

Annual General Report 2021



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June 2022

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Introductory Note

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was an agency of the European Union established by [Regulation \(EU\) No 439/2010](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010.

EASO (the Agency) helped to improve the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, strengthen practical cooperation among Member States on asylum and provide operational support to Member States subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems. The Agency operated within three main areas:

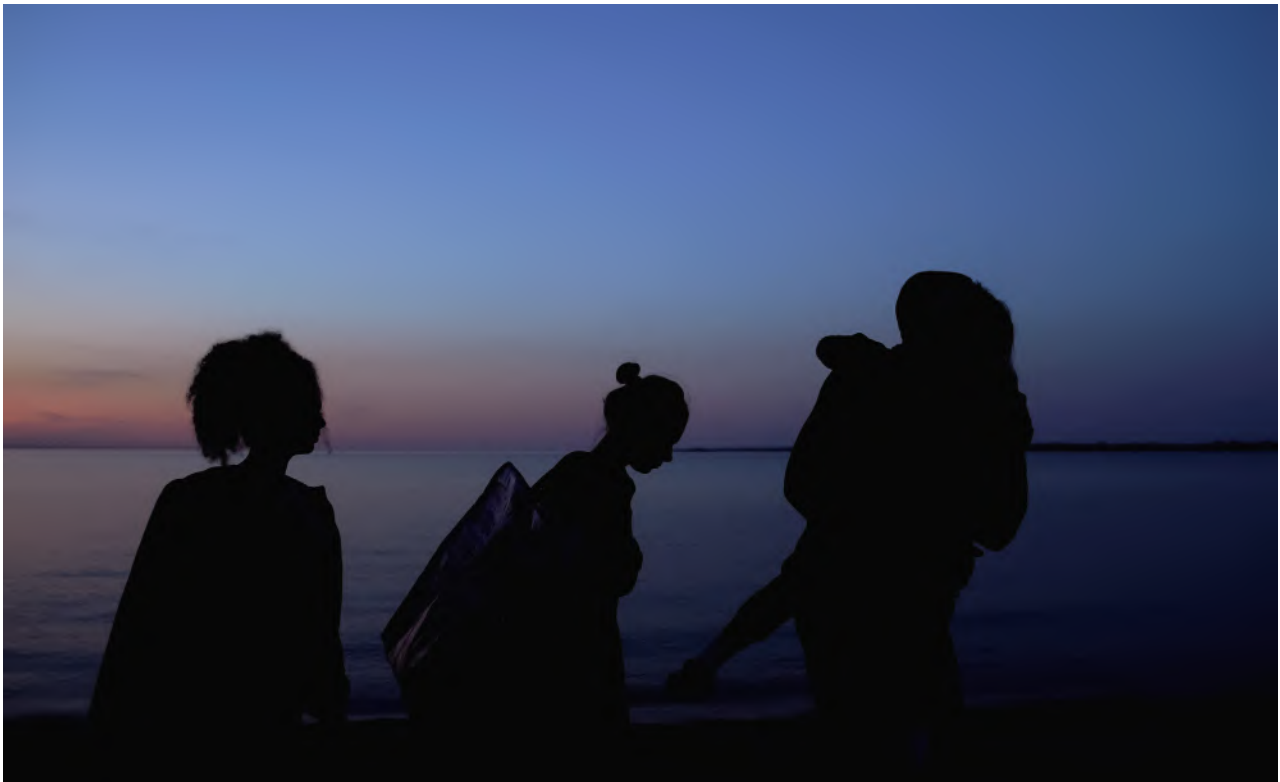
- 1 promotion of practical cooperation among Member States on the many aspects of asylum;
- 2 development and implementation of training for national administrations;
- 3 provision of operational support to Member States.

On 19 January 2022, following the entry into force of [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/2303](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021, EASO was replaced and succeeded by an agency entitled the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

Since this Annual General Report presents the main activities and achievements of the Agency in 2021, the denomination EASO will be maintained throughout the document.

The contents have been structured into three main chapters, each delving into one of the activity areas listed above.

A fourth and last chapter presents the main updates in terms of governance, external relations and communication.



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List of abbreviations

AWAS	Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (Malta)
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of origin information
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPD	Continuing professional development
EAIPS	EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ESQF	European Sectoral Qualification Framework
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EU+	Member States of the European Union and associated countries
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IDS	Information and Documentation System
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPA	International Protection Agency (Malta)
ITFlows	EU project “IT Tools and Methods for Managing Migration Flows”
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and queer
LMS	Learning Management System
MedCOI	Medical Country of Origin Information
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PFI	Push factor index
QuantMig	EU project “Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy”
RSF	Resettlement Support Facility
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Foreword

2021 was a year of adaptation, of innovation and of flexibility. With the continued grip of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging new political instabilities, we worked to respond to crises, fill gaps and strengthen the application of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The political and policy changes in 2021 justifiably raised expectations of our stakeholders as well as our own. I was pleased to witness the strong commitment and high level of debate during two milestone events: our 10th anniversary conference and the 11th Consultative Forum Annual Plenary Meeting.

Our transformation into the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) this year is a recognition of the continued need for our existing work and for the new functions introduced by the regulation. Through our new mandate, we are equipped to respond better, faster and more effectively to assist EU+ countries and our partners. Much of 2021 was spent preparing for these new functions, including the new reserve pool of 500 Member State experts, the fundamental rights officer, the EUAA liaison officers and the enhanced role of the Consultative Forum, amongst others.

I am particularly proud of the unqualified opinion issued by the European Court of Auditors, which confirms the strengthened governance implemented through the recently established and reinforced services, especially in the areas of internal control, planning, monitoring and reporting, quality management and evaluation.

Additionally, I reorganised the Agency to ensure its readiness and efficiency from the



outset. The new organigram, along with other important decisions, were adopted by the Management Board on the first day of the EUAA.

To provide improved and more extensive information on asylum, the Agency focused on new methodologies of data collection. We launched the Situational Update series, that offers comparative analytical overviews on diverse topics of interests. The pilot project “Survey of Asylum-related migrants” has begun, which will enhance our understanding of the root causes of asylum-related migration. Additionally, thanks to improved ways of cooperation, our Asylum Report could benefit from a significant increase in the number of inputs from civil society organisations.

In addition to the provision of training to members of national administrations, justice professionals and deployed personnel, we

progressed with the development of our certified asylum training curriculum. The introduction of a training quality assurance framework, the implementation of the European Sectoral Qualification Framework and the development of a new training needs analysis tool represent key milestones in becoming an accredited training institution on asylum.

The technical and operational assistance we offer to Member States is for the first time based on an improved, multi-annual approach. It reflects the trust of our stakeholders and recognition for more adapted forms of support. In addition to signing multi-annual operational plans with Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, the Agency demonstrated readiness to effectively respond to new global challenges. The establishment of an Expert Platform on Safe Pathways for Afghans and the launch of two new support missions in Lithuania and Latvia are testament to the Agency's capacity to react swiftly to dramatic events such as the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the sharp increase of asylum seekers coming from Belarus. A

new operational plan with Belgium was also signed at the end of 2021.

Our responsiveness and resilience will no doubt be put to the test as Europe braces itself for the full impact of the humanitarian crisis following the unprovoked armed invasion of Ukraine. In condemnation of this act of violence, the Council of the European Union adopted an unprecedented decision offering temporary protection to Ukrainians and certain third country nationals fleeing the war. This provides the legal basis for our support to Member States with regards to the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive, and we will work closely with Member States and our partners to provide assistance where it is needed.

Support remains our mission and I remain thankful for the exceptional commitment of staff and stakeholders. This report is an acknowledgement of joint efforts and achievements in asylum.

Nina Gregori

EUAA Executive Director



EASO 2021 key figures

Approximately 23 400 interviews conducted

2 836 pages of "Country of Origin" products realised or updated

Almost 28 300 asylum applications registered

8 operational needs assessments conducted in 8 Members States

12 100 remarks drafted

More than 1 100 short "Medical Country of Origin Information" reports produced

203 000 workdays of operational support provided, through more than 1 200 persons (85 full-time equivalent personnel)

29 operational standards, indicators, guidance and practical tools developed or updated

44 "Search and Rescue" disembarkations supported

Approximately 30 networks and sub-networks operated

21 EU+ countries used one or more EASO training modules in their national training programmes

88 % overall satisfaction rate among participants in EASO training sessions

3 136 participations in EASO training sessions within the framework of six country operations

4 407 participations in EASO training in the context of permanent support



1. Practical cooperation and asylum knowledge



The Agency fosters practical cooperation among Member States on the various aspects of asylum and provides scientific and technical assistance regarding the policy and legislation of the European Union (EU) in this domain.

It coordinates a wide range of activities promoting information exchange and collaboration among EU+¹ countries with a view to establishing quality standards that enhance consistency in the application of the **CEAS** legal instruments.

► 1.1 Support to asylum systems

The Agency supports Member States in continuously improving the efficiency and quality of their **asylum** systems through the work of two dedicated networks: the **Asylum Processes Network** and the **Exclusion Network**. These two platforms give representatives from national asylum authorities the opportunity to discuss common challenges, exchange best practices and develop common operational standards and practical guidance.

While the Asylum Processes Network deals with all aspects of the **asylum procedures** in EU+ countries, the Exclusion Network focuses on issues related to circumstances that exclude individuals from qualification for international protection.



What is the CEAS?

The Common European Asylum System is a legal and policy framework which establishes common procedures for international protection and a uniform status for those who are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

The CEAS aims to:

- i) ensure fair and humane treatment of applicants for international protection;
- ii) harmonise asylum systems in the EU and reduce the differences between Member States on the basis of binding legislations;
- iii) strengthen practical cooperation between national asylum administrations and the external dimension of asylum.

What does asylum mean?

Asylum is the form of protection granted to third country nationals or stateless persons who have been recognised as in need of international protection according to the [EU Qualification Directive](#).

How do asylum procedures work?

The procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection are outlined in the [Asylum Procedures Directive](#).

Contrary to regulations, which are legislative acts immediately applicable in all Member States, directives set objectives that EU countries must reach through the adoption of specific national laws. Therefore, while asylum procedures may vary across Member States, they must always be compliant with the general framework established by the relevant EU directive.

In 2021, five new practical guides were released by EASO in collaboration with the networks:

1. [EASO Practical Guide on the Application of Internal Protection Alternative:](#) provides guidance to case officers and decision makers on the possibility for some applicants to receive protection in parts of their own countries where they would not be at risk of **being persecuted or suffering serious harm**;
2. [EASO Practical Guide on the Application of Cessation Clauses:](#) focuses on the cessation clauses, i.e. circumstances under which a person can no longer be considered as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection because international protection is no longer necessary or justified;
3. [EASO Practical Guide on Subsequent Applications:](#) provides guidance to case officers on the examination of subsequent applications, i.e. further applications for international protection made after a final decision has been taken on a previous application;
4. [EASO Practical Guide on Registration:](#) guides registration officers in lodging applications for international protection, based on relevant EU legal provisions and national best practices;
5. [EASO Practical Guide on Exclusion for serious \(non-political\) crimes:](#) provides guidance on the circumstances for excluding a person from international protection due to serious crimes committed.

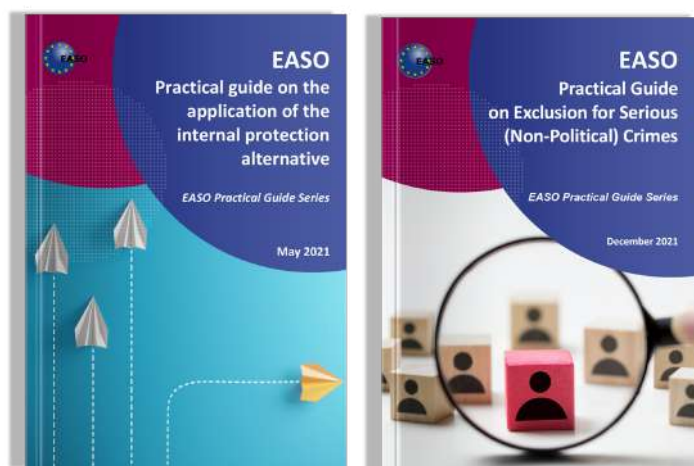
In collaboration with the two networks, in 2021 EASO held thematic meetings on efficiency and quality management of asylum procedures, country of nationality's verification process and exclusion related to acts of terrorism.

How do we define a refugee and what is the EU subsidiary protection?

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is someone who “owing to well-founded fear of **being persecuted** for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to that fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.

By contrast, according to the EU Qualification Directive, a person eligible for subsidiary protection is a “third country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee” and, if returned to his or her country of origin or former habitual residence, “would face a real risk of **suffering serious harm**”.

Moreover, between September and October 2021 EASO participated in the organisation of the two-day event “Digital innovation and efficiency in asylum procedures”, which presented national experiences related to the digitalisation of asylum processes².



2. The seminar was organised together with the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees and the General Directors of Immigration Services Conference.

► 1.2

Thematic cooperation: reception, vulnerability and the Dublin procedures

The achievement of convergence in the implementation of the CEAS requires enhanced harmonisation of national legislations and practices in the key areas of reception, vulnerability and implementation of Dublin procedures. The Agency supports EU+ countries' practical cooperation in these domains through the **Network of Reception Authorities**, the **Vulnerability Expert Network** and the **Network of Dublin Units**.

Drawing on the priorities identified by these three networks, in 2021 the Agency published fourteen practical guides and tools, intended to support the daily work of reception, vulnerability and Dublin officers.

Among others, EASO released a [Practical guide on the welfare of asylum and reception staff](#), which aims at supporting national authorities in their duty of care towards professionals working in asylum and reception settings. Based on good practices shared by EU+ countries, the guide is accompanied by a three-minute [animation](#) demonstrating the importance of early identification of stress.



RECEPTION

Reception plays a fundamental role in the efficient implementation of the CEAS, as it concerns the provision of accommodation to applicants throughout the duration of their asylum procedure.

The EASO Network of Reception Authorities aims to foster the exchange of knowledge, information and best practices in the management of reception systems across EU+ countries. Composed of representatives from national reception authorities, the network supports the development of practical tools and guidance that promote convergence of quality standards in reception.

In March 2021 EASO adopted a [Strategy on Reception](#) that defines the general framework within which the Agency will support EU and third countries in ensuring adequate and comparable standards of living in their respective reception systems. To that end, EASO started developing a **dedicated toolbox** divided in two parts.

- 1.** Hardware component: it will provide blueprints and technical specifications to support reception authorities in the planning, design and development of new facilities with dignified and safe living conditions;
- 2.** Software component: it will provide guidance in setting standardised workflows and procedures in support of the establishment and management of reception facilities.

EASO also developed an online resource to assist EU+ Member States in self-assessing their reception systems and facilities: the [Assessment of Reception Conditions](#) is available on the Agency's website in English, Greek, Italian, Romanian and Spanish. In 2021 the tool was rolled out in Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain and the Netherlands.





VULNERABILITY

The Agency supports EU+ countries in their efforts to identify, assess and respond to the special needs of applicants for international protection who are in a situation of **vulnerability**.

While each Member State has the obligation to identify, assess and refer vulnerable applicants for adequate support, the Agency develops tools that assist national authorities in realising these tasks and enhancing their capacity to meet the specific needs of vulnerable persons.

In 2021 EASO published the report [Consultation with Applicants for International Protection on Mental Health](#), which is part of its effort to support EU+ countries in identifying and responding to the mental health concerns of applicants for international protection. The Agency also produced an update to the report on [Age assessment in EU+ countries](#), presenting an overview of age assessment methodologies and procedural safeguards in Europe.

Finally, EASO continued to coordinate the work of the Vulnerability Expert Network, which facilitates practical cooperation and exchange of information among EU+ countries and other stakeholders such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Commission, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and representatives from relevant academia, civil society and international organisations.

What does vulnerability mean?

In the context of migration and international protection, vulnerability refers to a characteristic or situation of a person or group of persons in need of special reception conditions and/or additional procedural guarantees, which may also affect qualification for international protection.

A vulnerable applicant is someone whose ability to understand and effectively present their case or fully participate in the asylum process, and/or benefit from reception conditions, is limited due to their individual circumstances.

The [EU Reception Conditions Directive](#) offers a non-exhaustive list of vulnerable persons that includes “minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation [...]”.





DUBLIN PROCEDURES

The [Dublin III Regulation](#)³ establishes the criteria and mechanisms for determining which EU+ country is responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in any Member State. The regulation lays down a hierarchy of three sets of criteria:

1. criteria designed to protect family unity⁴;
2. criteria relating to the responsibility of the country which played the greatest role in the applicant's entry within the EU+ territory;
3. if none of these set of criteria applies, the first country where an application has been lodged will be responsible for it.

The EASO Network of Dublin Units aims at achieving further harmonisation in the processes and facilitating cooperation between national Dublin units. It is composed of a Steering Group, which discusses strategic issues, and of a Dublin Expert Network, where Dublin units exchange information and share expertise.

In 2021 EASO released a [Practical Guide on Information Provision in the Dublin Procedure](#) and a set of [recommendations](#) that promote best practices for exchanging information between Dublin units. Additionally, the Agency updated and published three previously restricted recommendations on [Dublin transfers](#) in general, [Dublin transfers during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) and the [operational and technical use of DubliNet](#), the secure electronic messaging system that Dublin units must use in their communications.

Finally, in November 2021 the Agency organised an exchange visit for Dublin experts hosted by the Greek Dublin unit in Athens.

How do Dublin procedures work?

After lodging an application for international protection in an EU+ country, applicants receive information about the Dublin III Regulation, the hierarchy of criteria, their rights and obligations and how and where to access legal assistance in the country.

To establish responsibility, Member States exchange information by sending “take charge” or “take back” requests and replies using specific forms.

With a view to ensuring quick access to asylum procedures, Member States apply strict deadlines for sending requests, replying to these and transferring applicants to the responsible country.



► 1.3

Cooperation with courts and tribunals

The Agency conceives reference material and conducts capacity building activities specifically designed to support judicial professionals in their tasks. To that end, it coordinates the activities of the **EASO Courts and Tribunals Network**, where the courts and tribunals of all EU+ countries are represented, together with the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court on Human Rights, as well as judicial associations and other stakeholders, such as FRA and the UNHCR.

In close collaboration with the network, the Agency supports the creation, review, update and translation of the [Professional Development Series](#), a set of training materials developed “by judges for judges” with the ambition of covering all aspects of the CEAS. In 2021 EASO released and/or translated into additional languages 12 products, including judicial analyses and compilations of jurisprudence in areas such as asylum procedures, reception, vulnerability or detention.

The publications of the Professional Development Series intend to foster convergence and consistency in the application of the CEAS and provide the basis for the periodical organisation of **professional development workshops**. Delivered by trainers from the EASO **Experts Pool**, these workshops take place using face-to-face or online modalities. In 2021 EASO conducted 12 such workshops, attended by 211 serving members of courts or tribunals, legal rapporteurs, assistants or research officers from 23 EU+ countries.

Five workshops for judges, research officers and administrative staff were also organised in Cyprus, Greece and Italy as part of the operational support to these countries.

Finally, in 2021 the Agency launched the **EASO Expert Panels**, which offer members of courts and tribunals the opportunity to deepen their knowledge on specific areas of the CEAS through *ad hoc* webinars delivered by experienced judicial professionals.

What is the EASO Experts Pool?

Established in 2017, the EASO Experts Pool serves as a source of national judicial trainers who are deployed to train their fellow members of courts and tribunals from across EU+ countries.

The pool is composed of serving members of courts or tribunal or trainers from national judicial training bodies with extensive knowledge of international protection and practical insights into the decision-making process in the field.



➤ 1.4

Information and analysis of developments in asylum

The Agency collects information through various sources and produces analyses of developments in legislation, policies, practices and jurisprudence related to asylum. This information is vital to report on the evolution of the CEAS, identify emerging trends and inform evidence-based decision-making.



INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION SYSTEM

The Agency's Information and Documentation System (IDS) is a central database that provides comprehensive information on the implementation of the CEAS. It contains the latest developments related to asylum legislation, policy and practices in EU+ countries for each stage of the asylum and reception procedures. Access is restricted to registered users across over 50 national asylum and reception authorities.

In 2021 the Agency changed the visual design of the platform and introduced new functions that optimise the process of searching and comparing asylum practices across Europe.

The IDS is also used for generating public analytical reports on key topics and trends, such as **situational updates** on asylum developments in specific countries of origin.



CASE LAW DATABASE

The [EASO Case Law Database](#) is a public resource containing jurisprudence related to the CEAS. It includes summaries of decisions and judgments pronounced by European and national courts, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The database is regularly updated by the Agency, which is also releasing quarterly newsletters summarising all new cases over the previous three months. In 2021 EASO published the report [Asylum Case Law in 2020](#), a compilation of summaries of international protection-related decisions and judgments pronounced in 2020 by national and European courts and tribunals.

In 2021 EASO published the following situational updates:

- COVID-19 measures and vaccination campaigns for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (Issue [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#));
- [Safe country of origin concept in EU+ countries](#);
- [The concept of safe third countries in EU+ countries](#);
- [Fee or other charges for applications for international protection in EU+ countries](#);
- [Developments in asylum procedures in EU+ countries in response to the situation in Afghanistan](#).



QUERY SYSTEM

The Agency's Query System is a restricted platform where national administrations can easily search or request detailed information on policies and practices related to the CEAS.

In 2021 EASO launched a new online **Query Portal** that ensures greater accessibility, easier exchanges and enhanced transparency. Asylum and reception experts from EU+ countries can access the Query Portal to consult the repository of existing and ongoing queries or propose a new query. The Agency may consolidate information from the queries into analytical reports.

In 2021 EASO processed a total of 65 queries and surveys through its Query Portal. It also conducted a series of training sessions on the new tool for experts of national administration.

ASYLUM REPORT

The [Asylum Report](#), adopted by the EASO Management Board in June 2021, is an annual publication that presents the latest developments in asylum trends and policies and summarises best practices and existing challenges.

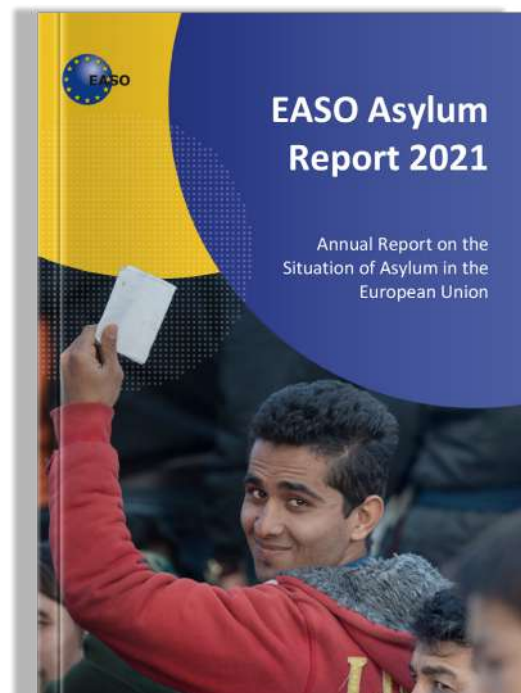
The Asylum Report is the result of complex and meticulous work involving asylum and reception national authorities, international organisations and more than 50 civil society organisations, academia and research institutions. Throughout the year the Agency conducts bilateral consultations to obtain updated field information and confirm primary facts on legislative, policy, practical and jurisprudential developments.

In 2021 EASO extended the number of complementary resources accompanying the Asylum Report. A searchable [National Asylum Developments Database](#), executive summaries



in 30 languages and a categorised [bibliography](#) of over 1 000 sources are now available on the Agency's website.

Additionally, five fact sheets on key topics covered in the report have been published in 2021: they delve into [family reunification](#), [resettlement](#), [digitalisation of asylum processes](#), [protection of women and girls in the asylum procedure](#) and [age assessment of minors](#).



1.5

Data analysis and research

The Agency's activities in the area of data analysis and research are built upon three pillars:

1. collection, analysis and exchange of statistics providing a measurable and comprehensive view on the practical functioning of the CEAS;
2. production of strategic analyses on asylum-related migration;
3. development of early warning capacities and research on the root causes of asylum-related migration.



ASYLUM STATISTICS

The Agency disseminates among EU+ countries timely information related to the implementation of the CEAS, including statistics on access to procedures, reception systems, first and second instance determination, resettlement or management of Dublin cases. Data regarding the resources available in the national asylum and reception systems and the operational support provided by the Agency are also collected.

Once consolidated and analysed, these data underpin and feed into the Agency's **Early Warning and Preparedness System**, a mechanism that enables the timely identification, preparation and implementation of appropriate measures in response to intense asylum-related migratory events.

All this information is stored and continuously updated in the **EASO Data Hub**, a central database available for consultation to asylum national authorities and relevant EU institutions.

EASO Operations 2021



EASO deployed personnel

203 000
(Work days)

852*
(Full Time Equivalents)



Registrations supported by EASO

28 300
(Registrations)

28%**
(of applications lodged)



Concluding remarks drafted by EASO

12 100
(Concluding remarks)

24%**
(of decisions issued)



EASO countries of operations in 2021

*FTE (full-time equivalent): Indicates the equivalent number of EASO personnel if they were to be deployed full-time during the year.

**Percentage calculated on the overall national data referring only to the countries where EASO performed the respective operational activity.

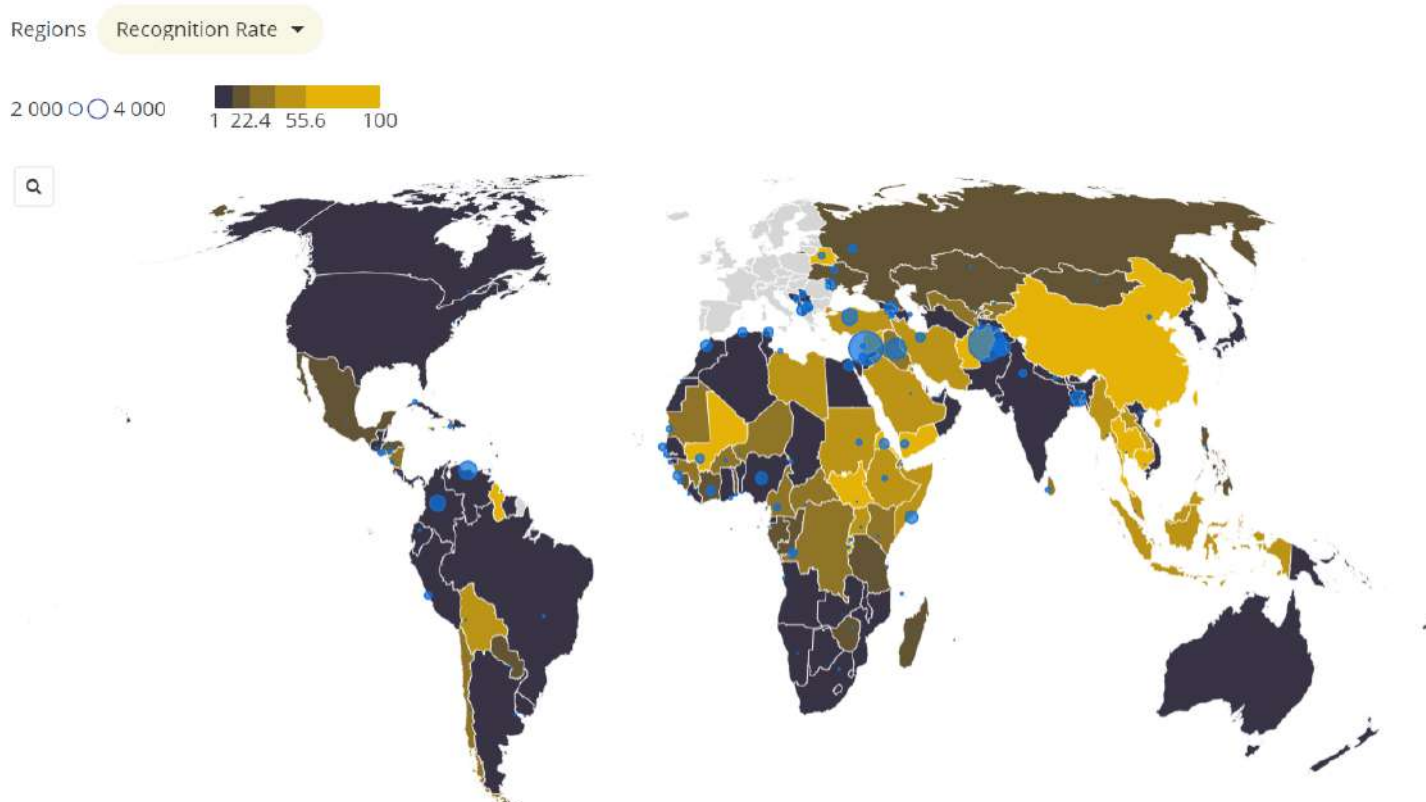
The Agency produces a wide range of statistics, including those related to the operational support provided to EU Member States.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

The Agency produces timely and high-quality analytical outputs on relevant aspects of the CEAS for a wide range of stakeholders, including EU+ countries' asylum authorities and EU institutions.

The Agency's strategic analyses take the form of periodical (weekly, monthly, quarterly, annual) or *ad hoc* reports, depending on the needs. Reports may focus on general aspects of asylum in the EU or on specific

areas of the CEAS such as, for example, the implementation of the Dublin III Regulation. While most of the analytical outputs aim at supporting evidence-informed policy making at the national and EU levels, some products are also available to the general public. This is the case, for example, of the [EASO latest asylum trends](#) web page, which offers reader-friendly analyses on key asylum facts such as number of applications, recognition rates, countries of origin or pending cases.



The latest asylum trends is one of the many analytical products developed by the Agency and published on its website.



RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Agency's research programme revolves around three main activity areas:

1. review of relevant existing work: it aims at establishing existing knowledge by conducting literature reviews on **push/pull factors** and surveys of existing models in asylum-related migration;
2. engagement in empirical work: it focuses on advancing the understanding of root causes of asylum-related migration from the point of view of migrants;
3. creation of an empirical model of asylum-related migration: it aims at building a migration model able to forecast the migration pressure on the European asylum system.

Events such as conflicts, economic hardship or deteriorating political situations have the potential to internally displace entire communities or force them to leave their homes to seek refuge in other countries. The Agency monitors such events and consolidates all relevant data into the EASO **push factor index (PFI)**, an indicator associated to each country of the world that provides an important framework for predicative analyses on migration trends and international protection needs.

In 2021 EASO continued to expand the scope of its research programme. In collaboration with academia, it published in October the study [“Toward an Early Warning System for Monitoring Asylum-Related Migration Flows in Europe”](#), offering an alternative approach to asylum modelling based on the detection of early warning signals. In November it presented its findings on early warning and forecasting at the event [Harnessing data innovation for migration policy in Europe and Africa](#), organised by the Big Data for Migration

What are push and pull factors?

Push factors are conditions in a migrant's country of origin that negatively affect his/her life there.

By contrast, pull factors are circumstances in a destination country that make it a more attractive place to live, compared to a migrant's country of origin.

Alliance. The Agency is also serving on the advisory board of Horizon 2020 projects on forecasting international migration, such as the EU projects “Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy” ([QuantMig](#)) and “IT Tools and Methods for Managing Migration Flows” ([ITFlows](#)).

Finally, in October 2021 EASO launched the pilot phase of the project “Surveys of Asylum-related Migrants” in Lesbos, Greece. The project collects direct testimonies from asylum seekers on the reasons to leave their countries, the journey they went through and their aspirations and plans for the future. Based on an online questionnaire, the project aims to improve understanding of the root causes of asylum-related migration and secondary movements within Europe. In 2022 the project will be rolled out in other reception centres of Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Malta.



Lesbos, Greece: posters translated in five languages to disseminate the “Surveys of Asylum-related Migrants” research project

➤ 1.6

Country of Origin Information (COI)

COI refers to information concerning countries from which asylum seekers originate. COI supports the decision-making of national authorities responsible for examining asylum applications by providing objective information regarding the socio-economic, legal, political, human rights and humanitarian situation in countries of origin. This context information is essential for ascertaining the existence of protection needs that may justify the granting of asylum.

EASO produces COI reports according to its [Country of Origin Information \(COI\) Report Methodology](#), which is based on the principles of objectivity, relevance, transparency and quality of information. The Agency coordinates a **COI Strategic Network**, composed of the heads of COI units of EU+ countries, as well as 11 country-specific **COI Specialist Networks**, where specialised COI researchers from EU+ national administrations exchange information and knowledge on issues related to asylum procedures and countries of origin.

In 2021 EASO released 14 COI reports and responded to over 50 **COI queries** (+70 %) as part of its operational support to Member States subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems. Examples include responses to queries on the situation in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran and Iraq, or the publication of the COI report on the [security situation in Afghanistan](#), covering the first developments since the August 2021 Taliban takeover. All COI products and query responses are publicly available on the [EASO COI Portal](#).

Moreover, in November 2021 EASO released an

What are the COI Queries?

COI queries are questions posed by case officers, COI researchers, policy makers and other national stakeholders on specific issues concerning a given country or region. They can refer, among others, to the conditions of particular social groups, the legal background on a certain topic or the security situation in specific areas. The Agency's COI responses are drafted in line with the EASO COI Report methodology and are published on the EASO COI Portal.

updated [COI Research Guide on the situation of LGBTIQ](#). The document responds to EU+ countries' increased needs of information on research strategies concerning the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and queer (LGBTIQ) persons in their countries of origin.

Finally, in 2021 EASO conducted 14 COI briefing sessions in EU Member States and provided support for the establishment of a regional **COI Practitioners' Network** in the Western Balkans.



➤ 1.7

Medical Country of Origin Information (MedCOI)

MedCOI is a service that provides EU+ countries' asylum authorities with information regarding the availability and accessibility of medical interventions in countries of origin. In conjunction with COI, MedCOI supports EU+ national authorities to reach accurate and fair decisions in the assessment of international protection needs.

The Agency's MedCOI service relies on a worldwide network of medical experts that provide up-to-date information on medical treatment and medication in their respective countries, outside of the EU+ area. Based on this information and combined with desk research, the Agency produces responses to individual requests from EU+ countries, which are then stored in a dedicated online portal.

In 2021, the first year of full incorporation of MedCOI services into the Agency's portfolio, EASO issued more than 1 100 short reports in response to requests submitted by MedCOI portal's users. Given the sensitive nature of these reports, the portal is only accessible to trained personnel from the Agency and EU+ countries' relevant administrations.

EASO is also issuing unrestricted MedCOI products: in 2021 it published a report on the healthcare reform and economic accessibility in [Ukraine](#) and a MedCOI report on the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#).

➤ 1.8

Country Guidance

Country guidance is a common analysis and guidance, developed by EASO together with a network of senior-level policy officials from EU+

countries (the **Country Guidance Network**), concerning potential protection needs existing in a given third country.

Country guidance documents aim to foster convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection. They assist asylum decision-makers to ensure that similar cases are treated alike and that persons in need have access to the same form of protection and assistance across the EU. These documents include an in-depth common analysis and a guidance note summarising the main conclusions, based on up-to-date country of origin information assessed in accordance with international and EU legislation and case law. The horizontal guidance of the Agency on qualification for international protection and the relevant UNHCR guidelines are also taken into consideration.

The Agency coordinates the work of the **Country Guidance Network** and of its drafting teams, which are composed of national experts selected on the basis of their specific expertise. In 2021 EASO published updated versions of country guidance on [Afghanistan](#), [Iraq](#), [Nigeria](#) and [Syria](#), including translations into several languages of their guidance notes. The Agency also started preparations for developing a new country guidance on Somalia, that will be published in 2022.

What is the difference between COI and Country Guidance?

COI refers to information related to a given country of origin.

Country guidance, instead, is the assessment of the situation in a given country of origin, in light of the applicable international and EU law.

COI therefore represents the factual basis on which country guidance provides an assessment in the form of a common analysis.

2. Training and professional development



The Agency conducts training for members of national administrations and justice professionals⁵ responsible for asylum matters. Training activities aim to identify key principles and best practices with a view to fostering greater convergence of administrative methods, asylum decisions and legal practice.

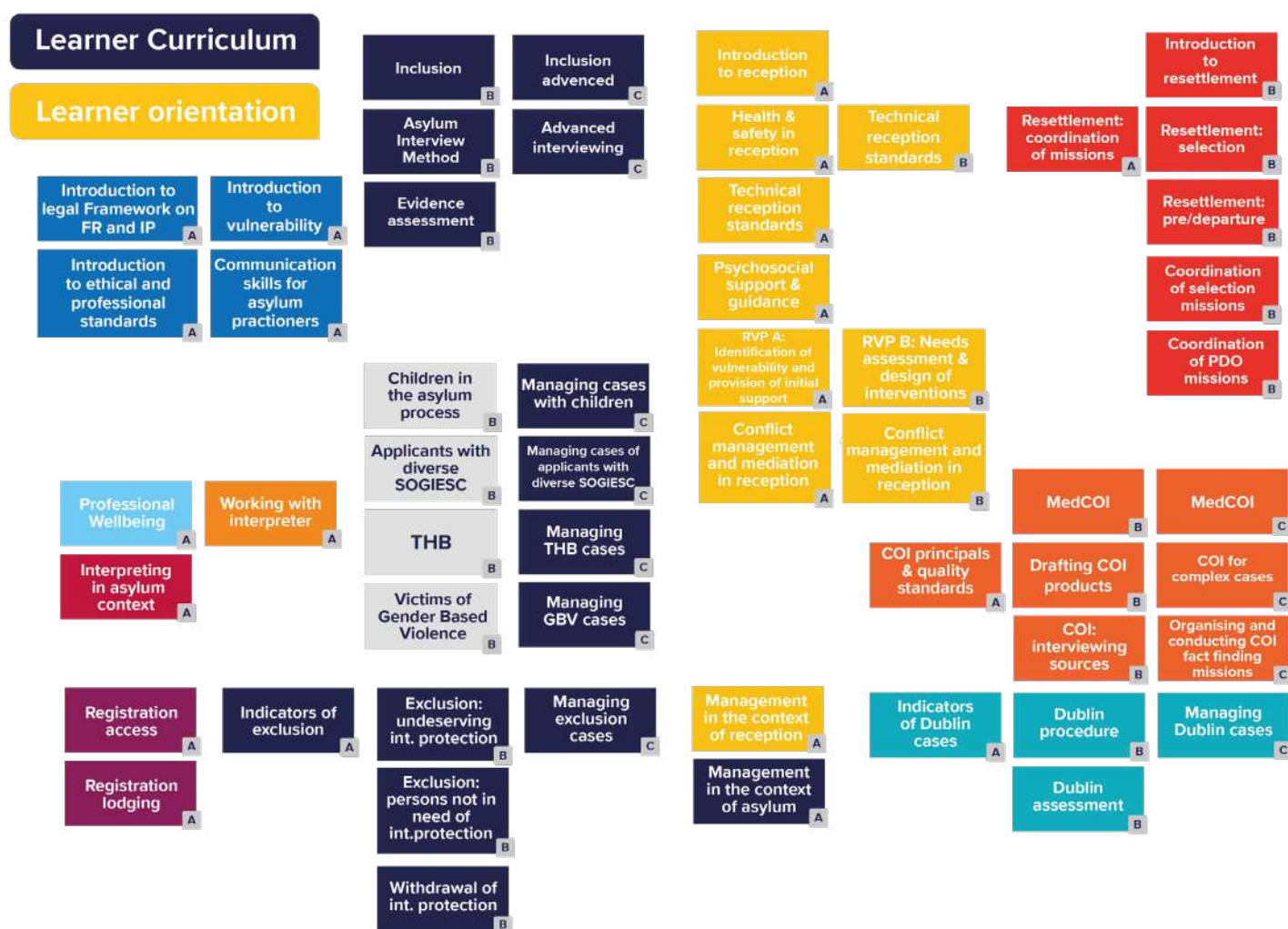
2.1

The European asylum curriculum

The Agency develops and manages the European asylum curriculum, one of the most important practical tools for achieving the effective implementation of the CEAS.

Composed of over 50 modules and training material, the European asylum curriculum covers the entire field of international protection. It serves to promote common understanding and harmonised application of the EU asylum *acquis* across all EU+ Member States.

Each module represents a learning block designed to meet the specific educational needs of asylum and reception officials in areas such as ethical standards, management of vulnerable cases, EU legislation, international human rights and interview techniques. The curriculum is updated and expanded based on regular analyses of training needs: in 2021 five new modules were developed and included⁶.



Overview of the European asylum curriculum's modules. The courses are classified from A to C and colour-coded to indicate different levels of complexity and thematic areas and target groups, respectively.

THE EUROPEAN SECTORAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

The development of a common asylum curriculum is not sufficient to achieve effective harmonisation of European educational standards. In fact, officials with the same job titles may be assigned different responsibilities in different countries. Based on this consideration the Agency launched, together with Member States, an extensive mapping of

What is a qualifications framework?

A qualifications framework is a reference grid of learning outcomes, set out in levels that denote the level of complexity of the learning. Its primary uses are to inform the design of qualifications and enable comparison between qualifications. The learning outcomes approach puts the focus on what the learner will know, understand or be able to demonstrate on completion of a programme of study.

What exactly are 'learning outcomes'?

'Learning outcomes' mean statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

- 'Knowledge' means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work.
- 'Skills' means the ability to apply knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems.
- 'Competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities in work [...] situations. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of 'responsibility and autonomy'.

An excerpt of the ESQF toolkit

the tasks of asylum and reception officials across Europe, with a view to defining the knowledge, skills and responsibilities needed for performing a given task.

This information was then used to develop the [European Sectoral Qualifications Framework](#) for asylum and reception officials (ESQF), a matrix that captures all the learning outcomes needed, i.e. what asylum and reception officials should know or be able to do for performing their various tasks.

In 2021 EASO developed a **toolkit** consisting of several components, such as pocketbooks and a practical guide, that support Member States' authorities in the utilisation of the ESQF throughout the training cycle.

NEW TRAINING ANALYSIS METHODOLOGIES

Based on the ESQF, EASO piloted the online **Training Needs Analysis Tool**, a web application that enables EU+ countries to identify their training needs and match them with the most relevant modules from the European asylum curriculum. The tool was positively received by Member States, which appreciated the possibility of defining learning paths for their officials in a practical and easy way. The application, which is accompanied by a comprehensive manual, allows users to select specific duties and tasks from a pre-defined list and grade them based on their frequency and relevance. Subsequently, the tool matches these duties and tasks with the learning outcomes of the Agency's training and provides a series of suggested modules, ranked in order of importance depending on the frequency and relevance of the tasks they refer to.

EASO also developed a **training evaluation**



methodology, available to Member States upon request, that aims to foster the continuous improvement of learning programmes. The methodology enables regular monitoring of training activities through the measurement of key performance indicators and the systematic collection of feedback from learners and trainers. A single feedback form, translated in all EU languages, will be used for training sessions starting from 2022.

TOWARDS A CERTIFIED EUROPEAN ASYLUM CURRICULUM

The Agency aims to become the reference asylum training institution in the EU, accredited to issue training certificates recognised in all Member States.

Accreditation entails putting in place a robust quality assurance system to guarantee that quality standards are maintained in every EU+ country where an EASO training is delivered. To that end, the Agency developed a **training quality assurance framework** based on the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#). The framework lays down the standards of quality, efficiency and transparency applied by EASO in all its training activities.

In 2021 the Agency made significant progress towards the achievement of accreditation. The application of the ESQF enabled EASO to design learner-centred training that matched more accurately the knowledge and skills required by asylum and reception officials in their daily work.

Moreover, EASO started preparations for delivering certified training, i.e. training modules that include the issuance of certificates proving the achievement of predefined learning outcomes by trainees. In view of that, the Agency launched the module “Becoming an EASO Assessor”, which aims to provide trainers with the knowledge and skills to assess whether learners have successfully achieved the intended learning outcomes of the Agency’s training modules. The pilot sessions of the new module recorded 32 participations from both EASO and national trainers.

All **certified training** will be delivered by certified trainers, i.e. experienced trainers who have successfully completed the “Becoming an EASO Assessor” module and whose knowledge, skills and competences in a given subject matter have been formally recognised through the Agency’s “recognition of prior learning” procedure.



➤ 2.2

Implementation of the European asylum curriculum

The Agency's training to EU+ Member States' officials is delivered within three different contexts:

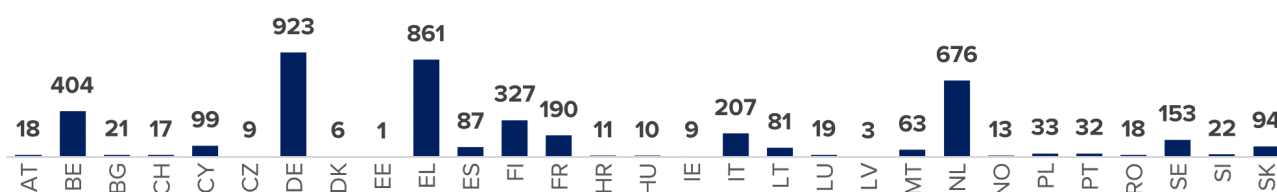
- permanent support;
- operational support;
- third country support.

TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF PERMANENT SUPPORT

The Agency responds to the training and professional needs of national authorities by offering learning resources and programmes

on a permanent basis.

The suspension of all face-to-face training activities imposed by the COVID-19 pandemics, initiated as of mid-March 2020, remained in place throughout 2021. A total of 3 014 officials, corresponding to 4 407 participations⁷, attended training based on the European asylum curriculum, which represents a slight decrease compared to 2020. Despite the challenges posed by the utilisation of exclusively e-learning formats, the overall satisfaction rate reached 88 %.

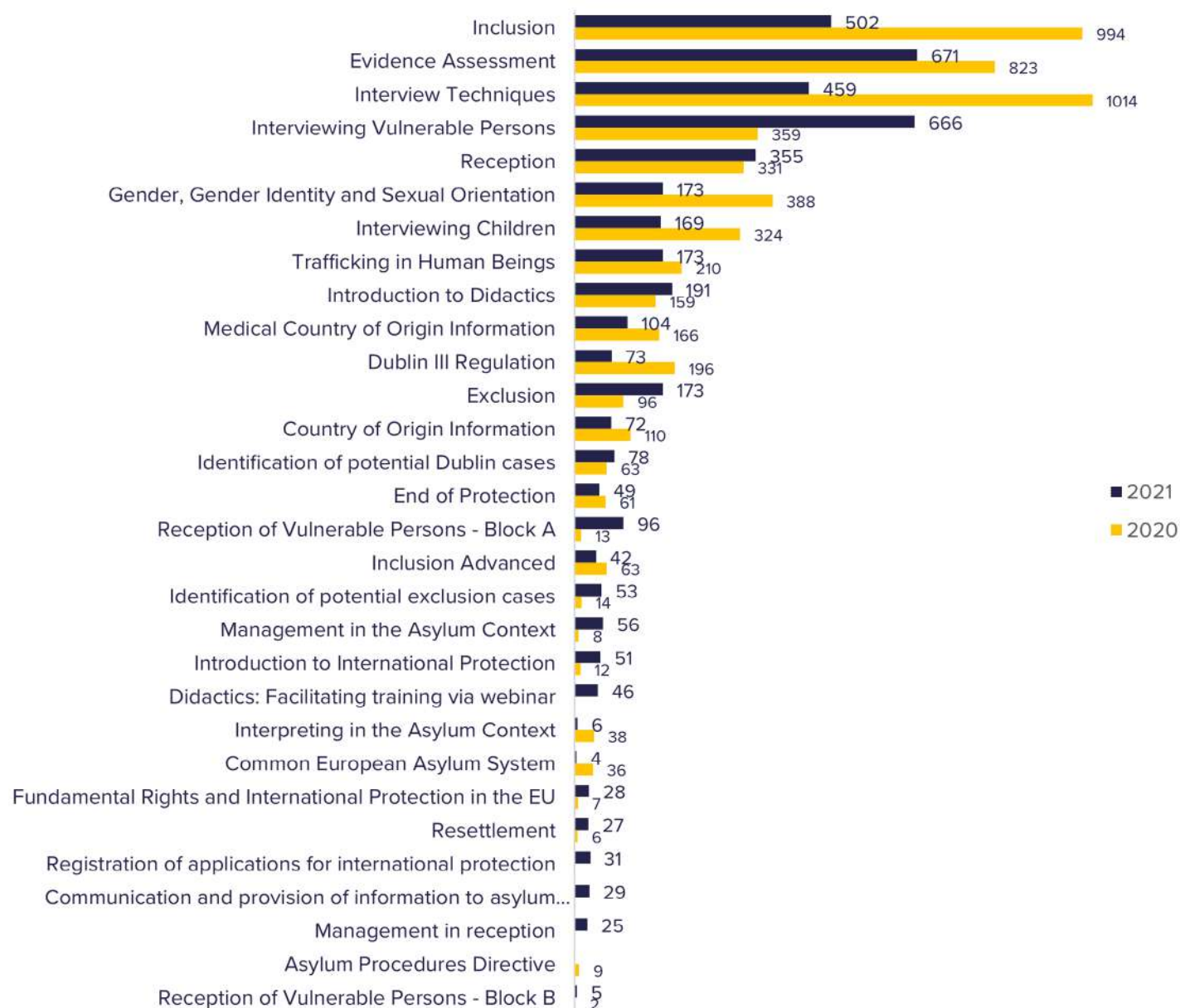


Participations in the European training curriculum modules in 2021, broken down by Member State



7. The number of participations is normally higher than the number of individual participants, since the same person can attend more than one training. The Agency keeps track also of the number of participations, as this allows to follow-up on the learning path and the skills developed by each trainee.

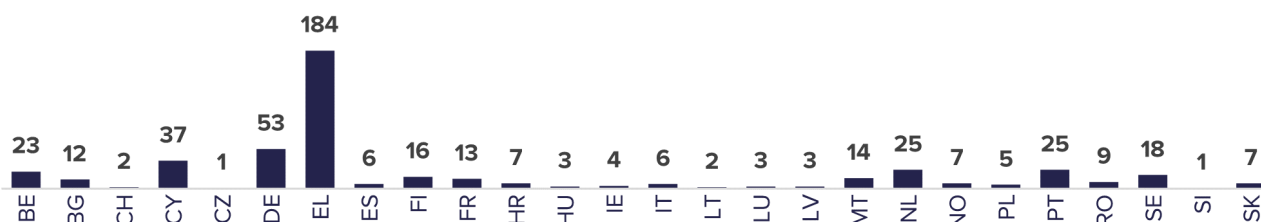
As in previous years, the greatest participation was recorded in the core modules for asylum and reception officers, as well as in those focusing on persons with special needs.



Participations in EASO training sessions, broken down by training module (2021 vs. 2020)



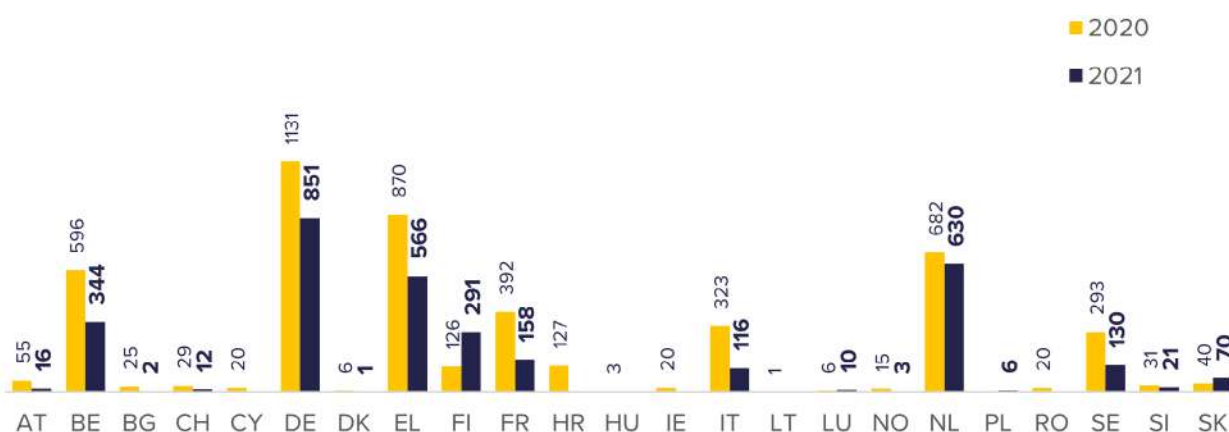
In 2021 EASO also delivered 38 train-the-trainer sessions.



Participations in train-the-trainer sessions in 2021, broken down by Member State

EU+ Member States conducted 360 training sessions using the Agency's training curriculum and online resources. A decrease of participations in national training was observed in most EU+ countries and can likely be attributed to the persistence of restrictions on travel and gatherings, which limited the possibility of organising face-to-face sessions.

In 2021 the training delivered in the context of permanent support was conducted by 344 trainers from the **EASO training pool**. In addition to 36 experienced trainers of the Agency, this number includes 308 EU+ countries' trainers who had been previously trained by EASO. These latter were involved in delivering national training in their home countries, as well as EASO train-the-trainer sessions.



Participations in national and other training sessions, broken down by Member State (2021 vs. 2020)



TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

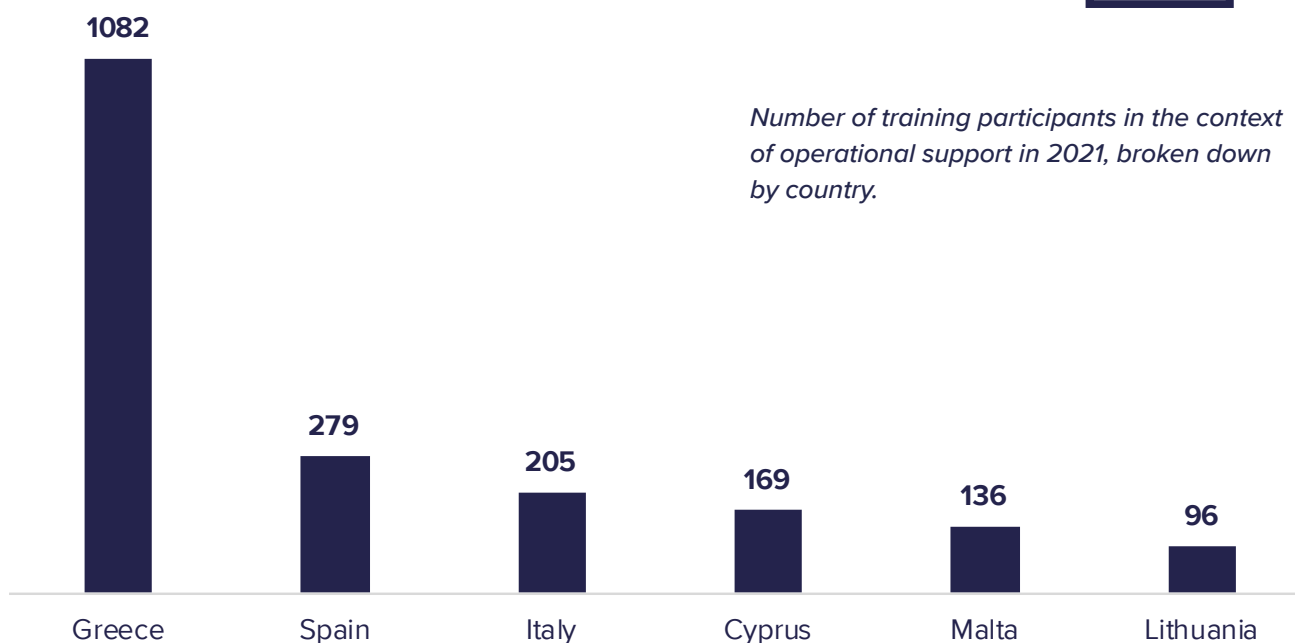
EASO training may also be delivered as part of the operational support provided to EU+ Member States whose asylum and reception systems are subject to particular pressure.

Such training activities address the learning needs of both national authorities and asylum support teams deployed by EASO. The Agency develops learning pathways adapted to the specific operational contexts, which may require training in areas such as access to asylum procedures, registration,

reception or backlog management.

In 2021 EASO trained a total of 1 967 individuals within the framework of six country operations (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Spain), recording a satisfaction rate of 88 %.

Detailed information about these training activities is provided in [Chapter 3, Operational Support](#).

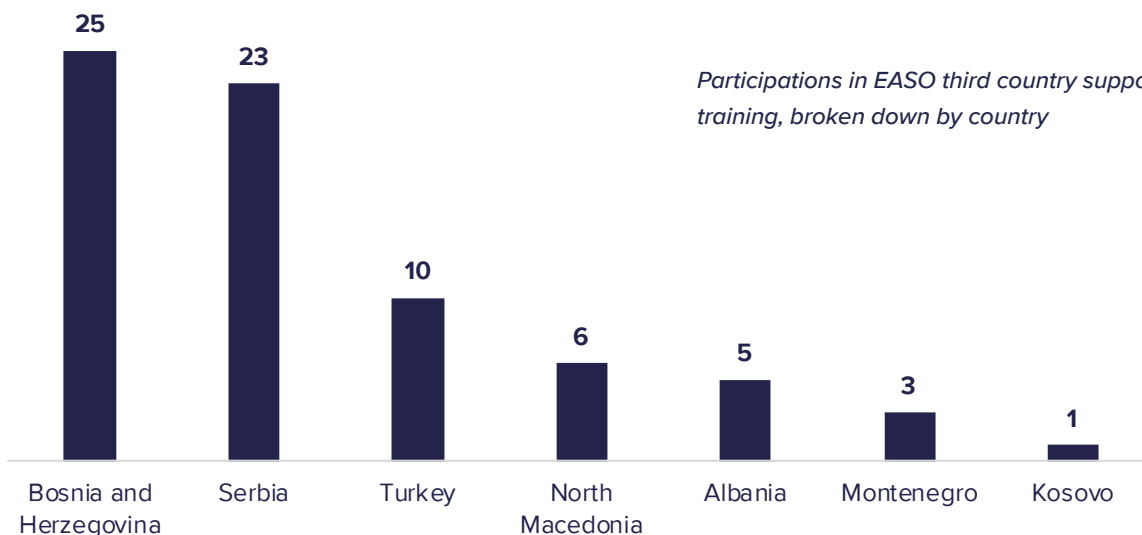


TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF THIRD COUNTRY SUPPORT

The Agency provides training support to third countries' national authorities within the framework of roadmaps for cooperation and regional agreements.

In 2021, EASO training sessions recorded

73 participations from third countries. Additional information regarding training activities in the context of third country support is provided in [Chapter 3, Operational Support](#).



Participations in EASO third country support training, broken down by country

OTHER TRAINING SUPPORT

Maintaining its commitment to enrich and diversify its training offer and meet the needs of Member States as they arise, EASO continued to ensure that asylum and reception officials who act as trainers in their administrations are provided with the latest updates in relation to their respective training modules.

In addition to delivering training, in 2021 EASO promoted the organisation of exchanges of views among national trainers who are part of the EASO training pool. The first meeting of this trainers' network, held in May 2021, focused on the EASO transition toward a certified training model and the restructuring of core modules for asylum officials.

The second trainers' network meeting, organised in December 2021, offered the



opportunity to discuss about the content of the restructured module on inclusion and share updates on relevant European caselaw and EASO tools and publications in this area.

Towards the end of 2021, in light of the increasing numbers of asylum applications submitted in EU+ countries by persons originating from Afghanistan, EASO started the preparations for two new **continuing professional development (CPD) sessions** focusing on inclusion and exclusion considerations regarding asylum seekers from Afghanistan.

The sessions will be delivered starting from early 2022 and will target experienced asylum and reception officials who act as trainers on specific EASO Modules.

► 2.3 e-Learning

All the modules of the European asylum curriculum are hosted on the **Learning Management System (LMS)**, the Agency-operated online platform that enables learners to participate in the learning programmes remotely and record their training progress. The LMS is also featuring virtual networks

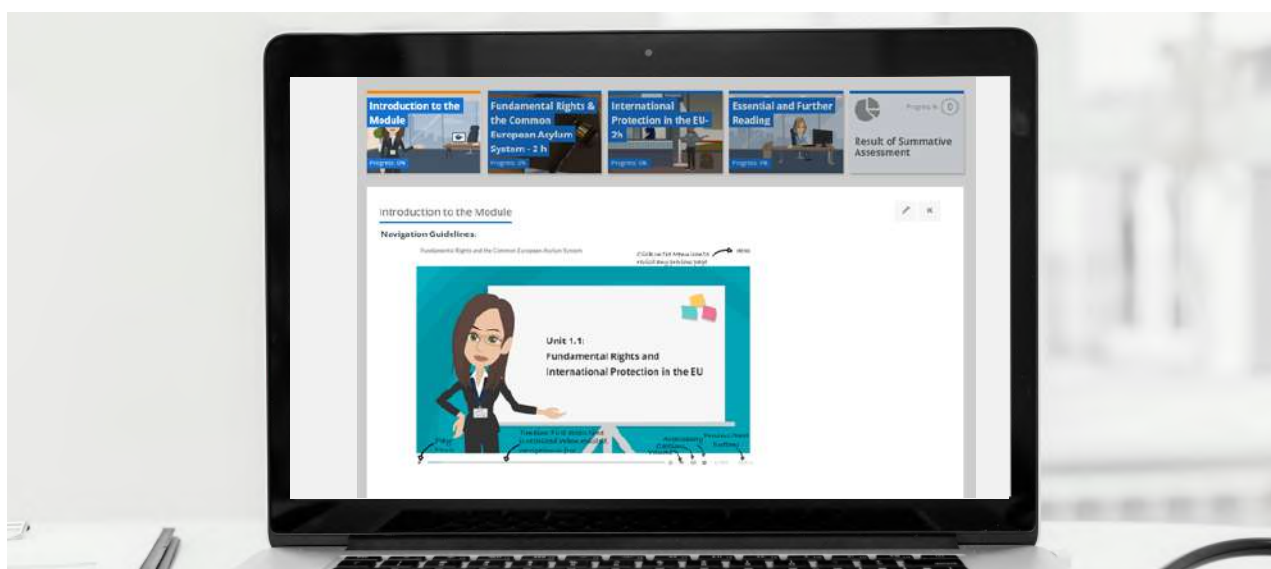
and communities of practice between trainers and content experts, which facilitate exchange of information and best practices.

In 2021 the Agency redesigned the online modules' educational approach based on the analysis of the users' behavioural data. The training modules are now more interactive, with an increased number of video animations and visual aids that provide an overall improved usability. Additionally, the LMS' own theme is now responsive to mobile devices.

What is Continuing Professional Development?

It is an ongoing and planned learning and development process including all the skills, knowledge and experience that individuals continue to learn throughout their careers.

In the second quarter of 2021, EASO digitalised the provision of helpdesk services for LMS end-users, introducing a service desk application that triages and monitors all requests for support submitted by training participants. The application also records the Agency's response and resolution rates in order to continue improving the service in the future.



The Learning Management System's Layout

3. Operational support ⁸



8. The figures of asylum applications presented in this chapter derive from the [Eurostat database](#).

The Agency may deploy **asylum support teams**, composed of Member States' experts, external experts or EASO staff, to assist Member States subject to **particular pressure** on their asylum and reception systems.

The Agency and the Member States in need of support agree on **operating plans** setting out the conditions for the deployment of the asylum support teams. The operating plans contain the following essential information:

- description of the situation and operational objectives;
- composition of the asylum support teams and description of their tasks;
- duration of the teams' deployment and indication of their geographical area of responsibility.

In 2021 EASO provided operational support to eight countries: Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia and Belgium.

What does “particular pressure” mean?

According to article 8 of the [EASO founding Regulation](#), it is a “pressure which places exceptionally heavy and urgent demands on [a Member State] reception facilities and asylum systems”. It may be characterised by “the sudden arrival of a large number of third country nationals” and may be connected to the “geographical or demographical situation of the Member State”.



Operational presence of EASO in 2021

➤ 3.1

Greece

As the main receiving country of migrants attempting to reach Europe through the Eastern Mediterranean route, Greece faced particular pressure on its asylum and reception systems in the last seven years. In order to address the needs of Greek authorities, the Agency has been progressively scaling-up its operational assistance.

In 2021 the Agency maintained its operational presence in five East Aegean islands⁹ and in over thirty locations on the mainland, supporting Greek authorities in three main areas:

- processing of applications for international protection at **first and second instance**;
- management of the national reception system;
- management and implementation of the voluntary relocation scheme.

■ PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

The substantial pressure on all stages of the asylum procedure over the past years led to considerable backlogs. EASO supported the Greek Asylum Service in developing its data management, analysis and reporting capabilities, including in terms of COI and Country Guidance products. In parallel, the Agency provided direct support in processing applications for international protection at first instance. EASO's personnel assisted Greek authorities in registering asylum applicants, conducting interviews and drafting opinions. The Agency also supported the Greek Asylum Service in the application of the Dublin III Regulation¹⁰: 2 593

Budget of EASO operations in 2021*:

Greece	EUR	46 386 254
Italy	EUR	9 762 306
Cyprus	EUR	5 354 631
Malta	EUR	4 929 642
Belgium	EUR	2 918 420
Lithuania	EUR	1 858 990
Spain	EUR	715 529
Latvia	EUR	167 757

*Figures rounded to the next whole number.

outgoing Dublin requests and 3 537 incoming information requests were processed in 2021.

In 2021 EASO registered almost 11 000 applications for international protection and conducted more than 20 600 interviews in Greece

In the second instance, EASO supported the Appeals Authority with the preparation of files and the drafting of 1 840 appeals essays¹¹.

The concerted efforts of the Agency, in partnership with the Greek Asylum Service, resulted in the clearance of the application backlog in the islands and in its significant reduction on the mainland.

■ MANAGEMENT OF THE RECEPTION SYSTEM

In the second half of 2021 the Agency almost doubled the number of its personnel assigned to reception tasks. EASO staff was deployed in all 32 mainland long-term accommodation centres, assisting the Reception and Identification Service in taking over full responsibility for the Greek reception system. The Agency also provided operational support in the first arrival centres on the islands, where it conducted more than 7 700 individual assessments on possible vulnerabilities and provided information to almost 23 500 third country nationals.

9. Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos.

10. On the Dublin III procedure, see [Chapter 1](#).

11. In Greece, appeals essays are legal opinions that facilitate the Appeals Authority's decision making.

EASO also supported the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors in the implementation of the National Strategy on Unaccompanied Minors : it coordinated voluntary relocation programmes for unaccompanied minors, facilitated the development of the legal and operational framework for the abolition of protective custody and supported the implementation of the unaccompanied minors' mentorship

programme.

Finally, the Agency piloted the “Assessment of Reception Conditions” tool¹² in four reception centres. The tool helps reception authorities to self-monitor a series of indicators measuring the quality of the reception services and identify corrective actions, where necessary.

What do first and second instance refer to?

The process for ascertaining whether or not an applicant is entitled to receive international protection may be articulated in two phases, referred to as first and second instance.

For each of these two instances Member States identify different authorities responsible for examining the applications for international protection and deciding on their merits.

First instance procedures

- Each Member State designates a determining authority, i.e. a quasi-judicial or administrative body responsible for examining applications for international protection and taking decisions on their merits;
- By lodging an application for international protection, a person officially submits all the elements that substantiate his/her claim;
- Within a reasonable period of time after an application is submitted, Member States shall identify applicants with special needs and ensure that they are provided with adequate support;
- Applicants have the obligations to cooperate with the competent authorities with a view to verify their identity and all the elements needed to substantiate the application;

- Applicants shall receive information in a language that they understand. They shall be assisted by an interpreter for submitting their case and shall have access to organisations providing legal advice or other counselling;
- Determining authorities must ensure that applications are examined and decisions are taken individually, objectively and impartially;
- Before a decision is taken, the applicant shall be given the opportunity to have a personal interview with the determining authority on the substance of his/her application.

Second instance or appeal procedures

Member States shall ensure that:

- Applicants have the right to an effective remedy, before a court or tribunal, against negative decisions taken by the determining authority;
- The remedy provides for a full examination of both facts and points of law;
- Reasonable time limits and other necessary rules are provided for the applicant to exercise his or her right to an effective remedy.

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RELOCATION SCHEME

Together with other actors such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR, EASO is assisting the Greek authorities in the implementation of **relocations** since to 2015.

In 2021 the Agency supported the coordination of Member States' voluntary relocations from Greece, through activities at the central level and the realisation of almost 300 relocation assessments at the field level. It successfully matched 990 candidates for relocations and supported 100 % of the missions organised by Member States to select asylum seekers to be relocated. EASO also conducted 306 Best Interest Assessments¹³ and contributed to the relocation of 2 229 individuals among unaccompanied minors, members of vulnerable families and other beneficiaries of international protection.



What is relocation?

Relocation is the distribution among Member States of persons applying for international protection. By virtue of its voluntary nature, applicants for international protection must provide their written consent to be relocated.

The legal basis of the voluntary relocation is set out in Article 17(2) of the Dublin III Regulation, called the 'humanitarian clause'. Such clause was temporarily suspended by a [2015 decision of the Council](#), which enabled a specific European scheme with defined quotas as a provisional measure to alleviate the migratory pressure on Greece and Italy and ensure fair sharing of responsibility between the Member States.

Since the summer of 2018, voluntary relocation arrangements within the Dublin framework are used to address cases of disembarkations following search and rescue operations at sea, especially in Italy and Malta (see also info box at page 39). Additionally, in 2020 the European Commission launched in Greece a voluntary relocation mechanism for vulnerable persons falling within three categories: unaccompanied minors, children with severe medical conditions accompanied by their families and vulnerable beneficiaries of international protection.

CAPACITY BUILDING

With a view to strengthening the pool of trainers of the Greek Asylum Service, EASO delivered nine train-the-trainer sessions to 71 national trainers. In cooperation with the Greek Asylum Service, it also conducted regular on-the-job coaching sessions for 312 Agency and national caseworkers.

13. The Best Interest Assessment is a standard child protection procedure designed to ensure that the best interests of children (mostly unaccompanied or separated minors, in the context of asylum) are the primary consideration in all actions affecting them, in line with the principles enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the field of reception the Agency developed, together with the Greek Reception and Identification Service, an induction course attended by 87 EASO newly hired reception assistants.

In parallel, the Agency delivered reception-related training to both national and EASO reception officers and trained 303 interpreters in its module on “Interpreting in the asylum context”.



➤ 3.2

Italy

The Agency’s operations in Italy are the second largest, after Greece. In 2021 EASO provided support in three main areas:

- 1 access to asylum procedures and voluntary relocations arising from search and rescue events;
- 2 management of judicial backlog;
- 3 strengthening the Italian authorities in the management of the reception system.

ACCESS TO ASYLUM PROCEDURES

In 2021 the number of sea arrivals and asylum applicants in Italy increased sharply (respectively + 96 %¹⁴ and + 97 %, compared to 2020). In this context, EASO’s support to the Department for Public Security of the Ministry of Interior was key in ensuring the registration of more than 8 000 applicants and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of procedures.

Italy received 67 040 sea arrivals and recorded 53 140 asylum applicants in 2021

The Agency also assisted Italian territorial immigration offices through a dedicated helpdesk that provided guidance on matters related to asylum procedures, Dublin transfers and applications from persons with special needs.

In 2021 EASO processed 2 494 Dublin take-back requests in Italy

Moreover, EASO supported the overall coordination and provided logistical and case management assistance in all 44 “**search and rescue**” disembarkations for which support was requested, in the context of the voluntary relocation programme.

Search and rescue disembarkations and the Declaration of Valletta

The 2019 Joint Declaration of Intent of Valletta introduces a temporary solidarity mechanism “to ensure the dignified disembarkation of migrants taken aboard, on the high seas, by vessels in a place of safety [...]” (art. 1).

According to this mechanism, participating Member States contribute to the relocation, within four weeks, of asylum seekers rescued at sea. Under the coordination of the European Commission, the Agency is conducting interviews, identifying vulnerabilities, matching applicants with Member States’ pledges and compiling the redistribution lists to be submitted to the participating Member States.



MANAGEMENT OF JUDICIAL BACKLOG

EASO provided technical support to the specialised sections of tribunals responsible for the judicial review of first instance decisions and to the Court of Cassation, which examines the appeals filed against such judicial reviews.

The Agency undertook preliminary studies of the cases, conducted research on national and European jurisprudence, provided case-specific legal analyses and offered interpretation and cultural mediation services.

In 2021 EASO assisted the specialised sections of tribunals, the Court of Cassation and General Prosecutor's office with the preparation of more than 20 000 files, the drafting of approximately 3 500 legal analyses in support of decision writing and the preparation of more than 10 000 research studies.

STRENGTHENING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE RECEPTION SYSTEM

EASO assisted the Italian authorities in improving the quality and sustainability of the national reception system by providing expertise in three areas:

- refinement of work processes related to the management of the reception system;
- improvement of coordination between central and local levels, including through enhanced data management;
- support in activities related to the assessment of reception conditions.

In 2021 the Agency's support teams were deployed to 15 prefectures to assist in the management of the reception system at the local level.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Training activities mostly targeted EASO research officers. The Agency also supported the Italian Department of Public Security in rolling out the first three national training sessions on the EASO module on "Registration of applications for International Protection", which involved police officers from 46 Immigration Offices.

Moreover, in the framework of the Agency's support to search and rescue disembarkation events and voluntary relocations, a total of 11 sessions were delivered in the modules on communication and information provision, registration of applicants for international protection and identification of potential Dublin cases.



3.3

Cyprus

In 2021 Cyprus recorded 13 670 applicants for international protection, corresponding to an 82 % increase compared to the previous year. In response to the heightened pressure, EASO scaled up its operations in the country.

The Agency supported the Cypriot authorities with the registration and processing of applications for international protection at first and second instance and the improvement of reception conditions.

REGISTRATION AND PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

Support was mostly provided at the First Reception Centre of Pournara. EASO focused on enhancing the quality of procedures: all registrations supported by the Agency were screened for vulnerability and a pilot initiative was launched, in August, to provide applicants with essential information on asylum procedures.

In the last quarter of the year, 76 % of all new arrivals in Pournara attended at least one of the Agency's info sessions

The Agency continued to support the Cypriot authorities in managing the accumulated backlog of asylum applications at both first and second instance. At the first instance, the deployment of additional case workers and the inauguration of the Agency's new premises in Strovolos (Nicosia) enabled EASO to almost double the number of interviews conducted

(+ 86 %) and more than triple the number of concluding remarks¹⁵ drafted (+ 282 %), compared to 2020.

At second instance, EASO deployed 14 staff to the International Protection Administrative Court, whose judges are competent for examining all appeal files. The Agency's preparatory work was instrumental in achieving the highest yearly number of issued decisions (3 910) since the creation of the Court, in 2019.

RECEPTION

The Agency supported the Cypriot Asylum Service in establishing a comprehensive national reception strategy. The strategy articulates and frames the national reception systems, including through the establishment of more efficient referral mechanisms for vulnerable persons.

The first phase of the process was accomplished in December 2021, following a series of workshops and bilateral meetings with public and civil society stakeholders. The strategy has been finalised in the first quarter of 2022 and its implementation is set to begin.

In 2021 EASO conducted vulnerability screenings on 100 % of registered applications in Cyprus

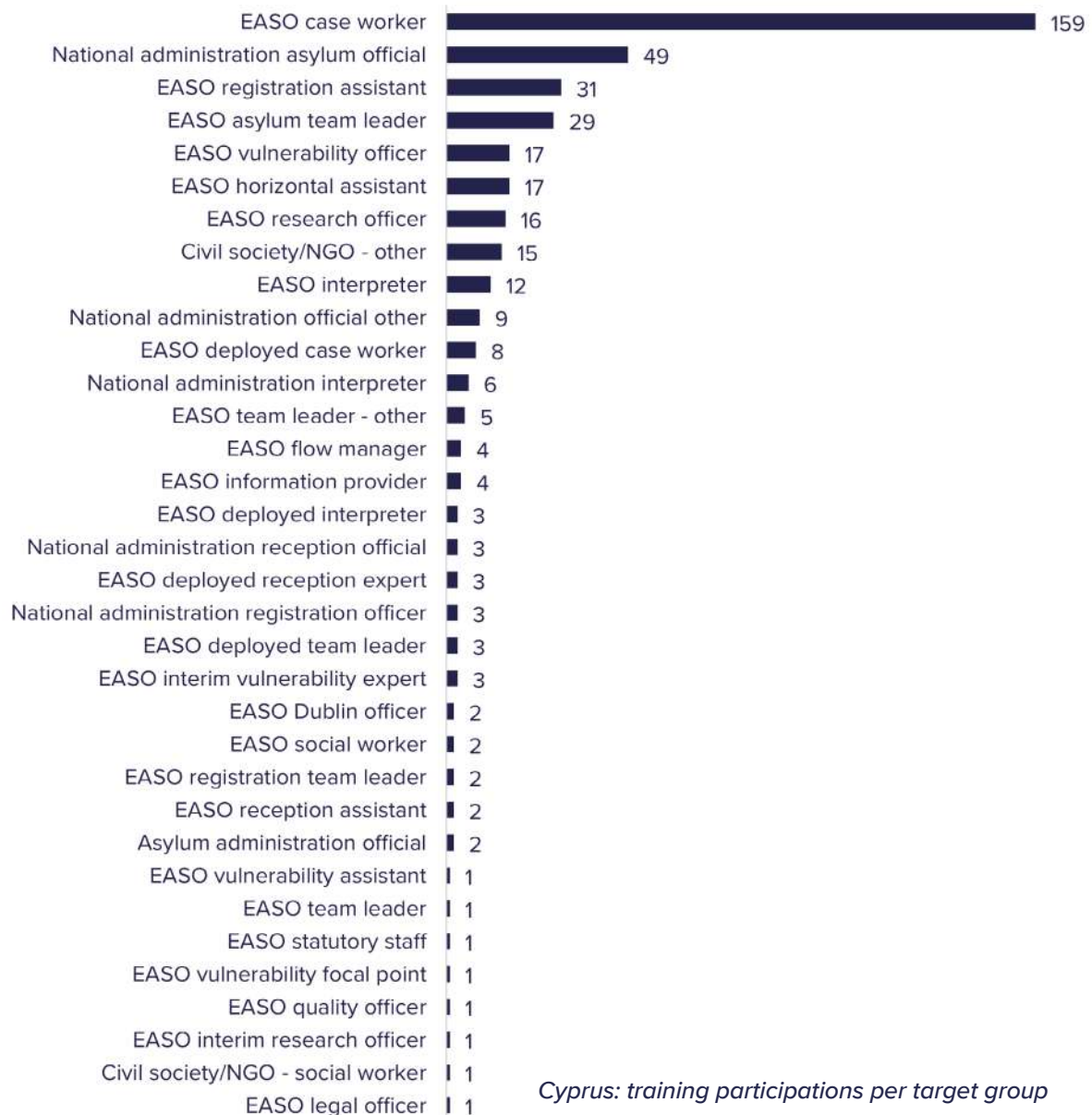
The Agency identified 1 301 vulnerable cases, 48 % of which were unaccompanied minors

¹⁵ In Cyprus, concluding remarks are legal opinions that support asylum authorities' decision making.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Agency's caseworkers, registration assistants and team leaders, as well as Cypriot asylum officials, received training in areas like access to procedures, asylum and reception.

Thematic training sessions were also developed and delivered, *inter alia* in areas such as vulnerability or managing cases of applicants with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. In addition, EASO regularly organised on-the-job coaching sessions for case officers and team leaders.



Cyprus: training participations per target group

➤ 3.4

Malta

The Agency has been providing support to the Maltese authorities since 2017, initially in the areas of training provision and support to *ad hoc* voluntary relocation exercises, but progressively across all core areas of asylum and reception.

In 2021 EASO assisted national authorities in improving access to asylum procedures and enhancing reception standards.

ACCESS TO ASYLUM PROCEDURE

The Agency provided operational support to the Maltese International Protection Agency (IPA) in the registration and lodging of applications for international protection.

Almost 80 % of the 1 220 asylum applications lodged in 2021 were registered by EASO deployed personnel, who also drafted more than 900 evaluation reports¹⁶ on individual applications. New and improved office spaces

enabled the Agency to conduct close to 1 000 interviews, thus significantly reducing the backlog of applications pending since 2018. The Agency supported IPA's decision-making also through the services of a dedicated COI helpdesk: EASO researchers released 12 products, delivered two country briefings and timely addressed all COI queries received. Moreover, the Agency successfully processed 100 % of the 319 outgoing Dublin requests received and supported the IPA's Quality Control Unit by completing more than 800 quality checks on asylum decisions.

Finally, EASO facilitated the relocation of 212 persons in the context of six voluntary relocation exercises related to *ad hoc* disembarkations which occurred in 2019 and 2020.



¹⁶ In Malta, evaluation reports are legal opinions that support IPA's decision making.

RECEPTION

EASO produced a customised welcome package that provides asylum seekers with key information on the reception phase (welcome, house rules, rights and obligations). This tool will be further piloted before being used regularly by the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS), the Maltese authority responsible for the management of the reception system and related services. EASO also conducted regular info sessions on asylum procedures, employment, access to health care and education, among others.

The Agency assisted the Maltese authorities to enhance their national referral mechanisms and the identification and management of vulnerable cases. In 2021 it conducted approximately 800 vulnerability assessments, which allowed to identify and refer for assistance more than 600 victims of serious violence or torture, among others.

Moreover, EASO supported AWAS in updating its Age Assessment Process and Tool and drafting the “Age Assessment Package: Guidance on how to conduct age assessment in Malta”, which was adopted in November 2021 and consists of an “Age Assessment Standard Operating Procedures” and of an “Age Assessment Tool”.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The Agency trained its deployed asylum and reception personnel, as well as national officers, in fields such as registration, access to procedure, processing of asylum applications, trafficking of human beings and identification of potential Dublin cases.

The Agency also conducted on-the-job coaching sessions for its own caseworkers.



Malta: training participations per target group

3.5 Spain

Spain has been under substantial migratory pressure in recent years, with a significant increase in sea arrivals, notably in the Canary Islands. From 2017 to 2021 the Iberic country received more than 200 000 irregular arrivals¹⁷, while the number of asylum applicants, which had averaged 3 600 between 2009 and 2014, reached a record high of 117 800 in 2019.

These events placed huge strain on the national reception system. As a result, following a needs assessment jointly conducted with the Spanish authorities, EASO launched its first operation in the country in December 2020.

A NEW RECEPTION MODEL

The Agency is supporting the Spanish authorities to transition toward a new reception model that guarantee access to reception for all applicants in need, in line with the [EU Reception Conditions Directive](#).

In 2021 EASO started developing a national reception assessment framework that builds on the results of the [Assessment of Reception Conditions](#) tool piloted in two sites in the Canary Islands. The Agency also supported reception authorities in optimising data management and in harmonising procedures,

workflows and tools related to information provision and vulnerability.

In parallel, EASO enhanced the capacity of the Spanish authorities to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure. Special focus was placed on technical site design, planning and development of emergency reception centres in the Canary Islands.

Finally, the Agency provided support in the implementation of the national resettlement programme, including through its Resettlement & Humanitarian Admission Network¹⁸.

CAPACITY BUILDING

In cooperation with all national reception actors, EASO developed a fully-fledged reception induction training, with learning units based on scenarios inspired by real field experiences. The course was delivered to 141 operational personnel from civil society organisations in the Canary Islands and 76 newly recruited staff of the State Secretary for Migration in Madrid.

Between October and December 2021, senior and intermediate Spanish reception officials were also trained in reception of vulnerable persons, trafficking of human beings and introduction to international protection.



17. [UNHCR operational data portal](#).

18. For details on the EASO Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network see [Paragraph 3.8](#).

➤ 3.6 Lithuania and Latvia

EASO's operations in Lithuania and Latvia were launched in the third quarter of 2021, in response to the sharp increase of irregular migration flows from **Belarus** and the ensuing escalation in the number of asylum applications.

LITHUANIA

The Agency's provided immediate support to the Lithuanian asylum and reception authorities through the rapid deployment of asylum support teams and the provision of interpretation services. In parallel, EASO initiated medium-term measures focusing on building the national authorities' capacities to address the new migratory scenario.

The Agency's experts supported registration procedures, conducted interviews of asylum applicants and drafted opinions to facilitate the relevant authorities' decision-making. In the field of reception, EASO supported the identification of vulnerable cases, developed standard operating procedures related to vulnerability pre-screening and conducted information provision activities for residents of reception sites.

EASO in Lithuania

- 3 250 persons provided with information on asylum procedures;
- 540 vulnerability pre-screening conducted;
- 219 vulnerable cases identified;
- an information helpdesk established for the residents of four reception centres.

What happened in Belarus in the summer of 2021?

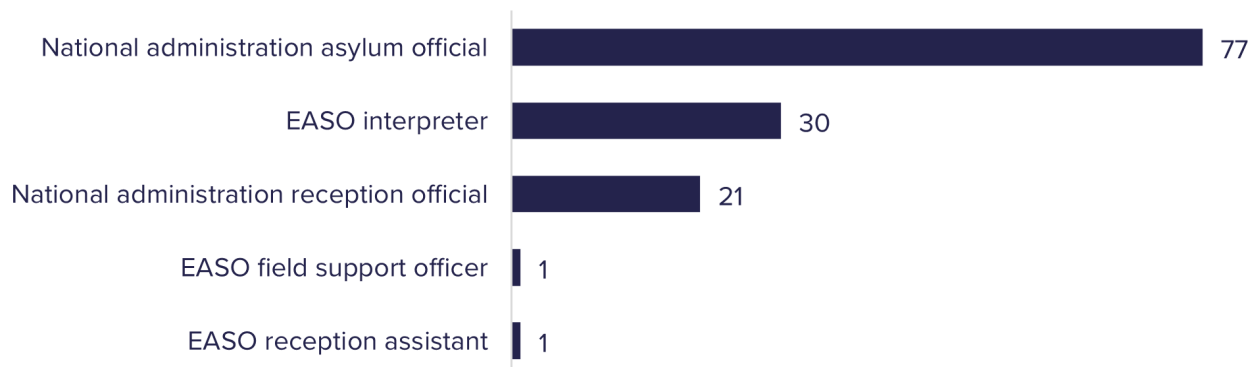
In response to the escalation of serious human rights violations in the country, on 24 June 2021 the EU Council adopted additional restrictive measures against the Belarusian regime. In retaliation, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko started fomenting irregular crossings of third country nationals through the borders of neighbouring Lithuania, Latvia and Poland.

The [EU strongly condemned](#) “the Lukashenko regime for deliberately putting people's lives and wellbeing in danger” in what was defined as an “orchestrated instrumentalization of human beings”. The EU also confirmed its full solidarity with the Member States affected by such hybrid attacks and called for “immediate and unhindered access to people therein to deliver humanitarian assistance”.

The Agency also trained national asylum and reception officials in inclusion, interview techniques, reception of vulnerable persons, provision of information and communication to asylum seekers. Additionally, EASO delivered train-the-trainer sessions to the State Border Service and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour on registration of applicants and first reception, respectively.



Finally, the Agency provided technical guidance and recommendations to its ministerial counterparts, including through the organisation of a study visit to Greece and the Netherlands.



Lithuania: training participations per target group

LATVIA

EASO deployed a team of interpreters to provide immediate support to the timely implementation of asylum and reception procedures. This contributed to a significant reduction in the backlog of asylum applications by the last quarter of 2021.

The Agency's interpreters were deployed in all reception sites and assisted in almost 70 % of the asylum cases processed by the Latvian authorities, providing support during interviews, legal counselling and notification of decisions.

Moreover, the Agency provided interpretation services to cover daily communications, provision of information, medical care and other *ad hoc* needs in the reception sites.

EASO in Latvia

- 26 interpreters deployed in support of asylum procedures;
- 10 interpreters deployed in support of reception procedures;
- by the end of 2021, EASO's interpreters supported 65 % of all interviews.



➤ 3.7

Belgium

In December 2021 EASO signed an operating plan for the provision of operational and technical assistance to Belgium.

The Agency is working with the Belgian Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers to increase the country's short and medium-term reception capacity.

The operational support to Belgium is based on two pillars:

- 1 first response to address emergency reception needs, notably by increasing the number of reception spaces available;
- 2 medium-term response to increase reception capacity.



➤ 3.8

External Dimension

EASO's external actions form part of a comprehensive effort to enhance the effectiveness of the CEAS, in line with the EU external policy.

The external dimension of the CEAS refers to the network of relations existing between EU+ Member States and third countries in matters related to international protection. The Agency plays an important role in this domain by leading numerous initiatives falling within two main areas:

- 1 facilitating Member States' efforts in providing access to the EU for persons in need, notably through resettlement and complementary pathways to international protection;
- 2 contributing to establishing and/or strengthening asylum and reception systems of third countries through capacity development.

RESETTLEMENT AND COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAYS TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

According to the UNHCR, resettlement is "the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them - as refugees - with permanent residence status¹⁹".

Resettlement is coordinated at the global level by the UNHCR, which identifies and submits the most vulnerable cases to potential destination countries. In the EU this process occurs within the framework of EU-funded **resettlement schemes**, which provide financial support to Member States accepting to admit persons in need of international protection as refugees.

The Agency supports Member States' resettlement efforts through the **Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network**, a forum that gives national representatives the opportunity to discuss strategic and operational matters. The network promotes joint EU resettlement efforts, supports data collection and analysis and builds Member States' expertise in the fields of resettlement and humanitarian admission.

In 2021 EASO organised 12 meetings of the network, inaugurated its dedicated digital platform and delivered resettlement training to 29 case workers and social workers from EU countries. Additionally, in response to the dramatic events that followed the withdrawal of the United States and its allies from Afghanistan, in the summer of 2021, the Agency established an **Expert Platform on Safe Pathways for Afghans**. The platform aims to coordinate and support EU+ countries and other partners in providing and enhancing legal and safe pathways to international protection for vulnerable Afghans.

The Agency is also assisting Member States' resettlement operations through the **Resettlement Support Facility (RSF)**, a project launched in 2019 to provide dedicated services to Member States willing to conduct resettlement operations from Turkey. In 2021 the RSF supported the preparation and implementation of ten selection missions and six pre-departure orientation missions in support of the resettlement operations of six EU+ countries²⁰. Given the positive feedback received, in 2021 the Agency conducted a feasibility study to assess the possibility to replicate the RSF model in other third countries.



Why is resettlement important and how does it work?

Resettlement is a safe and legal alternative to irregular journeys and a demonstration of European solidarity with non-EU countries hosting large numbers of persons fleeing war or persecution.

After receiving information from the UNHCR about the persons eligible for resettlement, EU countries usually conduct selection missions to interview refugees and determine whether they meet the criteria for resettlement. Often Member States conduct also pre-departure orientation sessions for refugees selected for resettlement, in order to familiarize them with the culture and socio-economic practices of their new country of residence.

What does humanitarian admission mean?

Humanitarian admission refers generally to all legal pathways available to vulnerable people in need of international protection. In addition to resettlement, Member States can implement other initiatives such as family reunification assistance or community sponsorship programmes, like the so called "humanitarian corridors", started in Italy in 2016 by Church-based organisations. Under this latter model, private sponsors are involved in all stages of the admission process, take charge of reception and integration efforts and bear the related costs.

20. Belgium, Germany, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands.

THIRD COUNTRY SUPPORT

Under the coordination of EASO, the **Third Country Cooperation Network** aims at supporting Member States in their efforts to build and develop capacities in priority partner countries. The network brings together national contact points holding senior positions in their respective ministries, as well as Member States' experts with specific knowledge on third countries' national policies and programmes in the areas of international protection.

In 2021 EASO supported the development of asylum and reception systems and the promotion of protection-sensitive migration management in three geographical priority areas: the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Turkey.

In the **Western Balkans** the Agency continued the implementation of roadmaps for cooperation with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. Two new roadmaps for cooperation were agreed in 2021: one with Montenegro, signed in December 2021, and another with Kosovo²¹, which obtained ministerial approval in the first quarter of 2022.

In 2021 national asylum officials from the six Western Balkan countries were trained as trainers in the EASO core modules and in the module on "Interviewing Vulnerable Persons". EASO also organised two train-the-trainer sessions on "Registration of Applications for International Protection" and "Information Provision to Asylum Seekers" for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, Serbia organised in 2021 the first roll-out of training session of the EASO modules on reception.

In December 2021 EASO successfully completed, in cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex),

What is the Resettlement Support Facility doing?

The EASO RSF works as a "one-stop-shop" at the EU+ countries' disposal. The services provided include:

- support to the preparation and implementation of Member States' support missions and pre-departure orientation missions;
- preparation of the candidates' interview schedules;
- arrangement of transportation, board and lodging for refugees invited for interviews in Istanbul;
- provision of interpretation services and pre-departure medical screenings;
- communications with refugees and the UNHCR.

the IOM and the UNHCR, the EU-funded project "Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey". Under this project the Agency implemented 58 activities which involved more than 400 participants and included workshops, training and roundtables.

In the **MENA** region the Agency explored bilateral cooperation with Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. In October 2021 it organised a Regional Conference on international protection and persons with specific protection needs. Held in Cairo, the conference hosted around 80 representatives (of which around 40 remotely) from Member States, partner

third countries from the region, EU and international organisations.

In 2021, five different capacity building activities were implemented in Egypt together with Egyptian officials from different ministries, national governmental agencies and civil society, with a focus mainly on access to asylum procedures and identification of vulnerable individuals.

In **Turkey** the Agency continued to implement its third roadmap for cooperation and launched discussions for establishing a new roadmap for the period 2022-2023. This new agreement will facilitate exchanges of best practices on organisational development, asylum and reception. Moreover, in 2021 the EASO training core modules were rolled-out for the first time in Turkey.

also conducted to identify good practices, areas for improvement and draw lessons that inspire internal learning and future improvement.

In 2021 five evaluations were conducted to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of operations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, as well as of the Resettlement Support Facility in Turkey.

Finally, the Agency started preparations for launching a pilot project in support of Niger.

➤ 3.9

Cross cutting aspects

PROGRAMMING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Agency applies a rigorous project management methodology to optimise the efficiency and impact of its operations. Programming, monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that the Agency's interventions are relevant to the identified needs and able to achieve the expected results in compliance with established plans.

Whenever a country operation is launched, a specific operating plan is agreed with the respective Member States' authorities. The operating plans²² are programmatic documents defining key performance indicators to allow close monitoring and timely adjustments, as necessary.

Periodic internal and external evaluations are

OPERATIONAL TOOLS

As the Agency's operations grow in complexity and scale, the Agency needs to develop adequate tools that ensure effective and reliable delivery of support to Member States.

In 2021 EASO finalised a full review and assessment of the procedures for deploying its asylum support teams. This process led to the development of a new deployment mechanism for external experts, which was successfully launched in Italy and Spain. The mechanism offers a comprehensive framework governing the selection of external experts and the conditions of their deployment. It establishes the technical tools and procedures to screen, select and deploy the experts, as well as to assess their performance.

In parallel, the Agency further developed the EASO Asylum Intervention Pool System (EAIPS), the online platform used to manage deployments. The EAIPS is now featuring new functionalities that facilitate the assessment and deployment of external experts. The tool provides real-time reliable data on the Agency's operations in the different Member States and allows for improved planning and management of the asylum support teams.

22. On the operating plans, see also [supra](#).

4. Governance, external cooperation and communication



As a decentralised EU agency, EASO has its own governance structure and operates within the institutional framework of the EU, contributing to shape and implement its policies in the area of international protection.

➤ 4.1

Governance

Transparent, secure and efficient internal processes remained high on the agenda, as the Agency continued to strengthen and improve its governance mechanisms in 2021.

Project teams were identified to manage all the aspects of the transition from EASO to the new European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), whose founding regulation, adopted on the 15 December 2021, entered into force on the 19 January 2022.

In anticipation of a broader mandate, which includes a reinforced operational role, intensified training and professional development for asylum experts and evolution into a global centre of knowledge and expertise on asylum, EASO continued to safeguard and enhance efficiency and effectiveness through strengthened governance and process improvements. A competency-based framework, aligning work profiles with job descriptions, is in its final development stages and will enable the Agency to utilise its talents. Simplification and automation were pursued especially with regards to financial and human resources management. In this respect, mass payments were introduced reducing workload, whilst maintaining compliance with the relevant rules. The introduction of new electronic tools, such as the human resources SYSPER tool, extended use of Microsoft Power BI for monitoring and reporting and the finalisation of the groundwork for the Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Tool, to only mention a

few, will lead to further streamlining and harmonisation of processes. Upgrades to online platforms and tools, such as the Electronic and Records Document Management System, and the shift to the cloud-based software Microsoft 365 with increased functionalities, led to improved connectivity and mitigated external security threats.

Strengthened governance systems and a re-engineered risk management process contributed to enhanced organisational performance and compliance. The governance of the Agency was further reinforced through the introduction of a security governance framework and a complementary business continuity framework, while new bodies such as the Security Advisory Board, the Evaluation Advisory Group and the Business Continuity Board were introduced to add value and coherence.

Ex post verification exercises identified further opportunities for improvement and expert advice on legal matters contributed to ensuring a sound legal environment for the overall functioning of the Agency. EASO strived for continual improvement of its environmental performance and maintained several precautionary measures established at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g., cancellation or reduction of non-essential missions, remote recruiting, enhanced videoconferencing for meetings and training.

The European Court of Auditors issued in 2021 an unqualified opinion, which is a testament of the Agency's compliance with the regulatory framework and a result of the strengthened governance.

A new proposal for the internal reorganisation, finalised in the last quarter of



2021, will facilitate the implementation of the broader mandate assigned to the EUAA and will lead to additional efficiency gains.

► 4.2 Cooperation with European and international stakeholders

The Agency maintains strong cooperation with a wide range of European and international stakeholders, often formalised with the signature of working arrangements, exchange of letters and cooperation plans.

In 2021 EASO established a new working arrangement with the European External Action Service. The existing Working Arrangement with the UNHCR and the exchange of letters with the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees were also updated in 2021.

EASO engages in intense collaboration with the EU institutions and EU agencies, especially those working in the area of justice and home affairs. In addition to regular exchanges of information, the Agency is regularly invited to contribute with its expertise to discussions within the Council of the EU and the European Parliament to support evidence-based policy making in relation to the CEAS. EASO also participates in the EU Agencies Network and the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Network, established to foster EU inter-agency cooperation and thematic discussions at expert level.

In 2021 EASO promoted an increasing number of strategic events and bilateral meetings with relevant key institutional stakeholders such as Council presidencies, ministers, ambassadors, members of the European Parliament and European Commission's officials. Moreover, the Agency continued to pursue synergies by ensuring regular consultations and ad-hoc collaborations with relevant international organisations such as the UNHCR, the



Nina Gregori (EUAA Executive Director) and Agnė Bilotaitė (Minister of the Interior of Lithuania) signing the Operating Plan for Lithuania

IOM, the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the General Directors of Immigrations Services Conferences.

In October the Agency organised and hosted in Valletta, Malta, the two-day conference “EASO to EUAA – 10 years of support”, which brought together high level officials from EU institutions, Member States and international organisations. Panel discussions focused on the pivotal role played by EASO in harmonising asylum practices across Europe in the past 10 years and provided an outlook on the forthcoming EUAA and the future of asylum systems in Europe.

► 4.3 Consultative Forum and civil society

The Agency is committed to maintaining close dialogue with relevant civil society organisations. To that end, EASO set up the Consultative Forum, a mechanism for

the exchange of information and pooling of knowledge, open to civil society organisations operating in the field of asylum at local, regional, national, European or international level.

The Forum holds an annual plenary meeting and a number of regional and/or thematic meetings, as required. Moreover, it is regularly consulted for the adoption of key Agency documents.

The 11th edition of the Consultative Forum's Annual Plenary Meeting was organised in November 2021. It gathered 40 civil society organisations attending in-person and more than 100 online participants representing non-governmental organisations, academia, think tanks, international organisations, Member State authorities and EU institutions. Focused on the mandate of the forthcoming EUAA, the meeting was an opportunity to discuss the added value of the Agency and the contributions of civil society to its different areas of work.



An image from the 11th Annual Plenary Meeting of the Consultative Forum



The Forum was consulted in June 2021 on the reorganisation of the European asylum curriculum according to the educational and occupational standards of the European Sectoral Qualifications Framework²³. Following this consultation, EASO launched a call for expressions of interest that allowed the selection of 11 civil society organisations, which are currently involved in the revision of four training modules.

Additionally, in May 2021 EASO organised two webinars on the EASO [Case Law Database](#), which attracted more than 50 participants. The events offered a live demonstration of the Case Law Database and participants were shown how to search for case law, identify relevant topics or publications and submit new cases for registration in the database.

Finally, many selected civil society organisations continued to be involved in the Agency's activities through the participation in the Vulnerability Expert Network, the development of practical tools and the collaboration in COI activities.

➤ 4.4

Communication and events

In 2021 the volume of the Agency's external and internal communication activities increased for a fourth consecutive year, notably in the production of audio-visual and social media outputs, in line with audience expectations.

MEDIA COVERAGE

The Agency's online press audience continued to grow. In 2021 the references to EASO in online media reached a potential readership of at least 18.4 billion persons, which represents a 11.5 % increase compared to 2020 and a 776 % increase compared to 2017.

Throughout the year, at least 7 840 online articles reported on the Agency, its activities or its reports, compared to 6 770 in 2020 (+16 %). The Agency appeared or was referenced in media outlets across Europe such as Politico, Euronews TV, Le Figaro, Der Spiegel amongst others, as well as in all major international and national newswires.



EUAA Executive Director Nina Gregory at the EASO 10 year Anniversary Conference in Valletta

23. On the European asylum curriculum and the ESQF, see also [Chapter 2](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

A notable growth was registered in social media, with 121 155 followers combined on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube (+23.6 % compared to 2020) and a 34 % increase in the monthly average reach at the end of the year. The Agency's website received 1.26 million page views by the end of 2021 (+26 % compared to 2020).

In 2021 EASO ranked 10th among 44 EU Agencies in terms of number of Twitter followers

The Agency launched several social media campaigns to highlight selected topics, such as the digital campaigns "[We are what we do](#)" and "[Did you know?](#)".

In 2021, around 40 videos and animations were internally produced. Significant resources were allocated to the communication on the transition from EASO to EUAA, which included the video series "[From EASO to the EUAA - What will change](#)". A quarterly newsletter was also launched on the website and in a stand-alone version, showcasing the Agency's latest activities, products and highlights.



PUBLICATIONS

In 2021 EASO released 279 public and limited reports, marking the highest number of publications since the establishment of the Agency. Out of these, 185 were limited and 94 public, the latter being promoted through EASO's social media channels, website and networks/stakeholders.





EVENTS

The Agency's large-scale stakeholder events, such as the launch of the Asylum Report, the EASO 10-year anniversary conference and the Consultative Forum's plenary meeting, were held in hybrid format (face-to-face and online), due to COVID-19 restrictions. They proved successful in terms of engagement, attendance of high-level speakers and online coverage.

The growing recognition of the Agency was also manifest in an increase in press requests and queries from the general public.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

EASO's internal communication focused on keeping staff members informed about the different phases of the transition toward the EUAA. Information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Agency's related teleworking strategy was also timely and regularly communicated via internal channels.

In 2021 a third Staff Engagement Survey was conducted, followed by a series of roundtables with staff and management team. Internal events continued to be organised remotely, in hybrid or entirely virtual format.

Finally, EASO's Intranet was migrated into a new, more interactive and user-friendly SharePoint Online Intranet, aligned with the structure of the Agency's new Organogram.



June 2021: launch of the EASO Asylum Report 2021

