



External evaluation of the EUAA's Roadmap for cooperation with Albania

Ex post evaluation report

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EUAA/EVAL/2022/10/FR; Final

November 2022





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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of origin information
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPSN	Identification of Persons with Special Needs
SOP	Standard operating procedure
UAMs	Unaccompanied minors
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Executive summary

This report provides an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU (European Union) added value and relevance of the Roadmap for Cooperation agreed between the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Albania for the period December 2020 to October 2022. The overall objective of the Roadmap was to enhance the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in line with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and EU Member States' practices, in view of contributing towards the country's accession process. More specifically, the Roadmap aimed to support the revision and implementation of legislation on asylum and reception in Albania, build capacity among the Albanian authorities to improve access to the asylum procedure and reinforce the examination of asylum applications, enhance reception services and conditions, and support the authorities in preparing for a potential future unexpected influx of asylum applicants.

The Roadmap was **relevant to meet the needs of the authorities** when it was drafted, and was sufficiently flexible to respond to changing needs such as the Afghan crisis which required unforeseen capacity building support for registration of applicants. Its relevance was high in relation to capacity building and improving asylum legislation and procedure, but was limited in the field of reception as the Albanian authorities chose to prioritise asylum due to resource constraints. The scope of the Roadmap was too ambitious considering the two-year timeframe foreseen for its implementation, in part due to the COVID-19¹ pandemic which hindered the implementation of foreseen activities that could not be delivered remotely.

The **effectiveness of the Roadmap overall was good**: of the 26 planned activities, 16 were fully implemented (61%), five were partially implemented (19%) and five were not implemented or postponed (19%). In the field of asylum, the Roadmap supported the first steps towards alignment of the asylum procedure in Albania with the CEAS and EU standards, and the Agency was able to build capacity among the authorities to improve their work in relation to the examination procedure. However, the rollout of the new legislation was not completed and would require more work. The limitations encountered were mostly due to factors outside of the Agency's control, such as the COVID-19-related travel restrictions (enforced for 16 months out of the total 24-month implementation period) which hindered the organisation of missions and on-the-job support, and absorption capacity of the authorities. In the field of reception, the Agency provided guidance that may support the improvement of reception conditions and the implementation of a contingency plan in Albania in the long run. However, the latter was not rolled out by the authorities, thereby limiting what could be achieved by the Agency in this area.

While the **financial resources assigned to the implementation of the Roadmap were sufficient**, the coordination of the Roadmap represented more work than initially foreseen, and there were gaps in continuity of work in some cases due to competing priorities within the Agency and the already mentioned COVID-19 challenges. Further challenges that led to delays and inefficiencies were encountered through administrative burdens ('red tape') stemming from the absence of the Agency's main counterpart in-country from August 2021.

¹ Coronavirus disease 2019.



The Roadmap was **coherent with and clearly supported the advancement of the overall aims of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) II project**, and by extension, EU policy priorities in the field of asylum. Where applicable, activities were also coordinated with other actors (e.g., international organisations) in Albania to avoid unnecessary duplication of work. The **added value of the EUAA** compared to other actors stemmed from its unique expertise on the CEAS and EU standards and practices, which is invaluable to a country like Albania which is in the process of negotiations to join the EU.

Based on the findings, the evaluation brings forward five recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Re-align the level of ambition, scope and timeline of the Roadmap with the human resource/absorption capacities of the authorities and the Agency

As institutional change and capacity building takes time to materialise, and the Albanian administration is limited in size and absorption capacity, the scope and timeframe of the Roadmap should be revisited. The Agency could consider extending the timeframe for the Roadmap to three years and introducing a prioritisation of activities and outcomes, where the highest priority goes to activities that are important to advance the accession journey of Albania or are considered most relevant by the authorities, followed by those that would be ‘nice to have’ but are not essential or urgent.

Recommendation 2: Support the Albanian authorities with the implementation / rollout of new asylum legislation and practices in line with the CEAS and EU practices

While progress has been made on paper in terms of aligning legislation with the CEAS, there is a need to support the Albanian authorities to actually implement the legislation in practice. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment for a future Roadmap, the Agency could aim to finalise the activities that were planned but not (fully) implemented during the 2020-2022 period, and could consider making the support contingent on a prerequisite that the Directorate for Asylum puts in place a Head of Asylum as the main counterpart to the EUAA.

Recommendation 3: Increase capacity building support in the field of asylum

Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment for a future Roadmap, to further increase the capacity of the Albanian authorities, the Agency could consider encouraging the Directorate for Asylum to nominate English-speaking staff to participate in EUAA train-the-trainer modules to build up a national pool of trainers, and provide additional capacity building on country of origin information (COI) research and access to the asylum procedure.

Recommendation 4: Provide support in relation to reception conditions

Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment for a future Roadmap, in light of the limited progress made in the field of reception so far, the Agency should aim to complete the foreseen assessment of reception conditions in Albania and feasibility study of opening a centre for vulnerable groups and developing an action plan for a way forward on this basis, as well as prepare to provide capacity building support (training) for when new reception staff is hired and/or a centre for vulnerable groups is opened.

Recommendation 5: Reconsider the approach to staffing the Roadmap

In light of the Agency’s limited resources, it is important to allocate work and responsibilities in an efficient way. The Agency could consider increasing human resources for the coordination of the



Roadmap, assessing for each mission whether there is a need for several experts to travel or if (part of) the support can be delivered online or by the Roadmap coordinator alone. It could also be useful to hire someone with professional knowledge of Albanian language and the local context among the additional staff foreseen under the IPA III project.



1. Introduction: purpose and scope

The aim of this report is to present the results of the evaluation of the 2020-2022 Roadmap for Cooperation between the EUAA and Albania (hereinafter ‘the Roadmap’).² The evaluation has been conducted by external evaluators from Ramboll Management Consulting and a subcontracted expert, and is part of a broader evaluation exercise of the 2020-2022 Roadmaps agreed by the EUAA with four Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, respectively.

The overall objective of the Roadmap was to **enhance the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in line with the CEAS and EU Member States’ practices**. The Roadmap identified priority areas where the support from the EUAA to the Albanian authorities has an added value and, where possible, contributes towards the accession process with a direct impact on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the European Commissions’ Progress Reports, in particular those aimed at meeting the criteria under Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security. Albania has been an official candidate for membership of the European Union since 2014, and final negotiations began in March 2020.³

The main asylum and reception authorities in Albania, and main counterparts of the Roadmap, are the Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship (hereinafter ‘Directorate for Asylum’) and the Border and Migration Department of the Albanian State Police (hereinafter ‘Border and Migration Police’), both of which fall under the Ministry of Interior. The Directorate for Asylum is responsible for reviewing, logging, and collecting the necessary information for asylum applications. The Border and Migration Police is in charge of processing foreigners who enter, transit, or stay on the territory of Albania, which includes conducting pre-screening procedures for foreign nationals at the borders and informing them about access to the asylum procedure in Albania.

In line with the [European Commission’s Better Regulation Guidelines](#), the evaluation assessed the **effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and relevance** of the Roadmap. The report focuses on assessing the performance of the Agency, and while it considers contextual factors, it does not comment on the performance of the Albanian authorities or other stakeholders. The evaluation sought to answer the following priority questions:⁴

1. What were the key **benefits of cooperation** for national authorities? What are the lessons learnt for the future? (Effectiveness)
2. Has the EUAA provided enough **resources** to meet the objectives of the Roadmap? (Efficiency)

² On 19 January 2021, 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 was adopted. This Regulation extended the mandate of the Agency and changed its name from the European Asylum Support Agency (EASO) to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). The Roadmap being evaluated in this report was agreed before the new Regulation entered into force, so it is titled ‘EASO-Albania 2020-2022 Roadmap’. For the purpose of this report, reference is made to the EUAA or the Agency instead.

³ European Commission, DG NEAR, [Albania](#) (last accessed 3/11/2022).

⁴ In addition, where judged relevant by the evaluators, elements relating to the social and environmental impacts of the Roadmap were considered, but limited evidence was found. A full list of evaluation questions can be found in Annex 3: Evaluation matrix.



3. To what extent is the intervention in Albania **coherent** with and complementary to other interventions that have similar objectives? (Coherence)⁵
4. To what extent and how did the Roadmap **add value** over other actors' interventions? (EU added value)
5. How **relevant** was the Roadmap to national authorities, and did it manage to adjust to changing needs and expectations? What are the key priorities for **future cooperation**? (Relevance)

To answer these evaluation questions, the evaluation combined evidence from secondary data (notably monitoring data from the EUAA, the Roadmap document, and reports from the European Commission in relation to Albania's accession process), with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with the Albanian authorities, international organisations and EUAA staff. These sources of information were used to provide an in-depth assessment of the results of the intervention (see Annex 1 for more details on the methodology). Based on the results, the evaluation draws conclusions and presents lessons learnt from the implementation of the intervention, in view of informing the way forward for a next generation of Roadmaps.

2. Intended results of the action

2.1. Description of the action and its intended results

The implementation period of the second Roadmap was 24 months, from 1 December 2020 to 31 October 2022. The Roadmap had **five intended outcomes** (objectives), each consisting of several activities and intended outputs.

Outcome 1: Asylum related legislation aligned with the CEAS and EU standards

- Output 1.1: Secondary legislation/by-laws related to asylum legislation developed/ revised and aligned to the CEAS and EU standards.
- Output 1.2: Mechanisms for implementation of the asylum-related legislation, developed/strengthened.

The Roadmap sought to support the revision of secondary legislation/by-laws and align them to the CEAS and EU standards through the organisation of a workshop on specific asylum procedures and guidance. The Roadmap furthermore foresaw the strengthening of mechanisms for implementation of the asylum-related legislation through senior expert support to work on developing baselines, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and/or workflows related to asylum legislation implementation and the organisation of (online or in-person) study visits to an EU Member State to exchange practices.

⁵ The original question was 'Is there a consistent **understanding and approach to cooperation** with the authorities across the Agency?'. As this concerns the Agency and its Roadmaps more broadly, it is covered in the horizontal evaluation report instead. This report rather considers external coherence (between the Roadmap and the EU's work more broadly, as well as coherence with interventions from other actors).



Outcome 2: Strengthened access to the asylum procedure, including the identification of persons with special needs

- Output 2.1: Improved capacity and knowledge of first contact officials to fulfil their obligations to ensure access to the asylum procedure and procedural safeguards for children and vulnerable groups.
- Output 2.2: Revised pre-screening instruction (293/2015) and procedures, improving identification of cases with specific protection needs implemented.
- Output 2.3: Developed accelerated procedures both for persons in need of international protection and the unfounded claims, in respect of international protection and CEAS standards.
- Output 2.4: Preconditions for developing rights-compliant age assessment process are accomplished.

The Roadmap intended to improve the capacity and knowledge of first contact officials to fulfil their obligations to ensure access to the asylum procedure, notably in relation to vulnerable persons and children. The support under this objective centred around the translation and dissemination of relevant practical guides and tools of the EUAA (on access to procedure, information provision, identification of vulnerabilities) and capacity building for the authorities to apply them. It also included support with the rollout of pre-screening instructions, accelerated procedure, and age assessment proposal.

Outcome 3: Reinforced examination of asylum applications in line with the CEAS and EU standards

- Output 3.1: Improved knowledge and developed skills of the case officers to assess the asylum claims effectively and efficiently.
- Output 3.2: Enhanced quality of asylum process and asylum decisions taken.
- Output 3.3: COI is produced and used in the international protection decision-making process.

The support under this objective concerned capacity building of the Albanian authorities to manage the asylum procedure effectively and efficiently, through training and coaching on interview techniques, the refugee status determination procedure, and the use of COI. This also included the translation and dissemination of relevant EUAA guidance on these topics.

Outcome 4: Enhanced reception services and conditions available to unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and vulnerable migrants

- Output 4.1: Strengthened capacity of the Albanian authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services with a specific focus on vulnerabilities.

The support under this objective concerned capacity building and guidance on reception conditions, notably related to unaccompanied children. This included training or workshops, the publication and dissemination of the Albanian version of the [Guidance on reception conditions](#) and [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children](#). The Roadmap also foresaw an assessment of reception conditions in Albania and feasibility study to support opening a reception facility for unaccompanied children/vulnerable groups specifically, as well as support with establishing and



managing such a reception centre, through a study visit to an EU Member State and associate country or expert support in Albania.

Outcome 5: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

- Output 5.1: A contingency plan in line with EUAA guidance is rolled out.

Support under this final objective concerned the rollout of Albania's updated contingency plan, through expert comments on the preparation of the rollout of the updated contingency plan and the organisation of a workshop based on the Agency's [Guidance on contingency planning](#).

An intervention logic that outlines the identified needs/problems, objectives, resulting impacts, outcomes and outputs, planned activities, inputs and external factors that could influence the action can be found in Annex 2: Intervention logic.

2.2. Points of comparison

This section outlines the situation prior to the implementation of the Roadmap in an effort to outline the points of comparison against which the implementation is assessed in chapter 4 of the report.

Since 2017, Albania has witnessed an **increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in mixed movements** (309 applications in 2017; 4,286 in 2018; 6,677 in 2019), until 2020 when the number decreased to 2,102 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related movement restrictions.⁶ Albania has traditionally been a **transit country** for immigrants travelling from Greece and Bulgaria to Western European countries. Applicants tend to leave after only a few days in the country, resulting in the majority of applications being withdrawn. In 2018, there were 105 decisions, with three refugee status recognitions, and 13 subsidiary protections awarded. In 2019, 60 applications were formally lodged, one applicant was granted refugee status, and 23 were granted subsidiary protection. During the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, asylum procedures and interviews were limited. After the reopening of borders in June, only 50 asylum referrals were recorded until the end of 2020.⁷

In 2019, the European Commission identified a need to revise the **instruction regulating pre-screening** in line with international standards, to include procedural safeguards for vulnerable persons as well as provisions on the identification, referral and protection of children and persons with special needs.⁸ Work on revising these pre-screening instructions started soon thereafter, with support from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The **asylum administration in Albania is small and has faced resource constraints in recent years**. Staff of the Directorate for Asylum is responsible for the whole asylum procedure (registration, analysis

⁶ European Commission (2019), [Albania 2019 Report](#), Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, SWD (2019) 215 final (hereinafter 'Albania 2019 report'); and European Commission (2021), [Albania 2021 Report](#), Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, SWD (2021) 298 final (hereinafter 'Albania 2021 Report').

⁷ [Albania 2021 Report](#), p. 46.

⁸ [Albania 2019 Report](#), p. 40.



of the case, conducting COI research, writing the decision, etc.), leading to high workloads for all individual members of staff.

The migrant **reception capacity** of Albania increased in 2019 and 2020. However, the National Centre for Asylum Seekers in Tirana was filled to capacity on a number of occasions at the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic). New centres were opened in recent years with support from the International Organisation for Migration and UNHCR, and at the time of the drafting of the Roadmap, Albania had an approximate total capacity of 500 beds. However, reception conditions were lacking compared to European standards, and there were no separate facilities for UAMs.

To help address these issues, a thorough needs assessment was conducted by the EUAA between June 2019 and November 2020, involving the Albanian authorities, international stakeholders and civil society organisations in Albania. The proposed actions of the needs assessment were subsequently included in the Roadmap, which was formally endorsed at the end of 2020.

3. Implementation of the action: current state of play

The **Roadmap is a bilateral cooperation instrument between the EUAA and the Albanian authorities.** The formulation and implementation of the Roadmap was funded through a **combination of funds** from the core budget of the Agency,⁹ and the project '[Regional Support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkan and Turkey](#)' funded by the EU IPA II. The IPA II project allocated € 1,475,500 to help advance EUAA's cooperation in the Western Balkan region and Turkey overall, without allocating specific shares to individual partner countries. The contribution from the Agency's core budget to this specific Roadmap is difficult to enumerate and attempting to do so is not within the scope of this evaluation. Rather, it was secured and updated on a rolling basis in the Roadmap's implementation plan, which meant that additional resources could be re-allocated on a needs basis, taking into account both the absorption capacities of the authorities and the evolving 'in-house' capacities of the Agency. The largest share of the budget corresponded to costs associated with the translation of training material¹⁰ and practical guides and tools into Albanian. The remaining costs related to travel for missions, interpretation, proofreading, copy-editing, and printing of materials.

In terms of **human resources**, one EUAA staff member was responsible for the planning, implementation, coordination and monitoring of the Roadmap. This same staff member also had other responsibilities, notably coordinating two other Roadmaps and supporting regional activities and horizontal processes of the Western Balkan team and the External and International Cooperation Unit as a whole. Thus, a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 0.25 was allocated to the coordination of the Roadmap. This Roadmap coordinator was supported by experts from other parts of the EUAA. Notably, there was one focal point on training, one focal point on asylum, and one focal point on reception. Other staff from across the Agency was mobilised based on needs and availabilities.

⁹ The Agency's own contribution concerned budget resources allocated for its external dimension priorities and in-house developed tools, guidance products and thematic expert support.

¹⁰ For both online (i.e., manuscript and subtitling or voice over for videos) and face-to-face (e.g., manual and handbook) modules.



At activity and output levels, **the Roadmap partially implemented what it intended to during the December 2020 to October 2022 period**. A total of 26 activities were planned in the Roadmap, of which 16 were fully implemented (61%), five were partially implemented (19%) and five were not implemented or postponed (19%). In broad terms, the support offered by the Agency consisted in legal advice for the alignment of legislation with the CEAS and EU practices; training and coaching for capacity building; and the provision of practical guidance and tools in Albanian to help improve asylum and reception practices. More support was provided in the field of asylum than in the field of reception. On asylum, 13 out of 19 planned activities were completed, five out of 19 partially implemented, one out of 19 not implemented, i.e., a completion rate of 68%. On reception, three out of seven activities were completed, and four out of seven were not implemented, i.e., a completion rate of 43%. Details on the implementation of different outcomes are presented below.

Outcome 1: Asylum related legislation aligned with the CEAS and EU standards

Out of the four planned activities, two (50%) were implemented in full, one (25%) was partially implemented and one was postponed (25%). The Agency provided comments to two draft by-laws (one on the accelerated procedure, one on reception conditions) to feed into their revision in line with the CEAS. A workshop was organised in August 2021 for the development of SOPs or workflows to implement the new by-laws, but they were not implemented. The planned study visit to exchange good practices, either online or in person, was postponed.

Outcome 2: Strengthened access to the asylum procedure, including the identification of persons with special needs

Out of the ten foreseen activities, six (60%) were fully implemented. For the other four (40%) activities, preparatory work was carried out, but the planned activities to improve the asylum procedure in practice could not be delivered. In relation to **access to procedure**, the Agency published the Albanian version of the [EUAA-Frontex access to procedure toolkit](#) and disseminated 200 copies to relevant Border and Migration Police staff.¹¹ The [Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs \(IPSN\)](#) was also translated and disseminated, and delivered workshops and on-the-job coaching to teach the authorities how to use it. In collaboration with UNHCR, the Agency also organised two roundtable events in December 2021 on Access to the Asylum Procedure and Identification and Referral of Persons with Specific Needs where both of these tools were presented to a total of 40 participants.

In relation to revised **pre-screening instruction and procedures**, aside from capacity building through the abovementioned roundtable events which covered this topic, no targeted support for rolling out the revised instructions took place. Similarly, in relation to **accelerated procedures**, the EUAA organised two expert guidance sessions on EU practices, one more than initially planned. Support with the rollout of the accelerated procedure was not implemented. Finally, in relation to **age assessment procedures**, the topic was raised in a regional workshop in which the authorities were informed about good practices, but an assessment of the current practice was not carried out. As a result, no further advice or guidance was presented to the authorities on the topic.

¹¹ An additional 100 copies of the tool were printed to be disseminated in Kosovo* at a later stage.



Outcome 3: Reinforced examination of asylum applications in line with the CEAS and EU standards

All five (100%) of the planned activities under this objective were implemented by the Agency. The Agency translated a number of its practical guides related to the asylum determination procedure into Albanian: the Guidance on [Personal interviews](#), on [Evidence assessment](#) and on [Qualification for international protection](#). These were disseminated to relevant staff of the Directorate for Asylum through on-the-job coaching and a dedicated workshop to discuss the guidance and advice on how to use them. In addition, three officials from the Directorate for Asylum participated in EUAA training on interview techniques. One of them completed the train-the-trainer module on this topic.¹² The Agency also translated the [Practical guide on the use of COI by case officers for the examination of asylum applications](#) into Albanian and disseminated it to the Directorate for Asylum. Three staff took part in training on COI methodology, and one of them completed the train-the-trainer module on COI.

Outcome 4: Enhanced reception services and conditions available to UAMs and vulnerable migrants

Out of the five foreseen activities, three (60%) were implemented and two (40%) were postponed. The Agency translated its [Guidance on reception conditions](#) and [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children](#) into Albanian and shared the documents with the authorities. Training on reception and reception of vulnerable migrants was offered by the Agency but not attended by the Albanian authorities. The planned assessment of reception conditions in Albania and feasibility study to support opening a reception facility for unaccompanied children/vulnerable groups was not carried out. Consequently, expert support or operational advice on establishing and managing a reception centre for UAMs and vulnerable persons through on-the-job coaching or a study visit was not offered.

Outcome 5: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

Neither of the two (0%) planned activities under this objective were implemented.

The Agency implemented several activities that were not initially foreseen in the Roadmap because no such need was identified at the time. For example, following increased influxes of asylum applicants during the Afghan crisis, the Albanian authorities received training on registration of applicants and on information provision, together with the authorities from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also benefited from EUAA train-the-trainer modules on trafficking in human beings (two participants from Albania) and a train-the-trainer session on fundamental rights (one participant from Albania).

4. Evaluation findings

4.1. To what extent was the action successful and why?

The **most appreciated support from the EUAA by the Albanian authorities related to capacity building activities**. Capacity building on all relevant topics (interview techniques, examination

¹² The two other officials did not complete the didactic part, meaning they were trained on interview techniques but are not certified to roll out the training nationally.



procedure, screening and referral of persons with special needs, access to the asylum procedure and use of COI) was welcomed and considered important for the alignment of standards and approaches with the CEAS and EU practices. The authorities expressed their satisfaction with the support because capacity building activities were delivered by senior experts, specialists and experienced trainers. Other stakeholders, such as Refugee and Migrant Services, a non-governmental organisation active in Albania, also participated in EUAA capacity building activities and appreciated this as well. Stakeholders appreciated that the EUAA was able to provide capacity building activities in a remote format considering travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, though some of the authorities experienced some (technical) challenges related to the online format and considered face-to-face activities to be more fruitful.

A key **hindering factor to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Roadmap** as a whole related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Maltese authorities put a travel ban in place from July 2020 until July 2022, i.e., for 16 months out of the total 24-month implementation period of the Roadmap. During this time, EUAA staff (residents of Malta) could travel to Albania only with special prior permission from the Ministry of Health, and even then, they had to be placed in a mandatory 14-day quarantine regardless of vaccination status. The Agency itself also restricted travel during this period, only allowing EUAA staff to travel for special missions with prior approval from the Executive Director and agreement to either quarantine for 14 days in Malta or in another ('green corridor') country at their own expense. **Because of the travel ban, only two expert missions (rather than six planned) could be carried out** – one on COI and one on registration and examination of asylum processes. The Roadmap coordinator traveled four times to Albania during this period to ensure continuity in the cooperation with the authorities and present EUAA tools at roundtable events on access to procedure and the IPSN tool, which would normally be done by colleagues from the Agency's Asylum Knowledge Centre.

Another **hindering factor to the efficiency of the Roadmap** related to human resources constraints on the side of both the authorities and the Agency. The Albanian administrations are small in size. For instance, the Directorate for Asylum had between three and five staff during the Roadmap implementation period, and had no Head of Asylum, the EUAA's main counterpart in-country, in place from September 2021 onwards. The fact that Albanian administration staff do not master the English language, while the EUAA Roadmap coordinator and expert staff do not speak Albanian and were not physically present in Albania often made this even more challenging. On the side of the Agency, the difficulty of aligning schedules of relevant staff who all had a range of different tasks and responsibilities and reportedly had no formal mechanisms in place to prioritise tasks, in some cases led to delayed implementation of foreseen actions as well.

Outcome 1: Asylum related legislation aligned with the CEAS and EU Standards

As set out in chapter 3, the **support in relation to aligning asylum related legislation in Albania with the CEAS was moderately successful**. Following the adoption of the Law on Asylum in February 2021, the authorities prepared 15 by-laws that were intended to support the operational implementation of the new law. Out of these 15 by-laws, five were identified by the EUAA as relevant ones they could provide comments on, in light of the Agency's mandate. The authorities only requested input from the Agency on two of them, however: the by-law on accelerated procedure and the by-law on reception conditions. This support was well received by all stakeholders, who underlined the quality and timeliness of the comments provided. According to the consulted authorities, support from the EUAA



was crucial in understanding the requirements and standards of the CEAS and how to apply them, especially in light of their possible future EU accession.

The **EUAA's comments on the draft by-laws were effective, as they helped support the alignment of national legislation with the CEAS and EU standards.**¹³ As this was a core goal of the Roadmap, it represents an important achievement. Work on this actually started before the adoption of the Roadmap, when the EUAA supported the Albanian authorities with the revision of the laws indirectly, through the EU Delegation in Tirana.

Despite advancements in the legal framework, there is limited evidence of the new laws having been effectively implemented in practice. As reported by the Commission, efforts should now focus on a swift and comprehensive implementation of the law, through the adoption of internal guidelines to guide the competent authorities in their work, and through capacity building.¹⁴ As explained by stakeholders, the law leaves certain aspects, e.g., the timeline for scheduling the personal interview and for completing the refugee status determination procedure, quite open, and there is a need to establish clear processes and procedures to ensure the process is as effective and efficient as possible.

While **such capacity building and institutional support activities were planned by the Agency, they could not be implemented in full.** There were two main hindering factors to this. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for the planned expert missions and study visits to be organised. On the other hand, turnover within the Albanian Directorate for Asylum and the absence of the EUAA's main counterpart in-country, hindered the development of internal guidelines (SOPs/workflows). Developing and implementing internal guidelines requires a human resource investment by the authorities and requires approval by the Head of Asylum. As the position remained vacant from September 2021, the Agency was limited in the support it could provide.

The **activities under this outcome were coordinated with other actors** such as UNHCR, non-governmental organisations such as Refugee and Migrant Services and the EU Delegation, all of which also supported the Albanian authorities in the revision of the laws. Stakeholders consulted within these organisations were satisfied with the support provided by the EUAA in this context. They wished the Albanian authorities would have taken on board more of the comments provided by the Agency and agreed that the Agency should continue to provide support to the Albanian authorities to implement the new laws in practice (see also section 4.3 on relevance).

Outcome 2: Strengthened access to the asylum procedure, including the identification of persons with special needs

The **support provided by the Agency for the strengthening of the asylum procedure was moderately successful.** Through the dissemination of the Albanian version of the [access to asylum procedure toolkit](#) and the IPSN tool and promotion of their use through workshops and on-the-job coaching, the Agency supported capacity building of the authorities in ensuring access to the asylum procedure and identifying and addressing special needs. According to stakeholders, the Directorate for Asylum is now better prepared to approach vulnerable cases because of this support.

¹³ [Albania 2021 Report](#), p. 46.

¹⁴ [Albania 2021 Report](#), p. 46.



The two roundtable events, on Access to the Asylum Procedure and Identification and Referral of Persons with Specific Needs, which the Agency organised in collaboration with UNHCR, played an important role in this regard. The **Agency and UNHCR worked together to build up the capacity of the Albanian authorities**, with the EUAA presenting about access to the asylum procedure (including the [EUAA-Frontex Toolkit](#)), and the IPSN tool, and UNHCR presenting its Vulnerability Screening Tool. These roundtables sufficiently covered the needs of the authorities during the 2020-2022 period, but there is a need to further operationalise the application of the tools through on-the-job coaching (see also section 4.3).

The Agency benefited from unexpected efficiency gains due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Roadmap coordinator travelled to Tirana in December 2021 to deliver presentations on access to procedures and the Agency's IPSN tool at the roundtable events organised by UNHCR. The mission would have been significantly more costly, both in terms of financial resources and human resources, if there had been no COVID-19-related restrictions, as the Agency's usual practice is to send thematic experts and/or the persons responsible for the development of tools on missions. Despite the coordinator not being a thematic expert on access to procedure and vulnerabilities, the presentations went smoothly and were well-received by participants, so this mission was highly efficient.

As concerns the **revised pre-screening instructions**, the envisaged support was delayed because the new procedure was adopted on 12 September 2022. Aside from a discussion about the new instructions and their implications, no practical support was therefore provided. The on-the-job coaching support that was envisaged to support the authorities with the implementation of the pre-screening instructions and procedures in practice remains relevant to implement in the future, considering the pre-screening instructions have recently been endorsed.

Similarly, **support related to the procedure on age assessment was limited yet relatively costly**, and there was no formal procedure on age assessment in place in Albania at the time of writing. The Albanian authorities benefited from learning about EU practices through the dissemination of the Albanian version of the EUAA's [Practical guide on age assessments](#), as well as through a regional workshop for the Western Balkan countries and Turkey that was organised in October 2020. The planned assessment of current practices could not be carried out because it would require the engagement of a local legal expert with expertise the Agency does not have in house. The Albanian Directorate for Asylum did not request this because it chose to prioritise other activities, such as the revision of legislation.

While the translations, proofreading and editing of EUAA guides and tools were relatively costly, they can be used in upcoming years, including to implement the Roadmap with Kosovo*.¹⁵

Outcome 3: Reinforced examination of asylum applications in line with the CEAS and EU standards

The Agency's support in relation to reinforcing the examination procedure was the most effective relative to other areas of support. The authorities were satisfied with the training as well as guidance

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

¹⁵ As Albanian is the most common language spoken in Kosovo*, all products that have been translated to Albanian can be reused.



and tools made available to them in Albanian, which supported them in their daily work. This is notably the case for the conduct of personal interviews, as all three staff of the Directorate for Asylum who are responsible for conducting personal interviews were trained by the EUAA. A consulted non-governmental organisation which provides legal assistance to asylum applicants noticed a clear improvement in the personal interview process, stating that the questions asked were being formulated more clearly and were more conducive to informing decisions at first instance.

At the same time, there has been a **lack of continuity in learning, due to turnover** at the Directorate for Asylum. The person that was trained as a trainer on interview techniques and COI methodology is no longer working there, so there currently is no certified trainer in Albania who can act as a multiplier for the training developed by the EUAA. Having a trainer in place would enable national rollouts which can be more tailored to the local context and practices in Albania. This, in turn, would not only increase the relevance of the support but also lead to efficiency gains for the Agency as it would limit the need for EUAA trainers to travel to Albania and the need to mobilise interpretation services.

Whether the dissemination of the guidance on evidence assessment and qualification have actually had an impact on the work of the Directorate for Asylum is difficult to assess. Only 11 decisions were made during 2021, and 39 in 2022, and there was a period (from September 2021 onwards) when there was no formal quality monitoring due to the position of Head of Asylum being vacant.

Further **support on the use of COI** was not provided because the Roadmap included a precondition that such support would be contingent on there being at least one new member of staff in the Ministry of Interior with a sufficient working level of English to access COI sources. Such a position was not put in place, because of resource constraints among the Directorate for Asylum and the need to master the English language to access EUAA COI. The authorities expressed a need for COI to be translated into Albanian, but this would require significant resource investments from the Agency, which would not be proportionate to the number of staff in Albania or to the number of asylum applications in the country. UNHCR has translated some of its COI into Albanian and thus fills this gap to some extent.

The **delivery of support under this outcome produced considerable yet justifiable costs for the Agency**, primarily related to the translation of training and guidance, and proofreading and layout services for the guidance. As already explained, these investments were justified by their potential long-term effect on capacity building and the fact that they have subsequently been used (or can be used in the future) for the implementation of the Roadmap with Kosovo* as well.

Outcome 4: Enhanced reception services and conditions available to UAMs and vulnerable migrants

In the area of reception services, limited progress was made. Due to resource constraints and the low number of applicants residing in the asylum centre (20 in total in August 2020, no more than 15 since the COVID-19 pandemic), the Albanian authorities prioritised other areas over reception.¹⁶ As a result, there was limited staff that could be trained on reception conditions and services. For example, a workshop was considered, but as only two relevant staff were identified to attend it, a decision was made that this would not be worth the investment. There was a plan for the EUAA to carry out an

¹⁶ [Albania 2021 Report](#), p. 45.



updated needs assessment in relation to reception conditions in Albania, but this had not been scheduled at the time of writing due to the responsible EUAA staff not being available.

In relation to reception conditions for children specifically, **Albania did not and still does not have separate facilities for UAMs**. Other stakeholders (UNHCR and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, with support from the EU Delegation) were supporting the Albanian authorities with building a mechanism for the effective and timely identification and referral of unaccompanied and separated children, including reception conditions adequate for them, in line with international standards. The support from the EUAA in this respect was thus focussed on building the capacity of the authorities to better understand EU standards related to reception conditions for unaccompanied children. This was done through the translation of relevant guidance on reception conditions. If separate facilities for unaccompanied children are put in place, further capacity building through practical on-the-job coaching on managing such a reception centre will be required.

Outcome 5: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

Limited progress was made towards enhancing the preparedness for a scenario of high influx through the establishment of a contingency plan. A contingency plan was drafted by the Albanian authorities with support from UNHCR, before the Roadmap was endorsed. The plan was not yet approved by the Council of Ministers, due to a lack of report on the financial cost for each institution involved. As per the precondition outlined in the Roadmap, no support on rolling out a contingency plan could be provided until the plan had been endorsed, so the support was postponed.

4.2. How did the Agency make a difference through the action?

The added value of the EUAA, notably in comparison to other actors such as UNHCR, which have a longer presence in Albania, is its role as a **centre of expertise on asylum and the CEAS**. The EUAA was considered by the authorities to provide more practical guidance and information, while UNHCR provided more operational support and assistance. The Agency's legal advice and comments on the draft legislation in recent years, including before the Roadmap, helped bring the legislation closer to the EU acquis, which is something other international actors could not have done.¹⁷ As the laws are not expected to change in the near future, the legislative changes are a step in the right direction towards ensuring that the asylum system in Albania is aligned with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices.

While it is **too soon to tell if capacity building activities have had a lasting impact**, some stakeholders noted that there had been improvements in the way the Albanian authorities carried out their work. For example, as mentioned in section 4.1 above, the way personal interviews are conducted seems to have improved as a direct result of the training provided by the EUAA. Had the Albanian authorities not had human resource constraints, the Agency's impact would likely have been greater, as more Albanian authorities could have taken part in capacity building activities. The Agency's added value could have been multiplied if there had been national trainers in Albania, who could roll out training

¹⁷ [Albania 2021 Report](#), p. 46.



nationally. This, too, was hindered by resource constraints and turnover within the Albanian administration.

The **added value of the Agency in the field of reception was limited** because the necessary prerequisites were not in place to provide the foreseen support. As the Agency is limited in its mandate to providing capacity building, guidance and work tools, it has no means to enforce the implementation of EU reception conditions or endorsement of a contingency plan and is thus dependent on the Albanian authorities putting these preconditions in place before such support can be provided.

4.3. Is the action relevant?

In general, consulted stakeholders agreed that the **support provided by the EUAA through the Roadmap was relevant**. The Roadmap was drafted following a joint needs assessment, so it was tailored to the needs of the authorities at the time it was drafted. When new needs came up, the Agency was able to flexibly respond to them as well.

In the **field of asylum**, the surge in applications following the Afghan crisis underlined the relevance of the Agency's support to the Albanian asylum authorities. In response to this unforeseen need, the Agency provided training on registration and information provision, which was not foreseen in the Roadmap initially but implemented following a need expressed by the authorities.¹⁸ Certain activities, such as the foreseen delivery of training modules on registration, information provision and vulnerability assessment (outcome 2) were considered to not be needed anymore as sufficient theoretical knowledge was acquired through the roundtable events. However, there is a need for further practical support, through on-the-job coaching, especially to implement the newly endorsed pre-screening instructions, as well as any future procedures such as on age assessment. Further practical support is also needed to continue the work towards implementing the new by-laws (outcome 1). As Albania currently has no national trainers on topics related to the refugee status determination procedure (outcome 3), further engagement in EUAA train-the-trainer sessions remains relevant.

In the **field of reception**, Albania closed reception centres during the COVID-19 pandemic, so there was not as much of a need for support in this area in comparison to asylum procedures. Nevertheless, Albania made progress in improving its reception centres through refurbishments after the COVID-19 crisis, which might increase the number of residents, making support on reception conditions more relevant in the future. The fact that there is still no dedicated space for vulnerable groups in reception centres further underlines this need. If the number of residents increases and a dedicated space for vulnerable persons is established, there will be an increase in reception staff and subsequently a need for the EUAA to provide further capacity building support to manage the centres in line with EU standards (outcome 4). So far, this capacity building support was not prioritised, as it would be more relevant and impactful to organise for a larger audience. Finally, given the low number of staff working on asylum and reception in Albania, there is still a need for a contingency plan to be adopted and rolled out (outcome 5). While the EUAA cannot influence the speed at which the contingency plan is adopted, it should remain prepared to support with its practical implementation when the plan is endorsed.

¹⁸ This training was organized jointly for the authorities in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

How relevant was the Roadmap to national authorities, and did it manage to adjust to changing needs and expectations? (Relevance)

The Roadmap and the outcomes it aimed to achieve were **very relevant in the field of asylum** (outcomes 1, 2, 3), and **less relevant in the field of reception** (outcomes 4, 5), especially in relation to the rollout of the contingency plan (outcome 5) as it was not endorsed. Although the Roadmap's outcomes, outputs and activities were designed to meet the needs identified during the needs assessment, during the implementation period there was a reorientation to asylum related support because this was prioritised by the authorities. Given the small size of their administrations, it would not have been feasible for the Albanian authorities to absorb all of the planned support within the two-year timeframe that was foreseen for the Roadmap.

The **flexibility shown by the Agency** to accommodate the absorption capacity of the authorities as well as to address to new needs as they arose, increased the relevance of the Roadmap as a whole. Now that there are no longer travel restrictions in place that hinder travel for on-the-job coaching and expert support, activities in the field of asylum should focus on accelerating the effective implementation of the newly adopted legislation through setting up working practices and procedures. Support in the field of reception will remain relevant in the future as well. If there is an increase in the number of residents or a new dedicated space for vulnerable persons is put in place, the previously foreseen support for capacity building and implementation of reception conditions in line with EU practices will be important to accelerate.

What were the key benefits of cooperation for national authorities? (Effectiveness)

The **main benefits of cooperation for national authorities were brought to bear in the area of asylum relative to that of reception**. The Agency was able to support the revision of legislation in the field of asylum (outcome 1), which helped further align it with the CEAS and EU practices. Even though the rollout of the new legislation in practice had not been completed and required more work, the authorities partook in capacity building activities that have already seemingly improved their work, notably relating to their ability to identify vulnerable persons (outcome 2) and the quality of personal interviews (outcome 3). The effectiveness of outcome 3 was especially high because all planned activities were fully implemented. The limitations to implementing the Roadmap were mostly due to factors outside of the Agency's control, such as the COVID-19-related travel restrictions which were enforced for 16 months out of the total 24-month implementation period, and the absorption capacity of the authorities.

The Roadmap was **less effective in the field of reception**. The Agency provided some guidance that may support an improvement in reception conditions (outcome 4) in the future, but could not implement all planned activities because of human resource constraints within the Agency and the authorities. The planned support for the implementation of a contingency plan in Albania (outcome 5) could not be delivered at all because the plan had not been formally endorsed by the authorities. There is a potential for the Agency to produce benefits for the authorities in the field of reception by



supporting the alignment of reception conditions with the CEAS and EU standards, but this has not yet materialised.

Has the EUAA provided enough resources to meet the objectives of the Roadmap? (Efficiency)

Conclusions on the overall **efficiency of the Roadmap** are difficult to draw. Both the Agency and the authorities were hindered by human resource capacity constraints which affected the implementation of the foreseen activities. While the financial resources assigned to the implementation of the Roadmap were sufficient, the coordination of the Roadmap represented more work than initially foreseen, and there were gaps in the continuity of the work in some cases due to competing priorities within the Agency.

Despite the challenges, the **efficiency of the Roadmap's activities on asylum (outcomes 1, 2, 3) was high** because the costs incurred were justified considering the outcomes achieved. The **efficiency of the activities on reception was fair (outcomes 4, 5)** because limited actions were implemented, but at the same time limited resources were invested, so the investments were proportionate. In fact, in the case of the initially planned capacity building activities on reception (outcome 4), a decision was made to postpone these until more staff would be available to attend them, to make investments more worthwhile.

To what extent is the intervention in Albania coherent with and complementary to other interventions in Albania that have similar objectives? (Coherence)

The Roadmap was **coherent with and clearly supported the advancement of the overall aims of the IPA II project**, and by extension, EU policy priorities in the field of asylum. This was mostly visible in the support provided with revision of the legislative framework (outcome 1). Within the IPA II project framework, the **Roadmap also complemented the Agency's work at regional level**, e.g., through workshops on COI and access to procedure. Where applicable, activities were also coordinated with other actors in Albania to avoid unnecessary duplication of work. This was especially the case in relation to the two roundtable events that were organised in cooperation with UNHCR (outcome 2).

To what extent and how did the Roadmap add value over other actors' interventions? (EU added value)

All of the above tie into the **added value of the Roadmap**. The added value of the EUAA, notably in comparison to other actors, is its role as a centre of expertise on the CEAS. As mentioned, the Agency helped align the legislation in Albania closer to the EU acquis, bringing it one step closer to potential future accession to the EU. All asylum-related activities of the Roadmap played a role in this. The added value in the field of reception services (outcome 4) was limited in light of the limited support provided, and could not be assessed in relation to contingency planning (outcome 5) because nothing had been done in this area at the time of writing.



Table 1. Evaluation criteria by outcome objective

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5
Relevance	Very good	Very good	Very good	Good	Fair
Effectiveness	Good	Good	Very good	Fair	Insufficient ¹⁹
Efficiency	Good	Very good	Good	Fair	Fair
Coherence	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Not applicable ²⁰
EU added value	Very good	Very good	Very good	Fair	Not applicable ²¹

Note: the rating is based on the evaluator’s qualitative judgement of the Roadmap performance. While quantitative evidence (pertaining to the percentage of activities implemented under each outcome objective) were used as a basis, judgements about the degree to which non-implementation was caused by factors outside of the control of the Agency were also taken into consideration.

5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

The **Roadmap was flexible enough to respond to changes in needs and priorities**. It was drafted in a way that left room for adjustments during the implementation period, referring, for example, to ‘workshops or on-the-job coaching’ rather than one of the two, or to ‘capacity building’ in more general terms. This increased its relevance and added value for the authorities, as new needs that arose could be tackled effectively, as long as they fell within the mandate of the Agency.

While this flexibility positively impacted the relevance and added value of the Roadmap for the authorities, it also **hindered advance planning and the possibility to prioritise for the Agency**. If the Roadmap’s activities had been more prescriptive, it might have helped the Agency prioritise tasks. This is especially the case for training, as the organisation and delivery of training is time consuming, compared to delivering presentations of workshops about a practical tool, for example.²²

The considerable share of planned activities that could not be fully implemented within the foreseen timeframe (38%) points to a degree of **misalignment in expectations**. The Roadmap was primarily concerned with institutional capacity building and adaptation of practices. These types of outcomes take time to materialise, especially because of the small size of the Albanian administration and the absence of a counterpart within the asylum administration for the majority of the Roadmap

¹⁹ This is rated as insufficient because no support was provided by the Agency. However, the lack of support was justified because the precondition of endorsing the draft contingency plan was not met by the Albanian authorities.

²⁰ As nothing was done under this outcome, its coherence with other actions cannot be assessed.

²¹ As nothing was done under this outcome, its EU added value cannot be assessed.

²² Translations are not done by Agency staff but rather through procurement, so while the Agency incurs financial costs for activities of this kind, the time invested is marginal.



implementation period. A longer timeframe for the Roadmap implementation would have enabled the Agency to achieve more of what it intended to.

Relatedly, there are lessons to be learnt on how the **implementation of the Roadmap was coordinated within the Agency**. An assessment of reception conditions (outcome 4) could not take place due to unavailability of the responsible EUAA staff, for example. At the same time, the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that certain activities (e.g., delivery of presentations on tools, outcome 2) can be effectively delivered by the Roadmap coordinator without necessarily requiring other EUAA staff to travel. Limiting the number of persons involved in missions enables staff to spend their time on other tasks and may marginally reduce the Agency's carbon footprint. In the case of questions that cannot be answered by the coordinator, the coordinator can consult internally to provide a response to the authorities later on (e.g., via email).

5.3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Re-align the level of ambition, scope and timeline of the Roadmap with the human resource/absorption capacities of the authorities and the Agency

As institutional change and capacity building take time to materialise, and the Albanian administration is limited in size and absorption capacity, the scope and timeframe of the Roadmap should be revisited. The Agency could consider:

- extending the timeframe for the Roadmap to three years;
- introducing a prioritisation of activities and outcomes: highest priority should go to those that are important to advance the accession journey of Albania or are considered most relevant by the authorities, and finally activities that would be 'nice to have' but are less essential or urgent (e.g., contingency planning).

Recommendation 2: Support the Albanian authorities with the implementation / rollout of new asylum legislation and practices in line with the CEAS and EU practices

While progress has been made on paper in terms of aligning legislation with the CEAS, there is a need to support the Albanian authorities to actually implement the legislation in practice. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment for a future Roadmap, the Agency could consider:

- providing guidance to establish workflows and SOPs related to the application of the pre-screening instructions which were adopted in September 2022;
- implementing the previously planned expert support with the development of an age assessment procedure, as there is no structured approach in Albania yet;
- making the support contingent on a prerequisite that the Directorate for Asylum puts in place a Head of Asylum as the main counterpart to the EUAA.

Recommendation 3: Increase capacity building support in the field of asylum

To further increase the capacity of the Albanian authorities, the Agency could consider:



- encouraging the Albanian Directorate for Asylum to nominate English-speaking staff to participate in EUAA train-the-trainer modules as there are currently no national trainers, e.g., by organising a meeting between the Training and Professional Development Centre and the Directorate for Asylum to discuss the training offer;
- providing capacity building support (potentially at regional level) on COI research, in view of Albania's potential future involvement in a regional COI network;
- providing additional capacity building support on access to the asylum procedure.

Recommendation 4: Provide support in relation to reception conditions

In light of the limited progress made in the field of reception so far and taking into account the results of a needs assessment for future support as part of a Roadmap, the Agency could consider:

- completing the previously foreseen assessment of reception conditions in Albania and feasibility study of opening a centre for vulnerable groups;
- supporting the authorities with the development of an action plan on reception in line with any gaps identified through the assessment;
- preparing to provide capacity building support (training), on the condition that new reception staff is hired and/or a centre for vulnerable groups is opened.

Recommendation 5: Reconsider the approach to staffing the Roadmap

In light of the Agency's limited resources, it is important to allocate work and responsibilities in an efficient way. The Agency could consider:

- increasing human resources for the coordination of the Roadmap, e.g., to 0.5 FTE;
- assessing whether it is essential for experts from the Training and Professional Development Centre or the Asylum Knowledge Centre to travel on missions to Albania, and if not, limit the number of staff traveling in favour of organising online meetings instead;
- hiring someone with professional knowledge of Albanian among the additional staff foreseen under the IPA III project;
- hiring or assigning expert staff with in-depth knowledge of the context and legal framework in the Western Balkan region to the Western Balkan team specifically (already foreseen under IPA III).



Annex 1: Methodology and analytical models used

The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, combining the use of existing sources of evidence with primary data collection, notably through (group) interviews.

Desk research included the Agency's monitoring data (which keeps track of which activities were implemented and when), the Roadmap document itself, relevant reports by the European Commission (notably 'Chapter 24' reports), and to a lesser degree statistics on asylum and reception which were used as contextual background information.

In terms of **interviews**, the evaluation made use of evidence collected through a total of 12 interviews (seven of them specifically about the Albania Roadmap, five covering all four Roadmaps being evaluated). Some of the interviews were carried out as group interviews, so a total of 21 stakeholders were consulted in total across all 12 interviews. The consulted stakeholders include relevant staff members from the EUAA, the authorities in Albania, other (international) actors active in the field of asylum and reception in Albania, and relevant EU representatives.

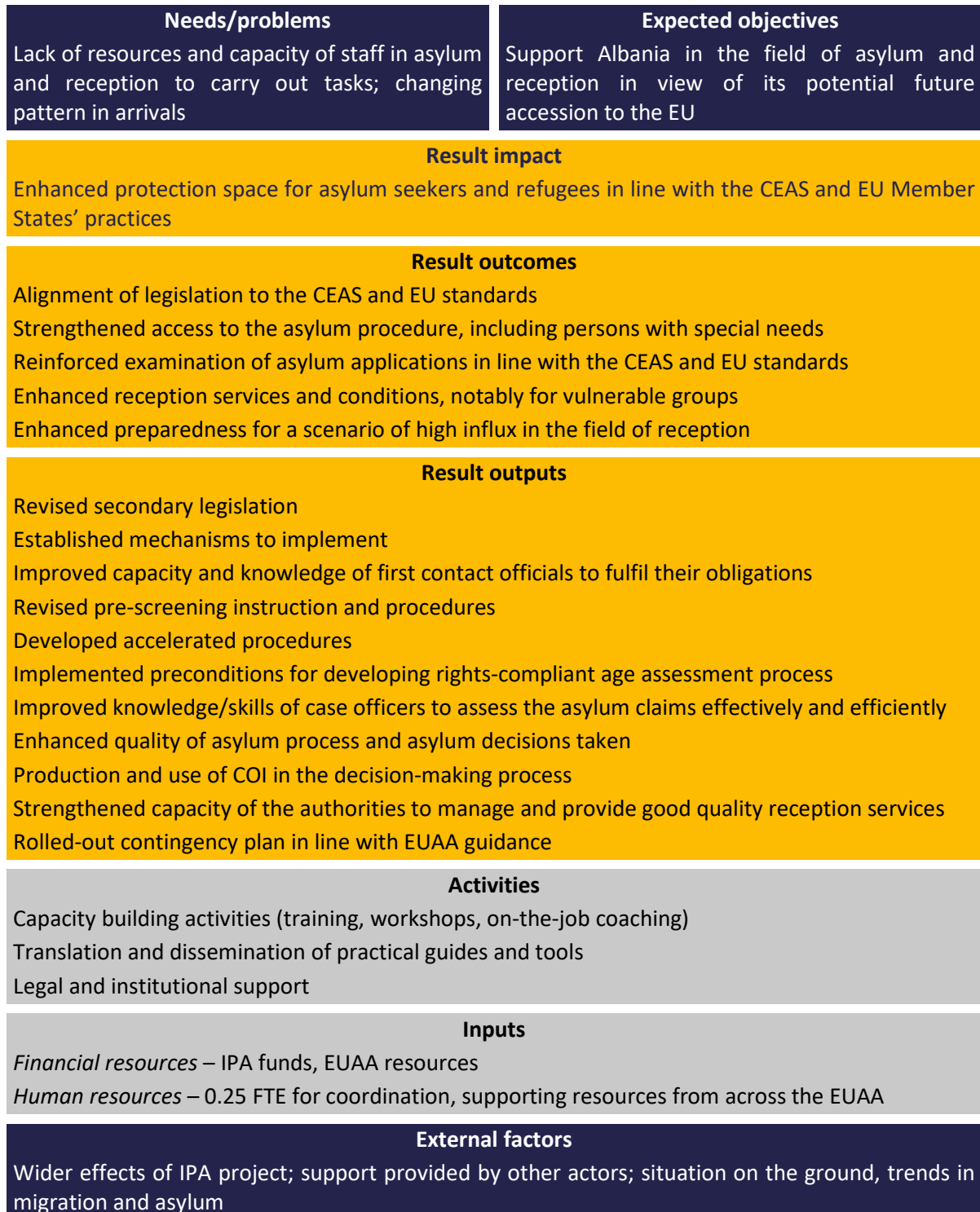
The collected primary and secondary evidence underwent a process of **triangulation and synthesis**, with a view to deriving robust, evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions, and formulating conclusions and lessons learnt for the future on that basis.

The **conclusions and lessons learnt**, as well as **recommendations** resulting from them, were validated with the Agency personnel after the submission of the draft report to ensure they were valid and appropriate, and workable given any contextual constraints faced by the Agency and/or other stakeholders.



Annex 2: Intervention logic

Figure 1. Simplified intervention logic of the Roadmap





Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Table 2. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<p>Relevance: To what extent was the intervention in Albania relevant to its stakeholders, in light of their original needs and any changes therein?</p>	<p>Priority question: How relevant was the Roadmap to national authorities, and did it manage to adjust to changing needs and expectations? What are the key priorities for future cooperation?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><i>To what extent are the authorities satisfied with the scope and dynamics of the cooperation?</i></p> <p><i>What needs and problems were identified prior to the launch of the intervention? Were these adequately addressed by the intervention?</i></p> <p><i>Have the needs and problems evolved over time? Did the Agency adapt accordingly?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any gaps in terms of needs or problems not addressed by the intervention?</i></p>	✓	✓
<p>Effectiveness: What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the intervention and to what extent can these be credited to the intervention in Albania rather than external factors?</p>	<p>Priority question: What were the key benefits of cooperation for national authorities?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><i>What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the intervention?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent do the observed effects link to the intervention? To what extent can these changes/effects be credited to the intervention(s)?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent are there other (internal and external) factors that influenced the observed achievements?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓
<p>Efficiency: To what extent are the costs of the intervention in Albania justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced the efficiency of the</p>	<p>Priority question: Has the EUAA provided enough resources to meet the objectives of the Roadmap?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><i>To what extent were the human resources and time appropriate to implement the intervention? Were they proportionate to the planned activities and the expected results?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent and how could the efficiency of the intervention be improved?</i></p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
intervention in Albania?	<i>To what extent internal and/or external factors influenced the efficiency of the intervention? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i>		
Coherence: To what extent is the intervention in Albania coherent with other interventions that have similar objectives (i.e., UNHCR)?	Priority question: Was the Agency's work coherent with and complementary to other initiatives in Albania? <u>Prompts</u> <i>Was there unnecessary overlap or duplication?</i> <i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i>	✓	✓
EU added value: To what extent has the EUAA intervention in Albania had added value in relation to the accession process of the country, particularly regarding the implementation and alignment with Chapter 24 of the EU acquis?	Priority question: To what extent and how did the Roadmap add value over other actors' interventions? <u>Prompts</u> <i>What is specific to the cooperation with the EUAA that is appreciated by national authorities (modalities of cooperation, access to specific information, EU Member State, etc)?</i> <i>Is there evidence suggesting that the specific outcomes of the intervention could not have been achieved to the same degree without the intervention?</i> <i>What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the existing Agency's intervention?</i> <i>To what extent has the Roadmap contributed to the progressions made within the accession process?</i> <i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i>	✓	✓