2020 OPERATIONAL & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE[1] PLAN

AGREED BY EASO AND CYPRUS

Valletta Harbour and Nicosia
[13 December 2019]

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[1] Operational & Technical Assistance Plans include Operating Plans and Special Support Plans

Having regard to Articles 8, 10 and 13 to 23 of Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office (hereinafter 'EASO Regulation'),

The Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (hereinafter 'EASO')

and

The Minister of Interior of Cyprus and the Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court

Hereby agree on the Operating Plan (hereinafter 'the Plan') for the deployment of Asylum Support Teams and the provision of technical and operational assistance to Cyprus from 1 January until 31 December 2020.

Any amendments or adaptations of this Plan shall be agreed in accordance with Article 18(2) of the EASO Regulation.

EASO shall share a copy of the Plan with the Members of the EASO Management Board for information.

Valletta Harbour and Nicosia

Executive Director of the   Minister of Interior of Cyprus
European Asylum Support   Nikos Nouris
Office

Nina Gregori   Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court
                                         Eirini Christodoulou

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Legal Framework

Article 13 of the EASO Regulation states:

1. A Member State (or Member States) subject to particular pressure may request EASO for deployment of an Asylum Support Team. The requesting Member State or Member States shall provide, in particular a description of the situation, indicate the objectives of the request for deployment and specify the estimated deployment requirements.
2. In response to such a request, EASO may coordinate the necessary technical and operational assistance to the requesting Member State(s) and the deployment, for a limited time, of an Asylum Support Team in the territory of that Member State(s) on the basis of an Operating Plan.[2]
3. All EASO activities performed in the context of the support and technical assistance as identified in the plan herewith fall under the legal framework of the host Member State. This includes, inter-alia, the safety and security of persons and assets participating in those EASO activities.

1.2 Operational Situation and Needs Assessment

EASO and Cyprus signed an Operating Plan on 14 December 2018 for a duration of one year. Earlier support to Cyprus had been provided through a Special Support Plan, signed on 5 June 2014 for one year and subsequently amended in 2015, 2016 and 2017. With the signing of amendment number 4 in December 2017, the Special Support Plan was extended until 31 January 2019.[3]

On 19 September 2019, EASO and Cyprus signed a Hosting Arrangement. The Hosting Arrangement aims to guarantee the necessary legal and material conditions for installing and running of an EASO operational office in 2020 and to ensure the proper managing of its operations in the country. Ratification of the Agreement by the Cypriot Parliament is expected to take up a few months.

The 2019 Operating Plan for Cyprus was the outcome of a rigorous needs assessment exercise conducted by EASO resulting in a formal request from the Asylum Service to EASO for support in the area of backlog and case management (first and second instance), first and second reception, registration and capacity building.

The needs assessment exercise consisted of a Comprehensive Needs Analysis (CNA) conducted by EASO in Cyprus and consolidated into a Prioritised Needs Assessment (PNA). As a result, four identified priorities were translated into four measures in the 2019 Operating Plan with the following respective objectives:
1. Improved registration system and access to procedure in Cyprus;
2. Cyprus complies progressively with CEAS reception conditions;
3. Cyprus has increased capacity to deal with first instance backlog ,
4. Cyprus case management systems quality enhanced (Efficient data management).

The preparations for a second annual Operating Plan already began in early 2019. They consisted of various initiatives – each one a consultative process involving the key national counterparts and international partners:
- An update of the Normative Needs Analysis (the first pillar of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment) carried out both internally and by an external consultant;
- An internal review of the Causal Analysis (second pillar of the CNA) carried out by EASO in 2018 for the 2019 Operating Plan;

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[2] Asylum Support Teams are composed of Member States deployed experts, contracted temporary workers and EASO staff.
[3] Special Support Plan, Amendment n.4, 15/12/2017

- Two dedicated needs assessment visits by EASO with regard to support for the newly established Administrative Court for International Protection (second instance)
- A dedicated EASO needs assessment of reception allocation mechanisms
- Continuous consultation with the key national counterparts, including a dedicated needs assessment workshop with the Asylum Service on 23 July
- Consultation/information exchange with the EC and EU agencies (since September formalised in an Operational Coordination Platform, OCP) and taking on board recommendations from DG Home`s draft Migration Action Plan for Cyprus
- Regular consultation/information exchange with international organisations (in particular with UNHCR, increasingly with IOM).

The outcomes of these exercises were consolidated in an updated Prioritised Needs Assessment (PNA).

In addition, EASO took on board the recommendations of an external evaluation of the Special Support Plan carried out in the first quarter of 2019, as well as findings and conclusions from its internal fidelity monitoring and mid-term review exercises.

The Prioritised Needs Assessment largely confirmed the priorities under the 2019 Operating Plan (registration and access to procedure, reception support, backlog stabilisation and management, vulnerable groups and data management) and identified support to second instance as an additional priority. The main changes or adjustments relate to scale, new mechanisms (such as accelerated procedure) and new or expanded areas of support (such as second instance, Dublin and information provision). As in the 2019 Operating Plan, prioritisation of vulnerable groups and appropriate and adequate referral mechanisms will be cross-cutting. Also cross-cutting will be the work on commonly shared databases and well-coordinated data management, supported by dedicated staff recruited at the end of 2019 and deployed experts.

In 2019 EASO supported **registration** in four district offices of the Aliens and Immigration Service of the police with six registration assistants. By the end of September they had completed 6,443 registrations (68 % of the total number of registrations). The needs assessment confirmed the continuation of this strand of support. Early identification of vulnerable groups and a comprehensive referral system remain priorities and efforts in this regard have to be stepped up. Capacity increase – together with more mobility and possibly a roving team – also needs to be considered as a result of a shift of the registration effort to Pournara and the piloting of an accelerated procedure for targeted nationalities.

On 1 November 2018 the Cypriot government opened a new **permanent first reception centre** ('Pournara') in Kokkinotrimithia just outside Nicosia. This new centre replaces the emergency facility which had been operated under the contingency plan 'Nafkratis'. Such first reception facility providing all necessary services, similar to the hotspot approach in other countries, will significantly improve Cyprus' reception system. Progress in 2019 has been slower than expected due to delays in the much-needed renovation works and overall coordination challenges. EASO committed to support for a Safe Zone for vulnerable groups through the provision of containers, SOP and workflow development and staff. The Safe Zone will not be operational before the spring of 2020 but, in the meantime, EASO has recruited two staff to provide support with vulnerability assessment and information provision, and deployed a Member State expert to advise on overall operational management and structure.

EASO activities in support of the **Kofinou accommodation centre** resumed in November 2018, after conditions for a return were met, as set out in the joint declaration *EASO/UNHCR Support towards an Effective Reception System in Cyprus* (March 2018). EASO will continue to support Cyprus to improve reception conditions in line with CEAS reception standards. This will be done through a continuation and deepening of the support to individual case management and strengthening of community ownership and empowerment.

EASO also conducted a first analysis of the existing overall reception framework and allocation of places in reception centres. This was a first step in a broader exercise to look into the challenges and to

identify possible solutions together with all main actors. Ideally, this will be captured in an overarching Reception Strategy for Cyprus which is a strong recommendation from the European Commission.

In October 2018 – during the preparation of the 2019 Operating Plan - the backlog in **first instance RSD** amounted to 5,614 cases. One year later the number of cases stands at over 16,000 (October 2019). Efficiently managing and reducing the backlog remains a key priority and making any significant progress in this regard implies an increase in capacity of both EASO and Asylum Service caseworkers. EASO will build on the expansion of its caseworkers' force under the 2019 Operating Plan (from 6 to 25) and increase substantially. In 2020, an increase to up to 60 EASO caseworkers – matched to the extent possible by an increase in Asylum Service caseworkers – will contribute to an effective stabilisation *and* reduction of first instance backlog. Based on projections of arrivals throughout 2019, EASO aims to reduce the current backlog – with its own caseworkers and the current modus operandi (i.e. regular procedure) – by up to 40 % by the end of 2020.

EASO will carefully consider the most effective use of its caseworkers in line with a possible expansion of accelerated procedures or other backlog management measures undertaken by the national authorities. Finally, EASO will initiate support on Dublin procedures.

In parallel to adding more human resources, EASO will further focus on maintaining high quality standards during the asylum procedure with active participation in the Quality Management Unit led by the Asylum Service in partnership with UNHCR. EASO will recruit dedicated staff to contribute to the development and monitoring of procedures and practices in the area of registration, international protection status determination and vulnerability.

In order to increase efficiency, reduce the risks associated with working exclusively with physical (paper) files and allow more easily for case work in multiple locations, EASO has initiated discussions with the Asylum Service regarding a transition to digital files. Ideally, the end result is digitisation in a format managed and owned by the Cypriot authorities (E-Oasis). Since this transition might take some time, EASO and the Asylum Service are considering the use of OneDrive as a data sharing tool until the government system is fully in place.

The 2019 Operating Plan includes very limited support on **second instance** due to the delays in setting up the dedicated International Protection Administrative Court (IPAC). The Court has started working in June 2019 and an initial request for support was submitted to EASO in August. The main challenges identified in the request and during the needs assessment phase were the lack of rules of procedures, infrastructure challenges, a lack of administrative and logistical support and the expected size of the backlog (consisting of new cases, the backlog from the Administrative Court and appeals against decisions by the Reviewing Authority). After close consultations with the Court and receiving a formal request for support, EASO intends to provide research officers, training and opportunities for peer-to-peer support and exchanges.

In sum, the 2020 Operating Plan contributes to the overall objective or main impact result indicating that persons in need of protection in Cyprus have access to CEAS conform international protection. It contributes to four distinct result outcomes (special objectives):

1. Improved registration system and access to asylum procedure in Cyprus with particular attention to vulnerable groups.
2. Enhanced implementation of CEAS reception conditions and improved overall reception mechanism.
3. Cyprus has increased capacity to efficiently and effectively manage and reduce first instance backlog.
4. Cyprus has increased capacity for the Administrative Court for International Protection (second instance).

Support provided under EASO's mandate envisages tailor-made assistance, capacity building, expert advice and support and quality control tools - in line with the needs identified for the next three years.

The Host Member State and EASO will provide Member States' experts with information on the general state of play with regard to the procedure for international protection and reception system in the Host Member State and specific information about the state of play of the deliverables as described in the specific measures. Every effort will be made by the different parties to provide a suitable working place for the expert(s) participating in the activities to implement the Plan. EASO will provide the technical equipment required for the work of the Asylum Support Teams and will reimburse costs incurred by persons participating in the activities, according to the applicable EASO rules.

The Host Member State shall provide EASO with information on the implementation of the Plan through timely input to the Early Warning and Preparedness System and the delivery of tailored information on the execution of measures agreed in the Plan.

1.3   Flexibility Clause

The Plan aims to provide timely, active and flexible support to the identified needs of the Host Member State. The foreseen activities will be implemented in consideration of the changing circumstances of the international protection and reception systems in the Member States, as well as any specific circumstances on the ground, and subject to the availability of financial resources and experts.

The schedule of the measures and tasks in the Plan is a forecast and may change. Any change will be subject to a discussion between EASO and the Host Member State. The Executive Director of EASO is authorised to make changes that may be accommodated within the objectives of a measure without requiring an amendment of the Plan, provided that they do not affect the overall budget and that the Host Member State is timely informed in writing.

The Plan may be revised including suspension or termination of Measures at any time in order to reflect new operational developments in accordance with Article 18(2) of the EASO Regulation.

1.4   Lawfulness and Respect for Fundamental Rights

Support related to the participation in EASO activities under this Plan must be carried out in a way that fully respects human dignity. All personnel involved in operational support activities shall maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, respect and promotion of fundamental rights and international protection. This particularly applies vis-à-vis persons who are in need of international protection. Personnel is expected to meet obligations imposed upon them by the provisions of this Plan, in compliance with the requirements of the CEAS.

Whilst taking part in the EASO operational support activities, all personnel shall respect the applicable International law, European Union law and the national law of the Host Member State. They shall maintain the highest standards of integrity and conduct. They are to act responsibly and proportionally to current objectives. Whilst carrying out supporting functions, all personnel must not discriminate persons on the grounds of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, age or sexual orientation. All persons 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 personnel must apply a zero tolerance attitude with respect to the infringement of fundamental human rights. All persons in EASO operational support activities shall comply and act in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

1.5 Confidentiality and Data Protection

Without prejudice to the public right of access to documents, as laid down in Regulation (EC) 1049/2001[4] and the EASO implementing rules on access to documents,[5] all versions of this document shall be made available to the competent authorities in each EU Member State, as well as the associate countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

This Plan shall be made publicly available once it has been signed by EASO and the Host Member State.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) 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. Additional EU data protection legislation applicable to EASO that may enter into force during the implementation period of this Plan shall likewise apply as of the date of entry into force. The current plan also takes into account the General Data Protection Regulation as updated in May 2018[6] with a Corrigendum to the 2016/679 Regulation 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 (Data Protection Directive).

Whenever processing personal data during the activities agreed within the current Plan, members of Asylum Support Teams will act as data processors on behalf of the competent authorities of the Host Member State, following the applicable EU and national laws and regulations, as well as the instructions received from the Host Member State as the data controller. EASO will implement the necessary technical and organisational measures to ensure the security and confidentiality of the personal data it processes, taking into account possible additional instructions received from the Host Member State. This is to prevent any unauthorised disclosure of or access to this information.

2. GENERAL CONDITIONS

This chapter of the Plan describes the various measures to support the authorities of the Host Member State in the field of international protection and reception.

EASO will provide 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 EASO. All intellectual property rights of the work of the experts performed in the context of the Plan are vested in EASO. Selected deliverables developed under this Plan may be published.

2.1 Main National Partner Organisations

The Host Member State's main organisations involved in this Plan are the following.

Organisation	Responsibilities
Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior	The Asylum Service (AS) is the competent authority to examine applications for international protection at first instance. In case an application is rejected by the Asylum Service (even if subsidiary protection is granted), the applicant has the right to an administrative appeal against this decision, before the independent Refugee Reviewing Authority (RRA), to be replaced by an Asylum Tribunal (part of the Administrative Court).

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[4] 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

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

[6] Corrigendum, OJ L 127, 23.5.2018, p. 2 ((EU) 2016/679)

Organisation	Responsibilities
	The decisions are based on the Refugee Laws (2000-2019).
	The Asylum Service is also responsible, by the Refugee Laws, for the operation of reception and (open) accommodation centres for asylum seekers, as well as for coordinating all other competent authorities on asylum issues.
Aliens and Immigration Service of the police, Ministry of Justice and Public Order	The Aliens and Immigration Service (AIS) is primarily responsible for receiving and registering applications for international protection on behalf of the Asylum Service (including fingerprinting for EURODAC and Dublin purposes). The AIS is also responsible for implementing detention and deportation orders issued by the Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department.
Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	The Social Welfare Services (SWS) carry the responsibility for the provision of social welfare services to applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. Where the applicant is an unaccompanied minor, the Director of the SWS acts as the guardian of the minor during the asylum procedure and takes all measures necessary under the Refugee Laws and the Regulations under it on the minor's behalf and on his best interest including in respect of the asylum procedure.
Ministry of Health	According to the Refugee Law, applicants for international protection are entitled to any pharmaceutical treatment free of charge at public hospitals and health centres, when the applicant does not have sufficient funds.
	Obligatory medical screening examinations are also taking place at public hospitals upon the submission of the application for international protection.
Refugee Reviewing Authority (RRA)	The Refugee Reviewing Authority is an independent administrative body, which used to be responsible for examining applications for international protection rejected by the Asylum Service. Following the establishment of the International Protection Administrative Court (see further below), the RRA now limits itself to clearing its remaining backlog.
Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus	The Law Office of the Republic is a centralized and independent office that provides legal representation for the eleven ministries of the Republic, the Council of Ministers and various others Departments or independent authorities before the court. In that capacity the Law Office handles asylum related cases before the Court of International Protection and all appeals against decisions of this court before the Supreme Court.
Administrative Court	Cyprus restructured the judicial framework in 2015, introducing an Administrative Court. Asylum seekers can appeal to the Administrative Court, either against the decision of the Asylum Service or against a decision of the Refugee Reviewing Authority.
International Protection Administrative Court	This new Court (IPAC), established in July 2018 and operational since June 2019, will replace the existing Administrative Court and will be

Organisation	Responsibilities
	competent for examining appeals relating to provisions of the Refugee Law.

2.2 Acceptance of Deliverables

Plans address the operational needs of Member States under particular pressure that have requested support from EASO. Such Plans give directions on the delivery of EASO's technical and operational assistance and the deployment of Asylum Support Teams.

EASO shall ensure quality control of agreed deliverables. Where practical and applicable, steps shall be taken to document the Host Member State's formal acceptance of deliverables.

2.3 Conditions for Deployment

General rules and conditions for the deployment of Asylum Support Teams as well as special instructions for their members (including databases that they are authorised to consult and the equipment that they may carry in the Host Member State, as well as practical information concerning location of deployment and related workflows) are published on the following platforms:

- EASO Asylum Intervention Pool's National Contact Point platform (EASO AIP NCP);
- EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System (EAIPS);
- EASO country-specific online platforms developed as part of the EASO Information and Documentation System (IDS) (e.g., EASO IDS Greece Operations Platform, EASO IDS Italy Operations Platform, EASO IDS Cyprus Operations Platform). These platforms are made available to members of ASTs upon their engagement, allowing for preparation for deployment (in case of national experts) and daily implementation of their tasks;
- Relevant thematic pages of the EASO IDS concerning the asylum and reception system of the Host Member State, including information on relevant practices, legislation, case law and statistical background. The host Member State shall contribute to information concerning the asylum and reception system of the Host Member State, including information on relevant practices, legislation, case law and statistical background to be available on IDS for AST Teams.

Specific Asylum Support Team deployment details are provided under each measure, where applicable.

2.4 Organisational Pre-Conditions

The Host Member State shall grant appropriate access rights for the Asylum Support Team members to all relevant databases and commits to provide the Asylum Support Teams with the required information and data in the context of this Plan.

The Host Member State shall designate an overall Plan Coordinator, as well as a specific Measure Coordinator for each measure stipulated in the Plan. The host member state will also facilitate the provision of appropriate working spaces.

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).

Minimum working and security conditions (see section 3) are considered as organisational pre-conditions and are set out in the Hosting Arrangement signed by the Minister of Interior and the EASO Executive Director in September 2019.

2.5 Implementation Period

The implementation period of this Plan is from 1 January 2020 until 31 December 2020.

The Plan, including the implementation period, may be revised at any time in order to reflect new operational developments.

2.6   Communication

The Executive Director shall designate the Union Contact Point under Article 20 of the EASO Regulation, who acts as an interface between EASO, the Host Member State and the Asylum Support Team members. The Union Contact Point provides assistance, on behalf of EASO, on all issues relating to the conditions of deployment of the Asylum Support Teams, monitors the correct implementation of the Plan, and reports to EASO on all aspects concerning the deployment of Asylum Support Teams.

Furthermore, at the end of their deployment, Asylum Support Team members will provide a Final Report to EASO using the template available on the EAIPS platform. Feedback from the deployed Asylum Support Team members shall be gathered on the completion of their deployment and prior to reimbursement of expenses.

During the implementation of this Plan, experts as well as other personnel deployed as part of Asylum Support Teams will be briefed regularly on current situational and operational developments to address challenges and identify improvements.

Particular attention shall be paid to the need to continuously develop, improve and make available EASO support tools. Should such need be identified or changed during the plan implementation, it shall be communicated to EASO for further consideration.

The Host Member State and the Union Contact Point will manage the exchange of information concerning the tasks under the Plan.

EASO will maintain close cooperation and communication with the relevant stakeholders. EASO 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 EASO transparency and communication policies. The timing and content of communication with the media shall be agreed upon between EASO and the Host Member State.

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

2.7   Incident reporting

Participants in EASO activities who have reason to believe that a violation of the Code of Conduct has occurred or is about to occur, are obliged to report the matter to EASO via the dedicated mailbox (complaints_operations@easo.europa.eu).

Any incidents that may occur during the deployment of an expert in the Asylum Support Teams shall be reported through the same channels. Incident reporting templates can be found on the IDS platform (https://ids.easo.europa.eu/index.action).

2.8   Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

EASO will implement a structured Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) methodology allowing evidence-based measurement of progress, corrective action-taking and reflective reviews.

In terms of monitoring, EASO 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. These elements will be outlined in a Monitoring Plan – as was already done for the 2019 Operating Plan – and structured in outputs and outcomes focusing on intended results and implementation processes.

Final, periodic or mid-term evaluations can be carried out in order to take stock of lessons learned and good practices. The evaluation(s) will be delivered within the European Commission's methodological

guidelines for evaluations. They may be performed externally through the engagement of evaluation specialist(s) or by EASO internally. Final evaluations will, however, always aim at including the involvement of the Host Member State and other stakeholders.

Monitoring and evaluation findings, as applicable, shall be shared with the Host Member State and communicated to the EASO governance structure (e.g. Management Board members and National Contact Points).

3. SECURITY

EASO should apply the security principles of the Commission's security rules. Commission Decision 443/2013 on the security in the Commission defines, that security shall be based on the principles of legality, transparency, proportionality and accountability.

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

EASO will endeavour to support the identification of required security measures and the implementation of those that are under its remit, both legally and functionally, in close cooperation with the MS security responsible.

To that end:
- Standard security requirements, identified herewith, should apply as a general rule;
- Specific security requirements for the specific plan, to be identified jointly by EASO and the host Member State security responsible, and should be established in an annex to this plan.

3.1. Standard security requirements

The standard security requirements are rather pertaining to elements to be present in the implementation of the plan, not to minimum security standards:

- Both the Host Member State on one side and EASO on the other shall appoint a security responsible, acting as a single point of contact for security matters for the operation, both at central and local levels.

- A pre-deployment briefing program, drafted in close cooperation with the respective national authorities, focusing both on general security rules and awareness, as well as on specifics for the security aspects of deployments. Regarding the decentralised nature of deployments, using e-learning and other distance based training techniques should be considered.

- Emergency (evacuation) plan. Certain operational activities, such as hotspots, require staff to have a 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. A responsible security person should maintain updated information on the availability of evacuation plan and routes.

- Communication tools. As considered relevant by the EASO Security Sector, EASO operational staff should have access to independent radio communication equipment. If possible, the

equipment should be interoperable with the local law enforcement in charge of the security of the operation.

- Security of information-sensitive non-classified and classified information should be protected adequately. EASO security responsible for this should be involved in supporting the proper classification of relevant information.

- Security of IT and communication equipment - EASO IT equipment is adequately prepared to protect the information level it has been foreseen to process.

- Personal security behaviour should be included in the pre-deployment training, led by operational teams and performed for the experts during the first days of arrival to the operational area. This may refer to the EASO code of conduct as well.

- Reporting security incidents from the operational area to the EASO HQ is essential with a view of the overall security management.

3.2. Specific security requirements

- Specific security requirements for the implementation of the Operating Plan, in particular security sensitive areas such as hotspots, 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 MS and involved stakeholders, prior to the deployment.

4. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

4.1. Cooperation with the European Commission

All activities under this Plan will be closely coordinated with the Host Member State and with the steady support of the European Commission as well as with other EU Agencies. The resident DG Home representative of the European Commission in Cyprus initiated an Operational Coordination Platform (OCP) with participation of EASO, Frontex and Europal in September 2019. The aim is to have monthly meetings and/or ad hoc meetings and firmly consolidate the practice throughout the implementation of the Operating Plan in 2020.

4.2. Cooperation with UNHCR

In accordance with Article 50 of the EASO Regulation, EASO aims at a coherent and complementary continuation of the fruitful cooperation with UNHCR. The Union Contact Point will continue to liaise with the UNHCR 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.

EASO and IOM signed a Partnership Agreement in September 2019 paving the way for closer cooperation and coordination. Initial information and needs assessment exchanges to that effect have already been undertaken.

4.3. Cooperation with IOM

In accordance with Article 52 of the EASO Regulation, in July 2019 EASO signed a working arrangement with IOM to establish a cooperation framework covering the relevant areas of common work and interest setting objectives and principles of such cooperation. Therefore, the Union Contact Point will liaise with the IOM 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 and in accordance with the working arrangement.

5. MEASURES

Measure CY 1.0: Improved registration system and access to asylum procedure in Cyprus with particular attention to vulnerable groups	
Measure Indicators	
Indicator 1: Written evidence of harmonisation and enhanced capacity of the registration and referral system	
Responsible Authorities	Asylum Service, Aliens and Immigration Service of the Police
Partner Organisations and Beneficiaries	Asylum Service, Aliens and Immigration Service of the Police; indirectly: asylum seekers who submit an application for International Protection.
Description and Assessment of the Situation	With an average of around 1,000 new applications per month throughout 2019, the district offices of the IASP in all locations have been under continuous pressure. However, most affected is the Nicosia district office, which registers applications from new arrivals who come through the first reception centre in Pournara. The Pafos office noted a particular influx of one nationality and started a pilot for accelerated procedure in late 2019.

Differences in procedure between offices persisted but have been increasingly addressed in the second half of 2019. The SOPs for registration will be revised by the end of 2019 with a particular emphasis on clear duties and responsibilities for EASO registration assistants.

In 2020 a shift to Pournara is planned in terms of registration of new arrivals which should alleviate the burden on the Nicosia district office and result in possible reallocation of EASO registration assistants. There have been delays with the infrastructure works in Pournara but these are expected to finish by March 2020. Discussions with CAS on the workflow and procedures – and a possible pilot – have been initiated also in the context of the Quality Unit (see CY 3.0) |
| **Pre-condition(s)** | • Cyprus will appoint a Measure Coordinator.
• Cyprus will provide appropriate working space and equipment to EASO registration staff in all registration points. |

	• Cyprus provides regular updates and data/analysis on arrivals in order to optimise planning and deployed resources and to get an updated overview of asylum in Cyprus.
Outputs	• Registrations by EASO registration assistants. • Registrations by EASO registration assistants under the accelerated procedure. • Clear and consistent workflows in line with the revised SOPs on registration agreed with the relevant Cypriot authorities. • Availability of support tools for early identification and referral of vulnerable applicants.
Action deliverable(s)	• Registration support. • Introduction of support tools for early identification and referral and possibly further revision of SOPs. • Training of EASO registration staff, officers of the AISP and CAS officers. • A coordination mechanism between AISP, CAS and EASO allowing for (temporary) deployment of EASO assistants in other locations or possibly a roving team.
Inputs	• 9 interim registration assistants (locations: Nicosia, Pournara, Larnaca, Limassol and Pafos) • 1 MS expert for flow management • 1 interim expert on registration procedures • 5 interpreters (Pournara, Nicosia, Pafos) • *Operational training for new registration assistants* • *Training for new registration assistants on Communication and Provision of Information to applicants* • *Training for registration assistants on the identification of potential Dublin cases* • *EASO Training programme for interpreters* • *EASO may offer additional training on the basis of needs and availability of resources*

Measure CY 2.0.: Cyprus enhances implementation of CEAS reception conditions and improves its overall reception mechanism *Measure Performance Indicators* **Indicator 1:** Evidence of improvement of reception conditions based on EASO reception quality measurement tool and/or on EASO Guidance on the Reception Conditions **Indicator 2**: Early identification, reception and protection of vulnerable groups. **Indicator 3**: Harmonised data collection systems on Reception.	
Responsible Authorities	Asylum Service, Civil Defence, service providers in Kofinou and Kokkinotrimithia, Social Welfare Services, Ministry of Health.

Beneficiaries	Asylum Service, Civil Defence and service providers in Kofinou and Kokkinotrimithia / indirect: Asylum seekers in Cyprus hosted under the reception system.
Description and Assessment of the Situation	The accommodation centre in *Kofinou* has been supported by an EASO team of two social workers, one reception support officer and one team leader since the beginning of 2019. Together with uninterrupted deployments of 1-2 MS experts and good cooperation with the local stakeholders, this has led to significant improvements such as individual case management (EASO social workers cover 30 % of all residents), an entry-exit system, SOPs and coordination of centre volunteers.
	Consolidation, expansion and deepening of the existing efforts in Kofinou and improvement of the overall reception coordination mechanism are required and have been requested.
	Delays in the infrastructural works at the first reception centre in *Pournara* also delayed the set-up of a safe zone for vulnerable groups (to which EASO dedicated MS expertise, containers and staff in the 2019 Operating Plan). Support to information provision and vulnerability assessment have been provided (2 EASO staff) since October 2019.
	In 2020 the Asylum Service and EASO aim to get the safe zone fully up and running, to work with other stakeholders on consolidating workflows and SOPs for the centre as a whole, and to improve the overall reception coordination mechanism, ideally in line with an overarching Reception Strategy.
	This will also include integration of the registration process in Pournara (see CY 1.0).
Pre-condition(s)	• Cyprus will appoint a Measure Coordinator. • Cyprus will provide regular updates and data/analysis on reception in order to optimise planning, resources and to get an updated overview of reception in Cyprus. • Cyprus will provide material, practical and technical support for the installation of the required infrastructure foreseen in Kofinou and Pournara.
Outputs	• Systematic individual case follow-up by EASO social workers (all residents, Kofinou – vulnerable groups, Pournara). • A fully functional safe zone (Pournara) with clear SOPs and workflows. • Early identification of vulnerable categories and efficient information provision (Pournara). • Coordination of volunteer groups and initiatives (Kofinou). • Improved data collection, overview and coordination mechanisms in Reception
Action deliverable(s)	• Social workflows by interim social workers. • Consultancy and training by MS experts on SOPs, community activities, integration and coordination.

	• Set-up of safe zone and appropriate SOPs/workflows in Pournara. • Training of EASO social workers/new teams in Kofinou and Pournara • Consolidation of entry-exit system and contribution to the development of real-time overview and allocation tools
Inputs	• 1 MS expert Kofinou (design) • • 2 interim social workers Kofinou • 2 interim social workers Pournara • 1 interim reception support officer Kofinou • 1 interim reception support officer Pournara • 1 interim reception coordinator Kofinou • 1 interim coordination support officer Pournara • 1 interim information provider Kofinou • 1 interim information provider Pournara • 1 interim vulnerability officer Pournara • 2 interim security assistants (Kofinou/Pournara) • 3 interpreters Kofinou / 12 months. • 3 interpreters Pournara / 12 months. • *Operational training for new staff in Kofinou and Pournara* • *Training on Reception module for new staff in Kofinou and Pournara* • *EASO Training programme for Interpreters* • *EASO may offer additional training on the basis of needs and availability of resources*

Measure CY 3.0.: Cyprus has increased capacity to efficiently and effectively manage and reduce first instance backlog:

Measure Performance Indicators

<u>Indicator 1</u>: Number of pending cases.

<u>Indicator 2</u>: Number of backlog management initiatives in first instance, including prioritisation of vulnerable groups.

<u>Indicator 3</u>: A joint effective and efficient quality control system for first instance is in place.

Responsible Authorities	Asylum Service
Beneficiaries	Asylum Service / indirect: applicants for international protection in Cyprus
Description and Assessment of the Situation	At the end of October 2019, the backlog was comprised of approximately 16,000 cases. The current duration of the procedure can be from eight months up to 2 years – with often more than one year between lodging and interview. The current capacity of a caseworker is approximately 16 cases per month. The final objective is the stabilisation and reduction of backlog through:

	a) A significant increase of resources on both the side of CAS and EASO, and
	b) Better backlog management, e.g. through accelerated procedures and other efficiency initiatives such as the digitisation of the current paper files.
	By the end of 2019, 20 EASO caseworkers will work in two different locations in Nicosia in a shift system due to office space limitations in the current building of the Asylum Service. With a further increase in 2020, EASO caseworkers are likely to be in multiple locations (including in and near Pournara and/or a new EASO office – facilitated by the Hosting Arrangement).
	The Asylum Service currently has no quality unit in place. EASO and UNHCR each have a team member dedicated to quality assurance and seek to cooperate closely under the guidance of a CAS quality coordinator to be assigned in late 2019 or early 2020. EASO plans to hire additional staff dedicated to quality, procedures and special attention to vulnerability in the framework of the quality unit.
Pre-condition(s)	• Cyprus will appoint a Measure Coordinator. • Cyprus will assign a staff member as quality assurance coordinator. • Cyprus will increase the number of its Asylum Service caseworkers to approximate the number of EASO caseworkers. • Cyprus agrees to and fully supports the efforts to digitise the current asylum case paper files • Cyprus will provide regular updates and data/analysis on the backlog in order to optimise planning, resources and get an updated overview of the asylum procedure in Cyprus.
Outputs	• Interviews. • Opinions. • Quality assurance tools. • Increased capacity on Dublin cases. • Fully digitised asylum case files
Action deliverable(s)	• Case work/file handling. • Development of quality assurance and support tools. • Coordination/information exchange on quality assurance. • Dublin support. • Training for EASO caseworkers/interpreters and CAS staff. • Data entry (file digitisation)
Inputs	• 8 MS experts (caseworkers) (Nicosia, Pournara) • 1 MS expert (COI researcher) (Nicosia) • 1 MS expert (Dublin) (Nicosia) • 52 interim caseworkers (20 in January, 35 by April, 52 by July) (Nicosia, Pournara)

	12 interim team leaders (4 in January, 8 by April, 12 by July) (Nicosia, Pournara) 2 interim Dublin support staff (Nicosia) 1 interim quality assurance officer (Nicosia) 1 interim helpdesk officer (Nicosia) 1 interim expert on vulnerability (Nicosia) 1 interim vulnerability assistant (Nicosia) 1 interim expert on exclusion (Nicosia) 2 interim training support officers (Nicosia) 1 interim project support officer (Nicosia) 2 interim operations assistants (Nicosia) 2 interim operations assistants (Pournara) 3 interim administrative assistants / 12 months (Nicosia) 2 interim security assistants / 12 months (Nicosia) 1 interim business analyst / 12 months (Nicosia) 2 interim ICT assistants / 12 months (Nicosia) 2 interim data entry clerks (Nicosia) 60 interpreters (20 in January, 40 by April, 60 by July) (Nicosia, Pournara) *Operational training for all new staff* *Training (core modules) for new EASO and CAS caseworkers* *Training (Interviewing Vulnerable Persons, Exclusion, Managers etc.) for dedicated staff* *EASO Training programme for EASO interpreters* *EASO may offer additional training on the basis of needs and availability of resources*

Measure CY 4.0.: Cyprus has increased capacity for the International Protection Administrative Court (IPAC) (second instance):	
Measure Performance Indicator	
<u>Indicator 1</u>: Number of pending cases in second instance	
<u>Indicator 2</u>: Number of expert/operational initiatives to improve the functioning of the IPAC	
Responsible Authorities	The International Protection Administrative Court (IPAC)
Beneficiaries	The International Protection Administrative Court (IPAC)
Description and Assessment of the Situation	The International Protection Administrative Court started its operations on 18 June 2019 with three judges appointed earlier in the year. The new Court immediately faced challenges such as limited rules of procedure, limited or lack of infrastructure and a lack of administrative and legal support staff. The Court currently deals with several types of second instance cases: a backlog from the Administrative Court (app. 750 cases in total), new appeal cases and appeals against decisions of the Refugee Reviewing Authority (which is phasing out and tackling its own

backlog of applications, with 1,800 cases). The Court also rules on the provision of legal aid.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the exact starting date of the new Court, the 2019 Operating Plan included limited support for second instance. EASO and the IPAC, during extensive needs assessment consultations in the second half of 2019, identified the secondment of research officers, expert meetings and peer-to-peer information exchange as well as judicial professional development activities as as priorities for support in 2020.

The secondment of research officers intends to provide technical support to the reduction of backlog by the Court, and, hence, to improve the timeframe in which decisions are taken. It also intends to improve quality of file preparation as well as consistency of the initial analysis of the appeals ensured through a dedicated support on COI research, in full respect of the principle of judicial independence.

Pre-condition(s)	• Cyprus will appoint a Measure Coordinator. • Cyprus will provide material, practical and technical support for the seconded research officers and one statistician. • The number of seconded research officers will be in direct correlation with the number of judges in the Court. • Cyprus will provide regular updates and data/analysis on all aspect of the asylum procedure in order to optimise planning, resources and get an updated overview of asylum in Cyprus.
Outputs	• ToR for the research officers. • Files prepared for judges by research officers. • Regular statistics and data/information exchange with other stakeholders.
Action deliverable(s)	• ToR development. • COI/research/file preparation. • Peer-to-peer exchange and meetings. • Data processing, management and analysis. • Training for research officers.
Inputs	• 2 MS experts (IPAC) • 5 seconded research officers (3 in early 2020, 2 when two additional judges are appointed) (IPAC) • 1 interim statistician (IPAC) • *Training (COI module) for seconded research officers* • *EASO may offer additional training on the basis of needs and availability of resources*