



# EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EASO-SPAIN OPERATING PLAN 2021

FINAL REPORT

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## ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Definition
ACCEM	<i>Asociación Comisión Católica Española de Migración</i> (Spanish Catholic Migration Commission Association)
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
ARC	Assessment of reception conditions
CDM	Complementary deployment mechanism
CEAR	<i>Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado</i> (Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid)
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CIDOB	<i>Centre d'Informació i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona</i> (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	Civil society organisation
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
GBV	Gender-based violence
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MISSM	<i>Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones</i> (Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCMP	Organisational change management plan
ODMP	Optimisation data management plan
OP	Operating plan
PDO	Pre-departure orientation
RSF	Resettlement Support Facility
SEM	<i>Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones</i> (State Secretariat for Migration)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises

<b>THB</b>	Trafficking in human beings
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)<sup>1</sup> provided operational support to Spain for the first time, specifically in the area of reception (and to a lesser extent resettlement). **The EASO-Spain operating plan (OP) 2021 aimed to:**

- Facilitate support to the Spanish authorities in the transition towards a new model for reception;
- Strengthen organisational structures and related systems to strategically plan and implement a new reception model;
- Strengthen capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development, tools and materials;
- Enhance capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure;
- Enhance implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish reception authorities (6-month inception measure).

EASO's operational support to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) in its management activities of the Spanish reception system was **highly relevant to meet the authority's needs**. This applies to all five measures originally foreseen in the OP. The relevance of the OP was enhanced by the fact that it was developed following a six-week joint needs assessment process. The needs assessment was a multistakeholder process, involving different EASO centres, SEM and external stakeholders such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), civil society organisations (CSOs) involved in the management of reception centres on behalf of the SEM and academic experts. This approach was new and well received by all actors involved. The participation of a diverse range of actors (including civil society and international organisations) from the design phase of the OP ensured a common understanding of the key concerns and future needs. However, in retrospect, **the scope of the OP and timeline of some of its measures were too ambitious** for a one-year OP, especially considering that this was the first OP with Spain, and it takes time to deploy personnel to a new country and establish the necessary working procedures.

Despite the fact that this first OP in Spain was ambitious in terms of both its timelines and objectives, **the level of effectiveness was judged to be sufficiently high**. Clear progress was made across all five measures, including (among others) the development of a draft reception model document which was presented to the Spanish authorities in November 2021; implementation of a wide range of professional development activities and training; drafting of a strategy document on emergency reception; and the undertaking of a series of reception site assessments. EASO also contributed to the harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to vulnerability and information provision in emergency reception in the Canary Islands.

These **achievements were enabled by a few key factors**. The creation of cross-cutting working groups facilitated the trust-building processes and allowed for the appropriate transfer of information. The collaboration and synergies developed between EASO's centres and sectors in the design and implementation of the OP ensured that the right activities were implemented, and resources were used effectively and efficiently, in line with relative strengths of different centres. However, the support was hindered by difficulties in the recruitment of human resources<sup>2</sup> (notably persons with both the required language capabilities and the necessary reception expertise), issues with logistics, procurement, obtaining adequate telecommunication services, and the limits to SEM's absorption capacity. EASO mitigated these issues as much as possible by taking a flexible approach

<sup>1</sup> On 19 January 2022, EASO became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), when Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (hereinafter: **EUAA Regulation**) entered into force. However, as this is a retrospective evaluation of 2021, the Agency is referred to as EASO, as was its official name during 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Their effective deployment was mostly concentrated in the second semester of the year (July-December).

to its workflows and (recruitment) processes to adapt to unforeseen challenges and to the SEM's absorption capacity.

The **temporary delay in the deployment of personnel** by EASO and the fact that parts of the training were provided virtually due to the **COVID-19<sup>3</sup> pandemic** affected the budget execution. There is a clear pattern of budget under-execution (most notably for measure 5). Of the total planned annual budget of € 1,994,128.80, estimated consumption amounted to € 633,670.59, representing a 31.7% absorption rate.<sup>4</sup>

The measures implemented by EASO during 2021 in Spain were found to be both **internally and externally coherent**. Internally, the first four measures were clearly complementary, because it is not possible to generate a new reception model without adapting internal processes and providing relevant training. From an external point of view, no inconsistencies were identified that could affect the proper implementation of the actions carried out by EASO. EASO played an important role as a strategic partner to SEM, notably considering the prior presence of international organisations specialised in migration with a longer standing presence in Spain (International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR), by 'filling a gap' not yet addressed by the other actors and thus limiting any duplicating in work.

The presence of EASO in Spain contributed positively to the improvement of the reception system, thus underlining its **European Union (EU) added value**. Importantly, EASO's support provided a degree of momentum in advancing the reception system by adding to the human resource capacity of authorities to deal with the pressures they faced. EASO played a key role as an organiser and coordinator, including by playing a bridging role *vis a vis* CSOs. Finally, as an EU Agency, EASO provided a certain degree of external legitimacy - Spanish efforts to govern migration flows are better perceived (within and beyond SEM) when a well-regarded and experienced EU Agency is accompanying these steps.

Following on from this evaluation of the Spain OP 2021, recommendations for improving EASO's work in the short, medium, and long term are presented below:

### **Recommendation 1: Enhance stable, appropriate, and sustainable deployment of experts and Member State experts, notably those fluent in Spanish**

In light of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining experts with the necessary linguistic and topical expertise, EASO should explore new mechanisms for ensuring a rapid and integral deployment of its human resources.

### **Recommendation 2: Prioritise support for the development of a comprehensive data management system**

The development of a comprehensive data management system would allow for evidence-based decision making; save time currently dedicated to (re)learning; and speed up the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of OPs.

### **Recommendation 3: Support mainstreaming of the reception model and its implementation**

EASO should consider maintaining its support for the harmonisation of processes, protocols, and tools so that, at the level of civil society partners as well as authorities (national, regional, and

<sup>3</sup> Coronavirus disease 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Agency internal financial monitoring (non-validated).

local), an unequivocal and sustainable "asylum-reception-integration" sequence of action can be developed in Spain.

**Recommendation 4: Better align the definition (scope) of the measures and timelines**

EASO should think about better aligning how measures are structured and the timeframe foreseen for their execution. The one-year time frame for this first OP was clearly intended to be a catalyst for a mutual recognition of the "signatories" and a promoter of future actions that could be sustained over time. However, the way in which the measures were designed was not in line with the one-year timeline of the OP.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure better alignment between the OP's objectives and the absorption capacity of the authorities**

As indicated in previous evaluations for other Member States, EASO should ensure better alignment between the measures and related actions foreseen in an OP and the absorption capacity of the national authorities it is supporting. In this case, the SEM underwent a number of organisational changes in 2021 (i.e., changes at ministerial level and in the organigramme, as well as high staff turnover) which had an impact on its ability to fully absorb the support foreseen.

# 1. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 Objectives and scope

This report provides an *ex post* evaluation of the Operating Plan (OP) agreed between the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Spain for 2021 (hereinafter: EASO-Spain OP 2021, or OP 2021). It concerns a reflective, retrospective and objective assessment reviewing the performance of EASO's support in contributing to the projected results, identifying the reasons for any shortcomings and suggesting lessons learned from the intervention that might be useful to EASO in the design and implementation of future interventions.

The scope of the exercise concerns EASO's operational support to Spain during 2021. For contextual reasons, the report also considers historical migration and asylum statistics and trends, as well as the already ongoing OP 2022-2024.

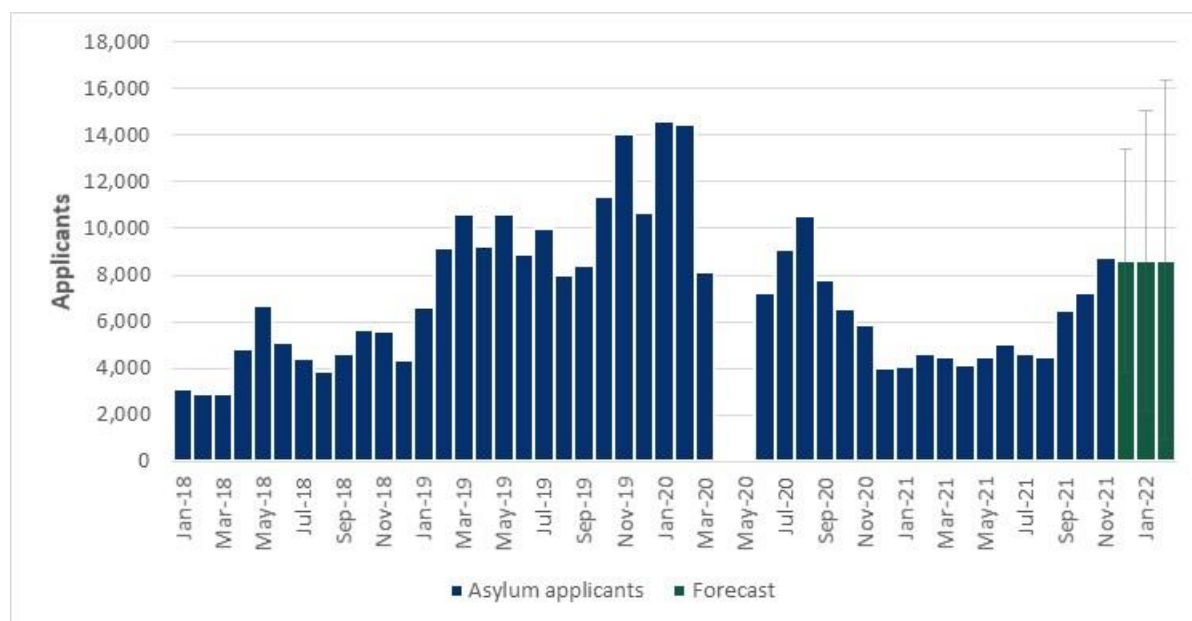
## 1.2 Background

Migration challenges in Spain have increased significantly in recent years, particularly in the Canary Islands. A significant increase in arrivals by sea and by air put particular pressure on the reception system. Spain is one of the EU Member States with the highest rates of applications for international protection. The annual volume of applications submitted in Spain averaged around 3,200 applications per year between 2008 and 2012, but increased significantly over the last few years, reaching almost 118,000 in 2019. In the first half of 2020, arrivals increased sixfold, especially on the islands of Gran Canaria and Fuerteventura. A total of 88,525 asylum applications were filed in Spain in 2020,<sup>5</sup> despite the COVID-19 pandemic limiting travel.

<sup>5</sup> Eurostat Asylum Statistics



**Figure 1. Asylum applicants in Spain (all), Jan. 2018- Nov. 2021**



Source: Eurostat, Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - monthly data (rounded)<sup>6</sup>

Spain has a mixed reception system with a public network of migration centres and care programmes for asylum seekers, managed by entities such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities, and religious organisations that receive funding from the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (MISSM).

To help alleviate the pressure on the Spanish reception system, the first EASO-Spain OP for the year 2021 was signed in December 2020. It was a special support operation, specifically focused on reception, with the overall objective of improving the Spanish Reception System, taking into account the provisions outlined in the Reception Directive 2013/33/EU. The OP 2021 included five measures:

- **Measure ES 1.0:** Facilitate support to the Spanish authorities in the transition towards a new model for reception;
- **Measure ES 2.0:** Strengthen organisational structures and related systems to strategically plan and implement a new reception model;
- **Measure ES 3.0:** Strengthen capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development, tools and materials;
- **Measure ES 4.0:** Enhance capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure;
- **Measure ES 5.0:** Enhance implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish reception authorities (6-month inception measure).

Although this was the first OP to be signed with Spain, it built on EASO's longstanding expertise with reception management in other countries, its knowledge built up through the EASO Network of Reception Authorities, and other relevant expertise such as in training in the field of reception.

<sup>6</sup> Note that data for December 2021 was not yet available at the time of writing (February 2022). The graph therefore includes a forecasted value for this month, calculated based on the 2018-2021 trends.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions this report sought to answer are based on the requirements for evaluations of the European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines<sup>7</sup> but tailored to the OP and specific elements of interest to EASO. Specifically, this evaluation addressed three priority evaluation questions (see Table 1). A more detailed overview of the questions is presented in the evaluation matrix in Annex 2.

**Table 1. Evaluation questions**

Evaluation criterion	Questions
Relevance	<b>Priority question 1:</b> Was EASO's intervention in Spain properly framed from the outset, i.e., in terms of the needs identified, objectives set and what it was feasible to achieve? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?
Effectiveness	What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the intervention and to what extent can these be credited to the intervention in Spain rather than external factors? <b>Priority question 2:</b> Over the course of 2021, was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced from both a resource and operational perspective? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future? <b>Priority question 3:</b> What role did other EASO country operations, Sectors and Centres play in the intervention in Spain and what lessons can be learned from their contributions?
Efficiency	To what extent were the costs of the intervention in Spain justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced the efficiency of the intervention in Spain?
Coherence	To what extent was the intervention in Spain coherent internally, and with other interventions that have similar objectives?
EU added value	What is the additional value resulting from the intervention in Spain, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from Member States acting at national and/or regional levels?

### 2.2 Methodological approach

This evaluation of EASO's support to Spain combined the use of quantitative and qualitative data to enable an in-depth assessment of the results of the interventions. Data collection consisted of the following activities:

<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Better Regulation Guidelines: Commission Staff Working Document, SWD (2021) 305 final, 3 November 2021.

## Desk research

A broad selection of relevant documents for the evaluation were shared by EASO which were analysed and relied on for the evaluation. Additional desk research was carried out to identify further relevant documents, including latest statistics on the asylum situation in Spain.

## In-depth interviews

Key informant interviews served to complement the already available evidence by exploring not only *what* has happened but also *how* and *why* certain results were or were not (fully) achieved.

A total of **14 interviews** were conducted for the evaluation of this OP, including with EASO staff, representatives of the Spanish State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), representatives of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), representatives of civil society organisations and representatives of international organisations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR).

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## Site visits

Site visits to centres in the Canary Islands were cancelled due to the surge in COVID-19 Omicron cases in January 2022. These visits were replaced by additional interviews.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3 Limitations to the robustness of the evidence base

These are the main limitations to the robustness of the evidence base:

- Contrary to the initial plan, all interviews had to be conducted via videoconference due to COVID-19. This reduced the personal connection (level of rapport) with the interviewees and the possibility of obtaining additional information not directly covered by the interview guide;
- No field visits were carried out due to COVID-19. At the same time, the timing of these (early January 2022) was not conducive to the evaluation because certain stakeholders were unavailable due to the Christmas holidays. This reduced the evaluators' knowledge of the situation on the ground;
- Changes in the organigramme of SEM affected the planning of interviews due to other priorities. It led to delays and in some instances a shorter timeframe for interviews, which impacted the depth of the discussions.

## 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the evaluation of the EASO-Spain OP 2021, based on all the information gathered and analysed from primary and secondary sources of evidence. The findings are presented in line with the evaluation criteria presented above.

### 3.1 Relevance

The evidence collected points to a **clear need for EASO's operational support** to the Spanish reception system. The high rate of applications for asylum in recent years which continued during 2021 (see chapter 1.2) put disproportionate pressure on the Spanish reception system that the SEM needed support to address. This need for EASO's support applies to all five measures originally foreseen in the OP.

<sup>8</sup> 11 interviews were originally foreseen as per the inception report.

The relevance of the OP was enhanced by the fact that it was developed following a six-week needs assessment process. It was a multistakeholder process, involving three EASO centres (not only the Operational Support Centre – C1 who is responsible for EASO’s operational support, but also the Training and Professional Development Centre – C2 and the Asylum Knowledge Centre – C3) and the authorities (SEM), but also external stakeholders such as UNHCR, partner organisations of the Ministry (*Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado* (CEAR), *Asociación Comisión Católica Española de Migración* (ACCEM), *Cruz Roja* and *La Merced Migraciones*) and academic experts (*Centre d’Informació i Documentació Internacionals a Barcelona* (CIDOB), *Universidad Pontificia Comillas* and *Instrategies*). This inclusive approach was new to EASO and has since become the standard when developing new OPs, although the external stakeholders consulted depend on the context. In Spain, civil society organisations (CSOs) manage reception centres and were thus a very relevant stakeholder to consult. The participation of a diverse range of actors from the outset of the design of the OP ensured a common understanding of the key concerns and future needs, and legitimises the results obtained through it (finding linked to **priority question 1**<sup>9</sup>).

The needs assessment highlighted needs in relation to (a) the reception model (and its vulnerability dimension); (b) the SEM’s technical and operational capabilities; (c) possibilities of offering structural responses at times of tremendous pressure, and (d) revisiting modes of acting in the matter of resettlement. The OP was designed accordingly, thus evidencing its relevance to address the stakeholders’ needs.

The increased pressure on the reception system in Spain in recent years fully justified the inclusion of measures aimed at rethinking the action model (**measure 1**) and improving the structural capacities of the SEM for example in relation to data management (**measure 2**). The high number of arrivals observed in the Canary Islands called for supporting and improving the reception capacities of the centres under particular pressure (**measure 4**). Moreover, the high turnover of personnel in the SEM justified the need to develop the skills of these human resources (**measure 3**). The existence of a mixed reception system (i.e., whereby reception is partially externalised to CSOs), implying an implicit dispersion of efforts, further justified the need for the design of these measures. The Spanish authorities’ strong impetus for European cooperation and solidarity was also a compelling reason for initiating the operational support.

The final measure, a 6-month inception measure to enhance the implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish reception authorities (**measure 5**), was somewhat different in focus, yet interviewees from different institutional stakeholders agreed that there was (and still is) a need for action in this area.

Despite the high relevance of the OP and its measures, in retrospect there was misalignment between the timeline of the OP (one year) and the scope of some of its measures. Most consulted stakeholders agreed that one year was a very constraining timeline for an integral execution of all the measures originally defined. While it is good to be ambitious to a certain extent, managing expectations is also important.

## 3.2 Effectiveness

Considering this first OP in Spain was ambitious in terms of both its timeline and objectives, **the level of achievement of the foreseen outputs was sufficiently high**. Clear progress was made across all five measures, and the support provided by EASO played a clear role on the achievements observed. There were a few factors that hindered the full achievement of the objectives, thus causing delays in implementation of the OP. However, EASO took appropriate mitigating measures

<sup>9</sup> Was EASO’s intervention in Spain properly framed from the outset, i.e., in terms of the needs identified, objectives set and what it was feasible to achieve? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?

to minimise the impact of the challenges encountered. Moreover, EASO and authorities learned from the experience, as evidenced by the new OP (for the 2022-2023 period), which takes into account the factors that helped and hindered the achievement of the goals set for 2021.

### **3.2.1 Measure 1: Facilitate support to the Spanish authorities in the transition towards a new model for reception**

Measure 1 sought to provide support to the Spanish authorities in the **transition towards a new model for reception** by enhancing the knowledge of the Spanish reception authorities on alternative decentralised reception models, including innovative approaches and good practices adopted in other European countries. To achieve this, EASO sought to implement workshops between the Spanish authorities, relevant stakeholders, other Member States and EASO; support the Spanish authorities in the drafting of a document for a new Reception Model; and organise a virtual or field visit to other Member State reception facilities.

During 2021, **three workshops were organised**, as planned.<sup>10</sup> The first one focused on an overview of the reception system in Europe, the second on reception pathways in Europe/ Proposals for a new reception model in Spain, and the third one was a summary workshop based on the two previous ones.

Moreover, a **working group of reception experts** was set up at the end of June 2021 to work on a preliminary draft of the new reception model for Spain.<sup>11</sup> Based on their work during Q3, a draft reception model document was presented to the Spanish authorities on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2021, thus achieving the targeted objective of supporting the Spanish authorities in setting up a new model for reception by the end of the year.

Finally, the **planned field visit (to Italy) to promote the incorporation of good practices could not take place** due to availability issues. Instead, the visit had to be postponed to 2022.

### **3.2.2 Measure 2: Strengthen organisational structures and related systems to strategically plan and implement a new reception model**

Measure 2 aimed to strengthen organisational structures and related systems to strategically plan and implement a new reception model (as identified as part of measure 1). This consisted of strengthening the capacity of SEM at various levels to: (a) develop and roll out a national reception monitoring framework; (b) optimise data management across the reception system; (c) harmonise procedures, workflows and tools related to vulnerability; (d) identify, access and plan for management of available funding mechanisms at EU level. While **several targets were not achieved, substantive progress was made in relation to this measure**.

While EASO provided (indirect) support through the deployment of external experts via the Complementary Deployment Mechanism (CDM), the planned organisational change management plan (OCMP) had not been drafted by the end of the year. It was deprioritised by the partner institution (SEM) over the course of the year.

In relation to supporting the development and roll-out of a **national reception monitoring framework**, a meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 on reception conditions monitoring systems in other country operations (Greece, Italy and Cyprus) to share good practices. Following this, the EASO assessment of reception conditions (ARC) tool was tested in two sites in the Canary Islands

<sup>10</sup> EASO internal operational monitoring, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> EASO internal operational monitoring, 2021.

(Las Raices and Las Canteras) and related assessment reports drafted, thus meeting the objective of piloting and testing the tool in Spain.

A **working group on data management** was set up and several meetings took place during 2021. In Q2, a mapping mission on Emergency Data Management to the Canary Islands was conducted and a mapping report drafted and presented to the Steering Committee. A query on entry-exit systems in other Member States was launched and the feedback shared with SEM. However, the intended objective of drafting an optimisation data management plan (ODMP) was not yet achieved. A continuation of the standardisation of data management procedures was a clear need expressed by interviewees as well.

Relatedly, EASO provided support on **harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to vulnerability** through the development of national guidance on identification of vulnerable people for first line officials. The national guidance was initially delayed due to prioritisation of the Vulnerability Protocol, but a draft was eventually circulated, pending final validation and approval from SEM. The EASO Vulnerability Toolkit was presented to SEM during Q4.

Finally, EASO provided support with the development of the Spanish Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) national programme 2021-2027 and assessment of other potential support on funding through the deployment of two Member State experts, though the **planned EU funding strategy was not drafted**.

### **3.2.3 Measure 3: Strengthen capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development, tools and materials**

Measure 3 sought to strengthen capacity within the Spanish reception system through professional development, and the development of tools and materials, including the delivery of targeted and thematic professional development and training events for specific groups (senior and intermediate reception officials; managers, directors and policy makers; new staff working in the context of reception), as well as implementing a Training of Trainers programme and translating training materials to Spanish.

Measure 3 was unique in that it was focused solely on training, whereas this is usually interwoven into different measures of an OP. It was also coordinated by a measure coordinator from EASO C2. This approach was considered beneficial in that it facilitated more direct interaction with stakeholders on the ground (authorities as well as CSOs), which enabled EASO to adapt its training activities and implement them more quickly than usual, when communication is funnelled through C1 staff. However, such an approach might not be appropriate in all cases, especially when the OP is broader in scope and would require the involvement of a larger number of people.

The **achievements in relation to the targets set for this measure were significant**. EASO managed to implement a wide range of professional development activities with reception officials and partners agencies deployed in both the Mainland and Canary Islands.

- A tailor-made training session on Prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence (GBV) was offered in the Canary Islands (1 session, 19 completed participations)<sup>12</sup>; and 25 people participated in the Communication and information provision training course to build the capacity of information providers on the adequate use of the protocol and SOPs<sup>13</sup>.
- In relation to professional development and training programmes for senior and intermediate reception officials, 77 people participated in the training offered in Spanish between October and December 2021 (thus meeting the target of 100 participants). Such training included:

<sup>12</sup> Based on EASO internal training plans.

<sup>13</sup> EASO internal operational monitoring, 2021.

Reception of vulnerable persons (2 groups, 29 completed participations), Trafficking in human beings (THB) (1 group, 20 participants) and Introduction to international protection (2 groups, 28 completed participations)<sup>14</sup>.

- As concerns professional development and training programme for managers, directors and policy makers, 23 people participated in Common European Asylum System (CEAS) sessions for the SEM Secretary of State and Cabinet (compared to a target of 40).
- A total of 221 people participated in an onboarding training programme (compared to a target of 120). This included induction courses on reception in the Canary Islands (9 courses, 175 completed participations, and in Madrid (2 courses, 46 completed participations)<sup>15</sup>.
- Three SEM trainers were certified in the Reception module following their participation in EASO Training of Trainers programme (meeting the target of 3).
- Eight EASO training modules, including online studies manuscripts and trainers' handbooks, were translated into Spanish during 2021 (compared to a target of 4).

The most challenging aspects of the intended training courses were the limited nominations from the Spanish authorities to EASO for the Training of Trainers courses, and limited capacity and availability of SEM to train their senior staff during the second half of 2021. The crisis with Ceuta, the cyber-attack, the situation with Afghans among other issues, put them under strain. Moreover, training and capacity building is by nature something that takes time, so it took the SEM team some time to incorporate the learnings/support provided into their work.

#### **3.2.4 Measure 4: Enhance capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure**

Measure 4 aimed to enhance the Spanish authorities' capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure. This included enhancing the emergency response and coordination of the MISSM in the Canary Islands, improving the technical site design, planning and development of emergency reception centres in the Canary Islands, enhancing harmonised procedures, workflows and tools related to emergency site management and to vulnerability and information provision in emergency reception in the Canary Islands, and enhancing the capacity of the MISSM for contingency planning at national level.

To achieve the objective of enhancing the authorities' **capacity for emergency response in the Canary Islands**, EASO supported the drafting of a strategy document on emergency reception that described inputs, outputs and deliverables. EASO also supported the drafting of a structure of coordination unit, including an organigramme and personnel to be recruited. This objective was also supported by the training activities implemented as part of measure 3.

In relation to **technical site design**, a range of site assessments were conducted during 2021 (Q2) which resulted in six preliminary site assessment reports, i.e., one for each emergency site assessed. This included three site assessment reports with drawing and security surveys, for Las Canteras, Colegio Leon, Canarias 50); two preliminary site assessment reports (for El Hierro, Echedo and private land), and one *draft* preliminary assessment report (for Unidad de Madres). Thus, the target of five technical site design reports was met.

The harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to **emergency site management** in the Canary Islands was mostly successful as well. A set of site management documents were drafted as planned. These included a mapping on site management practices, a draft protocol on feedback response mechanism, a draft protocol on disciplinary and preventive measures, draft recommendations on centres coordination and harmonisation, and general health and safety

<sup>14</sup> Based on EASO internal training plans. No targets were set for individual thematic meetings.

<sup>15</sup> Based on EASO internal training plans.

guidelines in Spanish. Moreover, an advanced draft of the Site Management Manual was presented but deprioritised by the authorities.

In relation to the harmonisation of procedures, workflows and tools related to **vulnerability and information provision in emergency reception** in the Canary Islands, considerable progress was made. Two working groups, one on vulnerability and one on information provision, were established and had regular bi-weekly meetings. Their work resulted in the development of the intended protocols. By the end of 2021 only the protocol on information provision had been signed by SEM, but its formal adoption was agreed to take place in January 2022. In fact, the visual material (PowerPoint® presentations) was already tested in the Canary Islands in mid-November. As for the protocol on vulnerability, a draft was produced but was pending revision from the SEM at the end of the year. This delay was caused by changes in functions within the SEM.

The planned **contingency plan for MISSM** had not yet been finalised by the end of the year. While EASO proposed to deploy a remunerated expert to support with this, the deployment did not materialise.

### **3.2.5 Measure 5: Enhance implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish Reception Authorities**

The final measure of the OP 2021 sought to enhance the implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish reception authorities. It was a 6-month inception measure to provide support to the Spanish authorities to facilitate the fulfilment of their resettlement commitments, notably by developing a Resettlement Framework Agreement and providing a range of training actions, written material and supporting tools. This measure could only be implemented to a limited extent during 2021 due to its short timeframe.

While initial discussions on the planning of a Spanish resettlement mission to the Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) in Turkey took place in Q1, and the Spanish reception authorities participated in the RSF Strategic Planning Committee during Q3, a **Resettlement Framework Agreement could not be established** by the end of 2021. Rather, activities were postponed to 2022.

The achievements in relation to measure 5 were primarily linked to the support provided by EASO to Spain's participation in **six Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network meetings**. The Spanish reception authorities participated in a wide range of meetings, including on security and integrity in the resettlement process, on information provision/ pre-departure orientation (PDO), on monitoring and evaluation for RSF, on emergency/urgent cases, as well a working group and a virtual field visit to the RSF in Turkey.

As concerns strengthening the capacity of the Spanish authorities through the participation in **tailormade training and development of PDO tools and materials for resettlement**, the only target set was for EASO to deliver a review of the PDO programme including the method of delivery as well as the supporting tools by the end of 2021. Three Member State experts were deployed to develop the PDO materials and training, though with a delay (until September) because of changes in prioritisation. They delivered a face-to-face resettlement training at SEM premises in Madrid in December 2021<sup>16</sup> in which 12 SEM staff participated. Moreover, 14 operational tools for resettlement were translated into Spanish by the Member State experts.

<sup>16</sup> Based on EASO internal training plans.



### 3.2.6 Factors that helped and hindered the achievement of the objectives (cross-cutting)

As the five measures of the EASO-Spain OP 2021 were closely interlinked and involved the same stakeholders, the factors that helped or hindered the achievement of the objectives were largely crosscutting across all five measures and have therefore been presented as such.

#### Factors that helped the achievement of the objectives

One of the factors that favoured the achievement of objectives was the **creation of cross-cutting working groups** (on vulnerability, information provision, data management, training, etc.). They facilitated the trust-building processes, which is important in a multi-stakeholder scenario such as the reception system in Spain, as it allowed for the appropriate transfer of information. Specifically, in the case of training, the creation of the working groups contributed to the effective planning, development and implementation of activities. For example, a Working Group on training was created in the Canary Islands with the participation of SEM, UNHCR, IOM, Red Cross and three NGOs. A fundamental element in this regard is the positive working relationship established between the officials from EASO in charge of the coordination of the OP and the ministerial authorities.

A second group of factors that was vital to fulfilling what was planned (linked to **priority question 3**<sup>17</sup>) related to the **collaboration and synergies developed between centres and sectors within EASO**. In various group interviews, it was emphasised that this collaborative way of working and 'teamwork' led to better results because the relative strengths and expertise of different EASO actors could be utilised in an effective and efficient way. It also increased ownership of the Spanish OP. The benefits were not only reflected in operational terms (i.e., in the degree to which objectives were achieved) but also in terms of organisational culture (shared vision and effort).

A third group of factors (linked to **priority question 2**<sup>18</sup>) related to the **flexibility shown by EASO to adapt to unforeseen challenges**. These include challenges related to its organisational structure and processes (mainly logistical and administrative) and limits in the availability/absorption capacity of SEM. This flexibility went hand in hand, as expressed by different interviewees, with the ability to work as a team (within EASO) and to understand that an adjustment of the initially planned timeframe was the best way to ensure better results in the long term.

#### Factors that hindered the achievement of the objectives<sup>19</sup>

A first group of factors limiting the achievement of outputs is linked to **EASO's own workflows and processes**. For instance, there were challenges in the timely recruitment of human resources with the necessary expertise and linguistic knowledge. Their effective deployment was mostly concentrated in the second semester of the year (July-December), causing unavoidable delays in the implementation of the OP. Delays in terms of logistics, procurement, and obtaining adequate telecommunication services were also encountered (see section 3.3). To a certain extent, these challenges stemmed from the fact that this was EASO's first intervention in Spain, and it takes time to become operational in a new place. As suggested by interviewees, not having rapidly recognised duty stations in the country affected the establishment of EASO in-country and complicated the status of deployed EASO staff and other categories of personnel. Going forward, improvements in

<sup>17</sup> What role did other EASO country operations, Sectors and Centres play in the intervention in Spain and what lessons can be learned from their contributions?

<sup>18</sup> Over the course of 2021, was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced from both a resource and operational perspective? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?

<sup>19</sup> The situation derived from COVID 19 pandemic is of relevance to consider here too. The lack of face-to-face encounters/meetings could be seen as a factor that led to administrative and logistical delays which impacted EASO and its counterpart's work. However, in the *current "new normal"*, it became a *"constant"*, affecting the ratios of success of not only this but all the endeavours of this kind.

these areas would need to be made to ensure EASO's ability to respond in a timely manner in Member States where its presence has been limited or non-existent in the past.

A second group of limiting factors was linked to the **capacity of the SEM team to absorb the support provided by EASO**. For instance, support in data management processes was limited compared to the plan as it required capacity building that takes time once agreed at the OP level. This was particularly the case because the SEM suffered a high level of turnover, and was affected by a series of unforeseen events that made it necessary to refocus efforts to manage them properly (massive influx of migrants in Ceuta, repatriation of Spanish collaborators from Afghanistan, cyber-attack, etc.). Taken together, these challenges caused a delay in the provision of workspaces to EASO staff by the SEM, thus delaying the implementation of the OP overall.

A third group of factors that limited the effectiveness of EASO's support was linked to the need for **Spanish and English language proficiency of the experts deployed by EASO, combined with a need for specific reception expertise**. While EASO's working language is English, working in the field in Spain requires Spanish proficiency to effectively communicate with authorities and external stakeholders. Challenges were encountered in the recruitment of experts who were proficient in both languages as well as sufficient expertise in reception.<sup>20</sup> Several interviewees suggested that this challenge could be mitigated by adapting the requirements for expert deployment. They suggested that it would be sufficient for those working in the field to speak only Spanish, given that EASO staff at management levels mastered both languages and could act as a bridge with EASO headquarters. At the same time, the limited number of applications submitted for the open positions could be explained by the recent presence of EASO in the country (i.e., potential applicants did not have enough information about the organisation at the initial stages of the recruitment process).

Finally, the **COVID 19 pandemic** influenced the outcomes to some degree. The limited face-to-face encounters/meetings could be seen as a factor that led to administrative and logistical delays which impacted EASO and its counterpart's work. This was fully beyond the control of EASO and authorities, however.

### 3.3 Efficiency

Of the total planned annual budget of € 1,994,128.80, estimated consumption amounted to € 633,670.59, which represents a 31.7% absorption rate.<sup>21</sup> The absorption rate was influenced by the **temporary delay in the deployment of personnel** by EASO, which impacted the degree of implementation of the OP's measures, and the fact that parts of training were provided virtually (rather than face-to-face) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced meeting/travel costs. The recruitment picked up in the final months of 2021, increasing the budget execution at the end of the year.

Both **human resource management** and issues relating to the **procurement of personnel** can explain the low absorption rate. In terms of **human resource management**, the main challenge explaining the under-consumption of the budget was the initial delay in allocating resources to support activities. There was also a clear stagnation in terms of calls for temporary workers – there were no calls in 2021 because EASO did not manage to get the local Spanish framework contract in place. This is also evident in the slow deployment of paid experts under the CDM; around half of the staff derived from the CDM scheme started work from September onwards, rather than over the summer when they were expected to join. In terms of **procurement**, there were marked delays

<sup>20</sup> For instance, Member State experts in reception satisfy the reception expertise and English language requirement, but often do not speak Spanish. Locally deployed staff with knowledge in reception would speak Spanish but may not have the required level of English proficiency to work with EASO.

<sup>21</sup> Agency internal financial monitoring (non-validated).

in three processes: (a) the Temporary Workers Call was affected by the requirement for expertise in reception combined with fluency in English and Spanish, which made it difficult to identify workers that met the criteria; the Telecommunication Call mainly affected the work carried out in the Canary Islands, obliging EASO workers to advance expenses in order to be later reimbursed<sup>22</sup>; and the Stationary Call for which no bids were received, thus hindering implementation.

These challenges did not produce accounting or financial problems at overall Agency level due to EASO's budget review practice, which allows for the movement of funds between budget lines to meet operational demands between OPs. Moreover, according to the analysis of documents related to this OP, previous and parallel OPs in other Member States and the interviews conducted, it is judged that what was initially budgeted and finally executed was in line with what was foreseen for the implementation of an operating plan of this size and scope.

### 3.4 Coherence

**The measures implemented by EASO during 2021 in Spain were found to be both internally and externally coherent.** Internally, the first four measures were clearly complementary, as evidenced by their design (as per the OP text) and interviewees' views. This is because it is not possible to implement a new reception model without also adapting internal processes and training in the principles, values, data management and practices that are embedded in it. As such, the measures were complementary to one another.

Measure 5, although it responded to a need identified in the needs assessment, fits less well into the overall picture due to its different focus. However, it is worth noting that EASO staff and SEM members decided to redefine the measure. In the OP 2022-2023, it is no longer a measure on its own but is integrated into a specific measure on reception processes.

From an external point of view, no inconsistencies were identified that could affect the proper implementation of the actions carried out by EASO. EASO's advice to the SEM team on the strategic use of the funds offered by the AMIF is a good example of this. No overlaps of any kind were identified. In fact, EASO made efforts to avoid duplicating work in favour of 'filling a gap' not yet addressed by the other actors. This first year of EASO's operation support to the Spanish authorities helped actors with a prior presence in Spain (IOM and UNHCR) to recognise EASO as a valid interlocutor with a specific role in supporting the improvement of the reception system.

### 3.5 EU added value

Most of the stakeholders interviewed agreed that the presence of EASO in Spain added considerable value to a hypothetical scenario in which EASO had not provided such support. EASO's added value stemmed from the effective implementation of the needs assessment process and (as a direct consequence of this) the structuring of a relevant, albeit overly ambitious, OP on the other.

The support offered by EASO brought a certain momentum to the work carried out by authorities. According to interviewees, standard activities would have been carried out without EASO's support, but at a slower pace and with a lower degree of internal and external exchange of information.

Relatedly, EASO played a key role as an organiser and coordinator. The elaboration of and sharing of protocols among different stakeholders thanks to EASO's support was seen as a clear improvement in comparison to the past where specific actors worked in isolation, following their

<sup>22</sup> Although this reimbursement process is functioning properly, the long-term implementation of this policy could affect the quality of the service and the level of expenses (always more convenient when there is a global agreement) related to some specific items such as telecommunications.

own workflows and processes. EASO's support contributed to streamlining procedures and made the work more efficient. This was evident in the fields of data management, information provision and vulnerability in particular.

As regards **communication**, EASO played a dual role. According to interviewees from SEM, it acted as a permanent (friendly) reminder of what was agreed in order to avoid diverging from the plan. In other words, EASO functioned as a strategic partner in a context of constant emerging risks that are typical in the context of the public management but threatened the timely implementation of the OP. Representatives of NGOs referred to the bridging role played by EASO in informing them of the challenges, problems, and plans established by their peers (other NGOs). EASO's contributions in the training field were similarly positively received.

Finally, EASO's role as an EU agency with longstanding expertise on asylum and reception issues, derived from the knowledge of good practices in other EU+ countries, can be considered an asset linked to the execution of the OP. The fact that EASO manages a network of reception authorities where such knowledge is shared, and the recent establishment of its reception strategy, made it a trusted partner to the authorities. Spanish efforts for governing migration flows are better perceived (within and beyond SEM) when a well-regarded and experienced EU agency is accompanying these steps.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 General conclusions

It is clear that the OP was **relevant** to address the needs of stakeholders. The participation of different actors representing diverse sectors (civil society, international organisations, etc.) in the design and implementation of the OP ensured a common understanding of the key concerns and future needs. This is evident for measures 1, 2, 3 and 4. For these four measures, there is common agreement that their ambition was out of step with the implementation time available, which was compensated by the fact that this OP constituted a first effective contact between EASO and the Spanish authorities. In the case of measure 5, its conceptual and operational design distanced it from the other actions. This situation has been addressed in view of the preparation of the new OP (for 2022-2023).

In relation to priority question 1<sup>23</sup>, while EASO's intervention in Spain was properly framed from the outset in terms of the needs identified and objectives set, its **level of ambition proved to be too high for a one-year plan**. This is likely due to a combination of factors including the fact that EASO only had an annual cycle to work with, and that it was an inception year which in effect would allow for a longer-term (e.g., three-to-five-year) operation. In terms of lessons learned for the future, it is important to set expectations and limit the level of ambition of future OPs from the start. The limitations and structural constraints of the supported authority (e.g., risks relating to changes in the authorities organigramme at managerial levels) need to be taken into account from the outset and kept in mind when setting expectations, notably in first-time OPs.

From the point of view of **effectiveness**, progress was made and the intervention partially met its intended objectives. Clear progress was made across all five measures, though there were a few factors that hindered their full achievement, notably by causing delays in implementation. These include administrative and logistical delays in deploying personnel and proceeding with recruitment,

<sup>23</sup> Was EASO's intervention in Spain properly framed from the outset, i.e., in terms of the needs identified, objectives set and what it was feasible to achieve? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?

as well as the issues faced by the SEM that forced it to refocus its efforts (migrant influxes from Ceuta, migration influxes from Afghanistan, a cyber-attack, high turnover of staff, etc.).

As regards priority question 2<sup>24</sup>, a variety of interviewees emphasised that **EASO was able to adapt** to both operational challenges and the challenges relating to the availability of its own and external resources. Overall, the level of achievement of the objectives was good considering the limitations encountered. As a lesson learned, it is important for EASO to recognise that the speed with which required resources can be deployed can be limited both on the side of EASO and on that of the partners assisted in terms of their capacity to absorb such resources. The objectives foreseen for the first months of future OPs should take account of this to avoid creating mismatches between expectations and implementation realities.

Concerning priority question 3<sup>25</sup>, the experience with the OP 2021 shows that **having different EASO sectors and centres working together from the start of an OP can ensure a more integrated and ultimately successful outcome**. The focus on reception acted as a key factor in this regard because it simplified the focus of the coordination work across centres. However, the joint needs assessment as well as the direct link between the training centre and the operational support with measure 3 being coordinated by C2 were good practices which positively contributed to the achievements. This approach allowed different internal actors to develop a greater sense of ownership of the OP and the work being undertaken. In terms of lessons learned, it is important to ensure that such collaboration and coordination across sectors and centres is ensured throughout the project cycle (as was the case here, i.e., from the initial needs assessment). Moreover, when deploying resources from EASO's headquarters to an OP country, it is important to weigh up the benefits of this relative to the impact it can have on the capacity of the team in EASO's headquarters.

From the point of view of **efficiency**, there was a considerable difference between planned budget and its estimated consumption. This is linked to the challenges in getting an OP in a new country off the ground within in a short period of time. As such, what was initially budgeted and finally executed was in line with what was foreseen for the implementation of an OP of this size and scope.

From the point of view of **coherence**, the first four measures were mutually reinforcing. Apart from the aforementioned particularities of measure five, the lines of action planned (and implemented) were sufficiently coherent in conceptual and operational terms. The exchange of information with other relevant actors in the field of asylum and reception (Ministry of the Interior, IOM, and UNHCR) was promoted by EASO and SEM and there is clear support for it to continue in the short and longer term.

Finally, there is **added value** resulting from EASO's intervention compared to what could have been achieved in Spain in its absence. All the actors interviewed stated that they would have been able to carry out their usual tasks without the presence of EASO, but that it would have been done in a less timely and coordinated manner.

The table below presents a scoring for each criterion and each measure, formulated on the basis of the results presented in this report. The ratings cover the spectrum from fair to very good. The highest ratings are related to relevance, as there was clearly a need to implement actions of this type in Spain. There are no dimensions where evidence pointed to an unsatisfactory performance, especially when considering the inherent difficulties associated with setting up an OP in a new country at short notice.

<sup>24</sup> Over the course of 2021, was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced from both a resource and operational perspective? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?

<sup>25</sup> What role did other EASO country operations, Sectors and Centres play in the intervention in Spain and what lessons can be learned from their contributions?

**Table 4. Scoring of achievements of the OP 2021 (Spain)**

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Relevance	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Good
Effectiveness	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fair
Efficiency	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Coherence	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Good
EU added value	Good	Good	Very good	Good	Good

## 4.2 Key lessons learned and best practices

### Lessons learned

This first year of EASO's operational support to Spain shows that the **greatest degree of progress can be made when there is alignment of the interests** of the requesting national authorities (SEM) and EASO's interlocutors. This alignment was ensured through structured consultation and dialogue with relevant stakeholders during the needs assessment process. At the same time, the activation of the envisaged measures requires timely and efficient deployment of the necessary staff. Likewise, the involvement of the different stakeholders at the central offices in Madrid and in the Canary Islands presented a positive catalyst for better outputs (as is evident in the excellent results obtained in the training arena).

Among the lessons learned, it is worth highlighting the **need to adjust the timelines to the foreseen activities under each measure**. This is all the more necessary in a context affected by external challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis in Ceuta, repatriation of collaborators in Afghanistan, and a cyber-attack on the IT infrastructure at SEM.

Another lesson learned is that EASO's language requirements (i.e., the need for expertise in reception combined with fluency in English, in addition to the need for Spanish proficiency to be able to work in the field in Spain) hindered the **deployment of experts**. This requires a partial review of the strategy for selecting these experts and consultants.

Finally, from a horizontal perspective relating to the planning and execution of future OPs, EASO's experience in Spain suggests that **there is added value in EASO's different centres coordinating their efforts and working together** in certain contexts, be it at the time of the needs assessment or during the implementation of the OP. Relatedly, **the OP in Spain confirms the need to create an agency-wide (rapid) response mechanism to assist Member States in need of support**.

### Good practices

Among the good practices, three are worth mentioning. First, stakeholders representing civil society appreciated the fact that they were consulted **in the design of the OP**, which enabled them to learn about different ways of working and concerns in similar organisations. This shared work resulted in the generation of better instruments and protocols for the provision of information and the recognition of vulnerability. In other words, the creation of sectoral working groups was a good decision for the deployment of the different components of each measure. This good practice is also visible in the training arena.

Secondly, SEM positively assessed the fact that the EASO team reminded them of the **need to implement the foreseen activities without putting pressure** on their agendas and any unexpected changes therein. The achievement of this balance between reiterating commitments and needs and not judging the speed of implementation was considered important.

Finally, the **speed with which EASO adapted and responded to changes** in the needs of authorities at the SEM in terms of training and provision of materials is a good practice. Although the high staff turnover experienced in SEM implied a multiplication of efforts on the part of EASO, EASO's ability to quickly build trust with new joiners/partners represented an added value.

### 4.3 Recommendations

#### **Recommendation 1: Enhance stable, appropriate, and sustainable deployment of experts and Member State experts, notably those fluent in Spanish**

EASO should explore new mechanisms for ensuring a rapid and integral deployment of its human resources. Possible options include:

- Creating a database of potential individual and organisational collaborators (such as universities, NGOs, think tanks, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) in Spain, including individuals who are fluent in Spanish and English and have knowledge of reception;
- Increasing the visibility of EASO as an agency providing support to Spain in the area of reception in Spain by spreading the word through its existing Member State networks, and networks and partners in Spain;
- Where EASO's staff policy can accommodate such a change, looking into the possibility of amending the requirements for experts, including by requiring experts working in the field to be knowledgeable in reception and fluent in Spanish only, while requiring those in coordination/senior management roles to speak both English and Spanish. These senior staff members can then act as a bridge between operations in the field and EASO headquarters.

#### **Recommendation 2: Prioritise support for the development of a comprehensive data management system**

The development of a comprehensive data management system would allow for evidence-based decision making; save time currently dedicated to (re)learning; and speed up the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of OPs. EASO could:

- Explore mechanisms for gathering and consolidating existing data into a Spanish system for the management of reception data. This should entail an assessment of the quality and completeness of existing data on reception;
- Based on the assessment, define what data should form part of the data management system, devise a methodology for gathering the data and a mechanism for ensuring its use (processing, analysis and reporting).

#### **Recommendation 3: Support mainstreaming of the reception model and its implementation**

EASO should consider maintaining its support in the harmonisation of processes, protocols, and tools so that, at the level of civil society partners as well as authorities (national, regional, and local), an unequivocal and sustainable "asylum-reception-integration" sequence of action can be developed in Spain. This recommendation includes:

- Improving the quality, from the point of view of legality, of all procedures related to reception. This must be consolidated in one short document of reference after consulting the members of the related working group;
- Continue disseminating the “future” new model (once approved) through specific *ad hoc* training among relevant stakeholders;
- Evaluate the model (once created), with support from the reception model working group and considering future changes (if required).

#### **Recommendation 4: Better align the definition (scope) of the measures and timelines**

EASO should think about better aligning how measures are structured, and the timeframe foreseen for their execution. The one-year time frame for this first OP was clearly intended to be a catalyst for a mutual recognition of the “signatories” and a promoter of future actions that could be sustained over time. However, the way in which the measures were designed was not in line with the one-year timeline of the OP. This recommendation includes:

- Adjusting, with a view to the renewal of successive stages of operational support to Spain, the definition of the measures (and, consequently, of their indicators and outputs) to provide a better fit with the established timeline;
- Considering further structuring the needs assessment methodology by clearly defining roles and responsibilities of different actors, with a view to more realistically assessing the temporary resource deployment capacities required for each action envisaged in each specific measure. This working group should also consider what is happening in other countries where EASO is developing OPs.

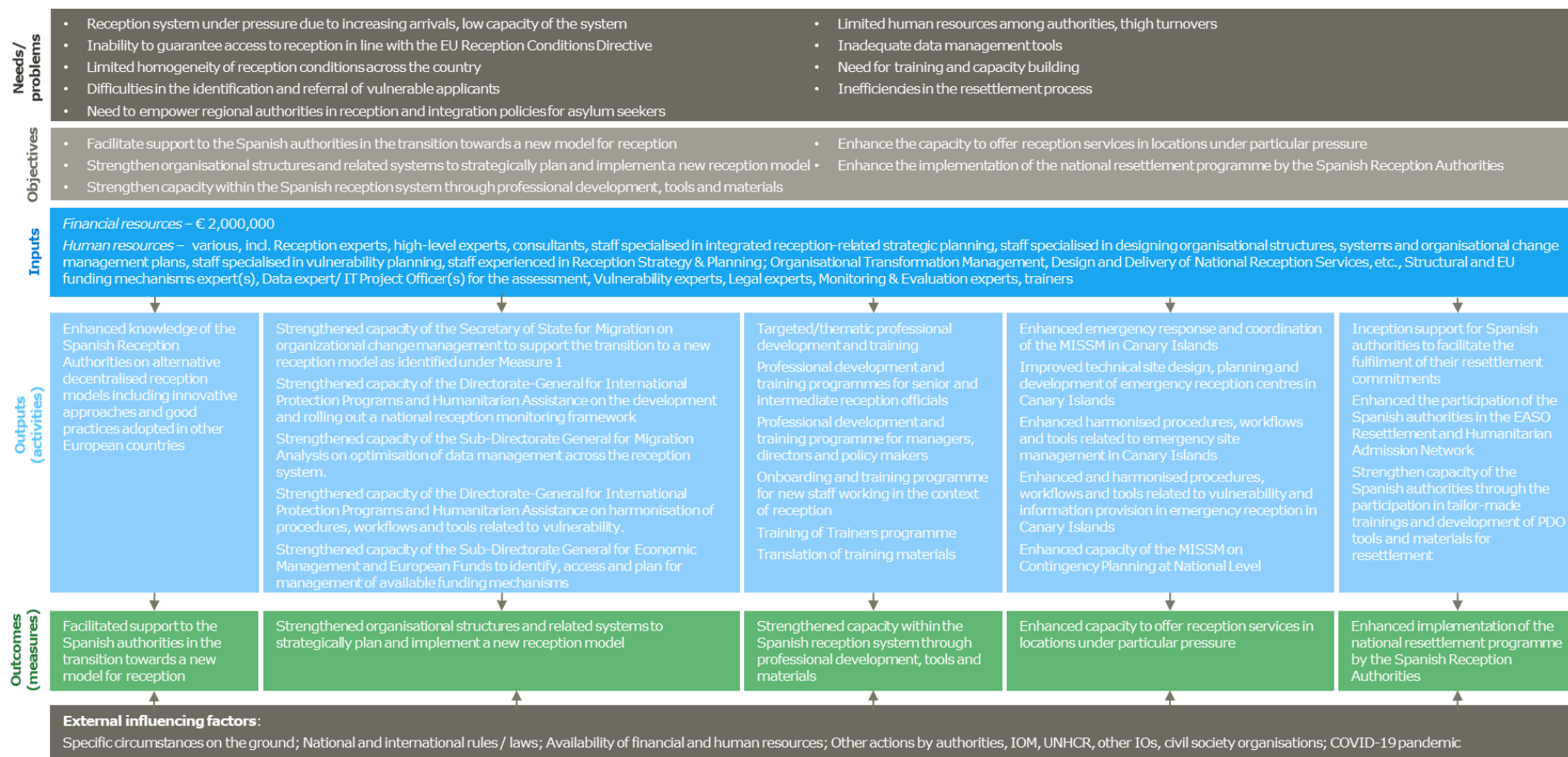
#### **Recommendation 5: Ensure better alignment between the OP’s objectives and the absorption capacity of the authorities**

As indicated in previous evaluations for other Member States, EASO should ensure better alignment between the measures and related actions foreseen in an OP and the absorption capacity of the national authorities it is supporting. In this case, the SEM underwent a number of organisational changes in 2021 (i.e., changes at ministerial level and in the organigramme, as well as high staff turnover) which had an impact on its ability to fully absorb the support foreseen. This recommendation includes:

- Re-assessing the short, medium, and long-term technical and operational capacities of the partners with whom EASO implements Ops;
- Adapting, on the basis of this assessment, the actions to be carried out within each measure to avoid creating a mismatch between what is planned and the absorption capacity of the partners.



## Annex 1 – Intervention logic



## Annex 2 – Evaluation matrix

Operationalised questions	Indicators / descriptors	Norms / judgement criteria	Indicative sources of evidence
<b>Relevance: To what extent was the intervention in Spain relevant to its stakeholders, in light of their original needs and any changes therein?</b>			
<p><b>Priority question 1: Was EASO's intervention in Spain properly framed from the outset, i.e., in terms of the needs identified, objectives set and what it was feasible to achieve? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>What needs and problems were identified prior to the launch of the intervention in Spain? How were these identified? Who was involved and how (related to priority question 3)?</i></p> <p><i>Did the needs and problems faced by stakeholders evolve over the course of 2021?</i></p> <p><i>What were the objectives/targets/outputs of the intervention in Spain when first established? Were these appropriate to meet the needs of stakeholders? Were these objectives feasible to achieve? Why? Why not?</i></p> <p><i>Were the objectives adjusted during the implementation of the intervention in Spain? Why/why not? Were these</i></p>	<p>Intervention logic, objectives of the OP</p> <p>Needs identified in needs assessment of the intervention</p> <p>Evidence of problems / needs and their evolution over time (e.g., trends in arrivals, trends in asylum applications)</p> <p>The process employed to develop the needs assessment; stakeholders involved</p> <p>Stakeholder views on their needs and the degree to which the intervention addressed their needs and problems</p> <p>Adjustments made to original objectives/targets/outputs (if applicable)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of ways in which the objectives were appropriate to meet the needs</p> <p>Evidence / examples of gaps not addressed by the objectives</p> <p>Evidence / examples of lessons to be learned for future needs assessments and design of OPs</p>	<p>The intervention was relevant throughout 2021 to meet the needs of stakeholders and to achieve the intended results</p> <p>The involvement of EASO Centres in the needs assessment for the Spain OP was appropriate and added value</p> <p>Where new needs / problems arose, appropriate steps were taken to adjust to these</p>	<p>OP 2021</p> <p>Results framework</p> <p>Needs assessment</p> <p>Eurostat data on migration and asylum</p> <p>National statistics on migration and asylum</p> <p>Interviews with EASO personnel</p> <p>Interviews with authorities</p> <p>Interviews with IOs, CSOs</p> <p>Results from the evaluation of effectiveness</p>

Operationalised questions	Indicators / descriptors	Norms / judgement criteria	Indicative sources of evidence
<p><i>appropriate to meet the needs of stakeholders?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future in terms of the identification of needs and design of OP's objectives (also relevant for priority question 3)?</i></p>			
<p><b>Effectiveness: What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the intervention and to what extent can these be credited to the intervention in Spain rather than external factors?</b></p>			
<p><b>Priority question 2: Over the course of 2021, was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced from both a resource and operational perspective? Why? Why not? What lessons can be learned for the future?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>Measure ES 1.0: Was support to the Spanish authorities in the transition towards a new model for reception facilitated? Why or why not? Was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced in relation to this measure? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p> <p><i>Measure ES 2.0: To what extent were organisational structures and related systems strengthened to strategically plan and implement a new reception model? Why or why not? Was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced in relation to this measure? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	<p>Intervention logic and its causal links</p> <p>Degree of achievement of targets (output and outcome level) set out in the results framework (for each measure)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of changes to the Spanish reception model and the role played by EASO (ES 1.0)</p> <p>Authorities' views on the degree to which EASO's support facilitated their transition towards a new model for reception (ES 1.0)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of changes in organisational structures and related systems in Spain (ES 2.0)</p> <p>Authorities' views on the degree to which EASO's support helped them strategically plan and implement a new reception model (ES 2.0)</p> <p>Evidence / examples strengthened capacity within the Spanish reception</p>	<p>Activities were implemented as planned; any changes were duly justified</p> <p>Intended outputs and outcomes were achieved; any changes were duly justified</p> <p>Achieved outcomes can be attributed to EASO's support rather than other factors</p> <p>EASO adjusted to resource and operational challenges that arose throughout 2021</p>	<p>OP 2021</p> <p>Results framework</p> <p>Internal operational monitoring</p> <p>Professional development / training statistics and tools</p> <p>Relevant documents pertaining to other actions (e.g., at national/regional/local level, by IOs, by CSOs)</p> <p>Interviews with all stakeholders</p>

Operationalised questions	Indicators / descriptors	Norms / judgement criteria	Indicative sources of evidence
<p><i>Measure ES 3.0: To what extent was capacity within the Spanish reception system strengthened through professional development, tools and materials? Why or why not? Was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced in relation to this measure? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p> <p><i>Measure ES 4.0: To what extent was capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure enhanced? Why or why not? Was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced in relation to this measure? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p> <p><i>Measure Spain 5.0: To what extent was the implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish Reception Authorities enhanced (6-month inception measure)? Why or why not? Was EASO able to adjust to any challenges faced in relation to this measure? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	<p>system and the impact of EASO's support specifically (ES 3.0)</p> <p>Professional development, tools and materials employed by EASO to strengthen capacity within the Spanish reception centre (ES 3.0)</p> <p>Impact of EASO's support through professional development, tools and materials on capacity within the Spanish reception centre (ES 3.0)</p> <p>Evidence of enhanced capacity to offer reception services in locations under particular pressure in Spain (ES 4.0)</p> <p>Evidence of implementation of the national resettlement programme by the Spanish Reception Authorities having been enhanced (ES 5.0)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of factors that helped and/or hindered the achievement of intended results (all measures)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of the impact of EASO's support compared to other (external or internal) factors (all measures)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of adjustments made during 2021 to mitigate resource and/or operational constraints (all measures)</p>		

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	<p>Stakeholder views on the degree to which the outcomes can be attributed to EASO's support (all measures)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of unintended effects of the intervention (all measures)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of lessons learned for the future (all measures)</p>		
<p><b>Priority question 3: What role did other EASO country operations, Sectors and Centres play in the intervention in Spain and what lessons can be learned from their contributions?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>What were the key challenges faced by key stakeholders in Spain? How were these addressed by EASO?</i></p> <p><i>How did EASO approach the implementation of the intervention in Spain? Which Centres and Sectors were involved and how?</i></p> <p><i>How does this approach compare to the approach taken in other countries / in the past?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future in terms of the design and implementation of OPs involving different EASO Centres and Sectors?</i></p>	<p>Evidence / examples of challenges faced by authorities and other stakeholders in Spain</p> <p>Degree of involvement of different EASO Centres / Sectors in the implementation of the Spain OP</p> <p>Stakeholder views on the appropriateness of the approach taken in Spain</p> <p>Evidence / examples of lessons learned for the future</p>	<p>EASO properly framed its intervention in Spain considering the challenges faced by key stakeholders to scale up and absorb support</p> <p>The involvement of different EASO Centres / Sectors was appropriate and supported the achievement of intended results</p>	<p>OP 2021</p> <p>Needs assessment</p> <p>Internal operational monitoring</p> <p>Interviews with DG HOME</p> <p>Interviews with EASO personnel</p> <p>Interviews with authorities</p> <p>Interviews with IOs, CSOs</p> <p>Results from the evaluation of relevance</p> <p>Results from the evaluation of effectiveness</p> <p>Results from the evaluation of efficiency</p>

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<b>Efficiency: To what extent are the costs of the intervention in Spain justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced the efficiency of the intervention in Spain?</b>			
<p><b>What costs were associated with the implementation of the intervention in Spain? Is there room for efficiency gains? Do the benefits of the intervention in Spain outweigh the costs?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>How were these costs distributed across the five measures? Was this distribution appropriate?</i></p> <p><i>What internal or external factors influenced the efficiency with which outputs / outcomes were achieved? Were there notable differences across the five measures?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent and how could the efficiency of the intervention in Spain be improved?</i></p> <p><i>How were costs and benefits distributed across stakeholder groups? Were they balanced/ proportionate?</i></p>	<p>Implementation costs of the intervention(s) (monetary/FTEs)</p> <p>Outputs and outcomes generated compared to their costs</p> <p>Costs and benefits for different groups of stakeholders</p> <p>Stakeholder views on the degree to which costs are proportionate to the outcomes achieved in Spain</p> <p>Evidence / examples of inefficiencies in implementation / achievement of outputs and outcomes in Spain</p> <p>Evidence / examples of ways in which efficiency could be improved in Spain</p>	<p>The costs of the intervention were justified compared to the achieved outputs and outcomes</p> <p>Encountered inefficiencies were appropriately addressed / mitigated by EASO</p>	<p>Cost data from EASO and other stakeholders (where available)</p> <p>OP 2021</p> <p>Results framework</p> <p>Internal operational monitoring</p> <p>Interviews with EASO</p> <p>Interviews with authorities</p> <p>Results from the evaluation of effectiveness</p>
<b>Coherence: To what extent is the intervention in Spain coherent internally, and with other interventions that have similar objectives?</b>			
<p><b>Internal coherence: Were there any inconsistencies or contradictions between the activities of the intervention in Spain? Were they complementary,</b></p>	<p>Evidence / examples of inconsistencies or contradictions between activities (within and across measures)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of mutual reinforcement or complementarity</p>	<p>There are no inconsistencies or contradictions within the intervention, measures were mutually reinforcing</p> <p>The EASO intervention and interventions by other actors are</p>	<p>OP 2021</p> <p>Internal operational monitoring</p> <p>Relevant documents pertaining to other actions (e.g., at</p>

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<p><b>working together to achieve coherent outcomes?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>Did the focus on reception (and resettlement in that context) rather than also asylum impact the internal coherence of the intervention in Spain? Why or why not?</i></p> <p><i>Were the five measures mutually reinforcing? How were they coordinated and did this work well?</i></p> <p><i>Did the different Centres / Sectors work together in a consistent, complementary way? (Related to priority question 3)</i></p> <p><i>Were there any inefficiencies resulting from different Centres / Sectors being involved in the design and implementation of the intervention in Spain? (Related to priority question 3)</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future in terms of the internal coherence of EASO's support?</i></p> <p><b>External coherence: Was EASO's work complementary to other sources of support or was there unnecessary overlap or duplication?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>Which other interventions (funded by the EU, e.g., AMIF, or funded through</i></p>	<p>between activities (within and across measures)</p> <p>Mechanisms for coordination between Centres / Sectors of EASO and between different measure coordinators in Spain</p> <p>Evidence / examples of other interventions with similar objectives/results (at national/regional/local level, by IOs, by CSOs)</p> <p>Evidence / examples of synergies or complementarity between other interventions and the EASO intervention in Spain</p> <p>Evidence / examples of overlaps or duplication between other interventions and the EASO intervention in Spain</p> <p>Stakeholder views on the coherence and complementarity of the interventions in Spain (or lack thereof)</p> <p>Lessons learned to improve coherence and complementarity in the future</p>	<p>mutually reinforcing and/or complementary, there were no unnecessary overlaps or duplications</p>	<p>national/regional/local level, by IOs, by CSOs)</p> <p>Interviews with DG HOME</p> <p>Interviews with EASO personnel</p> <p>Interviews with authorities</p> <p>Interviews with IOs, CSOs</p> <p>Coherence analysis</p>

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<p><i>national/regional/local funds) were relevant to EASO's work in Spain?</i></p> <p><i>Were any inconsistencies identified?</i></p> <p><i>Were the interventions mutually complementary?</i></p>			
<p><b>EU added value: What is the additional value resulting from the intervention in Spain, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from Member States acting at national and/or regional levels?</b></p>			
<p><b>What was the added value of EASO's intervention compared to what the Spanish authorities could have achieved alone?</b></p> <p><u>Prompts:</u></p> <p><i>What might have happened if EASO had not intervened in Spain?</i></p> <p><i>Is there evidence suggesting that the outcomes of the intervention in Spain could not have been achieved to the same degree without EASO's intervention in Spain?</i></p>	<p>Evidence / examples of added value of the intervention in Spain</p> <p>Extent to which the activities would not have taken place or taken place with a reduced scope or speed in the absence of the intervention in Spain</p> <p>Stakeholder views on what would have happened without EASO's support</p>	<p>The intervention in Spain added value compared to what could have been achieved in its absence</p>	<p>Interviews with EASO personnel</p> <p>Interviews with authorities</p> <p>Results from all previous evaluation questions</p>