

**Operational plan 2025
agreed by
the European Union Agency for Asylum
and Italy**

The **European Union Agency for Asylum** (hereinafter the 'EUAA' or the 'Agency'), represented for the purpose of signature of this operational plan by its Executive Director, and **Italy** (hereinafter 'host Member State'), represented for the purpose of signature of this operational plan by the Head of Department of Public Security of the Ministry of Interior, the Head of Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior and the Head of Department of Judicial Organisation, Personnel and Services of the Ministry of Justice,

Also jointly referred to hereinafter as 'the Parties',

Having regard to 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) 439/2010¹ (hereinafter the 'EUAA Regulation'), and in particular Articles 18, 30 and 32 thereof,

Hereby agree on this operational plan (hereinafter also 'the Plan') for the provision of operational and technical assistance by the EUAA to Italy.

The implementation period of the Plan, including the foreseeable duration of the deployment of asylum support teams, shall be from 1 January 2025 until 31 December 2025.

The Plan enters into force on the date after it has been signed by both Parties.

The Plan will be made publicly available on the EUAA's website.

Valletta Harbour and Rome

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16 December 2024

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¹ OJ L 468, 30.12.2021, p. 1.

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I. Introduction

An **operational plan** addresses the specific needs of the host Member State(s) with regard to:

- The implementation of its(their) obligations under the Common European Asylum System (CEAS);
- Operational and technical needs of the Member State(s) whose asylum and/or reception systems are subject to disproportionate pressure;
- Operational and technical reinforcement needs of the Member State(s) facing disproportionate migratory challenges;
- Situations of disproportionate pressure or ineffectiveness of the asylum and reception systems.

The Plan provides the framework for the delivery of operational and technical assistance by the EUAA, including the deployment of asylum support teams.

The Plan is composed of two main parts and two annexes, which constitute an integral part thereof.

Part II. Operational plan: description of the situation, operational objectives and measures

This part provides an overview of the specific operational situation leading to the request for provision of operational and technical assistance by the Agency. It describes the operational and technical assistance measures agreed to be implemented in the framework of the Plan, including the composition of asylum support teams, and is tailored for each specific Plan.

Part III. Operational plan: general implementing provisions

This part defines the general provisions for the operational and technical assistance, including inter alia the general legal framework, implementation modalities, general operational preconditions and conditions for deployment of asylum support teams, security and safety aspects, communication, monitoring and evaluation provisions.

The Annexes complement the Plan's general implementing provisions and provide further guidance concerning the processing of personal data in the context of the implementation of the Plan's activities as well as the modalities for the assignment of remunerated external experts.

The Plan is binding in its entirety, including its Annexes, on the Agency, the host Member State and the participating Member States.

The EUAA shall share a copy of the Plan with the Members of the EUAA's Management Board for information. All versions of this document shall also be made available to the competent authorities in each EU Member State, as well as the associate countries².

² Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

II. Operational plan: description of the situation, operational objectives and measures

1. Description of the situation in the host Member State

Italy has been facing high numbers of arrivals during the past few years, with varied trends: the record increase in the number of sea arrivals registered in 2023 was followed by a drop towards the end of the same year and reduced numbers were maintained in 2024. From September 2023 until August 2024, 85 045 people disembarked to Italy, compared to 161 486 in the same period of 2022 - 2023.

Asylum applications lodged increased in 2024 compared to 2023 and 2022. Between September 2023 and August 2024 Italy continued to receive high numbers of applications for International Protection, with 162 275 applications lodged, marking a +37% increase compared to already high figures of the same period in the previous year (118 579 referring to the period September 2022 – August 2023). 2 331 Unaccompanied Children (UAC) applicants were reported between September 2023 and August 2024, a little over 300 more than over the same period in the previous year, when they were 2 028.

In terms of first instance determination procedures, the number of pending cases amounted to 85 426 at the end of December 2022 and to 97 000 at the end of 2023, reaching 210 213 cases at the end of August 2024, of which two thirds had been waiting for a first instance decision for more than six months.

Concerning determination in appeal procedures, 65 405 cases were pending in second instance as of June 2024, registering an increase of 16 % compared to June 2023 (56 265). In the first six months of 2024, the number of new cases was 22 930, also an increase compared to the same period in 2023 (13 325). Finally, 14 632 decisions were issued by the Specialised Sections in the first six months of 2024, in line with the same period in the previous year (14 616).

With respect to relocation, following the signature and adoption of the Declaration on Solidarity, setting up a Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM) in June 2022, several applicants were channelled and successfully relocated through the mechanism. However, by the end of 2022 and entering 2023, several factors affected the implementation of the Relocation Programme, which continued at slower pace.

With regard to reception, out of 138 213 people present in the Italian reception system by the end of August 2024, 100 340 people were hosted in first-line reception centres, 36 944 people in second-line reception centres and 929 people were hosted in hotspots³. With regard to Unaccompanied Children present in Italy, the numbers have been steadily increasing from 2021, when UAC reported were still below 10 000, more than doubling to this day⁴. As of 30 June 2024, 20 206 UAC were reported to be present in the territory.

Finally, regarding Temporary Protection, Italy received high numbers of registrations until the end of 2022. In 2023 numbers started to decrease, with around 25 000 registrations recorded

throughout the year. As of August 2024, the number of registrations reported for the current year is 8 000. Given the volatile situation in Ukraine, on 25 June 2024, the European Council extended the TPD for the protection of individuals fleeing the crisis until 4 March 2026.

While the asylum and reception systems will likely be facing challenges in all the dimensions reported above, Italy has been stepping up its efforts to manage pressure and enhance capacities in both asylum and reception.

In terms of asylum, maintaining the support of the EUAA for information provision, pre-identification of vulnerabilities, registrations, first and second-instance processing, and voluntary relocations will contribute to the efforts of the Italian authorities to managing the caseload efficiently and ensuring the quality of the process. Considering the ongoing pressure on the asylum system, support in process efficiency, quality assurance, training, and the development and implementation of asylum procedures – including in the framework of accelerated border procedures - and tools remains crucial for enhancing institutional capacity in accordance with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

In the area of reception, EUAA support is needed for the central management of reception and implementation of legislative framework, for the allocation of applicants at central and at local level, including persons with special needs, and for the monitoring of reception conditions through the agreed methodologies. Emphasis should also be placed on capacity-building to promote the resilience of the reception system in the long run. Finally, provision of modular units is required to enhance reception capacity, quality and efficiency.

Given the ongoing needs, Italian authorities requested continuation of the Agency’s support in specific areas of assistance. The Agency subjected the request for assistance to a thorough and reliable assessment, in accordance with Article 17(3) of the EUAA Regulation, enabling it to identify and propose the measures referred to in section 2.

2. Operational objectives and measures

The following operational and technical assistance measures are hereby agreed by the Parties to be implemented in the framework of the operational plan.

Measure IT-AS-1 Asylum	
Operational objective (outcome): Increase the capacity of the Italian authorities to grant access to asylum, process applications and to ensure the quality of procedures in line with CEAS	
National stakeholders	<p>Ministry of Interior</p> <p>Department for Public Security (DPS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration Offices • Central Directorate for Immigration and Border Police <p>Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration (DCLI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefectures • Central Directorate for immigration and asylum services – Dublin Unit (DCLI Dublin Unit)

	<p>National Asylum Commission (NAC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial Commissions (TCs) <p>Ministry of Justice (MoJ)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior Council of the Judiciary (<i>Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura</i> or CSM) • Supreme Court of Cassation (Court of Cassation or CoC) • Specialised Sections of the Tribunals • Superior School for Magistrates (<i>Scuola Superiore della Magistratura</i> or SSM)
<p>Operational preconditions</p>	<p>In addition to specific preconditions referred to in other parts of the operational plan, the following operational preconditions are agreed by the Parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Italian authorities grant access to the EUAA Asylum Support Teams (ASTs) to disembarkation areas, hotspots and reception centres and informs ASTs on the upcoming arrival of possible applicants. • The Italian stakeholders share relevant documents related to the implementation of Italian asylum procedures for international protection. • EUAA will ensure coordination with UNHCR and IOM to mainstream the collaboration. • National stakeholders are available to attend capacity building activities. • The Italian authorities share information and guidance on the new IT system needed for the development and implementation of related capacity building activities. • Access to Vestanet and other relevant databases is provided by the Italian authorities, including credentials for each member of the EUAA ASTs. • Italian authorities agree on working instructions for the EUAA ASTs deployed under this measure. • Disaggregated data on appeals on international protection (as per Legislative Decree 25/2008, art. 35) is timely shared by MoJ and Court of Cassation. • The Specialised Sections of the tribunals allow access to the Court's IT system (<i>consolle del magistrato</i>). • The Ministry of Justice allows access to relevant databases (<i>Italggiure</i>). • The DCLI and the DPS identify reception centres (Hubs) to ensure the efficient and swift implementation of the VSM activities and provide office space that ensure privacy and confidentiality. • A Steering Committee is established, and/or regular coordination meetings are held among the concerned representatives of the national authorities and with

	EUAA to ensure effective collaboration and coordination, both at central and local level.
Activities	<p>IT-AS-1.1. Support to the access to the asylum procedure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the national authorities in assisting (potential) applicants with information provision sessions on the asylum procedure at first arrival or during the making of applications. • Support to the national authorities for the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs at first arrival or during the making of applications. • Support to capacity building activities (i.e. training and/or on the job-coaching and/or workshops) on relevant area of support, based on capacity assessment. <p>IT-AS-1.2. Support to the lodging of asylum applications and temporary protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the national authorities in lodging of international protection applications, identification of special needs and Dublin indicators, also in the framework of accelerated border procedures, resettlement, humanitarian admission and temporary protection. • Support the national authorities in developing/updating and implementing asylum quality management tools/ SOPs/ workflows for access to the asylum procedure. • Support to capacity building activities (i.e. training and/or on the job-coaching and/or workshops) on relevant area of support, based on capacity assessment. <p>IT-AS-1.3 Support to processing of asylum applications at first instance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical/legal and administrative support to the Territorial Commissions. • Support to capacity building activities (i.e. training and/or on the job-coaching and/or workshops) on relevant area of support, based on capacity assessment. • Transversal support to NAC on technical /legal matters and on data management and analysis. • Support NAC Quality Unit in the harmonisation of asylum procedures at central and local level. • Support NAC in managing cessation and revocation cases.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support NAC procurement system with tools/ SOPs/ workflows/ developed/updated with EUAA support. <p>IT-AS-1.4 Support to processing of asylum applications at second instance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to capacity building activities (i.e. training and/or on the job-coaching and/or workshops) on relevant area of support, based on capacity assessment. • Targeted support to selected tribunals in the management of cases related to accelerated border procedures (only International Protection), and, in exceptional cases, to tribunals with high backlog. • Targeted support to Court of Cassation in the management of international protection cases and in the development of the annual case-law review on international protection. <p>IT-AS-1.5 Support to the implementation of the Dublin procedure and the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to the processing of Dublin cases. • Support in designing/updating operational tools for Dublin system, procedures and transfers. • Support to capacity building activities (i.e. training and/or on the job-coaching and/or workshops) on the Dublin procedure, based on capacity assessment. • Support the national authorities on VSM cases management from disembarkation to the lodging of the application. • Support to the VSM matching exercise and MS interviews to applicants channelled in VSM. • Support to VSM interinstitutional coordination.
EUAA resources	<p><u>Deployment of asylum support teams</u></p> <p>IT-AS-1.1. Support to the access to the asylum procedure Protection Expert up to 10 Access to Asylum Procedures Expert up to 10</p> <p>Up to 40 FTE Cultural Mediators to support ASTs</p> <p>IT-AS-1.2. Support to the lodging of asylum applications and temporary protection</p>

	<p>Access to Asylum Procedures Expert up to 39 Information and Data Management Expert up to 1 Asylum Procedures Expert up to 5</p> <p>Up to 60 FTE Cultural Mediators to support ASTs</p> <p>IT-AS-1.3 Support to processing of asylum applications at first instance</p> <p>Asylum Procedures Expert up to 25 Finance/Procurement Expert up to 2 Programme and Project Management Expert up to 1 Legal Expert (Asylum/ Reception) up to 3 Asylum/ Reception Operations Expert up to 9 Information and Data Management Expert up to 1</p> <p>IT-AS-1.4 Support to processing of asylum applications at second instance</p> <p>Asylum Procedures Expert up to 14</p> <p>Up to 10 FTE Cultural Mediators to support ASTs</p> <p>IT-AS-1.5 Support to the implementation of the Dublin procedure and the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM)</p> <p>Asylum Procedures Expert up to 2 Dublin Regulation Expert up to 7 Information and Data Management Expert up to 1</p> <p>Up to 5 FTE Cultural Mediators to support ASTs</p> <p><u>Technical equipment and/or other</u></p> <p>Conditional upon EUAA assessment and approval of any request, and subject to budget availability for the present Operational Plan, support could include inter alia equipment, works, services, communication/promotional materials, costs for trainings/meetings/workshops, infrastructure costs, IT equipment, office supplies and other material and operational support where required for the joint EUAA and national authorities' activities.</p>
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Measure IT-REC-2 Reception	
Operational objective (outcome): Increase the capacity of national authorities in reception in line with CEAS	
National stakeholders	<p>Ministry of Interior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration (DCLI) • Prefectures • <i>Servizio Centrale</i> - SAI • Managing entities of the reception centres

<p>Operational preconditions</p>	<p>In addition to specific preconditions referred to in other parts of the operational plan, the following operational preconditions are agreed by the Parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Italian authorities grant access to EUAA asylum support teams (ASTs) to disembarkation areas, hotspots and reception centres. • Access to SGA-SUA and other relevant databases is provided by the Italian authorities, including credentials for each member of the EUAA ASTs as needed. • DCLI agrees on working instructions for the EUAA ASTs deployed under this measure. • DCLI/Prefectures support and enhance effective coordination with DPS/Immigration Offices in the transfer of information/data on applicants at arrival stage to facilitate reception allocation workflows, especially in light of vulnerabilities identified. • DCLI updates the reception conditions' monitoring tools and platform (SMAcc) to be used by Prefectures as needed. • Prefectures are committed to conduct monitoring visits to reception centres using the established methodology and tools with the support of EUAA ASTs. • Effective collaboration and participation of relevant personnel of the reception facilities' (as envisaged by <i>Capitolato</i>), as well as of representatives/social workers of the Prefectures, to capacity building initiatives agreed with the DCLI. • A Steering Committee is established, and/or regular coordination meetings are held among the concerned representatives of the national authorities and with EUAA to ensure effective collaboration and coordination, both at central and local level.
<p>Activities</p>	<p>IT-REC-2.1 Support to central management of reception and implementation of legislative framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to the Italian authorities in the central management of reception legal and policy frameworks through the development/update of corresponding tools/ SOPs/workflows, also in relation to the planned reception capacity. • Support to the Italian authorities on reception information and data management on the dedicated platforms/tools and to the analysis and extraction of reception data for internal reporting, monitoring and planning purposes. • Support to the Italian authorities in administrative, financial and programming aspects related to the reception system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions based on the European Asylum Curriculum and workshops targeting reception authorities and reception centres, as per priorities/topics defined with DCLI, and through a cooperation with other relevant actors. • Provision of modular units to enhance reception capacity, quality and efficiency. <p>IT-REC 2.2 Support the allocation to reception at central and local level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to the Italian authorities at central and local level in the management and monitoring of arrivals via sea and land borders, and through Humanitarian Corridors. • Support the coordination, allocation, registration and transfer mechanisms of the reception authorities, with a special focus on workflows related to Unaccompanied Children, other vulnerable applicants and their special needs. • Support the allocation and referral of vulnerable applicants and applicants with special needs through the local mapping of services (roll out of the EUAA referral tool). <p>IT- REC 2.3 Support to quality management through monitoring of reception conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to the DCLI Monitoring Office in leading and coordinating self-assessment methodology and tools development/updates as per legislative framework. • Technical and operational support to enhance Prefectures’ implementation of self-assessment methodology and tools. • Support to the DCLI Monitoring Office in the extraction and analysis of data on reception condition standards, as per self-assessment activities registered in the monitoring platform.
<p>EUAA resources</p>	<p><u>Deployment of asylum support teams</u></p> <p>IT-REC-2.1 Support to central management of reception and implementation of legislative framework Legal Expert (Asylum/ Reception) up to 10 Protection Expert up to 2 Finance/Procurement Expert up to 3 Information and Data Management Expert up to 6</p> <p>IT-REC 2.2 Support the allocation to reception at central and local level Reception and Site Management Expert up to 5</p>

	<p>Asylum and Reception Information System Expert up to 8</p> <p>IT- REC 2.3 Support to quality management through monitoring of reception conditions</p> <p>Reception and Site Management Expert up to 40</p> <p><u>Technical equipment and/or other</u></p> <p>Conditional upon EUAA assessment and approval of any request, and subject to budget availability for the present Operational Plan, support could include inter alia equipment, works, services, communication/promotional materials, costs for trainings/meetings/workshops, infrastructure costs, IT equipment, office supplies and other material and operational support where required for the joint EUAA and national authorities' activities.</p>
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The profiles and numbers of the EUAA's resources foreseen for the agreed measures intend to reflect the initial deployment planning, in line with the assessment of the situation in the host Member State, the capacity of the host Member State and the EUAA's response capacity.

If, during the operational plan implementation, operational needs change, and subject to the availability of the EUAA's resources, the deployment planning can be re-adjusted through redeployment and/or assignment of additional or fewer experts, and in accordance with the general implementing provisions of this plan. The EUAA will maintain the actual overview of deployments through the implementation period.

In addition, conditional upon the EUAA's assessment and approval of any request, and subject to budget availability for the present operational plan, support could include inter alia equipment, works, services, communication and/or promotional material, required costs for training/meetings/workshops, infrastructure costs, IT equipment, office supplies and other material and operational support where required for the joint EUAA and national authorities' activities.

Where material support is provided, it shall be the host Member State's sole responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable town planning, environmental or other national or local legislation and regulations, including by obtaining all required permits or authorisations prior to the commencement of any works or the provision of equipment by the Agency.

Moreover, in the event that the host Member State would request the Agency to repeat certain activities/tasks in relation to specific individual files, in particular when the legal validity of those activities is successfully challenged due to procedural or other defects which are not due to the fault or negligence of the Agency, the Agency reserves the right to request the host Member State to bear the related costs.

In the framework of EUAA quality mechanism, the Agency conducts quality assurance exercises. These exercises entail the quality reviews of samples of anonymized lodging interviews, first-instance interviews and opinions/recommendations, Dublin processes and vulnerability assessments carried out by the ASTs, where relevant. The sample of cases can also include anonymized cases processed by the national administrations upon request.

III. Operational plan: general implementing provisions

1. Legal framework

1.1 General legal basis for the operational plan

In accordance with Article 1 of the EUAA Regulation, the Agency shall contribute to ensuring the efficient and uniform application of Union law on asylum in the Member States in a manner that fully respects fundamental rights. The Agency shall facilitate and support the activities of the Member States in the implementation of the CEAS, including by enabling convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection across the Union and by coordinating and strengthening practical cooperation and information exchange. The Agency shall improve the functioning of the CEAS, including through the monitoring mechanism referred to in Article 14 and by providing operational and technical assistance to Member States, in particular where their asylum and reception systems are under disproportionate pressure.

Article 2(1) of the EUAA Regulation specifies the tasks the Agency is entrusted to perform, which include, in accordance with points (i), (l) and (n) thereof, providing effective operational and technical assistance to Member States, in particular when their asylum and reception systems are subject to disproportionate pressure, setting up and deploying asylum support teams, setting up an asylum reserve pool, and acquiring and deploying the necessary technical equipment for asylum support teams and deploying experts from the asylum reserve pool.

The Agency shall provide operational and technical assistance to a Member State in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 6 of the EUAA Regulation.

In line with Article 18(1) of the EUAA Regulation, this operational plan has been drawn up by the Executive Director in cooperation with the host Member State, and it is being agreed between the Executive Director and the host Member State.

In line with Article 24 of the EUAA Regulation, each Member State shall appoint a national contact point for communication with the Agency on all matters relating to operational and technical assistance.

In line with Article 18(1), the Agency has consulted the participating Member States, where necessary, on this operational plan through the national contact points referred to in Article 24.

1.2 Legal framework applicable to the operational plan

The EUAA's activities performed in the context of the operational and technical assistance as identified in this Plan are in principle governed by EU law, complemented, where appropriate, by the national law of the host Member State. This includes, *inter alia*, the safety and security of participating persons, and assets deployed for the purpose of EUAA's activities.

References to internal acts of the EUAA included in this Plan shall be construed to include any subsequent amendments to those internal acts as well as to any other internal act replacing them.

1.3 Lawfulness

This Plan shall be implemented by the Parties and all participating Member States in full compliance with all applicable laws.

All experts participating in asylum support teams and all persons taking part in the implementation of the Plan shall respect applicable international law, European Union law and the national law of the host Member State.

1.4 Respect for fundamental rights

1.1.1 Protection of fundamental rights

In accordance with Article 57(1) of the EUAA Regulation, the Agency shall guarantee the protection of fundamental rights in the performance of its tasks under the EUAA Regulation in accordance with relevant Union law, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and relevant international law, in particular the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967.

The Parties, as well as all participating Member States, shall implement this Plan in a manner which fully respects fundamental rights and human dignity. They shall cooperate in good faith and shall exchange all necessary information for that purpose, as required by virtue of Article 4 of the EUAA Regulation.

1.4.2 The role of the Fundamental Rights Officer of the Agency

In line with Article 49(1) of the EUAA Regulation, the Fundamental Rights Officer is appointed by the Management Board and is independent in the performance of their duties.

Pursuant to Article 49(3) of the EUAA Regulation, the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer shall be responsible for ensuring the Agency's compliance with fundamental rights in all of its activities and promoting respect of fundamental rights by the Agency.

In line with Article 49(5) of the EUAA Regulation, the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer was consulted on this operational plan. The Fundamental Rights Officer will also be consulted on any amendments to this operational plan as referred to in section 1.12. hereof and shall provide observations on the detailed evaluation reports referred to in Article 16(4) of the EUAA Regulation.

Pursuant to Article 49(5) of the EUAA Regulation, the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer shall have access to all information concerning respect for fundamental rights in relation to the Agency's activities, including by organising visits, with the consent of the host Member State, to the places where the Agency carries out operational activities under this Plan.

The EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer is also responsible for handling complaints received by the Agency under the complaints mechanism referred to in Section 1.4.3. hereof and shall do so in accordance with the right to good administration. In line with Article 51(4) of the EUAA Regulation, for the purpose of handling complaints, the Fundamental Rights Officer shall inform the relevant authority or body competent for fundamental rights in a Member State of a complaint. In line with Article 4 of the EUAA Regulation, all parties shall cooperate in good faith, also in view of the handling of complaints by the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer.

1.4.3 The complaints mechanism of the Agency

In accordance with Article 51 of the EUAA Regulation, the Agency has set up a complaints mechanism to ensure that fundamental rights are respected in its operational activities⁵.

Any person who is directly affected by the actions of an expert participating in an asylum support team, and who considers that their fundamental rights have been violated due to those actions, or any party representing such a person, may submit a complaint in writing to the Agency. In line with Article 51(3) of the EUAA Regulation, complaints which challenge a national authority's decision on an individual application for international protection shall be inadmissible.

Any expert participating in an asylum support team who receives any form of written communication from a complainant or from their representative containing allegations of violations of fundamental rights in the context of the Agency's activities shall forward such communication, including, where available, the contact details of the complainant or their representative, to the Fundamental Rights Officer without delay.

In accordance with Article 18(2)(n) of the EUAA Regulation, the following practical arrangements related to the complaints mechanism are being included in this operational plan, and shall be binding on the host Member State as well as all participating Member States:

- The host Member State shall cooperate in good faith and shall exchange all necessary information in a timely and accurate manner with the Agency and its Fundamental Rights Officer, as well as with home Member States where relevant, for the purpose of ensuring the proper handling and follow-up of complaints by the Agency and home Member States;
- The host Member State shall ensure that complainants are not unreasonably hindered from submitting complaints to the Agency concerning experts participating in asylum support teams, nor from accessing representatives who may submit complaints on their behalf;
- The host Member State shall ensure that information material about the complaints mechanism may be provided at the sites of the Agency's operational activities, and that information on the complaints mechanism may be provided directly to persons who may be directly affected by the actions of experts participating in asylum support teams;
- The Agency, the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer and all participating Member States shall handle all complaints in a confidential manner and in compliance with all applicable data protection rules, as provided in Article 51(11) of the EUAA Regulation;
- In the case of admissible complaints concerning Member State experts, including seconded national experts, home Member States shall ensure appropriate follow-up, including disciplinary measures as necessary or other measures in accordance with national law. They shall report back to the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer on their findings and follow-up within six months of the complaint being forwarded to them by the Fundamental Rights Officer, and at regular intervals of three months thereafter if necessary, using the templates that may be developed by the Agency for this purpose.

1.4.4 Code of conduct for experts in asylum support teams

⁵ The modalities governing the submission, handling and follow-up of complaints by the Agency and the Member States are laid down in Management Board Decision No 159 of 24 May 2024 on the setting up of the complaints mechanism.

Experts participating in asylum support teams shall maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct, professionalism, respect and promotion of fundamental rights and international protection.

Whilst carrying out supporting functions, experts must not discriminate on grounds of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, age or sexual orientation. All experts are expected to treat every person with courtesy, respect and due consideration for the nature of any legitimate activity in which they are engaged. To perform their duties properly, they shall serve the public interest and refrain from any activities which could undermine or compromise their independence and the appropriate performance of their duties.

During the implementation of this Plan, all experts must apply a zero-tolerance attitude with respect to the infringement of fundamental rights.

This obligation is particularly important when dealing with persons who are in need of international protection. To that end, experts participating in asylum support teams deployed under this Plan shall comply and act in accordance with the 'EUAA's code of conduct for experts participating in asylum support teams'⁶. All such experts will be requested to sign a declaration of compliance with the EUAA's code of conduct prior to their deployment.

Experts must inform the Agency without delay, making use of the relevant reporting channels, when they have reason to believe that a violation of the EUAA's code of conduct has occurred or is about to occur in the context of the Agency's operational and technical assistance activities.

1.4.5 Escalation of potential violations of fundamental rights by the host Member State⁷

The Agency has developed an escalation mechanism for the reporting and escalation of alleged violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations by the host Member State.

Experts participating in asylum support teams have an obligation to inform the Agency without delay, making use of the relevant reporting channels, when they learn about, witness, are directly or indirectly involved in and/or have grounds to believe that a violation of fundamental rights or international protection obligations by the host Member State has occurred.

According to Article 18(6)(c) of the EUAA Regulation, the Executive Director shall, after informing the host Member State, suspend or terminate, in whole or in part, the deployment of the asylum support teams if, after consulting the EUAA's Fundamental Rights Officer, the Executive Director considers that there are violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations by the host Member State that are of a serious nature or are likely to persist.

1.5 Public access to documents

This operational plan shall be made public on the Agency's website.

The EUAA and the host Member State shall consult each other on any requests for public access to any other documents relating to this Plan and treat such requests in accordance with

⁶ Available on the EUAA's website: <https://euaa.europa.eu/operations/operational-assistance>.

⁷ As soon as it is established in the EUAA.

Regulation (EC) 1049/2001⁸ and the EUAA's implementing rules on access to documents⁹ or the respective national law, whichever is applicable.

1.6 Protection of personal data

The protection of personal data processed in the course of implementation of the plan is governed both by Regulation (EU) 2016/679¹⁰ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (the GDPR) as well as by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725¹¹ of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data (the EUDPR). Whereas the former applies to stakeholders at national level (including parties that may not be co-signatories of this Plan however are cooperating with the main partners), the latter applies to the EUAA. In addition, the EUAA and the host Member State will comply with Chapter 7 of the EUAA Regulation that contains specific provisions as far as the processing of personal data in the context of provision of operational and technical assistance is concerned.

Whenever personal data are processed by experts participating in asylum support teams within the activities agreed in this Plan, the asylum support teams will act as data processors on behalf of the competent authorities of the host Member State under the instructions received from the latter in its role as data controller.

The instructions on how to process personal data are defined in a 'Data Processing Agreement' (DPA) laid down in Annex I to this Plan. Having the DPA in place is a condition for asylum support teams to be able to process personal data on behalf of the host Member State. The DPA forms an integral and legally binding part of this Plan.

To facilitate efficient and effective cooperation on matters pertaining to the protection of personal data, the host Member State agrees to indicate a contact point. The EUAA will be liaising with the contact point on relevant matters in the course of implementation of the Plan, including each time there is a need to amend the DPA to reflect amendments in this Plan.

1.7 Intellectual property rights

All rights in any writings or other work produced by experts participating in asylum support teams which are not intended for the exclusive use of the national authorities of the host Member State shall be the property of the EUAA and/or the European Union, where such writings or work relate to activities undertaken in the context of the Plan.

The EUAA and/or the European Union acquire irrevocably ownership of the results and of all intellectual property rights, such as copyright, and industrial property rights, on the materials produced specifically for the EUAA under the Plan and incorporated in such works, without prejudice, however, to the specific rules concerning pre-existing rights on pre-existing materials

⁸ Regulation (EC) 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001, regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents.

⁹ Management Board Decision No 6 of 20 September 2011 laying down practical arrangements regarding public access to the documents of EASO.

¹⁰ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

¹¹ OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 33.

or other detailed rules contained in the relevant framework contracts concluded by the EUAA for purposes related to the implementation of this Plan.

1.8 Civil and criminal liability of experts participating in asylum support teams

Articles 26 and 27 of the EUAA Regulation shall be applicable to the experts participating in asylum support teams deployed in the host Member State.

1.9 Protocol (No 7) on privileges and immunities

In line with Article 61 of the EUAA Regulation, Protocol (No 7) on the privileges and immunities of the European Union ('the Protocol'¹²) applies to the Agency and its staff members (statutory staff), including when they are deployed for the purposes of the implementation of the Plan on the territory of the host Member State, including as part of asylum support teams.

The host Member State shall ascertain that the relevant provisions of the Protocol are implemented and shall provide the necessary support to the Agency in this regard.

1.10 The role of the coordinating officer of the Agency

Pursuant to Article 25 of the EUAA Regulation, the Executive Director of the Agency shall appoint one or more experts from the Agency's staff to act or to be deployed as a coordinating officer(s), in order to ensure the operational implementation of all organisational aspects, including the presence of staff members of the Agency, related to the deployment of asylum support teams throughout the provision of operational and technical assistance.

In particular, pursuant to Article 25(3) of the EUAA Regulation, the coordinating officer(s) shall foster cooperation and coordination between the host Member State and the participating Member States. The coordinating officer will:

- (i) Act as an interface between the Agency, the host Member State and experts participating in asylum support teams, providing assistance, on behalf of the Agency, on all issues relating to the experts' conditions of deployment;
- (ii) Monitor the correct implementation of the operational plan;
- (iii) Act on behalf of the Agency as regards all aspects of the deployment of asylum support teams and report to the Agency on all those aspects;
- (iv) Report to the Executive Director where the operational plan is not adequately implemented.

The coordinating officer(s) of the Agency may also be authorised by the Executive Director to assist in resolving any disputes concerning the implementation of this Plan and the deployment of asylum support teams.

1.11 Non-substantial changes during implementation

The Plan aims to provide effective and flexible support to the host Member State. Therefore, the foreseen activities will be implemented in consideration of the changing circumstances which may occur in the international protection and reception systems in the Member States or

¹² [EUR-Lex - 12012E/PRO/07 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#).

on the ground, as well as in the context of the availability of the Agency's staff, financial resources and experts.

The implementation of measures and delivery of technical and operational assistance foreseen in the Plan, including deployment locations, may be subject to non-substantial changes that may be accommodated within the objectives of a measure, do not require an amendment to or adaptation of the Plan, and that the host Member State is informed in a timely manner at the appropriate level.

Changes required to the agreed actions and composition of asylum support teams in the framework of the Plan shall as a general rule be considered non-substantial, unless such changes require significant additional resources which cannot be accommodated within the overall EUAA budget, as well as when they impact on and/or require an amendment of the agreed operational objectives.

1.12 Amendments to or adaptations of the Plan

In line with Article 18(5) of the EUAA Regulation, any amendments to or adaptations of this Plan shall require the agreement of the Executive Director and the host Member State, after consulting the participating Member States, where necessary.

The Agency shall immediately send a copy of the amended or adapted Plan to the national contact points of the participating Member States referred to in Article 24 of the EUAA Regulation. The amended Plan shall be made public.

1.13 Suspension or termination of the Plan

According to Article 18(6) of the EUAA Regulation, the Executive Director shall, after informing the host Member State, suspend or terminate, in whole or in part, the deployment of the asylum support teams if the conditions to carry out the operational and technical measures are no longer fulfilled or if the Plan is not respected by the host Member State or if, after consulting the Fundamental Rights Officer of the EUAA, the Executive Director considers that there are violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations by the host Member State that are of a serious nature or are likely to persist.

2. Implementation provisions

2.1 Organisational pre-conditions

2.1.1 Pre-conditions applicable to the host Member State

In the implementation of the Plan, the host Member State will:

- (i) Designate an overall plan coordinator and may also designate specific measure coordinators for the measures stipulated in the Plan;
- (ii) Grant timely and appropriate access rights for the experts participating in asylum support teams and EUAA representatives to all relevant databases and provide the relevant parties with the required information and data in the context of the implementation of this Plan;

- (iii) Facilitate the provision of appropriate working space. Every effort shall be made by the Parties to provide suitable working conditions and, where required, working place for the experts participating in the activities implemented in the framework of the Plan. Health and safety conditions in line with EU directives and national law are considered as organisational pre-conditions;
- (iv) As far as operationally feasible, and where relevant, the working files shall be made available by the host Member State in English (unless otherwise agreed);
- (v) Provide timely input to the Early Warning and Preparedness System and tailored information on the implementation of measures agreed in the Plan;
- (vi) Facilitate the implementation of the EUAA survey data collection systems.

2.1.2 Pre-conditions applicable to the EUAA

In the implementation of the Plan, the EUAA will:

- (i) Designate a coordinating officer in accordance with Article 25 of the EUAA Regulation. The Agency may also designate specific measure coordinators for the measures stipulated in the Plan;
- (ii) Provide the necessary technical support to experts participating in this Plan with the aim of ensuring that all deliverables make good use of the expertise and information already available to the EUAA;
- (iii) Reimburse costs incurred by persons participating in the support activities in the framework of this Plan, according to the applicable EUAA rules;
- (iv) When supporting the development and implementation of agreed tools and procedures, take into account the EUAA's tools and guidance.

2.2 Conditions for deployment of asylum support teams

General rules and conditions for deployment are published on platforms, which the experts participating in asylum support teams are obliged to consult, such as the EUAA's country-specific operations platforms (COP). Access to these platforms is made available to experts participating in asylum support teams upon their deployment, allowing for preparation for deployment and daily implementation of their tasks.

The platforms contain relevant information, such as:

- Location(s) in the host Member State where the asylum support teams will be deployed;
- Logistical arrangements including information on working conditions, practical information concerning the location of deployment and related workflows, etc.;
- Relevant safety and security aspects of the operation;
- Special instructions for the experts participating in asylum support teams, including working instructions and databases that they are authorised to consult;
- Description of specific tasks, including with regard to fundamental rights, workflows and procedures, as relevant, including where available detailed information about measures to be taken for referring persons in need of international protection, victims of trafficking in human beings, minors and any other persons in a vulnerable situation to the competent national authorities;
- Procedures and incident report forms for the code of conduct and the EUAA's Internal guidance on reporting and escalation of potential violations of fundamental rights or international protection obligations by the host Member State pursuant to Article 18(6)(c) of the EUAA Regulation ('escalation mechanism');

- Equipment that experts participating in asylum support teams may carry in the host Member State, transport and other logistics;
- Other specific instructions and provisions as necessary.

Other appropriate platforms or communication tools may be made available as necessary to make the above information available.

The host Member State shall contribute to information concerning its asylum and reception systems, including information on relevant practices, legislation, case law and statistical background.

The host Member State will provide experts participating in asylum support teams with information on the general state of play with regard to the procedures for international protection and reception, including where available measures for referring persons in need of international protection, victims of trafficking in human beings, Unaccompanied Children and any other persons in a vulnerable situation to the competent national authorities for appropriate assistance and specific information necessary for the implementation of the operational measures on a continuous basis.

2.3 Composition of asylum support teams

In line with Article 19(1) of the EUAA Regulation, the Executive Director of the Agency shall determine the composition of each asylum support team, taking into account the particular circumstances of the host Member State.

The asylum support teams may be composed of the following resources:

- (i) **Experts from the Agency's own staff**, i.e., statutory staff within the meaning of Article 60 of the EUAA Regulation employed by the Agency subject to the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union (CEOS)¹³;
- (ii) **Experts from Member States**¹⁴, including experts made available through the annual bilateral negotiations and agreements referred to in Article 19(3) of the EUAA Regulation and the asylum reserve pool referred to in Article 19(6) of the EUAA Regulation¹⁵;
- (iii) **Experts seconded by Member States to the Agency (seconded national experts or 'SNEs')**, experts employed by a national, regional or local public administration of an EU Member State or an associate country or by a public intergovernmental organisation who are seconded to the Agency¹⁶ for the provision of support to its operational activities;
- (iv) **Other experts not employed by the Agency**: i.e., individuals providing services in relation to the Plan upon conclusion of a public contract between the Agency and the legal entity with which these individuals have an employment and/or contractual relationship, including

¹³ As laid down by Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 259/68, OJ L 56, 4.3.1968, p.1, as last amended by Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1023/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 (OJ L 287, 29.10.2013, p. 15). For the purposes of this operational plan, the term 'statutory staff' includes temporary agents and contract agents covered by the EU Staff Regulations and the CEOS.

¹⁴ Including experts from associate countries with which the European Union has an arrangement in place on the modalities of their participation in the EUAA's work, as referred to in Article 34 of the EUAA Regulation, which provides for the deployment of their experts as part of asylum support teams.

¹⁵ Decision of the Executive Director No 83 of 12 July 2022 on the mechanism for selection of experts to be assigned to asylum support teams in operational support activities coordinated by the Agency, including management of the asylum reserve pool.

¹⁶ Within the meaning of Article 1 of Management Board Decision No 1 of 25 November 2010 laying down rules on the secondment of national experts (SNE) to the European Asylum Support Office.

temporary agency workers¹⁷, or with remunerated external experts in line with Article 93 of the Agency's Financial Regulation¹⁸.

In line with Article 8(6) and Article 19(4) of the EUAA Regulation, experts participating in asylum support teams shall receive the training relevant to their duties and functions that is necessary for their participation in the operational activities organised by the Agency.

The implementation of the Plan shall be based on the common understanding that the provision of resources, other than EUAA (statutory) staff, to be deployed for the purposes described above can under no circumstances lead per se to the establishment of an employment relationship between the EUAA and the members of the asylum support teams.

2.4 Implementation modalities

The deployment on site/at national level of asylum support teams is the key modality for the provision of operational and technical support by the Agency, whereby through asylum support teams the Agency combines efforts with national authorities for the implementation of the Plan.

At times, based on prior agreement of the Parties and for pre-defined periods of time, members of asylum support teams can be assigned to work at the premises of the respective national authorities to ensure utmost efficiency, quality and sustainability of the anticipated results.

In practice, members of asylum support teams are temporarily assigned by the EUAA to work at the premises of national authorities of the host Member State. The latter coordinate the tasks of the deployed asylum support teams members in accordance with the activities foreseen in this operational plan and the agreed standard operating procedures and working instructions. The overall responsibility for the management of the resources remains with the EUAA and the members of asylum support teams report back to the Agency on the performance of their activities, deliverables, application of working instructions, etc. Members of asylum support teams remain bound by their obligations, including visibility of association with the Agency, compliance with the code of conduct, duty to report, etc.

In such cases, a coordination mechanism shall be agreed by the Parties to oversee the implementation of the Plan also with regard to the allocation and administration of resources, including coordination with national authorities' personnel deployed alongside the EUAA's asylum support teams. For this purpose, modalities for assignment of members of asylum support teams reflecting respective roles, responsibilities and obligations, shall be established and agreed upon in writing between the EUAA and the host Member State. In setting up the aforementioned coordination mechanism, the following rules must be complied with as a minimum:

¹⁷ Within the meaning of Article 3(1)(c) of Directive 2008/104/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on temporary agency work (OJ L 327, 5.12.2008, p. 9).

¹⁸ Article 93 of Management Board Decision No 54 of 14 August 2019 on the EASO Financial Regulation (as amended by Management Board Decision No 74 of 28 July 2021). Management Board Decision No 54 of 14 August 2019 remains in force despite EASO being replaced by the EUAA. Any references in the EASO Financial Regulation to 'EASO' or the 'EASO Regulation', should therefore be construed as references to the 'EUAA' or equivalent provisions in the 'EUAA Regulation', respectively.

- a) The EUAA shall duly advise the concerned members of asylum support teams, including — in the case of experts not employed by the Agency — the employers¹⁹ of the experts or the experts²⁰ themselves, of their envisaged assignment to the premises of national authorities of the host Member State before such assignment takes place;
- b) The national authority shall clearly acknowledge that they endorse the obligations and responsibilities pertaining to them as hosting authority vis-à-vis the members of the asylum support teams which are assigned to work on their premises by the Agency. Such acknowledgement includes the obligation for the concerned national authority to coordinate the tasks of the deployed asylum support teams related to the specific Plan measure(s) and in accordance with the respective standard operating procedures and working instructions, as applicable;
- c) The national authority remains responsible for ensuring proper working conditions for all members of asylum support teams deployed by the Agency, and is responsible for their health, safety and security during work, in accordance with section 3.0 of this Plan. The EUAA may not be held liable for any breach of health and safety rules that might occur on the premises of the national authorities and/or while engaged in activities coordinated by the national authorities;
- d) Regarding reporting, the deployed members of asylum support teams remain accountable to the EUAA, which remains responsible for the overall coordination of their support, through defined reporting requirements for the activities performed in the framework of the assignment. Additional specific reporting obligations may be agreed between the EUAA and the host Member State.

The deployment of EUAA-contracted remunerated external experts who are assigned to carry out services in support of any national authority, will be subject to the modalities for the assignment of remunerated external experts laid down in Annex No. II to this Plan. These modalities, which constitute the coordination mechanism mentioned herewith, are applicable exclusively to the deployment of remunerated external experts and are agreed by the Parties with the signature of this Plan.

3. Security and safety

The principles of the EUAA's Security Governance Framework²¹ are based on the security principles contained in the European Commission's security rules. Commission Decision 2015/443 on Security in the Commission²² defines that security shall be based on the principles of legality, transparency, proportionality and accountability.

The safety and security of persons participating in the EUAA's activities under the Plan falls under the overall legal framework of the host Member State and shall be provided by the respective authorities legally responsible and accountable for public order and security and safety on the territory of that Member State.

¹⁹ Referring to individuals providing services in relation to the Plan upon conclusion of a public contract between the Agency and the legal entity with which these individuals have an employment and/or contractual relationship. Examples include temporary agency workers and contractor personnel (such as interpreters and cultural mediators).

²⁰ Applicable to remunerated external experts deployed in accordance with Article 93 of the Agency's Financial Regulation.

²¹ Decision of the Executive Director No 61 of 12 April 2021 on the Security Governance Framework.

²² OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 41.

The EUAA will endeavour to support the identification of the required security and safety measures and the implementation of those that are under its remit, both legally and functionally, in close cooperation with the Member State's security focal point (see section 3.1 below).

To that end:

- (i) Standard security and safety requirements, identified herewith, shall apply as a general rule;
- (ii) Specific security and safety requirements for the Plan shall be identified jointly by the EUAA's and the host Member State's security focal point;
- (iii) The safety and security measures shall be identified jointly by the EUAA and the host Member State on the basis of field assessment visits, preferably prior to deployments.

3.1 Standard security requirements

The standard security and safety requirements are expected to be implemented consistently throughout the lifecycle of the Plan:

- Both the host Member State on the one side and the EUAA on the other shall appoint a single point of contact for security matters under the Plan (hereinafter 'security focal point');
- The host Member State shall ensure that the working conditions for the performance of the activities under the Plan are compliant with national occupational health and safety norms and regulations;
- A pre-deployment security briefing, prepared in close cooperation with the respective national authorities, focusing both on general security rules and awareness, as well as on specific security aspects for each deployment shall be provided;
- Emergency (evacuation) plan. Certain operational activities, such as operations in field locations, require that personnel shall have clear guidance and training on how to evacuate quickly in case of emergencies. In a more general context, there could be a need to evacuate from the operational area as well. Emergency plans shall be drafted and maintained up-to-date by the competent authority/person(s), and shall be made available to the concerned parties and exercised regularly;
- Communication tools. As considered relevant and necessary by the EUAA's Security Sector, the EUAA may deploy additional means of communication as deemed necessary and in cooperation with the relevant host Member State authorities;
- Security of information. Sensitive non-classified and classified information shall be adequately protected, in accordance with the applicable legal framework²³.

3.2 Specific security and safety requirements

Specific security and safety requirements for the implementation of the Plan shall be defined on the basis of a pre-deployment security assessment visit with the aim of identification of specific potential risks, identification of mitigation measures and communication of those measures to the Member State and involved stakeholders, prior to the deployment of asylum support teams.

²³ Including, inter alia, the security principles contained in Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17/03/2015, p. 53) and the Decision of the Executive Director No 49 of 14 May 2024 on the handling of sensitive non-classified and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED information.

3.3 Suspension of operational activities on security and safety grounds

The EUAA reserves the right to suspend operational activities on the basis of current risk assessment(s), while keeping the host Member State informed on the findings and mitigating measures identified as required for resumption.

The host Member State may also suspend temporarily, in whole or in part, the implementation of operational activities in case of serious imminent safety and security incidents, developments, or as mitigating or preventive measures or direct threats to personnel, activities or physical presence. The EUAA's coordinating officer and the EUAA's security focal point shall be informed without delay.

The Parties will agree on conditions for resumption as soon as possible.

3.4 Security incident reporting

Experts participating in asylum support teams who become aware of an incident related to the security and safety of persons, assets or premises is obliged to report the matter to the EUAA via appropriate channels and in any case to the following email: duty.officer@europa.euaa.eu.

4. Communication

The host Member State and the coordinating officer of the Agency as referred to in section 1.10, will manage the exchange of information concerning the tasks under the Plan.

During the implementation of this Plan, experts participating in asylum support teams shall be briefed regularly on the current situational and operational developments to address challenges and identify improvements.

The EUAA and relevant national stakeholders will maintain close cooperation and communication. The EUAA will also provide information to its partners (i.e., the European Commission, concerned EU agencies, and international organisations) about the operational activities, as appropriate and in line with the EUAA's transparency and communication policies.

The timing and content of communication with the media shall be agreed upon between the EUAA and the host Member State.

Where relevant, the Parties will facilitate media coverage to ensure a wider dissemination and visibility of results.

As a publicly funded EU body, the Agency is accountable for and committed to transparency for the public resources it makes use of.

In this regard, the EUAA may brand its operational activities to ensure appropriate visibility. This includes the application of fixed branding and use of visibility items, such as on, but not limited to, containers and premises, as well as in offices where the Agency provides operational and technical assistance. It also includes the branding of mobile assets which it may deploy, including vehicles.

Such branding may also include visibility clothing and materials worn by experts participating in asylum support teams in order to identify their association with, or funding by, the Agency.

For transparency reasons and for the implementation of the complaints mechanism referred to in section 1.4.3 above, experts participating in asylum support team are required to be visibly associated with the Agency.

In specific cases, the Agency and the respective national authority/ies may agree on co-branding of visibility clothing and/or materials, in line with the visual identity rules and guidelines of both/all parties.

5. Cooperation with other stakeholders

5.1 Cooperation with the European Commission and other EU agencies

All activities under this Plan will be closely coordinated with the host Member State and in close cooperation with the European Commission, as well as with the other EU agencies present on the ground.

5.2 Cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

In accordance with Article 18(3) of the EUAA Regulation, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operates and has the capacity to contribute a response to a request for operational and technical assistance, the Agency shall coordinate with the UNHCR as regards the implementation of the operational plan, where appropriate and with the agreement of the host Member State.

The EUAA's coordinating officer will liaise with the UNHCR's office in the host Member State for a continuous cooperation and coordination of practical activities agreed with the host Member State under the current Plan.

5.3 Cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration

On the basis of relevant working arrangement(s) concluded between the EUAA and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the EUAA's coordinating officer will liaise with the IOM's office in the host Member State for continuous cooperation and coordination of practical activities agreed with the host Member State under the current Plan and in accordance with the working arrangement.

6. Monitoring and evaluation framework

6.1 Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the plan will involve systematic and continuous collection, analysis and use of information and data.

The EUAA will implement a structured methodology, including regular and ad hoc monitoring and reporting, allowing evidence-based measurement of progress, corrective action-taking and reflective reviews. The monitoring and reporting framework will involve the collection and analysis of information about the Agency's operations, undertaken while the intervention is ongoing, and will help identify trends and patterns in an evidence-based manner, enhance regular analytical exercises, and inform strategic decisions for the management of the interventions.

The EUAA will make use of a number of tools developed in order to collect input from the implementation of the Plan and to guarantee feedback in real time.

Results from the implementation of the operational and technical assistance will be reviewed and reported through mechanisms deemed appropriate by the Parties, such as steering meetings or others.

6.2 Evaluation

A final (ex post) evaluation of the results of the operational and technical measures laid down in this Plan (and amendments thereto) shall be carried out in order to take stock of lessons learned and good practices.

Periodic or mid-term evaluations may also be conducted, if deemed necessary. The evaluation(s) will be conducted in line with the EUAA's evaluation framework, which is based on the European Commission's Better Regulation guidelines for evaluations. They may be performed externally through engagement of evaluation specialist(s), internally by the Agency's staff, or through a hybrid approach.

In order to ensure completeness of evaluations and to take into account the views and feedback from the Parties involved, senior and other key persons from the national authorities of the host Member State may be invited to interviews with the evaluators or to provide feedback by alternative means. The national authorities shall commit to supporting the evaluation process and participating in such engagements with evaluators by mutually agreed appointments.

The ex post evaluation report shall be submitted to the Management Board on conclusion of the evaluation. The report will be due within 60 days of the end of the provision of the operational and technical measures. For transparency and accountability purposes, evaluation report(s) may be made publicly available on the Agency's website after internal checks have been made to ensure compliance with the applicable provisions in Regulation (EU) 2018/1725²⁴ and that none of the interests protected in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001²⁵ are undermined.

²⁴ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC, (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 39).

²⁵ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, (OJ L 145, 31.05.2001, p. 43).

The independent observations of the Agency's Fundamental Rights Officer on the ex post evaluation report shall also be submitted to the Management Board on conclusion of the evaluation, in accordance with Article 16(4) of the EUAA Regulation.

Other evaluation deliverables, as applicable, shall be shared with the host Member State and communicated to the EUAA's administrative and management structure (e.g., Management Board) where relevant.