



Open call for expressions of interest from relevant civil society organisations and competent bodies to become members of the EUAA's Consultative Forum

1. Background

With a view of maintaining a close dialogue with civil society, the former European Asylum Support Office (EASO) first established a Consultative Forum in 2011 as a mechanism for the exchange of information and pooling of knowledge. Over the years, the Agency has engaged with civil society primarily via the Consultative Forum, through meetings and consultations, whilst selected civil society organisations have additionally been invited to participate and contribute directly to different thematic areas of the Agency's work.

On 19 January 2022, Regulation (EU) No 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021¹ (the EUAA Regulation) entered into force, replacing EASO with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

According to Article 50(1) of the EUAA Regulation, the Agency shall continue to maintain a close dialogue with relevant civil society organisations and relevant competent bodies operating in the field of asylum policy at local, regional, national, Union or international level. For that purpose, it shall set up a Consultative Forum. According to Article 39(e), the Consultative Forum is part of the administrative and management structure of the Agency. Pursuant to Article 50(4), the Consultative Forum is tasked to advise the Executive Director and the Management Board on asylum-related matters, in accordance with the Agency's specific needs in areas identified as priority for its work.

With the entry into force of the EUAA Regulation, and the reinforced role of the Consultative Forum thereunder, the Consultative Forum is to be (re)-established in a revised composition and set-up. The EUAA Regulation stipulates that, upon a proposal of the Executive Director, the Management Board decides on the composition, including on thematic or geographically focused consultation groups, and on the conditions for transmitting information to the Consultative Forum, whereas the Consultative Forum shall, after consulting the Executive Director and the Management Board, develop its own working methods including thematic or geographically focused working groups as deemed necessary and useful.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010, (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021, p. 1).





Consequently, on 23 June 2022 the Management Board adopted MB Decision No 111² establishing the Consultative Forum under the EUAA and setting out the rules regarding its composition and conditions for transmitting information thereto.

Pursuant to Article 3 of MB Decision No 111, the EUAA is hereby launching a call for expressions of interest from relevant organisations and bodies to become members of the EUAA's Consultative Forum.

2. Main features of the Consultative Forum's composition and modalities for cooperation with the EUAA

The composition and conditions for transmitting information to the Consultative Forum are defined in MB Decision No 111. In this regard, the short summary below presents some of the main features. MB Decision No 111 will subsequently be complemented by the working methods, which shall be developed by the Consultative Forum, once its members are in place.

2.1 Composition

In accordance with Article 50(3) of the EUAA Regulation, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and UNHCR are invited to be members of the Consultative Forum.

In addition, pursuant to Article 3 of MB Decision No 111, civil society organisations and relevant competent bodies operating in the field of asylum policy at local, regional, national, Union and international level are invited to express their interest in becoming members through this call and may become a member provided that the conditions set out are met.

To express interest in becoming members, interested organisations and bodies are required to complete the **online expression of interest form**, available via the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EUAACFMembership2022> Interested organisations or bodies are also requested to sign and submit via e-mail a **confidentiality agreement and two declaration of interests forms** (see section 3).

After expressing interest, the ensuing procedure and rules for the selection of organisations and bodies to become member of the Consultative Forum is set out in section 3 below.

One should note that the composition of the Consultative Forum is not fixed; this call for expression of interest remains open indefinitely, meaning that new members can be added to the Forum at any given time. Members of the Consultative Forum may also at any time notify the Agency that they no longer wish to be a member of the Consultative Forum. The Agency retains the right to revoke membership if, based on an internal assessment, it considers that the conditions for membership are no longer fulfilled.

² Management Board Decision No 111 of 23 June 2022 on the establishment and composition of the Consultative Forum and on the conditions for transmitting information thereto.



2.2 Thematic and geographic consultations groups

The Consultative Forum will have two thematic consultation groups:

- A thematic consultation group on country-of-origin information;
- A thematic consultation group on vulnerable groups.

In the expression of Interest form, organisations and bodies may indicate their interest to participate in one or both of these consultation groups. Members of these consultation groups are selected based on their thematic expertise and subject to the criteria set out.

Other thematic or geographic consultation groups may be set up at a later stage, if so decided by the Management Board, following a proposal of the Executive Director.

2.3 Modalities of cooperation between the Agency and the Consultative Forum

The Agency and the Consultative Forum shall exchange information through:

- **Consultative Forum meetings:** a plenary meeting organised at least once a year supplemented with meetings of the thematic consultation groups;
- **Consultations:** the Agency shall consult the Forum on all relevant matters, as required by the EUAA Regulation. This includes, inter alia, the following:
 - The annual and multi-annual programming documents;
 - Annual report on the situation of asylum;
 - Fundamental rights strategy;
 - Code of conduct;
 - Complaints mechanism;
 - European asylum curriculum
- **Other means of exchange:** whereby the Agency regularly informs the Consultative Forum of its ongoing work, and the Consultative Forum members communicate conclusions and recommendations of relevant conferences, seminars, meetings, and findings from studies or field work that are relevant to the Agency.

Other activities and/or output by and from the Consultative Forum may be envisaged and can be defined by the Consultative Forum in their working methods.

2.4 Working methods

The Consultative Forum shall, after consulting the Management Board and the Executive Director, establish its own working methods.

2.5 Chairperson of the Consultative Forum

In view of its advisory role, the Consultative Forum is to exercise its functions independently of the Agency and the Management Board. As such, the Forum is expected to be chaired by one of its own members.

The Consultative Forum shall at its first plenary meeting designate a chairperson *ad interim* for the purposes of coordinating the process for the development of the working methods.



The Consultative Forum shall then define in the working methods the detailed rules for the selection and functioning of the chair, including a description of his/her tasks and responsibilities.

2.7 Declaration of interest and confidentiality agreement

Organisations and bodies wishing to become member to the Consultative Forum are requested to complete and sign a confidentiality agreement.

Each relevant organisation or body shall also ensure that any conflict of interest is duly declared to the Agency in a timely manner. Therefore, when expressing interest, organisations and bodies are requested to:

- complete and sign a declaration of interest form on behalf of the organisation/body;
- complete and sign a declaration of interest in one's personal capacity.

2.6 Secretarial support and expenses

The secretarial functions of the Consultative Forum will be provided by the Agency.

In terms of expenses, the Agency will reimburse the members of the Consultative Forum for costs incurred for their participation in Consultative Forum meetings, in accordance with the applicable reimbursement rules³.

3. Rules and procedure for the selection of organisations and bodies to become member to the Consultative Forum

All interested organisations or competent bodies wanting to become a member of the Consultative Forum are invited to express their interest by:

- **completing the online expression of interest form**, available via the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EUAACFMembership2022> Expressions of interests should be completed in English.
- **Sign and submit via e-mail** to consultativeforum@euaa.europa.eu the i) confidentiality agreement, ii) declaration of interest (organisations and bodies) and iii) declaration of interest (personal capacity)

To be noted that the expression of interest to become member to the EUAA Consultative Forum is not complete until you have submitted your online application and e-mailed all three signed forms to consultative-forum@euaa.europa.eu

The call for expressions of interest remains open indefinitely. There is therefore no deadline for submitting the expression of interest as such. However, we would appreciate receiving your

³ Decision of the Executive Director No 6 of 14 January 2021 on the rules for reimbursement of expenses incurred by participants invited to attend EASO activities.



expression of interest at your earliest convenience and if possible no later than **15th September 2022** in order to be able to process the expressions of interest in a timely manner and to establish the new membership of the Consultative Forum prior to the organisation of the first plenary meeting scheduled to take place in Q4 of 2022.

Once an expression of interest has been completed, the Agency will acknowledge successful receipt and will review the expression of interest that has been submitted.

When assessing expressions of interest, the Agency will verify whether the organisation or body fulfils all the criteria to be fulfilled by civil society organisations and relevant competent bodies to become members of the Consultative Forum.

The criteria include the following:

Criterion	Description and examples
Type of organisation/body	In accordance with Article 50(1) of the EUAA Regulation, participation in the Consultative Forum shall be open to relevant “civil society organisations” and relevant “competent bodies” operating in the field of asylum policy at local, regional, national, Union, or international level. In accordance with the EUAA Regulation, the Consultative Forum shall therefore consist of participants who represent organisations/bodies and not persons acting on an individual basis.
Thematic expertise	<p>The civil society organisation or competent body shall be active in the field of asylum policy at either local, regional, national, Union, or international level and have established knowledge and expertise in the areas relevant to the work of the Agency.</p> <p>Examples of relevant activities/services in the field of asylum policy provided by civil society organisations or competent bodies could include <i>inter alia</i>⁴ :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy and/or research on issues related to asylum/reception/refugees; - Information provision; - Legal counselling/aid, litigation; - Cultural mediation; - Interpretation; - Provision of housing/accommodation; - Provision of other reception related services, such as transportation, food; - Health services; - Education; - Orientation/integration;

⁴ This is a non-exhaustive list and serves to provide an overview of relevant examples of activities that could demonstrate that the organisation or body is “active in the field of asylum policy”.



Criterion	Description and examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment; - Guardianship; - Identification and referral of persons with special needs; - Provision of training; - Provision of administrative support to authorities (e.g., assisting authorities with administrative tasks in the area of reception/asylum). <p>Examples of thematic expertise relevant to different areas of the Agency's work include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expertise in the area of vulnerable groups including children, trafficking, sexual orientation and gender identity, torture/serious forms of violence, gender-based violence, disabilities/medical issues, etc.; - Expertise on country-of-origin information; - Expertise on training delivery and training development in the area of asylum; - Expertise on reception (first and second line); - Expertise on asylum processes; - Expertise on relocation and/or other solidarity mechanisms; - Expertise on resettlement and humanitarian admission; - Expertise on research, data collection, situational awareness, forecasting; - Expertise on temporary protection.
Geographical scope	<p>The civil society organisation or competent body shall have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an office in one of the EU Member States, or associated countries⁵ with whom the EUAA has a working arrangement in place, and/or; - relevant operations/activities in the EU Member States, or associated countries with whom the EUAA has a working arrangement in place.
Commitment to engage with the Consultative Forum in a constructive manner	<p>The civil society organisation or competent body is committed to engage actively and in a respectful and fruitful dialogue with the EUAA and others cooperating in the Consultative Forum. The organisation or competent body shall also refrain from any conduct that may be harmful to the Agency or its reputation.</p>
Confidentiality agreement	<p>At the request of the Agency, the civil society organisation or competent body shall sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that</p>

⁵ These include Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.



Criterion	Description and examples
	any sensitive non-classified information shared through the Consultative Forum is not disclosed to any unauthorised person, or a person outside the civil society organisation or competent body, or to the public.

In case the organisation or body has expressed an interest to become a member of one or both of the thematic consultation groups, the Agency shall assess whether it fulfils the criteria for membership of the thematic consultation groups.!

Criteria to be fulfilled to become a member of the thematic consultation groups

For the thematic consultation group on **country-of-origin (COI) information**, the Agency shall verify whether:

- the organisation/body has proven COI experience, including demonstrated experience in researching COI, drafting COI products, applying COI methodology as per the EUAA's methodology or similar COI common guidelines observing the same quality standards and general principles.

For the thematic consultation group on **vulnerable groups**, the Agency shall verify whether:

- the organisation/body has proven knowledge and experience with vulnerable groups, including amongst others from one or more of the following categories: children (accompanied and/or unaccompanied), trafficking, sexual orientation and gender identity, torture/serious forms of violence, gender-based violence, disabilities/medical issues.

The Agency will inform the organisation or competent body of the outcome of their expression of interest in writing. In case of an unsuccessful outcome, the Agency shall also inform the organisation/body of the reasons thereof. In case of an unsuccessful outcome, the organisation or competent body may re-submit a new expression of interest, should the reasons identified for the unsuccessful outcome have been addressed.

The list of Consultative Forum members will be made publicly available on the EUAA website and will be updated on a regular basis.

For any further information, please contact: consultative-forum@euaa.europa.eu

Annexes:

- Annex I: Declaration of Confidentiality
- Annex II: Declaration of Interests (organisations and bodies)
- Annex III: Declaration of Interests (personal capacity)