

Press Release

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4th EASO Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting

On 11 and 12 December 2014 EASO held its annual Consultative Forum plenary meeting. For the first time, the event was held in Brussels. Over 100 participants joined this year's meeting representing around 60 different organisations. This year's meeting included a full day thematic conference with over 20 speakers focusing on contingency planning, Member State responses to the flow of Eritrean asylum seekers, different protection statuses granted to Syrian applicants and the use of Article 15 of the Qualification Directive (on qualification for subsidiary protection).

The annual plenary meeting of the Consultative Forum is an event that brings together the EASO Consultative Forum members to look at the experience of the past year of working together, identify lessons learned and earmark areas of future cooperation. As a European centre of expertise, consultation for EASO is not just an annual meeting but a continuous two way dialogue that brings together experts on the many aspects of asylum to share knowledge and expertise. This process provides additional insight and information which helps EASO develop more comprehensive and advanced practical cooperation tools aimed at supporting the implementation the Common European Asylum System.

Besides the usual focused discussions on the involvement of civil society in the different areas of EASO's work and exchanges with EASO's Executive Director, this year's meeting included a thematic conference on the first day that focused on contingency planning in view of the crisis in Ukraine, EU and Member State responses to the influx of Eritrean asylum seekers from an operational point of view, different forms of protection granted in the EU to Syrian asylum applicants, and Member State's existing practices in applying Article 15 of the Qualification Directive (on qualification for subsidiary protection) with regard to specific groups of applicants for international protection and practical measures to stimulate convergence and harmonisation of practices, through efforts such as EASO's Country of Origin Information (COI) and practical cooperation activities, on relevant countries of origin and guidance and tools on Article 15C. The Consultative Forum also discussed the production and sharing of EU level COI, EASO operational support, EASO quality processes and the EASO Information and Documentation System (IDS). This year's high level speakers included¹: Laurent Muschel, Elizabeth Collett, Tomasz Dzięcioł, Christer Zettergren, Francesco Maiani, Eva Singer, Mohammed Fitwi, Paulus Bouma, Doris Peschke, Nele Allenberg, Michael Williams, Blanche Tax, Ursula Countess Praschma, Judge Bernard Dawson, Achilles Skordas, Laurent Aldenhoff, Dr Robert K. Visser, MEP Laura Ferrara, Stephanie Huber, Wilfred Buchhorn and Kris Pollet.

Dr. Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director stated that *'We have continued to strengthen our relationship with civil society over the past year with over 70 organisations consulted and over 100 contributions submitted. We have established three focused consultation channels on training, unaccompanied minors and the EASO Early warning and Preparedness System and welcomed and included civil society input to our Annual Report on the Situation Asylum in the EU 2013. Next year, we will reach out even more and will also visit organisations to discuss how we can further improve our exchange of expertise.'*

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office by contacting Mr Jean-Pierre Schembri on the following e-mail address: jean-pierre.schembri@easo.europa.eu

¹ As per agenda speaking order.