EASO CONSULTATIVE FORUM THEMATIC WEBINAR

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ASYLUM IN THE EU

23 JULY 2020
Impact of Covid-19 on EASO activities

Session 1: Presentation by Mark Camillieri Head of Executive Office

Contingency Plan
Adjustment to existing or planned activities in response to covid-19 and a special contingency plan has been drawn up to cover all EASO’s activities.

Covid-19 Response Team
The COVID response team has been addressing the situation as it evolved, discussing the measures needed to be taken within the Agency at every stage.

Return to Office Plan
A Return to Office Plan was finalized for the EASO premises for a gradual return of the staff members to the office while adopting physical distance rules and respecting the requirements imposed by MS.

EASO horizontal response to covid-19
Session 1: Impact of covid-19 on EASO activities

Presentation by Mark Camilleri Head of Executive Office

- **Operations**
  - Continuation of operations
  - Suspension of face-to-face workflows
  - Focusing on back-office workflow
  - Supporting the relocation of UAMs in EL

- **Training**
  - Enhancing online training
  - Dedicated webinars
  - Adaptation training modules

- **Asylum Knowledge**
  - Dedicated network meetings via VC/Webinars
  - Practical Recommendations/input to COM Guidance
  - Monitoring/collecting information on measures taken by MS and asylum trends
  - Providing MS with regular bulletins/updates
  - 4 Special Reports
The impact of Covid-19 on Member States’ asylum and reception systems

Session 1
Presented by Maria Papaioannou, Information and Analysis Officer
Key Findings
Emergency measures on the basis of public health and security
Registration/Lodging

- suspended or restricted
- extensions of deadlines to apply
- introduction of electronic tools to lodge applications/ submit documents
Asylum and Reception procedures

- Suspension of Dublin transfers
At least, 17 EU+ countries discontinued personal interviews during the emergency measures.

- Resumption through alternative methods and modalities to carry out or resume personal interviews. (e.g. video-conference, extensive preventative measures)
Teleworking arrangements in national authorities allowed for the processing of existing backlogs.
Postal disruptions, internal reorganisation and/or lack of services (e.g. legal aid/interpretation) have affected the notification of decisions.
Access to public was limited or suspended
Hearings suspended or limited to urgent cases
New arrangements in place videoconference, telework, written procedures, use of electronic tools, extensive preventative measures and new ways of work (re-adaptation of rooms, limitation of number of people present in the same room etc).
Asylum and Reception procedures

Impact on Return, integration activities
Resettlement and family reunification also affected
Reception procedure

• Specific measures for newly-arrived asylum seekers (self-isolation, quarantine, placement in emergency structures and health screening)
• Creation of emergency shelters
• Medical screening
• Reorganization of services (food/cash distribution, educational/other group activities)
• Provision of information
• Impact on detention
Covid-19 measures in asylum and reception – Way Forward?

- New tools and processes as the emerging ‘new normal’
- **E-governance**: automatisation of processes, introduction of electronic tools for registration and lodging an application, remote management of applications, provision of information with video tools adjusted to different target groups, remote interviewing via IT means, inter-operability of technical solutions

- Development of **contingency plans** for the immediate operationalisation of emergency shelters or isolation areas will be crucial for controlling infections within reception centers

- **New challenges** e.g. the quality of remote interviews, access to and skills needed to use electronic tools by applicants, the quality of processes and data protection

- **EASO is supporting MSs to adapt to new processes:**
  - Practical recommendations on conducting the personal interview remotely
  - Practical recommendations on conducting remote/online registration (lodging) EASO Practical Guide Series, June 2020
Covid-19 Emergency Measures in Asylum and Reception

EMAR reports available at EASO website
QUESTION & ANSWER

SESSION
The challenges faced by CSOs working in the field of asylum in the EU

Session 2
Presented by Catherine Woollard,
Director ECRE
The impact of covid-19 on CSOs working in the field of asylum in the EU

Session 2
Presented by Portuguese Refugee Council, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, Swedish Red Cross
The impact of Covid-19 on Asylum Seekers

Challenges and Practices on the Ground

VLUCHTELINGENWERK VLAANDEREN
Who are we?

The changes in the procedure after the outbreak of COVID-19

The challenges on the ground
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen is an umbrella organization that defends refugee rights

- **Field work**
- Putting pressure on the policy.
- Sensitizing the general public.
- Supporting everyone who is in solidarity with refugees.
March 17:
The closure of the Arrival Center (IBZ+FEDASIL)

March 25:
Monitoring twice in a week

April 6:
The Corona Actors +
Daily monitoring at the Arrival Center

April 16:
Supporting AS with filling the online form

April 6:
The Online Appointment System

Changes after the outbreak of COVID-19
The challenges faced by AS

- **April 17, Mamadou**
  - partially disabled, no phone, no technological literacy, no good language skills
  - no confirmation e-mail, **23 days** in the streets

- **May 04, Babeni**
  - no email address, phone, no technological literacy, no network
  - he did not receive the invitation e-mail waited, **5 weeks** in the street

- **June 11, A family composed of 8**
  - a baby, a toddler, a child with epilepsy
  - no phone, no literacy, no network
  - **5 weeks** and **still waiting for an appointment**
The Challenges faced by the NGOs

125 asylum seekers IN THE STREETS- Covid-19 prevention?
From 24 countries

Top 5 countries

- Afghanistan
- Guinea
- Syria
- Eritrea
- Nigeria

Single men
Single women
Single mother
Family

IBZ + FEDASIE
VLUCHTELINGENWERK
June 22 - July 17: 116 AS

The labor court condemns Fedasil:
- a pandemic situation
- forced to survive on the street or in precarious emergency shelter with private individuals or NGOs
- danger on public health

“respecting the court’s decision no matter what”

overtime developed into

“not taking responsibility”

CSOs are going to the Court of First Instance!!
Conclusion

If the online registration was launched as a measure to protect asylum seekers and public health from Covid-19,
Could we say that it meets its objective?
Thank you for your attention!
Startpunt Field Team

If you are interested in reading our “situation reports”, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Sagia Hammoud: sagia.hammoud@vluchtelingenwerk.be
Gizem Dinç: gizem@vluchtelingenwerk.be
Meeting mental health and psychosocial needs during the Covid-19 pandemic: Swedish Red Cross experiences

Sara Fridlund, sara.fridlund@redcross.se
EASO webinar 23 July 2020
Swedish Red Cross
Health and Care Department

• Six treatment centers for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants affected by torture, armed conflict and migration.

• Members of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, IRCT.

• 1,695 patients received treatment in 2019.
Adjustments to the Covid-19 pandemic

• Digital solutions for meetings with patients in our treatment centers.
• A psychosocial support hotline for the public.
• A digital platform focused on mental health: https://www.rodakorset.se/fa-hjalp/psykisk-halsa-och-psykisk-ohalsa/
• Communication efforts and local response.
Meeting patients through digital solutions

**Implementation process**
- Identification of project group and outline of a project design
- Review and identification of possible solutions/tools
- Risk analysis
- Selection of 3 digital solutions / tools: 1) Care Connect by KRY, 2) Microsoft Teams and 3) “My healthcare-meeting”
- Development of routines
- Launch
Meeting patients through digital solutions: lessons learnt

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<td>• Quick process to set up.</td>
<td>• Physical meetings are in most cases preferred.</td>
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<td>• Enables maintained services for persons in need.</td>
<td>• Security and confidentiality issues.</td>
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<td>• Some patients are more satisfied.</td>
<td>• Technical challenges.</td>
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<td>• Possibility for the future: reach persons in more remote areas, increase access to services.</td>
<td>• Holistic response not possible and certain interventions cannot be done.</td>
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<td>• Not suitable for all persons.</td>
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➔ To be further evaluated
Thank you!
Anticipated and emerging asylum trends

Session 3: What is next?
Presented by Teddy Wilkin,
Head of Data Analysis and Research Sector
Before the COVID-19 outbreak, asylum applications were much increased.

In May applications down by 85% compared to pre-COVID levels (10200)

Continually more applications than illegal border crossings

Source: EASO and Frontex data.
Fewer asylum decisions and a different caseload

First-instance decisions

Recognition rate (EU-regulated types of protection)

Source: EASO data.

Largely due to more decisions on Syrians

EASO Consultative Forum, 23 July 2020
EASO/AKC/SAU/DARS/2020/225
How to understand, monitor and forecast the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

COVID-19 cases and patterns

Factors with direct and indirect impacts on asylum-related migration

- Conflict and violence
- Food insecurity and poverty
- Age structure of the population
- Epidemic risk/health care
COVID-19 spread in countries of origin

- Pandemic slowing down in the EU+ but rising in South America, Russia and some African countries
- Importance of testing facilities
- Likely impact on the economy, living conditions, poverty, conflict etc.

Figure 25: Weekly change in confirmed COVID-19 cases (Source: ECDC, Our World in Data). Note: The weekly growth rate on any given date measures the percentage change in the number of new confirmed cases over the last seven days relative to the number in the previous seven days.
Conflicts reduced in some but not all areas
Forecasting the post COVID-19 environment

- Data are not good enough for forecasting models
- Scenarios require experts to have previous experience

Closure of companies

Rising unemployment

Decreasing remittances

Growing food insecurity and hunger

Persistent and aggravating conflicts

Political tensions and social unrest

Fewer air travel options to the EU+

Conditional entry to EU+ countries

Travel restrictions in third countries
Special reports on COVID-19 & asylum trends
The future of the CEAS in the wake of covid-19

Session 3: What is next?
Presented by Ioana Pelin-Raducu
Policy Officer, DG HOME
Recommendations for asylum policy in the wake of covid-19

Session 3: What is next?
Presented by Nina Schrepfer, Senior Legal Officer UNHCR Brussels Office
QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION
THANK YOU