



European Asylum Support Office

EASO Training Curriculum

March 2014

SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION



EASO Training Curriculum

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'Learning is an experience. Everything else is just information'.
Albert Einstein

Foreword by the EASO Executive Director

Dear colleagues,

The agreement on the new asylum package in June 2013 was a historical achievement for the European Union which will lead to the further development of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Now that the legislation is in place, we need to work together to put it into practice. Training has a central role in this process. EASO, through its Training Curriculum, is committed to supporting Member States in implementing common protection standards for those in need of international protection.

I strongly believe that only through common high quality training and training material can we ensure common practices and fully develop a Common European Asylum System. We, at EASO, are committed to ensuring that our training is an experience which enhances the learner's knowledge and skills while also contributing to the personal development of the individual.

Our Training Curriculum aims at developing a system which is interactive, practical and based on real case studies. We do this by equipping participants with both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills that can be of use in their day-to-day work environment. The Training Curriculum is an excellent example of practical cooperation between Member States and it ensures a common understanding of the Common European Asylum System, leading to harmonisation of asylum practices across the European Union. Same cases should be treated alike, with same safeguards and same outcome, throughout the Union. This can only be achieved through common training.

Dr Robert K. Visser
EASO Executive Director

Introduction to the EASO Training Curriculum

Support is our mission! One of EASO's main tools to provide support to EU Member States is the **EASO Training Curriculum**. EASO considers its Training Curriculum as a practical tool contributing to the effective and harmonised implementation of the Common European Asylum System as it has been established in The Hague Programme and subsequently the Stockholm Programme.

In this regard, EASO has adopted a Training Strategy, (which can be found on EASO's Website www.easo.europa.eu) with the aim of outlining the principles and procedures that will guide the Agency in implementing its Training mandate as provided for in Article 6 of its Founding Regulation (EU) No 439/2010:

'The Support Office shall establish and develop training available to members of all national administrations and courts and tribunals, and national services responsible for asylum matters in the Member States (...). The Support Office shall develop such training in close cooperation with Member States' asylum authorities and, where relevant, take advantage of expertise of academic institutions and other relevant organisations (...). The training offered shall be of high quality and shall identify key principles and best practices with a view to greater convergence of administrative methods and decisions and legal practice, in full respect of the independence of national courts and tribunals'.

Article 4(3) of the Asylum Procedure Directive (2013/32/EU) stipulates that:

'Member States shall ensure that the personnel of the determining authority are properly trained (...). Member States shall also take into account the relevant training established and developed by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)', specifically referring to the list contained in Article 6(4) of the EASO Regulation.

The yearly activities related to the Training Curriculum are detailed in EASO's Work Programme.

What is the EASO Training Curriculum?

- A common vocational training system designed mainly for case officers and other asylum practitioners throughout the EU.
- A training system which covers the core aspects of the asylum procedure by means of a set of interactive modules.
- A blended learning methodology, enabling both theoretical and practical approaches to training by combining an e-learning method and face-to-face sessions.
- A high quality training material, developed by expert teams from different Member States and regularly updated and reviewed with the support of EASO's Reference Group, consisting of different international organisations and stakeholders from the civil society, the academia and the judiciary.
- A set of training modules developed in the English language, and being progressively translated by Member States into their national languages.

How can Member States use the Curriculum?

- The main objective of EASO's Training Curriculum is for it to be used by national asylum authorities across the EU. It can be used as a permanent tool to assist Member States in establishing a training framework for their personnel who works in the field of asylum or to complement their existing national training structures by means of high quality and commonly developed training material.
- EASO's Training Curriculum can also support Member States on an *ad hoc* basis in the framework of emergency or special support in response to specific situations.

EASO Training Modules

EASO's Training Curriculum consists of a number of interactive modules covering the entire field of international protection. It provides trainees with both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills required to perform their daily tasks within the framework of a Common European Asylum System.

The training modules are designed by Member States' experts in the field of international protection. They provide a simple, yet effective, way for trainees to develop competencies necessary for their day-to-day work. The modules are developed within the framework of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the Common European Asylum System legal instruments, as well as other relevant international and European law. They are based on real life scenarios and take forward good practices in the field of international protection.

EASO ensures that the quality of the curriculum is maintained through regular updates involving Member States' experts and the Reference Group.

Since 2013, EASO has also started to develop training handbooks corresponding to its training modules.

The aim of these training handbooks is to serve as a reference tool for those who have already completed the online and the face-to-face sessions of the particular training module. The handbooks will accompany asylum practitioners in the course of their daily work by providing a summary of the key elements of the training material. The handbooks will also serve as a tool to help learners retain the knowledge and skills acquired through the training. In their day-to-day work, they will be able to further reflect on the knowledge and develop the skills and competencies, acquired during the training.

EASO Training Cockpit

EASO has developed a system of data collection and analysis concerning training activities on a national and an EU level.

The Training Cockpit provides a toolbox for statistical data collection and quantitative data analysis and offers a visual overview of the implementation of EASO training tools.

Through various integrated tools, the Cockpit supports Member States in the process of setting up and maintaining their national training targets towards EASO Training. These tools also include the adoption of specific training recommendations and the provision of country-specific training road maps.



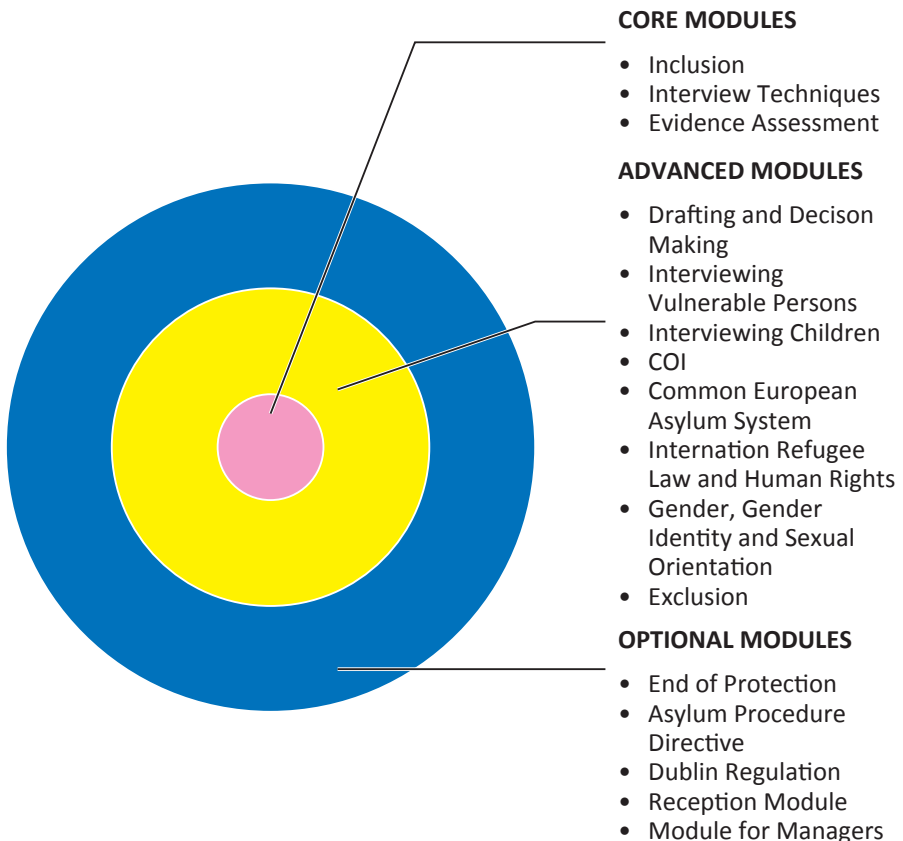
EASO Training Curriculum Modules

- Asylum Procedure Directive
- Common European Asylum System
- Country of Origin Information
- Drafting and Decision-Making
- Dublin Regulation
- End of Protection
- Evidence Assessment
- Exclusion
- Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation (to be developed in 2014)
- Inclusion
- International Refugee Law and Human Rights
- Interviewing Children
- Interview Techniques
- Interviewing Vulnerable Persons
- Module for Managers (to be finalised in 2014)
- Reception Module (to be developed in 2014)

EASO Learning Path for asylum case officers

The circular learning path of the EASO Training Curriculum reflects the particular training needs of asylum case officers. A set of Core, Advanced and Optional Modules were designed to ensure that trainees receive training in areas which are key for the performance of their specific roles. The Core Modules suggested will ensure that case officers across the EU receive the same fundamental training, creating a common level playing field.

Moreover, modules within the Advanced and Optional categories will help the user to increase his/her level of specialisation. In the categories of Advanced and Optional modules, the system allows the flexibility for Member States to identify the needs of the day-to-day work of an individual case officer.



The Core Modules

1. Inclusion Module

The module on Inclusion provides training on the interpretation and application of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its relation to the recast EU Qualification Directive.

This module presents, through a structured and interactive method, the definition of refugee and the grounds for subsidiary protection. It further explains key terms such as: persecution, in relation to both the *UNHCR Handbook*, as well as the recast Qualification Directive; the Convention grounds, that is race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and particular social group, the nexus between persecution (well-founded fear) and the Convention grounds; the key principle of *non-refoulement* and other important elements to the qualification as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection.

By the end of the training, participants will have gained knowledge of key terms and an opportunity to apply these concepts through the use of real case studies.

2. Interview Techniques Module

This module covers one of the core elements in the determination procedure. In most cases, the assessment of whether a person is in need of international protection would mostly rely on the information gathered during the personal interview. The aim of this module is to assist case officers in acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to conduct personal interviews in a professional manner, taking into account the relevant legal framework.

This module covers theoretical aspects and relevant legislation from a very practical perspective. It promotes the use of a structured interview method and provides participants with good practical examples, including tips on handling difficult interview situations and writing comprehensive and effective interview reports. Further specialised knowledge on the subject of interviewing can be acquired through the modules on Interviewing Children and Interviewing Vulnerable Persons.

3. Evidence Assessment Module

Evidence assessment can be defined as the primary method for establishing the facts of an international protection claim through the process of examining and comparing available pieces of evidence.

The overall aim of this module is to minimise the risk of similar cases not being treated equally due to different approaches in the assessment of evidence in different Member States. Its purpose is also to provide case officers with the knowledge and skills that they need to assess evidence in a fair and consistent manner. The module covers theoretical aspects and relevant legislation from a practical perspective. It promotes the use of a structured approach to the assessment of evidence and provides participants with good practice examples. It also takes a step-by-step approach and establishes the difference between assessing the credibility of an applicant's testimony (evaluation of past and present facts) and conducting a risk assessment to establish whether s/he has a well-founded fear in case of return (evaluation of future risk).



The Advanced Modules

4. Drafting and Decision-Making Module

Making a fair decision and presenting it in a well-reasoned manner is an important aspect of the international protection regime. This module provides trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills, while making them aware of the consequences of a poorly written decision. Trainees learn to identify the material facts and necessary evidence prior to making a decision, as well as to refer to the relevant legal instruments in the drafting process.

Upon completion of this module, trainees will have learned how to write a good, fair, well-reasoned and legally sound decision.

5. Interviewing Vulnerable Persons Module

There is an inherent vulnerability in the status of the applicant for international protection. However, the individual circumstances of some applicants make them especially vulnerable in the process of determining the need for international protection. Medical conditions and traumatic experiences, which occurred in the country of origin, during the flight, and even in the host country, can all influence the amount and quality of information the applicant is able to provide during the personal interview. It is crucial for case officers to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and address the special procedural needs of such vulnerable applicants.

This advanced module builds on the module 'Interview Techniques'. It follows the same structured interview method and takes the trainee through the process of preparing and conducting an interview with a vulnerable person in a professional, respectful and emphatic manner. Further, the module focuses on specialised knowledge on indicators of vulnerability, mental and physical impairments; and provides advice on addressing difficult situations, as well as the interviewer's own needs.

6. Interviewing Children Module

Specific skills and knowledge are required to interview children, since a child's perception of the environment, his/her memory and sense of time is considerably different from that of an adult. It is therefore crucial that case officers are fully aware of these differences when conducting a personal interview with a child. This module highlights the principle of the best interest of the child, which must be of primary consideration in actions concerning children. The objectives of this module are: to provide the participants with knowledge and skills in children's development stages;

to provide specific techniques for interviewing children; and to provide knowledge and skills on how to assess the information given by a child.

This module is also built on the structured interview method presented in the core module 'Interview Techniques'. It aims to help case officers acquire skills to perform personal interviews in a sensitive and empathic manner, while taking due consideration of the age and maturity of the child, cultural variances and effects of trauma and/or distress.

7. Country of Origin Information Module

The Country of Origin Information (COI) module assists case officers in answering questions about the political, social, cultural, economic, humanitarian and human rights situation in the applicant's country of origin. COI is an important tool in the international protection determination procedure. It serves as a preparatory instrument for the personal interview and as documentary evidence for assessing credibility.

The main objective of this module is to provide participants with an understanding of the essential role of COI in procedures to assess claims for international protection.

It allows participants to learn about the different aspects of COI in the procedure, such as COI research, COI questions and COI reports. Trainees have the opportunity to explore research strategies and skills, types of sources and source assessment.

Participants are also trained on how to apply quality standards in COI research.

8. Common European Asylum System Module

This module provides the legal framework of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by focusing on the legal developments in the area of international protection within the European Union. The establishment of a CEAS has for over a decade been a key policy objective for the European Union. This has been a crucial process for the achievement of a common asylum procedure and a uniform status valid throughout the EU. This module aims to raise awareness among case officers and other practitioners and to enable the development of a common understanding of their role as the core actors in the implementation of the CEAS.

This module also focuses on assisting case officers to develop the required skills in understanding the implementation of the common legal instruments, including legal text and jurisprudence, thus contributing to a harmonised understanding of the asylum *acquis*. Additionally, this module assists case officers to understand the role of EASO in helping to improve the implementation of the CEAS.

9. International Refugee Law and Human Rights Module

This module provides an overview of the basic human rights instruments and their relevance in the establishment of protection standards for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The historical overview of the major developments in International Refugee Law provides a solid framework for the comprehension of important principles, such as *non-refoulement*, non-discrimination and non-criminalisation of refugees.

By the end of this module, trainees will understand the direct implications of human rights instruments in the context of international protection. They will be able to apply the key principles of Refugee Law and to identify and assess situations where overlooking human rights aspects in dealing with applicants for international protection may result in non-compliance with international human rights instruments.

10. Exclusion Module

The exclusion module offers the opportunity for case officers to specialise in assessing and applying the exclusion clauses of Article 1, sections D, E and F of the 1951 Geneva Convention, also reflected in the EU Qualification Directive. Trainees also learn how the application of the exclusion clause is further influenced by international law, domestic legislation, policies and operational practice, domestic or international jurisprudence, such as those of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, UNHCR guidance and guidance of other important organisations or authors.

Trainees acquire the knowledge and skills to apply the provisions rigorously, albeit restrictively, taking into account the relevant burden and standard of proof in cases of exclusion.

Optional Modules

11. End of Protection Module

This module offers the opportunity for case officers to specialise in the application of revocation and cessation clauses, as well as other circumstances which may lead to an end of protection situation, such as refusal to renew status. Trainees also learn how to interpret the conditions which lead to an end of protection as laid down in the Qualification Directive.

Upon completion of this module, trainees will be able to understand the different ways in which protection ends and how to prepare and write decisions on end of protection.

12. Asylum Procedures Directive Module

This module provides knowledge on the common principles and guarantees that all Member States shall implement in their national asylum procedures in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive.

Trainees will gain knowledge in aspects which are covered by this Directive, such as access to the procedure, the relevant obligations of Member States and the respective guarantees for applicants for international protection, the applicant's right to legal assistance, and the applicant's obligations, the role of UNHCR and safeguards for applicants in need of special procedural guarantees.

13. Dublin Regulation Module

This module provides participants with knowledge and skills on fundamental issues concerning the application of the Dublin III Regulation and the way it operates. Trainees are also provided with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the EURODAC database and the electronic network 'Dublinet'. Besides acquiring knowledge on the purpose and content of the Dublin Regulation, participants also learn how to apply specific aspects of this Regulation, in scenarios involving family reunification of unaccompanied minors, opt-out clauses, humanitarian clauses or applicable time-limits.

By the end of this training module, trainees will acquire the skills and knowledge required for the application of the binding Dublin III Regulation in a framework that respects other international human rights instruments.

14. Module for Managers in the area of asylum

This module covers different aspects related to the day-to-day duties of a manager working in the field of international protection. Covering both theoretical and practical knowledge, this module aims to help managers in this particular area to develop competencies which will assist them in ensuring that their departments provide good quality standards in an efficient way and in line with international and EU legal requirements.

The core target group for this specific module are the managers working with asylum decision-makers.¹

¹ Please note that the full description for the Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation and for the Reception Modules is not available at the moment as those modules will only be developed in 2014.

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