European Asylum Support Office

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FOURTH EASO CONSULTATIVE FORUM PLENARY MEETING
11 & 12 December 2014

Breakout session 4: EASO's Information and Documentation System (IDS)

- Report –

Facilitated by: **Kris Pollet**, European Council for Refugees and Exiles
Supported by : **Jadwiga Maczynska**, EASO Information and Analysis Coordinator.

Summary

This meeting outlined the development of EASO's Information and Documentation System (IDS) as a key tool in understanding how the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) functions. EASO's Jadwiga Maczynska demonstrated how IDS could be used to source key information on asylum processes across EU+ countries, while Kris Pollet provided an interesting overview on ECRE's Asylum Information Database (AIDA) project.

Key points included the challenge of keeping IDS accurate and up to date, making it a tool that adds value rather than replicates information stored elsewhere, and ensuring it becomes an important reference point at EU+ level.

Detail

The main purpose of the session was to present the scope of EASO's IDS, outline its main features and links to other aspects of the Common European Asylum System (legislation, case law, statistics, glossary) and explore the possible contribution of civil society and access to the system.

Jadwiga Maczynska presented the current version of IDS by providing several samples from the system as currently set up as an IT tool. IDS will be a combined content management system and database, providing a central source of information that gives a detailed and up-to-date overview of the practical functioning of CEAS. EASO's work on IDS is based on Article 11 of the EASO Regulation (contributing to the implementation of the CEAS by supporting the exchange of information between the relevant stakeholders concerning the implementation of the asylum acquis).

Consequently, CEAS has been arranged as a series of individual topics according to a structure based on the acquis instruments. The main parts are: access to procedure, application for international protection, Dublin procedures, determination at first instance, determination at second instance, reception and detention, return and content of protection/integration. These topics will be further broken down into more detailed parts. Each element will provide a short summary of its key aspects including references to respective documents stored in the system (Much of this is already available through various external sources, including MS sources, NGO sources, UNHCR etc.). IDS users can easily retrieve relevant information in a concise format and access more detailed source information

as needed. Since IDS will eventually cover 28 Member States, Norway and Switzerland, it will provide a comprehensive overview of how each key stage of the common asylum process is generally carried out in the EU+ and what the range of practice is. This information will be supplemented with basic statistical information, based on Eurostat data, and links to relevant national legislation and case law. A common glossary of terms will be used to ensure terminological consistency with other EASO activities.

Kris Pollet (ECRE) presented the AIDA (Asylum Information Database, http://www.asylumineurope.org/) project, by explaining the scope and nature of the database.

Funded by private donations, the AIDA database provides up-to-date information on asylum systems in 16 Member States by focusing on asylum procedures, reception conditions and detention. The information comes from national reports written by NGO experts who work in national organisations that provide services to asylum seekers and refugees. National reports are drafted on the basis of an in-depth questionnaire that was developed by the partners in the project (ECRE, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi, Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Irish Refugee Council) with the support of the Odysseus network and UNHCR. The reports provide detailed information on the legal framework in the countries covered by the database and focus on how procedures are implemented, and the impact of the legal framework and policies on the situation and fundamental rights of asylum seekers. Information in the database is gathered from all relevant sources and is verified with national authorities by the national experts as much as possible.

Based on the experience of AIDA and other ECRE projects, Kris Pollet began the discussion on development of IDS.

Main discussion points:

- The coexistence of multiple databases and reporting tools and the need to ensure added value, so that information is not merely repeated. IDS should continue to take note of other databases and possibly attempt to first fill in any existing information gaps. Participants stressed the added value of NGO initiatives in this area in order to establish fully how the CEAS operates and functions. For instance, important judgments of the European Court of Human Rights relating to the Dublin Regulations rely heavily on information provided and collected by NGOs.
- The primary challenge would be to keep the database updated and accurate. The intended quarterly update schedule for IDS was assessed as commendable and very ambitious but possibly difficult to keep in practice.
- It was emphasised that using uniform terminology, where possible, will be a key prerequisite so that IDS can be a useful reference tool at EU+ level by overcoming difficulties in understanding country-specific terminology.
- In terms of selection of sources, IDS aims to follow the methodology developed for the EASO annual report. All sources (including NGO-based sources) that have reliable, accurate and referenced information can be used in drafting IDS summaries, which will serve as a compilation of information available in a descriptive manner.
- As is the case for the annual report, the intention of EASO is to have IDS publicly available to all interested parties. The launching of IDS as an publicly available database will, however, be possible after the initial information is verified and validated internally to make sure it is accurate. Participants stressed that lack of transparency and limited public access to IDS may raise concerns, for instance in Dublin cases where only the asylum authority could consult and use the database to support its position.

- Information available to EASO from other processes (Early Warning and Preparedness System data collection, Quality Matrix information) may be used for IDS if providers of such information agree, since initially both of those processes were intended to remain internal.

- IDS will not include any information on procedures conducted in individual cases, with the exception of case law (which will be included as published by the respective judicial authority) or any other personal information on individual applicants.

Suggested next steps

- EASO to keep civil society updated on the steps taken in the process (in particular as regards contributions from civil society to be included in IDS and the production schedule of IDS).