



European Asylum Support Office

EASO

Training and Learning Strategy

2019

SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION

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1. Background

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), established by Regulation (EU) 439/2010¹, is responsible for facilitating, coordinating and strengthening practical cooperation among Member States on asylum-related matters. The mandate of the Office is focused on three major tasks; namely, contributing to the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (hereafter referred to as CEAS), supporting practical cooperation among Member States on asylum, and supporting Member States that are subject to particular pressure.

With the implementation of the EASO Training and Learning Strategy, EASO is committed to supporting Member States in providing training for officials within their national administrations and national authorities responsible for asylum and reception matters. EASO's support will be provided through the continuous development of its Training Curriculum, which aims to promote good practices and common standards in the implementation of the CEAS. Through the provision of training and learning opportunities, EASO will contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy of asylum and reception officials, upholding European quality standards and guidelines, and strengthening the overall implementation of the CEAS.

This strategy, replacing the previous version of the EASO Training Strategy (2016), outlines the principles that guide EASO in the implementation of its mandate as provided for in Article 6 of the EASO Regulation.

In line with the EASO Regulation, the implementation of EASO's Training and Learning Strategy shall be guided by the following principles:

1. In implementing this strategy, EASO takes an open, constructive and dynamic approach while remaining fully committed to upholding the highest standards of quality, efficiency and transparency. To this end, EASO will develop a Training Governance System based on the European common standards and guidelines for quality assurance in education and training. EASO will also duly take into consideration the EU education and training framework, including the Bologna and Copenhagen principles and the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
2. EASO will cooperate closely with and rely on the commitment of asylum and reception authorities of Member States and the 'Reference Group' composed of the European Commission, other EU Agencies, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other relevant actors, whose expertise can contribute to designing and delivering EASO training and learning material.
3. When requested, EASO's training and learning material will be customised in order to be tailored to the specific needs of national asylum and reception authorities, including within the framework of operational support and capacity building in the external dimension framework.
4. EASO's training and learning activities will be primarily targeting Member States' asylum and reception authorities². Whenever possible, EASO will broaden the scope of these activities to other actors, including, but not restricted to, other relevant national authorities in Member States, EU agencies, UNHCR, academia, relevant civil society organisations and third countries, as per the EASO External Cooperation Strategy.
5. The implementation of this strategy will contribute to greater convergence in the Member States in the provision of high-quality training as specified in the CEAS.
6. While EASO is fully committed to this strategy, the commitment of Member States and their involvement at all levels is crucial to its implementation.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 (OJ L 132, 25.5.2010, p.11) - the 'EASO Regulation'.

² The development of the professional material for the members of Courts and Tribunals is not covered under this strategy.

2. Objectives

By implementing a Training and Learning Strategy, EASO aims to strengthen Member States' practical cooperation on asylum and reception, enhance the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), and support those Member States whose asylum and reception systems are under particular pressure.

To fulfil these objectives, EASO will aim to:

❖ **Develop the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy of asylum and reception officials**

EASO aims to support Member States in ensuring that asylum and reception officials are provided with the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy required to perform their job at a satisfactory level. In this regard, a European Sectoral Qualification Framework (ESQF) for asylum and reception officials will be developed to identify both the tasks that asylum and reception officials perform as well as the learning outcomes required for their successful performance.

❖ **Capacity development and preparedness**

EASO's training and learning activities will assist national administrations in Member States to strengthen the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy of their personnel and to anticipate future training needs to enable a rapid and effective response when required. Having knowledgeable and skilled officials will ensure that national administrations are well prepared to respond rapidly to situations of increased influx of asylum seekers, retaining efficient procedures, and remaining compliant with the CEAS.

❖ **Active learning approach**

Learners have a central role in their learning and development experience and EASO aims to provide a safe learning environment where adult learners can explore issues and discuss practical challenges under the guidance of a certified facilitator. Central to the active learning approach is the peer-learning element, where the learning and training environment enables a stimulating opportunity for learners to discuss challenges and exchange views with other practitioners in the field.

❖ **Assessment strategy**

Assessment forms an integral part of the training and learning process and well-designed assessment activities will demonstrate that learners have achieved the intended learning outcomes and thus provide assurance of what the learner should be able to do once the learning process has been completed. EASO implements accurate and reliable assessment as an essential element of a credible certification and accreditation system. The assessment of learners undertaking EASO training and learning activities is designed to be rigorous, transparent and ethical.

❖ **Recognition of prior learning**

EASO acknowledges and recognises prior learning including formal and non-formal learning. The pre-existing knowledge, skills and competences of learners brings additional value to the learning process and strengthens the peer-learning component. Assessment methods for recognising prior learning and experience will also be designed.

3. Training needs analysis

EASO is further enhancing a methodology which uses a structured, and evidence-based framework to support Member States' asylum and reception authorities and other stakeholders in identifying training and learning needs.

EASO's training activities target Member States' national asylum authorities; primarily asylum case officers, reception officials, country of origin information officers, Dublin officers, registration officers and resettlement officers. Following guided group discussions with various experts in the field as well as the Training National Contact Points and Member State working groups, EASO is developing a European Sectorial Qualification Framework (ESQF) for asylum and reception officials. This involves mapping occupational standards and matching them with relevant educational standards/learning outcomes. The ESQF will provide comprehensive guidance on what asylum and reception officers should know and be able to do, under a specified degree of responsibility and autonomy, in order to perform their duties and tasks.

EASO implements a flexible learning path approach for different target groups. Each learning path is based on a set of core modules, which are key for the basic performance of a specific role. EASO strongly recommends that the core modules are followed by all officers within the respective target group.

EASO holds annual meetings together with the established network of Training NCPs who act as a liaison with their respective administrations on training-related matters. These meetings provide a forum to discuss training needs in a structured and formal set-up. Training NCPs are nominated by Member States, following EASO recommendations on the needs and responsibilities related to the performance of this function.

NCPs identify relevant target groups for training within their respective administrations and regularly inform EASO about their training needs. In doing so, Member States focus on training needs for both newly recruited and experienced asylum and reception officials. EASO provides guidance and advice to Member States on the process of establishing and monitoring their training targets and training needs.

EASO also maintains close cooperation with Member States and third countries and explores training needs on a bilateral level, particularly in the context of operational and ad-hoc support. Structured questionnaires may be used to conduct training needs analysis either collectively or bilaterally with Member States.

4. Training design

EASO will design its training material based on a learning outcomes approach, thus focusing on the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy that the learner should acquire once the training is completed. The implementation of learning outcomes in the design of training and learning material will ensure that a learner-centred approach is adopted, and that the focus will be on what the learner will know and will be able to do, and how this can be measured and demonstrated by means of an assessment.

This approach has also provided the foundation for the establishment of a European Certification and Accreditation of the EASO Training Curriculum, supported by Member States through the EASO Certification and Accreditation Working Group (CAWG). The Certification and Accreditation of the EASO Training Curriculum is being developed without prejudice to national systems.

Training material is developed, updated and upgraded by EASO in close collaboration with Member States. An EASO focal point is nominated for each specific development/upgrade/update process and Member States are invited to contribute through the deployment of content experts who support EASO throughout the drafting process. The involvement of external experts may also be considered, and EASO may work in partnership with other relevant agencies or organisations. However, the ultimate responsibility for the content of the training material is retained by EASO.

EASO fosters an open dialogue with civil society organisations through the EASO Consultative Forum. In particular, EASO collaborates with the relevant stakeholders through the establishment and maintenance of a EASO Training Reference Group. Among others, the Reference Group is composed of representatives from the European Commission, UNHCR, members of civil society, academia and where relevant members of courts and tribunals. The Reference Group supports EASO in the development, upgrade and update of its training material and acts as quality reviewer of content. Through the cooperation with the Reference Group, EASO also promotes mutual understanding and collaboration among relevant EU actors to further enhance consistency and compliance of the training material with the standards set in international and European law and jurisprudence.

EASO Training and Learning materials are complemented by tools which provide practical support for those on the ground. These translate the legal obligations and good practices into user-friendly tools, such as checklists, guidance, web-based interactive tools, etc.

4.1 Training and learning methodology

When EASO develops, upgrades and updates training material, an inclusive approach is adapted to different audiences taking into account needs assessments, time and cost-efficiency considerations. EASO uses innovative training and learning methodologies making extensive use of its blended learning approach which consists of an e-learning element and face-to-face training as well as on-the-job coaching, peer learning and mobility learning programmes. EASO is also exploring an increased use of workshops and professional conferences.

The EASO on-the-job coaching methodology offers the opportunity for learners to assimilate acquired knowledge and skills in order to perform their duties with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility. Learners who have just started working in the field of asylum will be provided with the opportunity to perform their daily tasks under the supervision of an EASO coach, who will assess whether the learner is applying the newly acquired knowledge and skills effectively. The learners will be provided with relevant feedback and guided towards full autonomy. Learners, who already have experience working in the field of asylum, can benefit from guidelines and discussions with a EASO coach to further expand and strengthen their knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy in specific areas.

EASO's training can be used in the context of permanent support to assist Member States in establishing a training framework for their personnel or to complement their existing national training structures by means of high-quality and commonly developed training materials. Additionally, training can support Member States in the framework of emergency or special support in response to specific situations, as well as in other ad hoc support, particularly in view of the EASO External Cooperation Strategy.

4.2 Training programmes

EASO training programmes may be clustered into three categories:

The EASO Training Curriculum

The EASO Training Curriculum is one of EASO's practical tools contributing to the effective and harmonised implementation of the CEAS. It is mainly composed of training modules but also includes a broad range of complementary training material. Designed mainly to train case officers and other asylum and reception practitioners throughout the EU, EASO training modules are integrated into a common training system, which covers the entire field of international protection by means of a set of interactive modules. The modules are based on a blended learning methodology, enabling both theoretical and practical approaches

to training by combining e-learning with face-to-face sessions. EASO relies on a train-the-trainer system (which sustains a multiplier effect) to facilitate the implementation of the EASO Training Curriculum within national administrations. The modules are supplemented by training handbooks which serve as a reference tool for those who have already completed the online and face-to-face sessions of the particular training module and accompany trainees in the course of their daily work by providing a summary of the key elements of the training.

EASO reviews the EASO Training Curriculum on a regular basis. Each module has its 'life cycle' of an average duration of five years. At the end of its life cycle, the module is reviewed and a decision is taken on the necessity to update or upgrade the module. EASO also retains the right to discontinue the module, following an evaluation on the usage of the module and discussions with EU+ Member States.

EASO Operational Training

One of the key functions of EASO is to support Member States who are subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems. Such support involves the design and implementation of operational training activities.

EASO Operational Training is under constant development and adjustments, depending on the needs identified on the ground and the changeable operational contexts. Training delivered in order to support Member States under particular pressure is guided by the provisions of Article 6 of the EASO Regulation as well as the rules and principles of the operating plans and, whenever necessary, it is delivered in coordination with the deployment of Asylum Support Teams (ASTs).

Given the operational nature of the activities, the format of the operational trainings consists mainly of face-to-face sessions and focuses to a large extent on practical exercises. The sessions are delivered by EASO's in-house trainers, Member States' experts from the EASO Trainer and Expert Pool, and external experts with extensive expertise on the specific topics. Representatives of national local authorities, as well as international/EU bodies involved in the operation, are expected to participate in the delivery of these trainings.

EASO Operational Training consists of thematic training programmes related to the tasks to be performed on the ground, as well as the characteristics of the operational context. The training programmes are usually complemented by a set of training material such as the Trainer's Manual and Handbook. The training material is developed by Member States' representatives, as well as by external experts with extensive knowledge and experience of the topics in question. The EASO Training Curriculum, which covers relevant asylum and reception matters, forms the basis for developments within the framework of Operational Training Programmes.

Similar training schemes may be followed when providing training and learning opportunities for third countries which are part of the External Dimension of the CEAS. In this case, EASO may also consider organising tailor-made training based on the existing EASO Training Curriculum and Operational Training Programmes.

Other training initiatives

EASO remains open to considering its engagement in other relevant initiatives, regardless of whether they fall under the above categories. These initiatives may include the development of training activities in cooperation with other agencies (e.g. Frontex, The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training and the Fundamental Rights Agency); participation in training organised by other actors (e.g. UNHCR); the provision of specific training as part of the development of thematic action plans, or the development of specific training resources.

5. Training delivery and facilitation

The implementation of EASO's main training activities follow a train-the-trainer system. Through this system, EASO sets up an annual training plan for the provision of training to national trainers, who will, upon certification, organise and deliver training to their peers at the national level. This system not only maximises EASO's training efforts but also allows greater flexibility in the organisation of training events and provides for durable capacity building within Member States.

EASO will further support regional cooperation and sharing of information on training initiatives from which more than one EU+ State could potentially benefit. Additionally, EASO will continue supporting the organisation of training activities at a regional level, including train-the-trainer sessions as well as national training sessions with the aim of reducing organisational costs and promoting regional cooperation.

On ad hoc arrangements, EASO may also provide tailor-made training programmes to asylum and reception officials. Ad hoc and operational trainings may not follow the train-the-trainer methodology if the aim is to train a specific target audience on content related matters and the participants cannot be expected to become trainers in the topic in the near future.

EASO training material is designed in English. EASO informed the Management Board in September 2017 that the core modules will be translated into 21 EU languages. Depending on the availability of resources, EASO may also be able to assist Member States in the translation of other training modules. In this regard, EASO has also established a procedure to assist Member States in the translation of other modules. In the event that the latter option is not feasible, and Member States are unable to fund the translation from their national funds, EASO will promote cooperation and dialogue among Member States to identify other EU funding opportunities to cover translation costs.

The responsibility for quality check of the translated material in all cases will remain the competence of Member States and is to be coordinated by the Training NCP. In all cases, Member States shall rely on the support and services of EASO in the process of managing the translations, making them available on the Learning Management System (LMS).

5.1 Learning Management System

EASO established a Learning Management System to administer and deliver training courses and report training progress. The LMS allows learners to follow training programmes on-line, contributing to a more efficient training system. In parallel, it supports a learner-centred approach, providing a platform for learners to be coached on-line by a trainer who provides them with feedback throughout the duration of the training course. It also facilitates the possibility of enhancing virtual networks between trainers and content experts for sharing and exchange of information and good practices.

5.2 EASO Trainers and Experts pool

EASO has set up a Trainers and Experts Pool to coordinate the involvement of Member States experts in the development and implementation of training activities. The Pool is managed by EASO in coordination with Member States and consists of content experts, content trainers and didactics experts. EASO also manages a trainer and expert network.

While the Pool is generally restricted to members of national asylum administrations, EASO may exceptionally include other relevant actors (e.g. UNHCR) to support training in specific areas.

EASO follows an internal deployment procedure to manage the deployment of EASO trainers, EASO content experts and EASO didactic experts/trainers for the EASO training-related activities. In the event of numerous trainings needing to be organised within a short period of time or in parallel, an open call for trainers can be circulated to the Training NCPs.

Alongside the content trainers, content experts and didactic experts from the Pool, EASO deploys qualified staff as well as external experts for the EASO training activities, if relevant.

6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

EASO will take a dual approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD), addressing on the one-hand asylum and reception officials and on the other hand trainers in EASO modules.

EASO will organise continuing professional development activities as part of its lifelong learning strategy in the field of asylum, allowing for the systematic maintenance, improvement, acquisition and reinforcement of the lifelong knowledge, skills and competencies of asylum and reception officials. CPD is pivotal to meet the learning needs for the harmonised implementation of CEAS.

Trainers in EASO modules are key actors in ensuring quality and they play an essential role in the harmonised implementation of CEAS. It is critical to EASO that trainers in EASO modules have opportunities to develop and keep their content related competencies and pedagogical skills up to highest standards. This also includes CPD of transversal competences such as digital and intercultural communication.

7. On-going monitoring, evaluation, and periodic review

EASO aims to continuously enhance and standardise the existing evaluation mechanisms. The outcome of these evaluations is taken into account when identifying gaps in a need assessment process and in reviewing the quality of training material, which in turn will result in the continuous improvement of the training material. Further to this, EASO encourages informal and formal communication with all relevant stakeholders to identify potential areas of improvement for EASO training and learning activities.

EASO will periodically report on the implementation of its training activities and relevant achievements. On a yearly basis, EASO publishes a training report on the implementation of the EASO training activities at both the EU and national level. The timely and accurate provision of data by Member States through the Training NCP network will allow EASO to successfully exercise its training and learning function.

Annex: Definitions

Term	Definition
Accreditation	Formal recognition that a body or a person is competent to carry out specific tasks.
Blended Learning Methodology	An approach to training that combines online training materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. The EASO Training rely on a blended learning approach. The training starts with an eLearning phase followed by the face-to-face session.
Bologna process	The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental cooperation of 48 European countries in the field of higher education. It guides the collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations, and institutions, including the European Commission, on how to improve the internationalisation of higher education. The main focus is: the introduction of the three cycle system (Bachelor/Master/Doctor), strengthened quality assurance and easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study (https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en)
Certification (of learning outcomes)	The process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies.
Competences	The proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European qualifications framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
Copenhagen process	The Copenhagen Process was launched by the Copenhagen Declaration, approved on 30 November 2002 by ministers responsible for vocational education and training in the Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries, the European Social Partners and the European Commission. They agreed on priorities and strategies for the promotion of mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications in order to increase mobility and facilitate access to lifelong learning. The Declaration calls for enhancing European cooperation in VET across Europe. It focuses on the contribution of vocational education and training to the challenges identified in the Lisbon strategy: strengthen the European dimension of VET, improve transparency, information and guidance systems, recognise competences and qualifications -including non-formal and informal learning promote cooperation in quality assurance. https://www.eqavet.eu/What-We-Do/European-Policy/Copenhagen-Process
Development	Development is defined as a long-term learning process and does not only encompass the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also development of competences and changes in attitudes.
Knowledge	Knowledge means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualification Framework ('EQF'), knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.
Learning	A process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences.
Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes refer to statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process. They are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy.
Skills	The ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
Training	For the scope of this document, training is defined as planned and coordinated programmes of instruction that are, or will be, related to the official's responsibilities.

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