum Commission and UNHCR to share experiences and expertise relating to the project of the Italian authorities to establish a Quality Assessment Mechanism. Moreover, support was provided directly to the EASO's operations through the provision of advice and guidance on draft national legal instruments that were to be adopted in 2019.

The following new tools to advance the quality of the asylum procedure were developed and introduced in 2019.

- Guidance on registration of asylum applications under the accelerated procedure for EASO caseworkers.
- Guidance Note on information provision to applicants for international protection, whose

applications are processed in the accelerated procedure.

- Handbook on Good Practices in the Territorial Commissions in Italy.
- Handbook on Good Practices on registration in the Questure in Italy.

Finally, the APS provided feedback for the establishment of a Helpdesk within EASO's operational support to Italy and contributed towards the design of operational standards and indicators for Italy.

In the context of **quality support to Greece**, EASO participated in meetings for team leaders in the field to give direct guidance and respond to questions on quality challenges faced by team leaders in their everyday work. In these meetings, thematic quality feedback reports and relevant Helpdesk Queries were presented.

EASO also actively participated in operational trainings on exclusion and vulnerability, and in three field missions, in cooperation with team leaders on the application of new SOPs and cooperation with the Helpdesk experts.

125 international protection cases were reviewed in the context of the border and the regular procedure in terms of thematic quality and quality assurance feedback.

EASO also produced for the first time, thematic quality feedback reports and quality feedback reports for the eligibility procedure. In total, 11 quality feedback reports (thematic, border and eligibility procedure) were produced. The EASO Quality Assurance tool is used by team leaders for the evaluation of the work of case officers.

Quality support to EASO operations in Greece:

- | Provision of guidance on quality issues via Quality Feedback Reports and Helpdesk Queries (new and revised).
- | Revision of SOPs, interview and opinion templates and participation in coaching and training sessions in all hotspots for their implementation.

- | Introduction of EASO Quality Assurance Tool for use by team leaders.

- | 125 international protection cases reviewed in the context of the border and the regular procedure in terms of thematic quality and quality assurance feedback.

In cooperation with the Greek Asylum Service, EASO co-drafted standard operating procedures on vulnerability procedures, and drafted templates for the interviews and opinions.

In September 2019, EASO conducted a survey on the use and impact of the quality feedback reports and on possible improvements. Feedback was also given on an action plan for the improvement of quality assurance in Greece in November 2019.

EASO Operations in Cyprus

- | Revision of the SOP on Registration and development of new SOPs on the asylum procedure and templates for personal interview and recommendation on the application for international protection in Cyprus.

- | Quality feedback system was improved.

With regard to EASO's operations in Cyprus, SOPs on registration were revised. In addition, 15 international protection cases were reviewed with the use of the quality assurance tool and two quality feedback reports were drafted. SOPs for Cyprus on the asylum procedure and templates for the personal interview and for recommendations on the application for international protection were developed. An evaluation of the quality feedback system was carried out through a field survey. This led to improvements in the structure and the introduction of thematic quality reviews. Asylum support officers participated alongside officers from the Training Unit in three coaching sessions in Cyprus with the aim to support newly recruited EASO case officers.

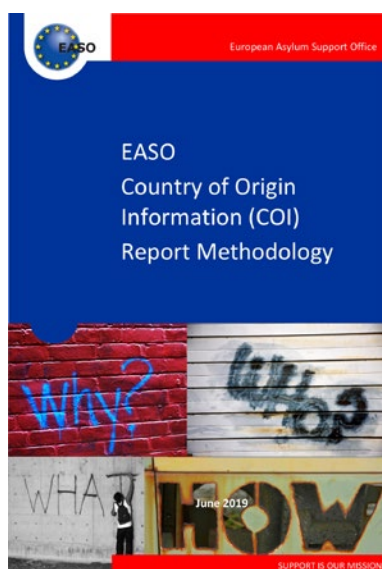
3. Information, analysis and knowledge development

3.1 Country of origin information (COI)

The production of Country of Origin Information (COI) on a wide range of third countries and themes is imperative for well-informed, fair and well-reasoned asylum decisions and evidence-based policy development.

- | 65 COI products, including query responses, published reports and COI methodology.
- | 24 thematic or methodological COI events organised, including on specific countries of origin.
- | Over 500 queries processed regarding medical treatments (MedCOI).

In 2019, EASO updated its COI report methodology, implementing lessons learned from several years of cooperation on the production of COI within the context of the EASO COI network approach. The publication of this update was celebrated together with the anniversary of the Austrian Red Cross' COI department – ACCORD- by way of a jointly organised conference on COI methodology.



EASO also published a *COI Writing and Referencing Guide* and produced a large number of COI products

accessible on the *EASO COI Portal*. Priorities for EASO in terms of production have been COI in support of country guidance developments (see section 3.2), and of operational activities in support of Member States (e.g. Italy and Greece).

In 2019, the COI network approach was further implemented by way of organising COI meetings with EU+ countries' network members, including two COI strategic network meetings and two MedCOI steering group meetings. A number of workshops and seminars were also held on specific countries of origin, regions or relevant COI themes, namely: Accessibility to healthcare; Afghanistan; Eritrea; Ethiopia; Iran; Iraq; Libya; Pakistan; Palestine; Russia; Syria; Ukraine; Venezuela and Colombia (co-organised with IGC); and West Africa.

In addition, EASO organised one national common portal administrator meeting on the EASO COI Portal. Within the specialist networks, national COI researchers share information on COI needs, on recent and upcoming national COI products and on fact-finding missions, in order to avoid duplication and overlapping of efforts.

On the topics of healthcare and medical treatments in third countries, EASO continued with the transfer of the **MedCOI** project activities. MedCOI was initiated and implemented in 2010 by project teams in the Netherlands and Belgium under EU funds, with the aim of improving access to medical COI for national migration and asylum authorities in Europe. During 2019, EASO was in the third stage of taking over this project, and in this period, EASO increased its capacity to process individual MedCOI requests from EU+ countries, involving a worldwide network of local medical contacts. EASO onboarded specialised medical expertise in order to guarantee quality of the services, and a platform for the exchange of healthcare information on countries of origin between EU+ states.

Cooperation with civil society experts in the field of COI has also continued throughout 2019, with involvement in several COI-related meetings, workshops and a conference on COI methodology. Civil society actors specialised in the field of COI were consulted and have been invited to contribute to EASO COI production as reviewers.



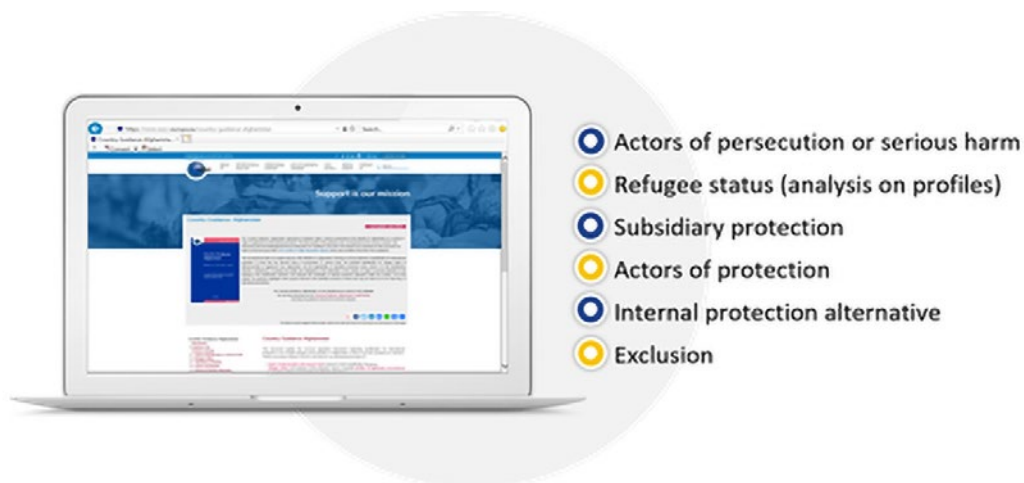
© European Union (Peter Biro), The ruins of the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in Mosul's Old Town on the western banks of the Tigris. From here ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the IS Caliphate in June 2014. Mosul's Old Town was retaken in July 2017, Photo taken on 18 July 2018

3.2 Country guidance

The methodology for the development, review and update of country guidance was consolidated; reinforcing a framework for collaboration between EU+ countries, with valuable input from the European Commission and UNHCR.

- | New publications on Country Guidance: Nigeria (February 2019) and Country Guidance Iraq (June 2019).
- | First update of country guidance successfully completed, with the publication of the Country Guidance: Afghanistan in June 2019.

Following the publication of the pilot *Country Guidance: Afghanistan* in June 2018, EASO went on to support EU+ countries in producing common analysis and guidance on two new countries of origin: the *Country Guidance: Nigeria* issued in February 2019, followed by the publication of *the Country Guidance: Iraq* in June 2019. In the standard format of country guidance, both documents provide an in-depth assessment of the situation in the particular country of origin, looking into the international protection needs of applicants in the legal framework of the Qualification Directive.



The first update of country guidance was also completed in June 2019, with the publication of *the Country Guidance: Afghanistan*. This update focused on the sections ‘Article 15(c) Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU)’, ‘Internal protection alternative’ and the assessment of the profile ‘Individuals of Hazara ethnicity’.

In these processes, EASO coordinated and facilitated the work of the Country Guidance Network of senior policy officials from EU+ countries. Their collaboration was further supported by the valuable input of the European Commission and UNHCR. The work on country guidance involved the organisation of five country-specific network meetings and one strategic meeting of the Country Guidance Network; two surveys on national caseload, policy and practice; and five written consultations with the network. Three Drafting Teams of selected national experts were set up and coordinated, and a total of nine Drafting Team meetings organised throughout the year.

Another important development was the consolidation of the country guidance methodology, approved by the EASO Management Board in June 2019.

EASO is also looking into establishing new user-friendly ways of communicating the available country guidance to the reader. Their content is now available in interactive html format on the EASO website (*to see latest available documents, visit <https://www.easo.europa.eu/country-guidance>*).

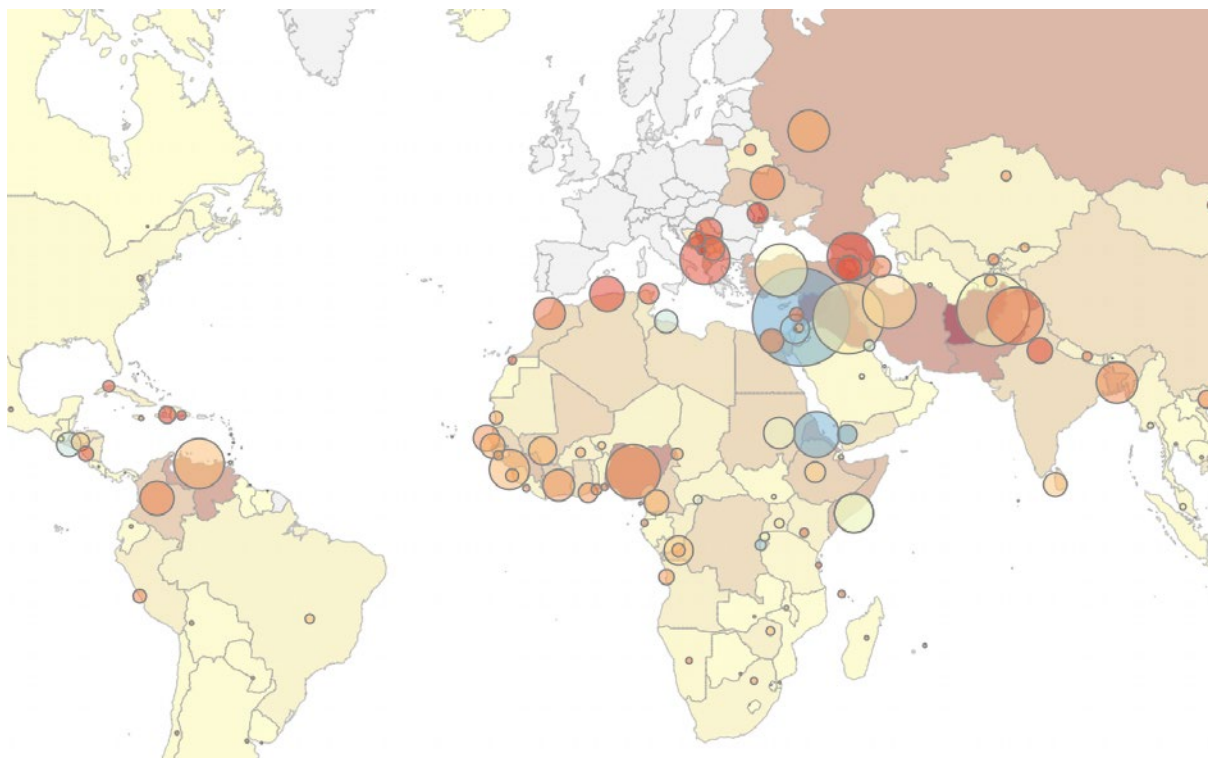
The work on country guidance continues in 2020, with the development of country guidance on Syria and the update of the country guidance on Afghanistan and Iraq.

3.3 EASO data hub

| EASO Data Hub manages complex and strategic operational data and information allowing EASO to monitor and analyse the asylum situation in the EU+, as well as operational support provided by EASO.

| The Data Hub also produces Operational Analyses that quantify operational support provided by EASO.

EASO’s Data Hub manages a complex array of data and information allowing EASO to monitor and analyse the asylum situation in the EU+, as well as the operational support provided by EASO. To this end, as part of the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS), EU+ countries (Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) share harmonised statistics with EASO on important topics such as first-instance determination, the functioning of the Dublin system, the nature and extent of the reception population and numbers of appeals. The Data Hub receives these statistics, often on a weekly basis, and processes them into visually appealing dashboards that can be accessed across EASO and also by the EU+ countries who originally shared the data – hence creating a unified body of information for situational awareness and the monitoring of EASO’s operational response. These important statistics are routinely combined with other data shared by the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex), together with data downloaded from multiple other sources, so that EASO analysts, researchers and managers have all the most up-to-date information at their fingertips in near-to-real time. In the interests of stimulating an informed public discourse, in 2019 many of these statistics were visualised on [EASO’s Latest Asylum Trends page](#) and [EASO’s Annual Report on the asylum situation](#).



In 2019, EASO visualised asylum data each month on its public Latest Asylum Trends page

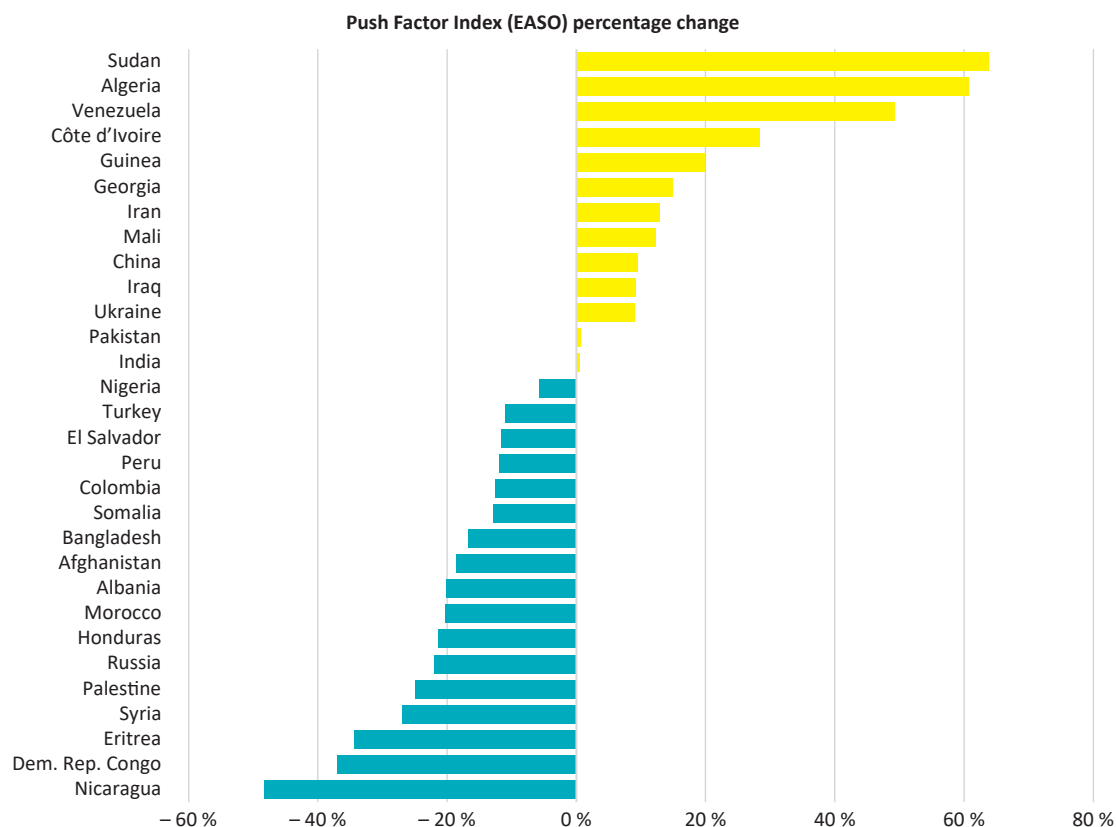
EASO's Data Hub is also responsible for managing data collected during EASOs own operations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Malta. In this case, statistics on the numbers of experts deployed under the EASO banner, and the number of cases supported by these experts are key indicators of the efficacy of EASOs operational response. Moreover, they allow EASO to understand in more detail the asylum situation in host Member States for the purpose of needs assessments. In 2019, the Data Hub used these data to produce Operational Analyses that demonstrated, for example, that EASO supported the registration of half of all asylum applications lodged in Greece in 2019, and more than 70 % of those lodged in Cyprus.

3.4 Research programme on early warning and root causes

| EASO produced five Early Warning Reports in 2019, which were hosted on the EU's platform for Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements.

| In December 2019, EASO also hosted the first meeting of the Advisory Group on Early Warning in which participating EU+ countries agreed to share with each other details of their own work on early warning, and considered possibilities for the future integration of these projects towards a consolidated European approach.

According to Article 9(3) of the EASO Regulation 439/2010, EASO should make use of existing early warning systems and mechanisms and, if necessary, set up an early warning system for its own purposes. To this end, EASOs research programme uses advanced technology to monitor the situation in countries of origin and transit and produce a 'big data' estimation of push factors around the globe. Specifically, internet search terms and near-to-real-time monitoring of conflict and disruptive events in countries of origin and transit are combined to model and forecast individual displacement events and ultimately forecast the arrival to the EU+ of populations in need of protection. To analyse these big data, EASO employs a type of Artificial Intelligence called *machine learning* to uncover hidden correlations and reveal what type of events preceded displacements and arrivals in the EU+. In 2019, this information was frequently used as a framework for discussing the future, and it formed one element of EASO's early warning tool box, so that EU+ countries can be prepared for any sudden influxes that may cause particular pressure on asylum and reception services.



EASO's research program uses big data to monitor conflict and disruptive events in countries of origin and transit, and create an index of 'push factors' for the purpose of planning and preparedness.

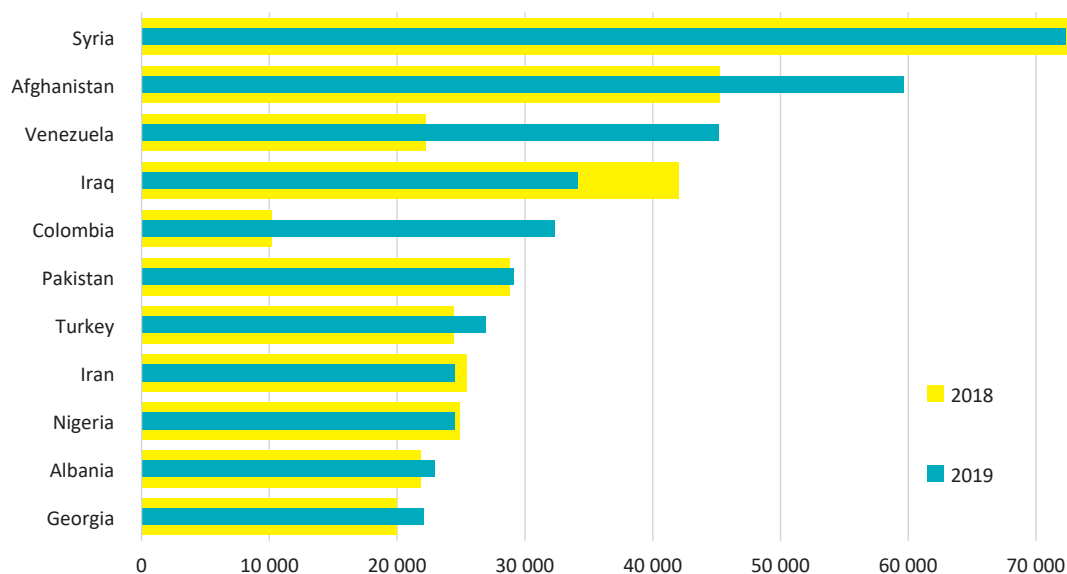
In 2019, EASO produced five Early Warning Reports that were disseminated to EU+ countries, EASO's Management Board, and the European Commission. These reports were hosted on the EU's [platform for Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements](#). EASO's work on early warning added much value to the debate on the extent to which asylum related migration can be forecasted and as a result, in October 2019, EASO was invited to present its methodology at the High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration, and several conferences in EU+ countries on the same topic. Finally, in December 2019, EASO hosted the first meeting of the Advisory Group on Early Warning in which participating EU+ countries agreed to share with each other details of their own work on early warning and examined how such projects could in the future be joined together into a consolidated European approach

3.5 Strategic analysis

| EASO analysts continued to publish monthly Latest Asylum Trends, together with 10 Analytical Briefs.

| A scenario analysis was also conducted on the future of international protection in the EU+.

EASO analysts have the task of sieving through all available data and information to fully understand the asylum situation and the implementation of the CEAS, and then deliver clear concise messages to a very broad range of stakeholders and decision-makers. First, to encourage an evidence informed public discourse and ensure that journalists, researchers and policymakers have up-to-date information on the numbers of asylum applications being lodged in the EU+, in 2019 the team published each month the ever-popular [Latest Asylum Trends](#) and contributed chapters to many different publications such as [EASO's Annual Report on the Asylum Situation](#) and [Frontex's Risk Analysis for 2019](#). At the same time, EASO's Analytical Brief was delivered to multiple European fora such as the Justice and Home Affairs Council and the Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum (SCIFA). EASO also contributed valuable analyses each week to the migration activation of the EU's [Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements](#).



As a forward thinking endeavour, analysis needs to do more than just talk about past events – indeed decision-makers spend much more time planning for the future. To address this need, in 2019 the Strategic Analysis team partnered with Z-punkt, a well-known strategic foresight company, to conduct a scenario exercise on the future of international protection in the EU+ in 2030. Using surveys and workshops EASO brought together expertise from academia, NGOs, the European Commission plus UNHCR, IOM, OECD, the JRC, EU+ countries, Frontex and Europol, to identify five very different possibilities for the future. A methodology for systematically exploring possibilities, and stretching the thinking of practitioners and decisions makers alike, the exercise provided a coherent framework for making sense of an increasingly complex world.

3.6 Information and documentation system

| EASO's Information and Documentation System (IDS) is an online platform that aims to provide a single point of comprehensive and up to date information on the organisation of EU+ countries' asylum and reception systems in terms of policies and practices, relevant legislation and jurisprudence, as well as an overview of the practical functioning of all key aspects of the CEAS.

| The publicly available EASO case law database provides timely and accurate information on new jurisprudence, with more than 700 cases registered.

The IDS platform, as a factual, legal and case-law database on national, Union and international asylum instruments offers a comprehensive overview and accurate descriptions of asylum legislation and practices in 31 EU+ countries, following the key stages of the asylum process, including: access to procedures, Dublin Procedure, first-instance determination, second instance determination, reception, detention, forms of protection, return, resettlement and humanitarian admission schemes. IDS is accessible via login to registered users from EU+ countries' asylum administrations (currently from more than 50 national authorities). The system addresses specific EU+ countries' information needs thanks to easy access to comprehensive information of interest to them, updated on a regular basis, validated by the relevant stakeholders and meeting quality standards in referencing and sourcing. This adds value by meeting the challenge of gaining a wide range, up to date and easily-consultable overview of the state of play of national asylum systems across EU+ countries and at EU+ level as such. IDS Advisory Group members notified on several occasions that information from IDS is highly relevant when preparing EU overviews on laws, policies and practices in order to compare and contrast national context.

A dedicated project between EASO and Frontex/ EBCG's online return platform *IRMA* creates additional synergies between the two systems on cross-cutting matters between asylum and return.

Case-law resources have been organised in a publicly available EASO case-law database providing timely and accurate information on new jurisprudence by managing and storing case-law relating to the implementation of the CEAS at national and European level (Court of Justice of the European Union and the

European Court of Human Rights). This was particularly timely with more and more cases reaching the appeal stage at EU+ level and the need for an easy to use overview along a standard format of the national jurisprudence.

The culture of collaboration in the area of information sharing is further promoted and enhanced with the EASO query system, that allows EU+ countries to post written questions and receive replies concerning practical aspects of the CEAS and other matters related to asylum policies and practices in the EU+ of interest to asylum administrations. The query system provides consolidated replies to thematic specific questions within a short timeframe, where EASO drafts high content-related summary reports with the main findings from the query supplemented with additional contextual information. Synergies are enhanced with ongoing communication and cooperation (Query Cluster) with other stakeholders administering query systems – IGC, EMN and GDISC.

3.7 Annual report on the situation of asylum in the EU

- | Annual Report accessed by over 6 200 readers.
- | Over 620 reference materials consulted and included in the bibliography.
- | 24 language versions of the Executive Summary.

The EASO Annual report on the situation of asylum in the European Union 2018 was adopted by EASO's Management Board in June 2019.

The report provides a comprehensive overview of developments at European level and the level of national asylum systems. Based on a wide range of different sources, the report looks into main statistical trends and analysis changes in EU+ countries with regard to their legislation, policies and practices, as well as national case-law. The report serves the purpose of having objective information and evidence-based analysis on the situation of asylum, reflecting relevant developments of key importance in the reference year. Whilst the report focuses on key aspects of the CEAS, it often makes necessary references to the broader migration and fundamental rights context. As part of that report, EASO makes a comprehensive comparative analysis with the aim of improving the quality, consistency and effectiveness of the CEAS.



At a time of dynamic developments and a lively debate on asylum and migration matters, fact-based and objective reporting is of fundamental importance, preventing misconceptions and facilitating constructive dialogue and objective conclusions. Per established methodology, in an effort to capture developments in an integrative, synthetic way, an attempt is made to include a diversity of perspectives eliciting input from a multiplicity of actors, who -in different capacities- are involved in the area of asylum. To this end, apart from constantly monitoring developments by performing desk research throughout the reference year looking into already existing sources, the team drafting the EASO Annual Report has opened up a number of input processes, meant to feed into the report, always in consultation with key partners, including UNHCR and the European Migration Network, academia and think tanks. Contributions to the annual report were specifically sought from civil society, resulting in contributions from 27 organisations. The overall bibliography of the report lists over 620 materials consulted during the drafted process.

The report can also be consulted online in a user-friendly and attractive format, including an executive summary of the main findings available in 24 European languages.

4. Training

4.1 EASO training curriculum

EASO Training Curriculum

A common vocational training system covering core aspects of the asylum procedure. It includes a blended learning methodology, combining e-learning, and face-to-face sessions, with a theoretical and practical approach.

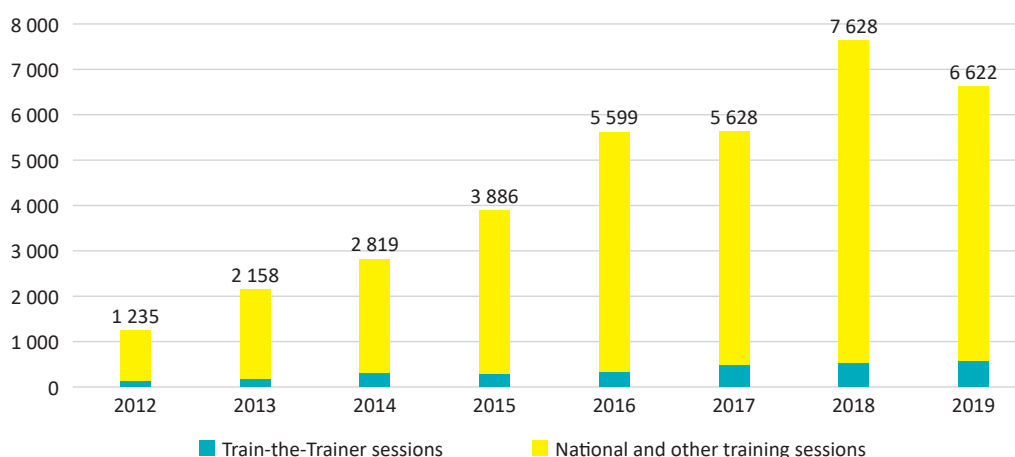
EASO continued to consolidate its training curriculum with new and updated training material, which responds to new developments and changes in the EU asylum field.

- | 6 622 participants trained in annual train-the-trainers sessions organised directly by EASO, and in national training sessions organised by the Member States.
- | 421 national sessions delivered in EU+ and third countries.
- | Development of 3 new training modules and upgrades of 2 training modules.

Three training modules were completed in 2019 as part of the consolidation process: MedCOI (Medical country of origin Information); Country of origin information (COI); and Management in the asylum context. New training modules were also developed on reception for vulnerable persons; the registration of applications for international protection; and the upgrading of the modules on evidence assessment and exclusion. EASO maintained close consultations with EU+ countries in order to monitor and analyse their training needs and training plans.

Train-the-trainer sessions have a multiplier effect, where on average, each participant may in turn train 12 participants at the national level. Throughout the year, 39 train-the-trainer sessions on 21 different modules, were delivered at the EASO Headquarters in Malta (23); at the regional level in Rome (4) and Athens (4); and at the national level in Germany (6), Belgium (1) and the Netherlands (1). 556 asylum officials participated in these train-the-trainer sessions, representing an increase of 6 % on 2018.

Participations in training curriculum from 2012 to 2019



The overall participation in EASO Training Curriculum sessions (train-the-trainer and national) amounted to 6 622 participations. The core modules on *Inclusion*, *Interview Techniques* and *Evidence Assessment* remained the three most popular modules, attracting 54 % of total participations. The reason why these modules remain so popular with participants derives from the fact that knowledge on qualification for

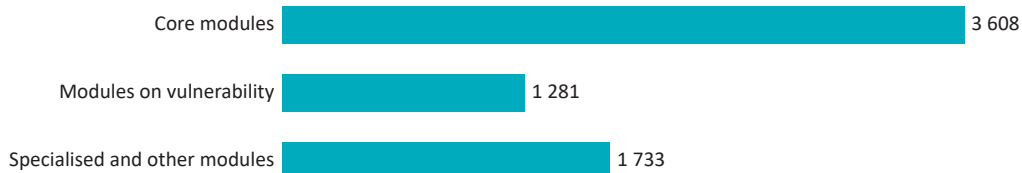
international protection, techniques for interviews with asylum seekers, and the methodology for evidence assessment, are fundamental for an efficient asylum system in line with the CEAS.

The second most popular modules focus on applicants with special needs. This is a trend observed in the past years. In 2019, the *Interviewing Vulnerable Persons*

module ranked fourth (559 participations), followed by *Interviewing Children* (480 participations), and *Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation* (393 participations). Moreover, the *Trafficking in Human Beings* module attracted an increase in the participation rate when compared to previous years (+ 191 %).

Another observation regarding the implementation of the training curriculum concerns the participation in EASO specialised knowledge modules. The steepest increase in the number of persons trained was observed for the *End of Protection* module (+ 530 % vs 2018) and *Inclusion Advanced* (+ 262 %). Furthermore, the use of the *Reception* module increased to 511 participations in 2019, up from 317 in 2018 (+ 61 %).

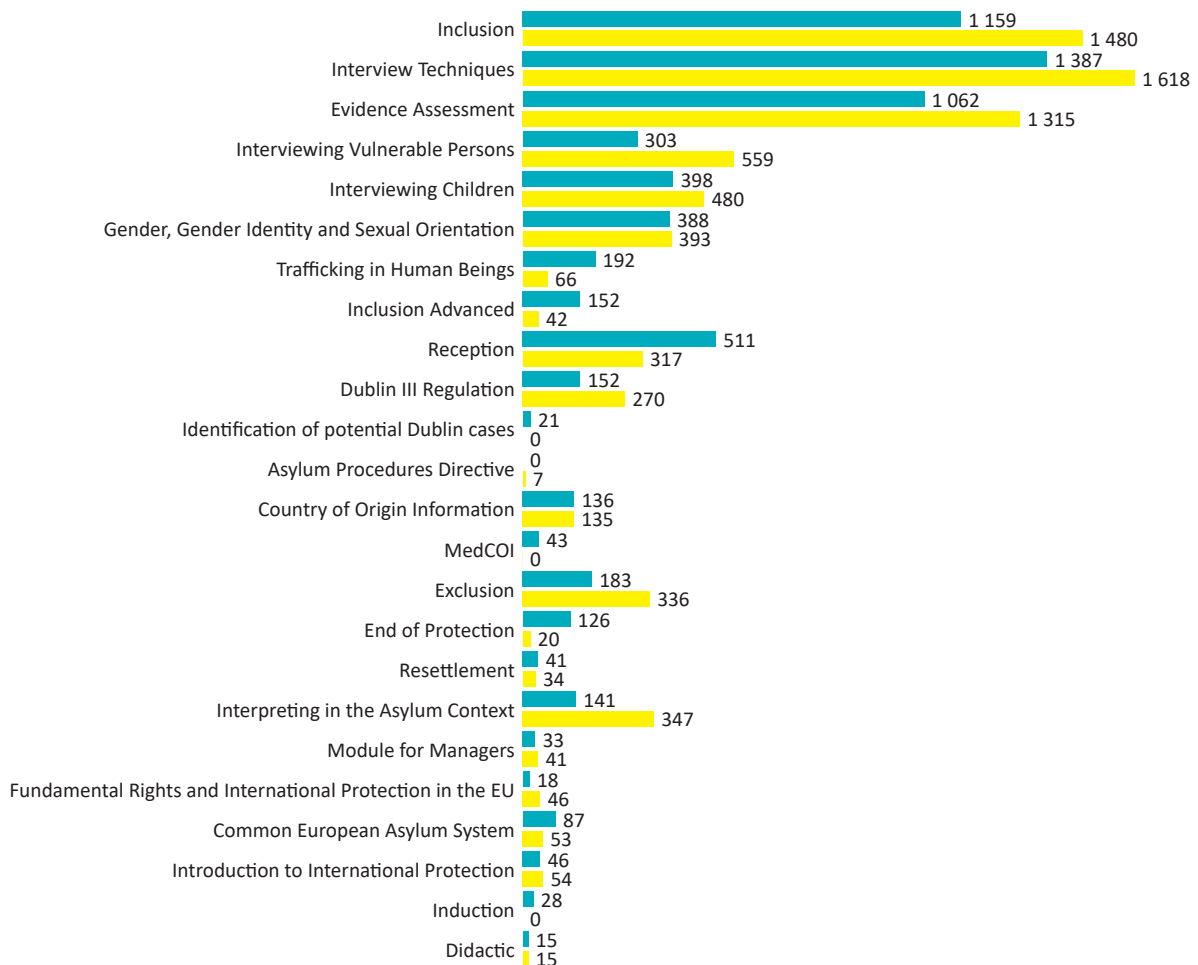
Participation in training curriculum in 2019



EASO also continued its collaboration with third countries. In total, 16 different EASO training modules were used in the framework of the external dimension. For the first time, EASO trained asylum authorities from Egypt, within a broader project aimed at supporting Egypt in the establishment of its asylum system.

EASO also ensured training for its own staff on the training curriculum modules *Introduction to International Protection* and the *Common European Asylum System*.

Number of participations in EASO Training Curriculum modules in 2019



4.2 Certification and accreditation

The European Sectoral Qualification Framework for Asylum and Reception Officials (ESQF), developed in 2019, establishes a framework for the extensive mapping of job tasks for asylum officials and the identification of the knowledge, skills and competences required by officials to perform their tasks (occupational standards), including the required learning (educational standards).

The Certification and Accreditation Working Group (CAWG) met on several occasions in 2019 to map out occupational and educational standards for asylum and reception officials into a European Sectoral Qualification Framework for Asylum and Reception Officials (ESQF), which was validated by Member States by the end of the year.

As a reference framework, the ESQF facilitates the comparison of training courses for asylum and reception officials across the EU, contributing to the harmonised implementation of the CEAS and training that supports interoperability. It can also be used in Member States' national training systems to assist in training design and to provide support to a range of human resource functions. The ESQF was designed with Member States for Member States, to enable fit for purpose training for asylum and reception officials. It is comprehensive, and captures all of the different job tasks, and the associated learning that is required by officials in every Member State, regardless of the national system.

- | Development of a European Sectoral Qualification Framework for Asylum and Reception Officials (ESQF)
- | Creation of a base-line for Quality Assurance in training and an action plan for the development of a Training Governance System (TGS)

Moreover, together with Member States, EASO created a baseline for quality assurance in training through the mapping of the EASO current system against the 10 quality standards of the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance (ESG 2015). As a result, an action plan for the development of a training-governance system was established. The CAWG addressed the different aspects of the Training Governance System, thereby actively contributing to the details of the first consolidated draft of the system which was concluded by the end of the year. The term quality assurance encompasses all activities within the

continuous improvement cycle which is mainly the result of the interaction between trainers, trainees, EASO and Member States. Quality assurance strives to ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose.

The training governance system will provide greater accountability and enhance the quality of EASO's training curriculum.

4.3 e-Learning and didactic support

EASO's blended learning methodology - combining online e-learning format and face-to-face sessions - is supported by the EASO Learning Management System (LMS) and its integrated registration application, ETIS (EASO Training Integration System).

In 2019, the EASO Learning Management System (LMS) continued to provide support to online train-the-trainer and national training sessions. During the year, 39 train-the-trainer and 421 national training sessions were opened. Overall, 6 994 enrolments were processed to LMS training sessions. Moreover, the content of 20 training modules were built on the LMS, including new modules, updated modules and translated ones.

- | Technical meetings held internally and across EU Agencies to exchange good practices & inform EASO's decisions on the future ICT infrastructure supporting e-Learning.
- | Making available new, updated and translated training content by building 20 modules on the EASO LMS.
- | Technical meetings, internally and across EU Agencies to exchange good practices and inform EASO's decisions on the future ICT infrastructure supporting e-Learning.

During 2019, EASO further improved on its e-Learning experience by taking into consideration new ICT developments and enhanced learning methodologies.

In February 2019, EASO hosted a technical meeting for e-learning administrators with participation from several EU agencies. Participants exchanged good practices on the infrastructure and administration of the LMS and helped inform EASO's decision on its future ICT infrastructure supporting e-Learning.

A survey was also launched amongst all EASO LMS users for their views on the LMS. On the basis of the feedback received, EASO opted to maintain the existing solution of Open-Source Platform – namely Moodle – for the EASO LMS and on-board the EASO LMS in EASO’s own technical infrastructure.

In December 2019, EASO also launched a new open call for tender for the online authoring of the training content to be built into EASO’s LMS. This new call included specifications on enhanced quality assurance and the use of most up-to-date tools for the development of the online content.

4.4 Other training support

In 2019, EASO developed three ad hoc training plans; two with Spain and one with Malta. In Spain, this plan contributed to the training of authorities in asylum and reception. This was necessary due to the very high number of asylum seekers arriving in the Iberian Peninsula, which in the second half of 2019 recorded the highest number of applications in Europe, especially applicants from Latin American countries. Through these ad hoc training plans, 50 ad hoc sessions (exceeding the eight forecasted) were organised, reaching 746 participants.

Within the framework of the ad hoc training plan to Malta, which ended in June 2019, seven participants from the Office of the Refugee Commissioner underwent training in the EASO core modules.

5. Asylum support

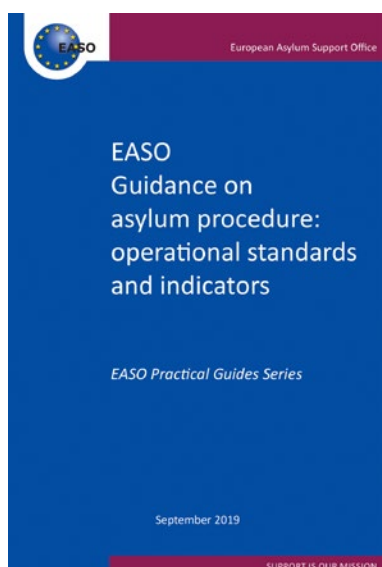
5.1 Asylum processes

Launch of two practical tools on asylum processes

- | EASO Practical guidance on Operational Standards and Indicators for the Asylum Procedure (published in September 2019);
- | EASO App on the core Practical Guides: Personal Interview, Evidence Assessment, and Qualification for International Protection.

EASO continued to effectively engage in practical cooperation with EU+ countries in all activities relevant to the work on asylum processes, including through the work of the EASO Asylum Processes Network. Two thematic meetings of the national contact points (NCPs) were organised in 2019. The thematic meeting on *Withdrawal of international protection with geographical focus*, was held in Malta on 11-12 April 2020, where the participants discussed in particular the application of cessation clauses in relation to ceased circumstances. Following discussions in the EASO Management Board, another thematic meeting was organised on *Backlog Management* in Athens in October 2019, with a focus on advantages and limitations of different ‘tracking’ systems and effective monitoring systems.

In November 2019, the EASO Asylum Processes Network gathered in Brussels for its annual meeting, where it discussed guarantees for applicants in special procedures. The event was held back-to-back with the EASO Consultative Forum.



Two products related to asylum processes were developed and published in 2019. The EASO Practical guidance *Operational Standards and Indicators for the Asylum Procedure* was published in September 2019, following its adoption by the EASO Management Board. The guidance is designed to serve as a tool to strengthen or further develop national asylum procedures and to ensure effective implementation of key provisions of Directive 2013/32/EU of 26 June 2013 (APD) and to support process improvement initiatives. Additionally, the guidance can serve as a reference for the development of monitoring frameworks and for conducting self-assessments of national procedures on the quality of asylum procedure systems.

EASO also launched the EASO app on the core practical guides: personal interview, evidence assessment, and qualification for international protection.

Two Quality Matrix thematic reports were published on: *Quality Management* and on the *Withdrawal of international protection*. An update of the Quality Matrix report on personal interview was initiated and is planned for publication in 2020.

The development of the *EASO Guidance on the use of country of origin information by case officers* was also initiated, including the development of the EASO Practical tool on registration (lodging of applications for international protection). With regard to the quality-management related activities, a presentation was delivered by EASO on the EASO Quality Assurance Tool to the Italian asylum authorities and to the UNHCR.

5.2 Practical cooperation networks

Promoting exchange of expertise among Member States

- | Supporting practical cooperation among Member States through the respective work of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities, the Network of Dublin Units, and the Vulnerability Expert Network.
- | Thematic expert meetings on topical issues in the areas of Reception, Dublin and Vulnerability.
- | Practical tools to assist Member States in the implementation of CEAS

In accordance with its overall objective to support Member States in enhancing their capacities to implement the CEAS, and to achieve convergence in the application of common standards, EASO continued to support Member States' practical cooperation through the respective work of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities, the Network of Heads of Dublin Units, and the Vulnerability Expert Network. Drawing on the priorities identified during these biannual network meetings in 2019, EASO developed and published seven practical tools intended to support the daily work of reception, Dublin and vulnerability officers.

These tools provide guidance, for example, on the best interests of the child; the age assessment process; a report on asylum procedures for children; a practical guide on the Dublin Regulation – interview and evidence assessment; the development of the guidance on the Dublin procedure: operational standards and indicators; the conduct of personal interviews and evidence assessment along the Dublin III Regulation, as well as recommendations on Dublin transfers.

In 2019, practical cooperation activities were encouraged through the organisation of various thematic meetings on the topics of age assessment; trafficking in human beings and international protection; children under Dublin; the use of DublinNet; information provision in reception; and about the impact of long stays in reception centres. The thematic meetings served to identify good practices and common existing challenges and to streamline efforts in improving practices across EU+ countries.

Exchange programmes in the area of reception and Dublin were organised through five study visits which facilitated the exchange of practical knowledge and a critical friend review among peers, sharing their experiences among 29 representatives of Dublin Units and reception authorities from 10 EU+ countries. The topics of the study visits were Children under Dublin, the integrated approach in arrival centres, and the impact of long stays in reception.

Quarterly periodic newsletters were shared with the Network of Reception Authorities and the Network of Dublin Units, providing timely updates on changes in legislation, case-law, as well as organisational matters and data analysis in the area of reception and on the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

5.2.1 EASO Network on Vulnerable Groups

Consolidated efforts in mainstreaming vulnerability in the area of asylum:

- | Meetings of the EASO Vulnerability Experts Network.
- | Thematic expert meetings on age assessment, and on identifying and assessing the international protection needs in cases of victims of trafficking in human beings.
- | Practical tools to assist Member States in the implementation of CEAS

Since its inception, EASO has been supporting Member States in mainstreaming vulnerability along the full asylum chain to foster the convergence of EU standards in the identification and support to applicants with special needs. Actions such as identification, special needs assessment and responses through referral have been mainstreamed in all EASO activity domains such as training, quality support and COI, as well as operations.

In 2019, EASO continued to focus its activities on children, including unaccompanied children, highlighting the link between asylum and trafficking in human beings and identified new areas of activity such as mental health and staff welfare in asylum and reception. In doing so, EASO sustained its cooperation with the European Commission and sister agencies, including CEPOL, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, Fundamental Rights Agency and Frontex, together with UNHCR and IOM amongst others, in relation to vulnerable applicants.

Established in 2018, the EASO Vulnerability Experts Network (VEN) has grown into an important instrument to streamline Member States' expertise in identifying priorities and setting objectives in addressing vulnerability in asylum. Composed of representatives from EU+ countries, the European Commission, EU agencies, international organisations and civil society representatives; the VEN provides a unique platform for the discussion on challenges and exchange of good practices among stakeholders with different mandates and responsibilities. A meeting of the VEN Advisory Group took place in September 2019. The priorities proposed by the Advisory Group were discussed during the second Annual Conference of the VEN that took place in Malta in October 2019, and streamlined into specific thematic areas to become the focus of work in 2020. A meeting of the VEN steering group, held back-to-back to the VEN

Annual Conference, decided on the priority areas and activities to be addressed in the VEN 2020 annual plan.

In 2019, two thematic meetings were held in the area of vulnerability. A thematic meeting on age assessment was organised by EASO in cooperation with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in February 2019 in Spain, and provided a platform for discussion on the challenges and good practices in age assessment among Member States and relevant EU actors. A second thematic meeting on the nexus between trafficking in human beings and international protection was held in April 2019 in Malta. A set of recommendations were put forward at the meeting to improve the identification and assessment of international protection needs in cases of victims of trafficking.

In 2019, EASO developed three practical support tools in the area of vulnerability. The *EASO Practical Guide on the Best Interests of the Child in asylum procedures* was published in February 2019 to support competent Member State authorities in applying the principle of the best interest of the child and enhancing the guarantees within asylum procedures for children. The guidance is complemented with an overview of the terminology, a comprehensive check-list, as well as relevant policy, guidance and legal framework documents. In an effort to support EU+ countries in mainstreaming child-related issues in the asylum procedures, EASO published the *Report on Asylum Procedures for Children*, which presents national practices and policies in this area, identifies gaps as well as good practices across EU+ countries, and provides key recommendations to strengthen the protection of children in EU territory. The *EASO Animation on age assessment* provides EU+ countries' authorities with a visual tool to guide the implementation of the principle of the best interest of the child when assessing the need for age examination and the design and undertaking of age assessment.



In response to a new priority set by the Vulnerability Expert Network to support staff welfare in the field of asylum and reception, EASO produced the *Mapping Report on Staff Welfare Initiatives Introduced by*

Agencies Working in the Field of Asylum in Europe and Beyond. The report maps good practices and gaps in the area across the EU+ to help identify how EASO can play a role in assisting authorities to support their staff in a more efficient way.

5.2.2 EASO Network of Dublin Units

Support to Member States in the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation, ensuring enhanced compliance with the CEAS:

- | Steering Group meetings of the EASO Network of Dublin Units.
- | Thematic expert meetings on Children under Dublin procedure, and on DubliNet, in collaboration with eu-LISA.
- | Exchange programme, including visits organised on the topic of children under the Dublin procedure.
- | Periodic newsletters shared with members of the Network of Dublin Units.

Pursuant to the European agenda on migration, EASO has been supporting EU Member States in the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation; to increase the number of Dublin transfers, reduce delays in the transfer process, consistently apply the legal clauses related to family reunification, as well as make broader and more regular use of the discretionary clauses intended to relieve the pressure on Member States situated at the EU external border.

The main instrument for providing a forum for practical cooperation and communication between national Dublin Units and for discussions on current needs and priorities within the Dublin context has been the **EASO Network of Dublin Units** which was set up in 2016. Following its work programme for 2019, the network continued to organise discussions at senior and expert levels, issued four quarterly update reports within the network, and facilitated the communication of specific Dublin-related queries through the dedicated electronic platform of the network. The network continued the development of practical guides to support the Member States.

Two steering group meetings of the EASO Network of Dublin Units were held in 2019, serving as a forum for the exchange of information about the practical challenges that Member States face in the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation. The 6th steering group meeting was held in March 2019, in

Brussels. Representatives from EU+ countries discussed practices in the implementation of specific aspects of the Dublin III Regulation such as the chain rule, information requests and re-examination requests. The 7th steering group meeting was held in October 2019 in Malta and was attended by representatives of EU+ countries as well as the

European Commission, EU-Lisa and UNHCR. The discussion focused on practices related to ad hoc disembarkations, re-examination and information requests, as well as on positive experiences regarding bilateral administrative arrangements and delegating liaison officers to other Member States.



7th Steering Group Meeting of the EASO Network of Dublin Units 14-15 October 2019, Malta

A thematic expert meeting on *Children Under Dublin Procedure* was held in May 2019 in Malta and served to identify key challenges faced by caseworkers in the areas of age assessment, family tracing and evidence assessment, as well as to put forward recommendations on addressing them. Another thematic expert meeting on *DubliNet* was held in cooperation with eu-LISA in September 2019 in Brussels. The discussion on the practical and technical challenges regarding the operation of DubliNet and the technical systems associated with the Dublin procedure served to provide an update on the latest developments regarding DubliNet on policy, technical and operational level.

A Dublin Exchange Programme was piloted in 2019 as a practical tool to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among EU+ countries' authorities. The exchange programme involved two visits to the Dublin Units of the host countries in the Netherlands (6-7 November) and Greece (13-14 November) by a total of 10 participating experts from, besides the host countries, Denmark, Romania and Spain. The topic of the 2019 exchange visits was *Children Under Dublin Procedure: best practices on safeguarding the best interest of children*. Both visits were evaluated by participants as successful in achieving a better understanding of projects, practices and initiatives in the field based on interaction with key stakeholders in the visited Member States.

EASO practical tools developed in 2019:

- | EASO Practical Guide on the Implementation of the Dublin III Regulation: Personal Interview and Evidence Assessment.
- | Recommendations of the EASO Network of Dublin Units and Dublin Transfers.
- | EASO Practical Guide on Dublin Regulation – Interview and Evidence Assessment.
- | EASO Guidance on Dublin Procedure: Operational Standards and Indicators.

EASO also finalised four practical tools in the area of Dublin. In support to Dublin practitioners to implement the Dublin III Regulation in their daily work, EASO published a *Practical Guide on the Implementation of Dublin III Regulation: Personal Interview and Evidence Assessment*. The tool provides guidance through the different elements of the conduct of a personal interview and evidence assessment in the context of the Dublin procedure, as well as references to legislation, relevant case-law and additional sources. The *EASO Guidance on Dublin Procedure: Operational Standards and Indicators* supports the technical operation of the Dublin Units by operationalising the existing legal provisions of the Dublin III Regulation and by setting a frame for

self-assessment. In addition, four periodic newsletters were shared with the Network of Dublin Units providing timely updates on changes in legislation, case-law, as well as organisational matters and data analysis on the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

5.2.3 EASO Network of Reception Authorities

Enhancing the quality of reception systems in the EU+, by building on the rich experience of the members of the Network of Reception Authorities:

- | Meetings of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities.
- | Thematic expert meetings on Information Provision in Reception, and on the Impact of long stays in reception centres.
- | Exchange programmes, including organised visits.
- | Periodic newsletters shared with members of the Network of Reception Authorities.

In line with the European agenda on migration, in 2019 EASO continued its work in the area of reception

providing support to EU+ countries by improving standards of reception conditions while reinforcing the fundamental rights of asylum seekers and paying attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. Through the Network of Reception Authorities, EASO continued to foster the exchange of information, experiences and best practices in reception systems; to bring together expertise and develop specific tools and guidance, including enhanced data collection in the field of reception within the framework of the CEAS.

The EASO Network of Reception Authorities met in Malta in June 2019 to discuss the latest developments at national and EU level in the field of information provision in reception, first- and second- line reception practices and transition towards integration, including working with 'challenging residents'.

A second meeting of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities was held in The Hague in December 2019 and was attended by high level representatives of the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands (COA) on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary. In addition to discussing the latest developments in the field of reception across EU+ countries and the priorities of the network for 2020, participants were acquainted with the Dutch Integrated approach in arrival centres for asylum seekers as a good model for Europe.



2nd Meeting of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities, 3-4 December, 2019, The Netherlands.

Two separate thematic workshops were organised on information provision in reception in May 2019, in Seville, Spain and on the impact of long stays in reception centres in October 2019 in Brno, Czechia. Participants at both workshops discussed good practices and challenges in the respective reception

areas as well as ways to foster improvement and the role that EASO could play in this process.

EASO organised three exchange visits for participants from eight EU Member States' reception authorities to facilitate first-hand exchange of knowledge and experience among them. The study visits to Slovakia in

April 2019 (Arrival Centre Humenne) and to the Netherlands in April 2019 (Arrival Centre Ter Apel) focused on the *integrated approach in arrival centres* while the visit to Norway in November 2019 (Nannestad Saerbol and Hobol reception centres) focused on the *impact of long stays in reception*.

In addition, four periodic newsletters were shared with the Network of Reception Authorities providing timely updates on changes in legislation, case-law, as well as organisational matters and the analysis of reception related data.

The EASO reception team was also active in supporting EASO operations and external dimension activities, for example, through dedicated outreach activities (contingency planning in Turkey, and Cyprus; guidance on reception conditions, including for unaccompanied minors for Cypriot, Greek, and Italian authorities; and reception best practices to Irish authorities) or observation visits on reception and vulnerability needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5.2.4 EASO Exclusion Network

The EASO Exclusion Network brings together contact points of EU+ States, engaged in EASO activities on matters related to exclusions from international protection.

- | Annual EASO Exclusion Network meeting on Syria.
- | Thematic Exclusion Network meeting on Social media and Exclusion.
- | Publication of EASO Exclusion screening tool on Afghanistan (limited).

A thematic expert meeting on *Social Media and Exclusion* took place in March 2019, in Brussels. A meeting of the national contact points (NCPs) of the EASO Exclusion Network was held in November 2019, in Malta, with a thematic focus on Syria.

Four periodic updates with statistics on national practices were issued in 2019.

Additionally, EASO developed and published an *Exclusion Screening Tool for Afghanistan*, and prepared an *Exclusion Screening Tool for Iraq*, to be launched in 2020.

In 2019, EASO reinforced its cooperation with the International Criminal Court and Eurojust, through participation and delivery of relevant presentations in

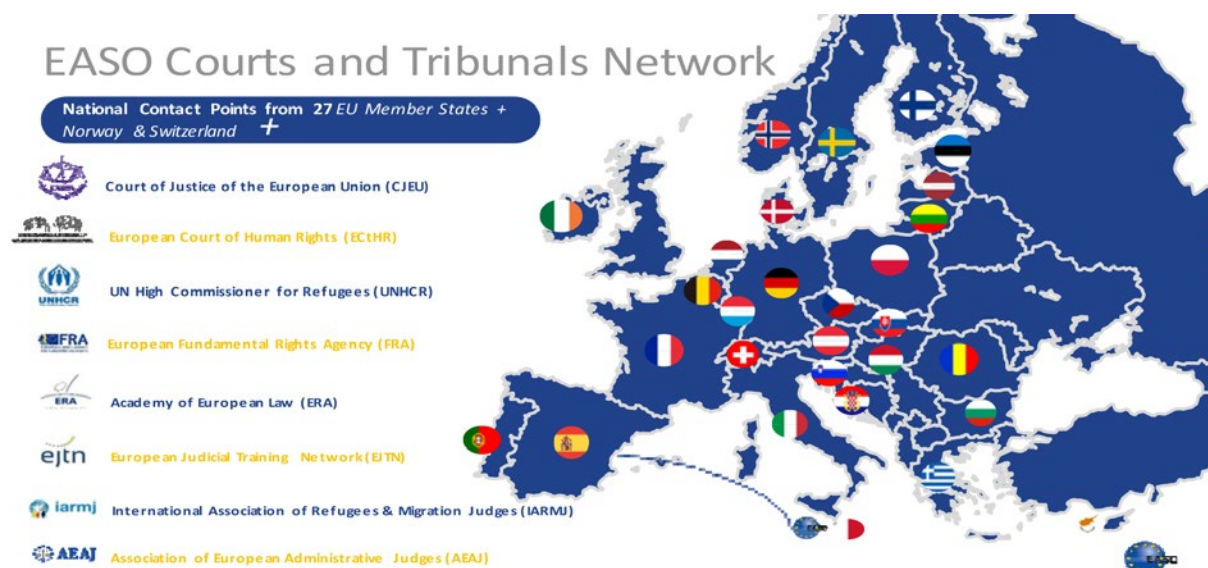
meetings. After a mission to Albania together with Frontex in December 2019, Frontex officials responsible for the Frontex Consultative Forum were invited to participate in the next exclusion network, following a discussion about the creation of a link between the two networks.

5.3 Cooperation with members of the courts and tribunals

EASO support to and cooperation with members of the courts and tribunals

- | 8th Annual Coordination and Planning Meeting (ACPM)
- | Publication developed as part of the Professional Development Series (PDS) on Legal standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.
- | First EASO Regional Workshop in German Language.

EASO supports members of courts and tribunals in the enhancement of quality standards and strives towards improving consistency in the implementation of the legal instruments of the CEAS. To that end, the EASO Network of Courts and Tribunals has been established and professional development series (PDS) materials and activities have been either developed, or implemented since 2013 for members of courts and tribunals, in full respect of the principle of judicial independence (Article 6 of the EASO Regulation). The cooperation consists of, inter alia, PDS materials for subsequent implementation in judicial training activities; collecting and exchanging jurisprudence and providing support to Member States within the context of support to operations, and other measures as required on an ad hoc basis.



The network has positively contributed to the development of the EASO professional development series for members of courts and tribunals. In addition, an increasing number of EASO professional development workshops have been organised as materials – on a greater array of subject matters – became available, with a very high overall satisfaction rate among participants. Since 2013, the network has been meeting every year at EASO Headquarters in Malta for its Annual Coordination and Planning Meeting (ACPM) in order to discuss strategic and thematic issues.

On 23 and 24 January 2020, the EASO Network of Courts and Tribunals Members held its 8th ACPM in Malta, during which it took stock of its achievements in 2019 and set out its work plan for 2020. The EASO Network of Courts and Tribunals is composed of judges and representatives of courts and tribunals from all EU+ countries, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), together with representatives of the Association of European Administrative Judges (AEAJ), the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges (IARMJ), the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the Academy of European Law (ERA), European Law Institute (ELI) and UNHCR.

In line with the methodology agreed with relevant stakeholders primarily with members of national courts and tribunals in 2015 (as amended since), EASO continued to advance the joint preparation of PDS in 2019, as well as their subsequent dissemination to relevant partners. In pursuance of its work in this area, efforts continued towards the development and advancement of materials for use in professional development activities for members of courts and tribunals. One publication was finalised over the course of 2019 as part of the EASO professional

development series. A judicial analysis, a Judicial Trainer's Guidance Note and Compilation of Jurisprudence on *Legal standards for the reception of applicants for international protection* was completed in 2019 (pending publication). This judicial analysis aims to put at the disposal of members of courts and tribunals a practical tool for understanding the provisions of the Reception Conditions Directive (recast) 2013/33/EU, which aims to achieve convergence across EU Member States by laying down common standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. The judicial analysis is primarily intended for members of courts and tribunals of EU Member States concerned with hearing appeals or reviewing decisions on issues pertaining to the reception of applicants for international protection. In addition, under the terms of a contract concluded with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges (IARLJ), a judicial analysis was reviewed and updated on *Exclusion from international protection and a Judicial Analysis on Article 15(c) Qualification Directive* was reviewed.

Throughout 2019, 461 members of courts of tribunals participated in EASO professional development activities compared to 264 in the previous year. This includes two external dimension activities, eight operational events and thirteen professional development meetings dealing with the following.

- Detention of applicants for international protection, pilot session (March 2019).
- Introduction to the CEAS (March 2019).
- Country of Origin Information (April 2019).
- Qualification for International Protection (May 2019).
- Asylum procedures and the principle of *non-refoulement* (June 2019).

- Detention of applicants for international protection (June 2019).
- Evidence and Credibility Assessment (July 2019).
- Regional workshop in German language, Leipzig (September 2019).
- Ending International Protection (September 2019).
- Exclusion from international protection (October 2019).
- Qualification for International Protection (November 2019).
- Regional workshop in Italian for members of the Italian judiciary (November 2019).
- Evidence and credibility assessment for the judges of the International Protection Administrative Court in Cyprus (November 2019).



In September 2019, EASO organised a Regional Workshop at the Federal Administrative Court of Germany in Leipzig. It was the first time that a Regional Workshop was held in the German language. Members of courts and tribunals from Germany, Austria and other EU Member States participated in this workshop and discussed current challenges for the CEAS using examples from the German and Austrian practice. The workshop covered topics such as the distinction between refugee protection and subsidiary protection, membership of a particular social group as reason for persecution, credibility assessment in cases of religious conversion and homosexuality, together with internal flight alternative and secondary movements of refugees. The

participants were presented with the EASO PDS pertaining to the topics covered and with the EASO material on Afghanistan through a presentation led by an EASO COI expert.

The second call for expression of interest for the EASO Judicial Trainers' Pool was launched in June 2019, following which 64 applications from EU+ members of courts and tribunals were received. The second meeting of the Selection Committee took place in October 2019 that admitted 37 new judicial trainers to the pool. As of the time of writing, 84 EASO Judicial Trainers are now in the EASO Judicial Trainers' Pool compared to 47 in the previous year.

6. Horizontal activities

6.1 Consultative forum and civil society

Consultative forum meetings:

- | Thematic meeting on Gender-based persecution (July 2019).
- | Annual Consultative Forum Plenary meeting on Initial steps in the Asylum Procedure (November 2019).

EASO continued to engage in a close dialogue with civil society through its consultative forum, EASO's civil society platform, and by means of electronic consultations on key documents of EASO.

The consultative forum met on two occasions in 2019. A thematic meeting on Gender-related persecution took place in July, followed by the consultative forum plenary meeting on initial steps in the asylum procedure, which was hosted in Brussels on 12 November 2019. Civil society organisations (CSOs) were closely involved in the preparation of both events, channelling their input through a public survey conducted with all consultative forum members, and through face- to-face consultations with several CSOs with expertise on identified topics. What stood out from previous years was the level of output from both meetings, where participants discussed and prioritised recommendations.

A series of workshops were also organised over the year, providing a platform for think tanks, academia, NGOs and CSOs to come together and contribute towards the EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU, and to discuss main trends in the field of asylum.

CSOs provided 122 contributions in response to consultations launched by EASO on key documents, including: the annual report on the situation of asylum 2018; the draft EASO work programme for 2020; the EASO annual general report 2018; and the judicial analysis on legal standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

Selected CSOs were also engaged in reference groups on training and practical tools. More than 30 CSOs participated in the advisory group of EASO's VEN, with

several other CSO experts having participated in COI meetings, workshops, and conferences, and provided expert contribution to the production of COI reports.

EASO itself actively participated in civil society networks, amongst them, the Frontex Consultative Forum, the Network of Practitioners on Civil Society Dialogue organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Migration Forum, and the Contact Group on Capacity Building and Supporting Human Rights Defenders organised by FRA and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

6.2 EASO communication and events

Social Media reach

EASO's social media presence continued to grow. A dramatic increase has been reported in Social Media reach, highlighted by Twitter platform reach of 8.4 million (+600% from 2018; +976% from 2017)

With a more targeted approach to its communications activities, EASO has continued to focus on tailoring its narrative to broader international policy developments in order to make EASO more relevant to public discourse. Combined with a heavy use of audiovisual and succinct, comprehensible content (moving away from technical-niche content) and an equal utilisation of social media and mass media (particularly news wires) as tools to reach a larger audience, EASO recorded a strong improvement in reach of its communication products. This was the second year of transition from technical-specialised communication to a strategy focusing on EASO's more 'sellable' activities, being those which make it more relevant to a broader audience. These include EASO's operations and its asylum trends/data products. This culminated in the finalisation of EASO's new communication strategy at the end of the year, to officially take effect in 2020.

In addition to the marked increase in reach, the increasing recognition of EASO was also manifest in an increase in press requests, queries from the general public, and physical visits to EASO itself. EASO was also much involved in coordinating its communication

with other JHA Agencies as well as the European Commission, in order to ensure synergistic narratives.

As EASO continues to grow, so have the number of events managed by EASO. To alleviate the administrative burden and ensure a continued response to the growing needs, new tools are being considered to facilitate the management of future events.

6.3 Stakeholder relations

Engagement with stakeholders

EASO maintained close relations with its stakeholders, in order to ensure the highest possible degree of cooperation, coordination and proper information flow. Meetings were held with key stakeholders, from bilateral meetings with Ministers, meetings organised by the EU Institutions, EU Agencies, the JHA Agencies Network, or the EU Agencies Network. Meetings were also held with International Organisations, including UNHCR, IOM, IGC and the ICMPD.

At its headquarters in Malta, EASO also hosted a range of visits, from high-level delegations to meetings of the EASO Management Board, representatives of civil society organisations, meetings of national contact points, and study visits, amongst others.

By participating in and organising an increasing number of strategic events and bilateral meetings with stakeholders at all levels, EASO expanded the visibility of EASO and its work, increased awareness of requirements and challenges faced, contributed knowledge and expertise for evidence-based policy and decision-making, and strengthened EASO's credibility, while consolidating existing relations with key stakeholders and building new ones.

Apart from its active participation in meetings of the JHA Agencies Network and the EU Agencies Network, which inter alia enabled a sharing of best practices in several sectors, EASO also continued to actively collaborate with other JHA Agencies through consultations on and contributions to documents, reports and products, such as in the development of training modules, practical guides, and joint reports.

Regular meetings continued to take place with UNHCR's liaison office to EASO in Malta, as well as the regular exchange of information. UNHCR was

consulted on various EASO products, in accordance with the EASO Regulation and the EASO-UNHCR Working Arrangement. In December 2019, EASO also actively participated in the Global Refugee Forum.



EASO also continued to increase its presence within the European Migration Network (EMN), through consistent participation and active engagement in the EMN national contact points and Steering Board Meetings and consultation processes.

Formalising cooperation:

- | Hosting Agreement signed between EASO and the Cypriot authorities on 19 September 2019, providing legal clarity to the status of EASO in Cyprus, including that of its staff and personnel.
- | Advanced discussions towards the conclusion of a Hosting Agreement for an EASO Operational Office in Greece (signed on 28 January 2020).
- | Working arrangement signed between EASO and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) with a view to establishing a cooperation framework on relevant areas of mutual work and interest.
- | EASO-Frontex 2019-2021 Cooperation Plan signed on 18 July 2019 in Helsinki. The Plan amended and replaced the previous Cooperation Plan based on the 2012 EASO-Frontex Working Arrangement and laid out a number of possible key actions in areas of cooperation such as operations, information and analysis, capacity-building (training) and also horizontal cooperation in areas such as fundamental rights, recruitment, procurement and logistics.

7. Governance

At its 31st meeting held in February 2019, the EASO Management Board appointed Ms Nina Gregori as the new Executive Director of EASO. Ms Gregori took up office in June 2019. At this same meeting, the Board also elected its new Chairperson, Dr David Costello, Member of the Board from Ireland, and elected Mikael Ribbenvik, Member of the Board from Sweden, as Deputy Chairperson.

In a further effort to strengthen the governance processes of EASO, on 26 November 2019, the Executive Director of EASO, Ms Nina Gregori presented a **new organisational chart ('organogram') for EASO** to the Management Board for its endorsement. The new structure came into effect on 1 January 2020 (refer to Annex A.I. below).

The restructuring was to reflect three priority areas identified for EASO: to strengthen EASO's operational role; intensify the training activities and professional development for asylum experts; and prove EASO's role as a true centre of knowledge and expertise on asylum with the production of guidance tools, and enhanced statistical, analytical and research work.

The three core activities built into three separate centres of expertise, knowledge and development: an operational support centre (C1); a training and professional development centre (C2); and an asylum knowledge centre (C3).

The new organisational structure also focuses on strengthening the Executive Office and its responsibilities covering corporate planning and reporting, legal affairs and data protection, internal control, risk management, and quality management.

An important and much welcomed step undertaken in 2019 was the re-establishment of the *legal function* within EASO, and plans for a further strengthening of its function through additional resources planned for 2020. Action was also taken to ensure compliance with the *Data Protection* Regulation. The new data protection processes envisaged under the future EUAA regulation will require added checks (in comparison to the current EASO Regulation) to ensure compliance with data protection principles.

EASO continues to strive for full compliance with the *internal control* principles, and performs regular assessments to measure the effectiveness and further improve on the efficiency of its internal control system. The implementation of the internal control framework is reinforced with the *ex post* controls

function, which contributes to the overall effectiveness of the internal control framework by conducting self-assessments and annual reviews, as prioritised in the annual *ex post* controls programme. In order to meet the expectation from the internal control framework, EASO has also developed a procedure on *risk management* in order to identify, assess and respond to potential issues that could affect the execution of EASO's activities and the achievement of its objectives.

With a focus on streamlining *quality management* across EASO's activities, measures were introduced as a response to requirements and principles stemming from the applicable framework, and in line with internal control principles.

EASO continues to work on implementing actions to address *audit findings* conducted by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the European Commission, and to monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations by the agreed deadlines. Priority is also given to *corporate planning, monitoring and reporting capabilities*, including forecasting, prioritisation and contingency planning exercises. A corporate security dimension will also be implemented in 2020.

EASO continued to work closely with its Management Board throughout the year, including through the introduction of measures designed to reinforce communication channels. Since June 2019, a procedure for quarterly reporting to the Management Board was established to keep track of progress towards predefined objectives across areas of governance, specifically: in the implementation of the EASO Work Programme; Human Resources; Staff Engagement; Internal Control; Procurement; and Budget and Finance. The first such report was presented to the Management Board in October 2019 in line with MB Decision No 53, which was later repealed by MB Decision 60.

In close consultation with the Chair and members of the EASO Management Board, the Executive Director has represented EASO in discussions with the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council in the context of discussions on the discharge in respect of the implementation of EASO's budget for the financial year 2018. In the run-up to the decision taken by the European Parliament in May 2020, the Executive Director openly engaged with members of the European Parliament on corrective measures taken by EASO in follow-up to the 2017

discharge as well as to report on the implementation and progress of recommendation stemming from the European Court of Auditors report for the financial year 2018.

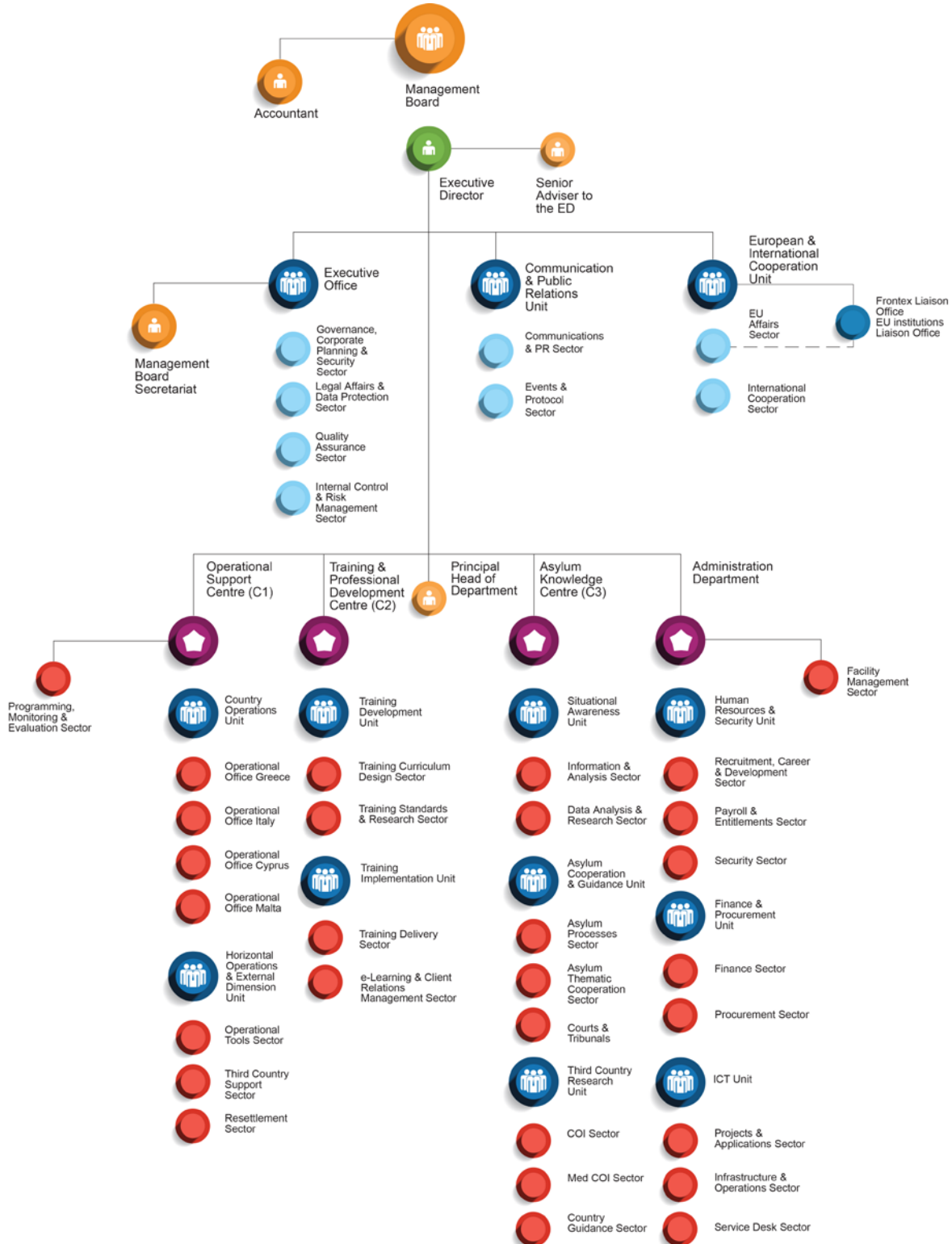
*** At the time of writing, the European Parliament decided at its meeting of 14 May 2020 to grant EASO discharge in respect to its budget 2018.*

Annexes

A.I: EASO's organisational chart

on 26 November 2019, and which came into effect on 1 January 2020.

The organisational chart below represents the new structure endorsed by the EASO Management Board



A.II: EASO budget in 2019

Table A.1: Budget execution of Commitment Appropriations (CA) per fund source

Budget title	Fund source	CA budgeted (€)	CA implemented (€)	CA (%)
Title 1 – Staff expenditure	C1	27 285 300.00	24 816 895.67	90.95
	C4	5 219.75	2 233.02	42.78
	C5	4 266.30	2 124.80	49.80
	C8	1 376 859.78	1 102 394.07	80.07
Total Title 1		28 671 645.83	25 923 647.56	90.42
Title 2 – Infrastructure and operating expenditure	C1	12 897 200.00	12 077 824.53	93.65
	C5	4 135.43	2 903.96	70.22
	C8	4 153 515.45	3 784 382.55	91.11
	R0	10 213.40	698 192.85	0.00
Total Title 2		17 065 064.28	15 865 111.04	92.97
Title 3 – Operational expenditure	C1	56 503 500.00	55 167 741.33	97.64
	C4	7 631.33	-	0.00
	C5	21 082.00	17 818.59	84.52
	C8	20 217 720.39	18 109 592.38	89.57
	R0	14 412 811.42	5 149 194.56	35.73
Total Title 3		91 162 745.14	78 444 346.86	86.05
Title 4 – Other external projects	R0	941 530.00	564 865.58	59.99
Total Title 4		941 530.00	564 865.58	59.99
Total CA		137 840 985.25	120 797 971.04	87.64

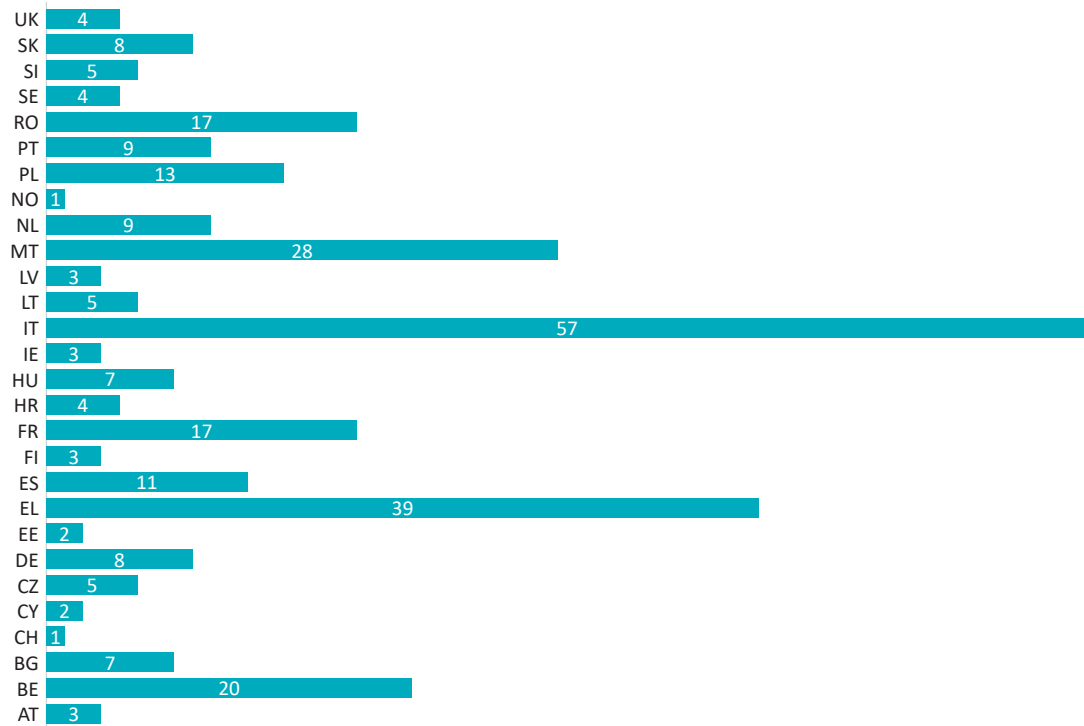
Table A.2: Budget execution of Payment Appropriations (PA) per fund source

Budget title	Fund source	PA budgeted (€)	PA consumed (€)	PA (%)
Title 1 – Staff expenditure	C1	27 285 300.00	22 866 865.65	83.81
	C4	5 219.75	2 233.02	42.78
	C5	4 266.30	2 124.80	49.80
	C8	1 376 859.78	1 102 394.07	80.07
Total Title 1		28 671 645.83	23 973 617.54	83.61
Title 2 – Infrastructure and operating expenditure	C1	12 897 200.00	7 883 835.19	61.13
	C5	4 135.43	2 903.96	70.22
	C8	4 153 515.45	3 784 382.55	91.11
	R0	10 213.40	698 192.85	0.00
Total Title 2		17 065 064.28	11 671 121.70	68.39
Title 3 – Operational expenditure	C1	56 503 500.00	56 130 198.64	99.34
	C4	7 631.33		0.00
	C5	21 082.00	21 082.00	100.00
	R0	14 412 811.42	3 599 471.97	24.97
Total Title 3		70 945 024.75	59 750 752.61	84.22
Title 4 – Other external projects	R0	941 530.00	344 533.48	36.59
Total Title 4		941 530.00	344 533.48	36.59
Total PA		117 623 264.86	95 740 025.33	81.40

A.III. EASO staff

Graph A.1: Geographical distribution of EASO staff as of 31.12.2019

28 nationalities were represented as of 31.12.2019.



Graph A.2: Distribution of EASO staff as of 31.12.2019 by gender



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