



External evaluation of the EUAA's Roadmap for cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ex post evaluation report

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EUAA/EVAL/2022/11/FR; Final

October 2022





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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
ARC	Assessment of reception conditions
BIC	Best interest of the child
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CoE	Council of Europe
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EU	European Union
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SA	Sector for Asylum
SFA	Service for Foreigners' Affairs
SOP	Standard operating procedure
UAMs	Unaccompanied minors
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund



Executive summary

This report provides an evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, European Union (EU) added value and relevance of the Roadmap for Cooperation agreed between the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period October 2020 – September 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 Bosnia and Herzegovina, strengthen and implement effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to unaccompanied minors (UAMs), and strengthen the capacity of the authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services with a specific focus on vulnerabilities under the condition that the authorities would become responsible for the management of reception centres and request such support.

The Roadmap was highly relevant to national authorities particularly in light of their accession journey and need to align with the EU acquis. In the field of asylum, the Roadmap was relevant to tackle key priorities in the country as the support envisaged as part of the Roadmap was in line with Chapter 24 and the Opinion issued by the European Commission on their application for membership, which highlighted the need to strengthen institutional coordination, ensure effective access to procedures and the adequate protection of vulnerable groups. The support in the field of reception was relevant when first planned, but since the precondition of national authorities to fully taking over the legal responsibility for all reception centres was not met during the Roadmap implementation period, limited support was needed (and requested) in the end.

The **effectiveness of the Roadmap overall was modest** (25% of planned activities were fully implemented, 20% partially implemented), though this was primarily due to reasons outside of the Agency's control. In the field of asylum, the Agency supported the revision of the Asylum Law and its accompanying by-laws. It also delivered institutional capacity building activities to a significant number of participants. Support in these areas was highly appreciated by national authorities who reported having noticed a positive change in the quality and speed of their work. In the field of reception, the potential areas of support outlined in the Roadmap were contingent on the effective transfer of reception facilities management competencies to national authorities. As this transfer did not fully take place during the Roadmap implementation period, the Agency was severely limited in the support it could provide, and thus only contributed with capacity building support and practical guidance. This concern was known at the needs assessment stage, but support on this outcome was nonetheless included in the Roadmap, in the event that something changed during the 2020-2022 period.

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 work in some cases due to human resources constraints within the Agency. Additional challenges, notably the COVID-19¹-related travel ban (enforced for 21 months out of the 24-month implementation period of the Roadmap) severely hindered the Agency from providing the intended support in an effective and efficient manner.

¹ Coronavirus disease 2019.



While other actors were also present and provided comparable support to the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **their activities were coordinated** to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and inconsistencies. The **added value of the Roadmap in this respect stems from its role as a centre of expertise on the CEAS** which other actors could not provide, at least not to the same extent.

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

Recommendation 1: Accelerate support concerning the implementation of the asylum legislation

Given the partial completion of some of the activities during the implementation period, a finalisation of their implementation would be beneficial. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment preceding a future Roadmap, the Agency could consider further supporting the authorities to implement the new legislation in practice. In the field of reception, the Agency could consider including the activities in high-level working arrangements rather than a future Roadmap, if a decision is made to make use of working arrangements.²

Recommendation 2: 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; embedding reception and asylum experts in the European and International Cooperation Unit specifically; and establishing a physical presence to facilitate closer interaction with the authorities and other organisations on the ground.

Recommendation 3: Put in place systematic financial/monitoring data collection mechanisms

To improve monitoring and subsequent evaluation of the Roadmap in the future, the Agency could consider developing and distributing tailored questionnaires to collect information on how learnings from training and practical guides or tools are actually applied, as well as disaggregating training satisfaction data per country and disaggregating financial data per outcome to facilitate monitoring and evaluation.

² Article 35 of the EUAA Regulation foresees that the Agency can conclude working arrangements with the authorities in third countries. These need prior approval from the European Commission, Parliament and Council so they would bear more political weight. If a decision is taken to establish working arrangements with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Roadmap could be used as a short term 'work plan' that excludes reception support until the responsibilities are transferred.



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 Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter ‘the Roadmap’).³ 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 Agency’s support to the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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 associated European Commissions’ Progress Reports, in particular those aimed at meeting the criteria under Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security (hereinafter, ‘Chapter 24’). Bosnia and Herzegovina applied for EU membership in February 2016. In June 2022, the European Council affirmed its readiness to grant the status of candidate country to Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴

The main asylum and reception authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and main counterparts of the Roadmap, are the Sector for Asylum (SA) and the Service for Foreigners’ Affairs (SFA). The SA is responsible for the processing of asylum claims and determining whether there are grounds for provision of international protection. The SA receives asylum claims, registers the applicants, conducts interviews with asylum seekers and issues its decision on claims. The SFA decides on status of foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) by deciding on visa requests, approving or denying a request for stay, prolongation or cancelling the right to stay, exile, issuing the surveillance order or removing the foreigner from BiH. It monitors illegal migration and oversees and controls legality of stay of foreigners in the country.

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 authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina or other stakeholders. The evaluation sought to answer the following priority questions:⁵

³ 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). As the Roadmap being evaluated in this report was agreed before the new Regulation entered into force, the report refers to the Roadmap as EASO-BiH 2020-2022 Roadmap or just ‘the Roadmap’.

⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (last accessed 3/11/2022).

⁵ 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 evaluations questions can be found in Annex 3: Evaluation matrix.



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)
3. To what extent is the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina **coherent** with and complementary to other interventions that have similar objectives? (Coherence)⁶
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 Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession process), with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with national authorities, international organisations, and EUAA staff (see Annex 1 for more details on the methodology). These sources of information were used to provide an in-depth assessment of the results of the intervention. 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 Roadmap was 24 months, from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2022. The Roadmap had **three 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: Better alignment of the asylum legislation with the CEAS and EU standards.
- Output 1.2: Mechanisms for effective implementation of the asylum legislation and processing of asylum claims in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices strengthened.
- Output 1.3: Increased institutional coordination, effective screening system and systematic respect of procedural guarantees for asylum seekers strengthened.

The Roadmap sought to support the revision of the Asylum law and its accompanying by-laws through the provision of expert advice. The Roadmap further foresaw the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) on examination and registration, and workflows to support the work of case officers and ensure systematic application of the legislation. Moreover, on-the-job coaching was envisaged to ensure effective processing of asylum claims. Continuous support of short-term experts and on-the-job coaching was planned to enhance institutional coordination. Furthermore, additional capacity

⁶ 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).



building activities for the SFA officers and SA registration and case officers, respectively, as well as joint workshops with SA and SFA staff were foreseen.⁷ Moreover, expert support and on-the-job coaching for the development of effective screening procedures and instruments for vulnerable categories to the SFA was expected to be provided.

Outcome 2: Effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to UAMs strengthened and implemented

- Output 2.1: Enhanced referral procedures between the relevant authorities; tools, instruments and practices to identify, assess and respond to the best interest of the child (BIC).
- Output 2.2: Strengthened rights-compliant age assessment process.
- Output 2.3: Developed family tracing process.
- Output 2.4: Management system to ensure sustainable training of the relevant authorities and their respective staff with regards to the respect of international standards and procedural safeguards for children.

The Roadmap envisaged the provision of support to contribute to the development of clear referral procedures, tools, and instruments for the identification, assessment and response of special needs of children in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also foresaw capacity building activities such as four workshops on BIC and the dissemination of Bosnian translations of a range of practical guides and tools on BIC. The delivery of four workshops on age assessment (eight participants) and four on family tracing (eight participants) were planned as well. Additionally, the translation and dissemination of the Agency's [Practical guide on age assessment](#), the [video](#) on age assessment and the [Practical guide on family tracing](#) were planned. Finally, the Roadmap foresaw the provision of support for the development of knowledge management on international standards and procedural safeguards for children by supporting the development of sustainable knowledge management system through the organisation of four workshops with 20 participants overall.

Outcome 3: Capacity of the authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services with a specific focus on vulnerabilities are strengthened

- Output 3.1: Enhanced by-law on reception.
- Output 3.2: Strengthened capacity of national authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services to UAMs.
- Output 3.3: Strengthened contingency planning on reception.

Under the precondition that management of the reception centres would be transferred to the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that they requested the Agency's support, the Roadmap outlined the possible provision of senior expert support with operational experience in managing reception; the development of SOPs, protocols and workflows for managing reception centres; and

⁷ At the beginning of the implementation period, 75 first contact officers (SFA) were expected to be trained on identification and referral of persons with special needs; cultural differences and cultural mediation and access to asylum procedure. Additionally, the participation of at least one case officer (SA) in train-the-trainer modules on inclusion (advanced) and one case officer (SA) on Interviewing children was foreseen. Finally, joint workshops (operational training) for the SA and SFA in the areas of trafficking in human beings, sexual and gender-based violence; UAMs; Traumatized individuals in trafficking in human beings and sexual and gender-based violence; sexual orientation and gender identity.



capacity building on management of reception centres with special focus on UAMs through the participation of at least two staff members (one from SA and one from SFA) in the EUAA train-the-trainer module on reception and reception of vulnerable persons. The Roadmap furthermore envisaged the provision of expert support to review the by-law on reception to ensure alignment with EU and Member States' practices; the provision of expert support, workshops; and the dissemination of the Bosnian translation of the Agency's [Practical guide on contingency planning](#) to support the development of a contingency plan for the country.

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.

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.

An assessment carried out in 2018 by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)⁸ concluded that the SFA had **insufficient infrastructure to deal with vulnerable migrants**. No effective screening mechanisms or procedures and instruments to identify, assess and refer vulnerable persons were in place. First contact officers, asylum case officers and social and welfare officers also lacked resources, tools, and adequate skills to initiate, refer and conduct family tracing and age assessment, thus posing potential protection risks to UAMs.

In 2019, the European Commission issued an [Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union](#) recommending that effective coordination, at all levels, of border management and migration management capacity is ensured as well as ensuring the functioning of the asylum system. According to the document, the **lack of coordination between key institutions** (i.e., Border Police, SFA and SA) hinders the effective processing of asylum claims, as well as overall management of migration. In its 2020 Chapter 24 report, the Commission found that the legislation on asylum in Bosnia and Herzegovina was broadly in line with international standards and the EU acquis, yet legislation was not harmonised across the country, and institutional cooperation and coordination were weak.⁹ Particularly, the Commission identified a need for the implementation of the asylum legislation to be improved to ensure effective access to asylum procedures and systematic respect of procedural guarantees for asylum seekers. In fact, obstacles to ensuring effective access to asylum procedure were identified from 2018 due to insufficient human resource capacities and lack of facilities to register asylum intents upon entry in the country on the SFA's and Border Police side.¹⁰

By late August 2020, approximately 10,000 migrants and asylum seekers were present in the country, around 6,500 of which were sheltered in seven EU-funded temporary reception centres in the Una-Sana and Sarajevo cantons. Facilities were insufficient to ensure shelter and protection to those in need and access to asylum and to services varied depending on the reception centres' location. As the

⁸ OSCE (2018), [Assessment: Migrant and Refugee Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 25 September 2018](#).

⁹ [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report](#), p. 35, 43.

¹⁰ [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021 Report](#).



authorities had not taken over the legal responsibility for the temporary reception centres in the Una-Sana canton, as well as those in Sarajevo, there was a lack of reception strategy, contingency plan, reception management system and reception governance institutions/structures.

To help address these issues, a thorough needs assessment was conducted by the EUAA between September 2019 and October 2020,¹¹ involving national authorities as well as other key stakeholders (i.e., EU Delegation, European Commission, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), OSCE, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Council of Europe (CoE), international stakeholders and civil society organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. 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 national authorities. The formulation and implementation of the Roadmap was funded through a combination of funds from the core budget of the Agency,¹² and the project '[Regional Support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkan and Turkey](#)' funded by the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (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.

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 asylum, one focal point on reception, and one focal point on training. Other experts and staff from across the Agency were mobilised based on needs and availabilities.

At activity and output levels, **the Roadmap partially delivered what it intended to during the October 2020 to September 2022 period**. A total of 20 activities were planned in the Roadmap, of which five were fully implemented (25%), four partially implemented (20%) and 11 not delivered or postponed

¹¹ Two field missions were organised in September and December 2019. Further consultations were carried out between March and October 2020, including during a final mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020, with national authorities and international stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refine the findings of the needs assessments missions and design appropriate interventions.

¹² 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.



(55%). This support was mainly provided in the field of asylum as the specific support in reception could not be implemented. 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 six planned activities, three (50%) were fully implemented, two (33%) were not implemented and one (17%) was partially implemented. In February 2021, the EUAA supported the **revision of the [Asylum Law](#) and its accompanying by-laws** in order to ensure the harmonisation of national laws with CEAS standards. The planned joint SOPs and workflows for coordination between SFA and SA could not be implemented, however. Overall, 45 participants took part in various **capacity development activities** during the implementation period. Apart from a series of peer-to-peer exchanges, coaching sessions and workshops (e.g., on age assessment), this included participation in nine train-the-trainer sessions (see Table 1), a didactic session organised for the Western Balkan countries in September 2021 (13 participants), a training session on information provision (six participants) and one on registration of applications for international protection (seven participants).

Table 1. Train-the-trainer sessions and number of participants

Train-the-trainer session	Participants
Trafficking in human beings	3
Interview techniques	2
Fundamental rights	2
Inclusion	2
Evidence assessment	2
Gender, gender identity and sexual orientation	2
Interviewing vulnerable persons	1
Interviewing children	1
Reception	4
Total	19

Outcome 2: Effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to UAMs strengthened and implemented

Out of the eight activities planned, six activities (62%) were not implemented, two (25%) were fully implemented, one (12%) was partially implemented. The envisaged provision of expert support, on-the-job coaching and workshops to enhance referral procedures to give an adequate response to the **special needs of children and to support the development of workflows to ensure BIC** could not be carried out. In the area of **age assessment procedures**, one out of the four workshops envisaged was organised and four officers were upskilled (instead of the 20 planned) and the Practical guide on BIC was translated and shared. On-the-job coaching to strengthen rights-compliant age assessment procedures did not take place. Similarly, the four workshops envisaged in the area of **family tracing** and on-the-job-coaching activities could not be delivered. The Agency translated and shared the [Practical guide on family tracing](#). Activities to enhance the management system to ensure sustainable



training concerning international standards and procedural safeguards for children (i.e., workshops) could not be organised.

Outcome 3: Capacity of the authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services with a specific focus on vulnerabilities are strengthened

Out of the six activities outlined in the Roadmap, four were not implemented (66%) and two (34%) were partially implemented. Four **SA officers participated in an EUAA train-the-trainer session on reception**. The EUAA did not provide feedback on the revision of the by-law on reception, nor expert advice on managing reception facilities or support to the development of a contingency plan.

The Agency also implemented additional activities that were not initially foreseen in the Roadmap. For instance, the [Assessment of Reception Conditions \(ARC\)](#) tool was introduced to national authorities through the organisation of a session where experts from Spain and Greece shared their experiences from operations. Additionally, *ad hoc* support to share EU Member States' experiences on the digitalisation of asylum procedures was also provided at the request of national authorities.

4. Evaluation findings

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

The **most appreciated support delivered by the Agency for national authorities was the provision of legislative support and the capacity building activities**. In relation to the latter, train-the-trainer sessions were very well received by national authorities, who participated in additional sessions to those initially foreseen. Moreover, despite not being originally envisaged, national authorities also participated in additional capacity building activities (i.e., training session on information provision and one on registration of applications for international protection). Capacity building activities on interviewing techniques, human trafficking, as well as access to the asylum procedure in safe third countries and registration reportedly contributed to the strengthening of capacities and a more effective approach towards vulnerable persons.

However, **the Roadmap's implementation overall was significantly hindered by factors that were largely beyond the control of the Agency**. For instance, in the field of reception, limited work was carried out because it was not requested by the authorities and they did not fully become responsible for reception management during the Roadmap implementation period (precondition for support). Other constraints included the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel ban, which was enforced for 21 months out of the 24-month implementation period and thus limited the possibility of EUAA staff and Member State experts to travel. Even though some activities could be moved online, others (e.g., on-the-job coaching) are better delivered face-to-face. More generally, some of the consulted stakeholders mentioned that the remote management and implementation of the Roadmap hindered the ability of the Agency to capture nuances and practical aspects which are easier to observe through close and regular contact with the authorities. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the EUAA Roadmap coordinator travelled five times to Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure continued coordination, communication and smooth implementation to the extent possible with the authorities.



The Roadmap was also hindered by the complex institutional framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A key stakeholder pointed to issues derived from the fact that information is not adequately trickled down to the end beneficiaries of the Roadmap. In their view, the end beneficiaries of the Roadmap (i.e., case and first contact officers) are not sufficiently aware and/or prepared to implement some of the outputs agreed by the negotiating partners (i.e., the Agency and the authorities in charge of the negotiations). Thus, on some occasions, implementing partners did not have the time nor the resources to implement the outputs agreed. Additionally, changes in the composition of the organisations on national authorities' side and insufficient coordination of migration-related measures among competent institutions hindered the implementation of the activities, according to the stakeholders interviewed.

Outcome 1: Effective asylum system aligned with the CEAS and EU practices

One of the key benefits of the Roadmap for national authorities was the provision of legislative support to ensure alignment of asylum legislation in line with the CEAS and EU standards through the revision of the Asylum Law and by-law on Asylum. Particularly, the Agency's support provided guidance to policymakers to further align the legislation in areas pointed out by the Chapter 24 report, namely standardised procedures for the examination of applications for international protection and systematic access to procedural guarantees, interview techniques, evidence assessment, guarantees for vulnerable groups and UAMs, access to rights and legal aid. While the Agency's comments were not fully taken on board, the legislative support was nevertheless highlighted by national authorities as a key area of cooperation under the Roadmap as it provided details and clear direction on which areas required further alignment. While other organisations (e.g., UNHCR) also provided inputs for the review of the by-laws, the Agency's feedback from the perspective of alignment with the CEAS was something only the Agency could deliver (see also section 4.2).

The initially planned activities related to the development of SOPs to ensure systematic application of the law did not take place because of a lack of capacity on the Agency's side. The authorities acknowledged the need for the progressive introduction of SOPs and workflows to support them in applying the new laws and suggested that these should be accelerated. Introducing changes to institutional procedures and practices takes time, and the two-year timeframe of the Roadmap, especially in light of constraints like the COVID-19 pandemic, was insufficient for such changes to be introduced. It seems, however, that national authorities were prepared to introduce new ways of working; at the time of writing, a mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina was planned to rediscuss the development of SOPs and workflows to ensure the effective processing of asylum claims.

Another **important achievement under this outcome relates to capacity building and knowledge transfer**. Despite not fully implementing the activities foreseen at the beginning of the implementation period (see chapter 3), these activities were quite effective. According to the authorities, the guidance, tools, peer-to-peer exchanges and training sessions provided or facilitated by the EUAA increased the speed and efficiency of the asylum procedure, contributing to an overall improvement and harmonisation of their asylum system with EU standards and an increase in the numbers of registrations, interviews and decisions. According to the European Commission, the processing speed reduced in the first half of 2022, but it was still considered too lengthy.¹³

¹³ European Commission (2022), [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report](#), page 47.



The Agency's **train-the-trainer sessions** were also appreciated by national authorities. According to the EUAA, the authorities showed interest and participated actively in train-the-trainer sessions, and their participation rates were impressive considering the relatively small size of the administrations. These train-the-trainer sessions, which have the objective of building institutional capacity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, were complementary to more operational training provided by other organisations.¹⁴ Nevertheless, no national rollouts were organised in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the framework of this Roadmap.¹⁵ Future rollouts could maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's capacity building support. Some of the consulted stakeholders suggested that the Agency should follow up on the training delivered to ensure that the learnings of the training are translated operationally.

Outcome 2: Effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to UAMs strengthened and implemented

The **availability of practical guidance and tools in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian**, was positively perceived by national authorities. They highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer exchanges and having access to practical examples on how to apply good practices in the asylum procedure, particularly concerning the provision of adequate support to vulnerable groups. Moreover, the delivery of train-the-trainer sessions on interviewing techniques, including interviewing children, served to enhance the capacities of case officers, according to the authorities consulted. Despite this, key milestones, such as the development of a rights-compliant age assessment procedure and/or family tracing workflows on the basis of these good practices were not put in place. While the authorities reported their willingness to continue to implement the envisaged support in this area, work was hindered by the limited human resources on the Agency's side and the COVID-19-related travel ban.

The **support delivered in this area by different organisations, particularly through training, needs to be carefully observed in order to avoid potential duplications in efforts**. Potential duplications on age assessment with the CoE and UNICEF could be identified, however, the Agency is aware of this and was planning to involve them once the work on age assessment is kicked off. In relation to BIC, the Agency's train-the-trainer methodology complemented more operational training provided by UNCHR. However, the fact that there are still challenges in operationalising BIC in practice points to there still being a need for both types of training in the future, in which case alignment needs to be ensured.

Outcome 3: Strengthened capacity of the authorities to manage and provide good quality reception services with a specific focus on vulnerabilities

The ability of the Agency to effectively contribute to strengthening the authorities' capacities to provide quality reception services with a specific focus on reception was highly impacted by several factors, most notably the fact that the **preconditions set out in the Roadmap were not met**. The

¹⁴ For instance, UNHCR rolled out four training modules in November 2020 targeting SFA officials and covering areas such as registration, processing families and children and identifying vulnerabilities.

¹⁵ The Agency supported the rollout of training by national trainers previously, however, outside of the framework of the Roadmap.



provision of support in the area of reception was contingent on the effective transfer of reception facilities management competencies from IOM to national authorities. In March 2019, the Council of Ministers decided to take over the responsibility of the reception facilities in the Una-Sana canton. However, this decision was not implemented. Additionally, the establishment and formal approval of a reception centre for vulnerable asylum seekers was not met, which impeded the effective implementation of the majority of activities foreseen under this outcome.

This concern was known at the needs assessment stage, but support on this outcome was nonetheless included in the Roadmap, in the event that something changed during the 2020-2022 period. This is because, unlike the Agency's operating plans in EU Member States, the Roadmaps are strategic frameworks for cooperation which outline potential areas of support which are not only contingent to the fulfilment of certain preconditions but are dependent on whether national authorities request support from the Agency.

By October 2022, as per the Commission's 2022 Chapter 24 report, the authorities at all levels of government failed to improve coordination and share the responsibility in hosting asylum seekers and migrants across the entire country, and institutional and coordination weaknesses in migration management remained.¹⁶ Until the task of managing migration is more fairly shared among all entities and cantons, under the full responsibility of the state authorities, the EUAA remains limited in the support it can provide.

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 and IOM, is its role as a **centre of expertise on the CEAS**. Legal advice concerning the alignment of asylum legislation with the CEAS is an area of support inherently linked to the EUAA's mandate and its role of ensuring the practical implementation of the CEAS. The support provided in this regard helped the authorities align the legal framework with the CEAS on areas where further alignment was needed according to the Chapter 24 report. While there are still shortcomings and support concerning the practical implementation of the legislation is still outstanding, the legal changes are a step in the right direction towards ensuring that the asylum system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is aligned with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices, in preparation for their potential future accession to the EU.

While it is **too soon to tell if capacity building activities have effectively increased capacity**, some stakeholders noted that there have been improvements in the way the authorities carry out their work, e.g., increase in the number of registrations, interviews and decisions. According to national authorities, without the Agency's support, the processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be slow and untimely, which was the case in the 2018-2020, prior to support being provided by the EUAA. Additionally, the **support provided by the EUAA through the provision of tools and materials, facilitation of peer-to-peer exchanges, coaching and training**, which reflects existing good practices in EU Member States, was perceived to be a key added value of the Agency's intervention.

The **added value of the Agency in the field of reception was limited** as the foreseen support could not be implemented as the reception system in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not ready to absorb the added

¹⁶ European Commission (2022), [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report](#), page 45.



value that the Agency could potentially provide in this area. However, the introduction of the ARC tool accompanied by on-the-job coaching sessions and provision of corresponding training constitute a step towards an increased role for the Agency in the area of reception.

4.3. Is the action relevant?

The **Roadmap was highly relevant to national authorities particularly in light of their accession journey and need to align with the EU acquis.** Despite the fact that the majority of envisaged activities could not be implemented, the Roadmap provided a strategic framework for cooperation between the Agency and Bosnia and Herzegovina through which support can be provided to strengthen national authorities' capacity and hence contribute to the enhancement of the asylum system in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices. In the absence of such a framework, the process to formalise the cooperation between the Agency and Bosnia and Herzegovina would be more burdensome. The relevance of the intervention is expected to further increase in future iterations of the Roadmap as the relationship between the authorities and the Agency is further strengthened.

The needs assessment contributed to the relevance of the Roadmap due to its thoroughness and in-depth analysis of the asylum and reception system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The needs assessment and priority identification for Bosnia and Herzegovina was a two-stage process.¹⁷ During the second stage (2019-2020), two missions to the country were organised in September and December 2019. Further consultations were carried out between March and October 2020, including a final mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 to refine the findings of the needs assessments missions and design appropriate interventions.

In the field of **asylum, the Roadmap was relevant** to tackle key priorities in the country as the support envisaged as part of the Roadmap was in line with Chapter 24 and the Opinion issued by the European Commission on their application for membership, which highlights the need to strengthen institutional coordination, ensure effective access to procedures and the adequate protection of vulnerable groups. However, as previously mentioned, the partial implementation of the activities and the short timeline of the intervention hindered the effectiveness of the Roadmap in this regard. Therefore, key areas of cooperation such as the development of SOPs to accelerate the implementation of the asylum legislation remain priorities going forward and could be maintained in future iterations of the Roadmap.

In spite of the hindering factors which impeded the effective provision of support by the Agency, **the relevance of the Roadmap on reception remains fair.** As previously mentioned, the Roadmaps are strategic frameworks to facilitate cooperation between the Agency and third countries. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the presence of IOM and the lack of effective management of the reception facilities by the authorities limited the relevance of the activities envisaged in this area (e.g., deployment of an expert on the ground). However, the relevance of the support in this area is expected to increase, particularly given the progress made concerning the effective control of reception centres in the Una -Sana canton by national authorities. Thus, while future iterations of the Roadmap should

¹⁷ The first stage of the needs assessment was a response to a request of DG NEAR as a response to an increase in mixed migration flows in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A follow up needs assessment was carried out which formed the basis of the Roadmap.



consider the inclusion of support in reception, the formulation of the outputs/outcomes related to this should be realistic and adjusted to the reality on the ground.

The flexibility of the Roadmap to accommodate emerging needs contributed to the relevance of the Roadmap, according to stakeholders, through for instance, remote peer-to-peer exchanges, organisation of online workshops to facilitate development of procedures and online training sessions after the outbreak of COVID-19 and the support provided in the aftermath of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and during the crisis in Afghanistan on registration and information provision. Additionally, the Roadmap allowed national authorities to request support outside the scope of the initially agreed deliverables to respond to an emerging need. Indeed, the **introduction of the ARC tool** was not originally foreseen, but was very well perceived by national authorities and international organisations (i.e., UNHCR).

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? What are the key priorities for future cooperation? (Relevance)

The Roadmap, as a framework for cooperation between the Agency and Bosnia and Herzegovina, was highly relevant to national authorities, particularly in light of their accession journey and need to align with the EU acquis. The thorough and in-depth analysis of the asylum and reception system in Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to the relevance of the activities envisaged as part of the Roadmap.

In the field of **asylum (outcome 1, 2)**, the Roadmap was relevant to tackle key priorities in the country as the support envisaged as part of the Roadmap was in line with Chapter 24 and the Opinion issued by the European Commission on their application for membership, which highlights the need to strengthen institutional coordination, ensure effective access to procedures and the adequate protection of vulnerable groups. Given the partial completion of activities during the implementation period, these areas of cooperation identified during the first iteration of the Roadmap, particularly those concerning the implementation of the asylum law, are expected to continue to be relevant in future iterations of the Roadmap. Therefore, key areas of cooperation such as the development of SOPs to accelerate the implementation of the asylum legislation remain priorities going forward and should be maintained in future iterations of the Roadmap.

The **relevance in the field of reception (outcome 3) was more limited** mainly due to the context in which support in this area was envisaged. However, the Roadmap as a framework for cooperation continues to be a relevant tool to support reception authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina should certain preconditions be fulfilled, and the authorities request support in this area. While cooperation in the area of reception should be maintained in future iterations of the Roadmap, the formulation of the outcomes/outputs should be revisited and adapted to the context on the ground.



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

The **main benefits of cooperation for national authorities concerned the provision of support in the asylum field**. The Agency was able to support in the revision of the asylum law and its accompanying by-laws with a view to harmonising the national laws with CEAS standards (outcome 1). Additionally, the authorities pointed to the benefits derived from their participation in the capacity building activities delivered by the Agency (some envisaged as part as the Roadmap and some others not). These capacity building activities had reportedly improved their work, i.e., the speed and efficiency of the asylum procedure was increased. However, the envisaged activities to strengthen institutional coordination and implementation of new practices and workflows between the authorities could not be implemented (outcome 1), and there were shortcomings in the implementation of activities to strengthen and implement effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to UAMs (outcome 2) due to COVID-19-related restrictions (notably a travel ban that was enforced for 21 months out of the 24-month implementation period of the Roadmap) and human resource constraints. While national authorities participated in the train-the-trainer session on **reception**, the deployment of an expert on the ground could not be implemented as the authorities did not request support in this area (outcome 3).

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

Conclusions on the **overall efficiency are difficult to draw**, particularly due to the lack of granular data which hinders the assessment of the efficiency of specific activities/outcomes. 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 work in some cases due to inability of the Agency to deliver. Both the Agency and the authorities were hindered by human resource capacity constraints which affected the implementation of the foreseen activities. As already explained, the COVID-19 pandemic also led to delays because it severely hindered the possibility for EUAA staff and Member State experts to travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the planned support.

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

Where appropriate, **activities of the Roadmap were coordinated with other actors**, such as CoE, UNICEF and UNHCR to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and inconsistencies in the support provided. Complementarities were observed in areas of support such as age assessment and family tracing as these are not priority areas for other actors.

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

The **added value of the EUAA, notably in comparison to other actors is its role as a centre of expertise on the CEAS**. This is mainly observed through the provision of support in ensuring the alignment of asylum legislation with the CEAS (outcome 1), as the support provided by the Agency contributed to bring the legislation closer to the EU acquis, bringing it one step closer to potential future accession to the EU. Despite the modest effectiveness in the strengthening and implementation of effective procedures of identification, assessment and response to UAMs (outcome 2), there is potential added



value of the support provided by the Agency in this regard. The added value of the intervention in the area of reception (outcome 3) was significantly limited due to the presence of IOM on the ground as they are effectively managing reception centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, there is potential for high added value of EUAA support, in terms of aligning reception conditions with the CEAS.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria by outcome

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3
Relevance	Very good	Very good	Good
Effectiveness	Good	Fair	Fair ¹⁸
Efficiency ¹⁹	Fair	Fair	Fair
Coherence	Good	Good	Good
EU added value	Very good	Good	Good

Note: the rating is based on the evaluator's qualitative judgement of the Roadmap performance. While quantitative evidence (pertaining to the degree to which activities under each outcome objective were implemented) was 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 considered.

5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

The **needs assessment process** in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a two-step process initiated by DG NEAR in light of the high influx of asylum seekers during 2018-2019. Overall, the process took almost two years resulting in a thorough analysis of the context and the priority areas which contributed to the relevance of the intervention. The Roadmap design also took into consideration the lessons learnt from the implementation of the Serbia and North Macedonia Roadmaps. Lessons learnt such as the inclusion of fewer but more concrete activities were introduced, which increased the relevance of the Roadmap.

The Roadmap was **sufficiently flexible** to incorporate and respond to *ad hoc* requests in light of emerging needs of the country such as the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the crisis in Afghanistan. This further increased the relevance and added value of the Roadmap for the authorities, as new needs that arose could be tackled effectively, as long as they fell within the mandate of the Agency. At the same time, this flexibility also runs the risk of there not being a common understanding within the Agency early on as to what work needs to be delivered when.

¹⁸ This is rated as fair because the Agency implemented what it could, in light of constraints (human resources and the COVID-19 pandemic) and the fact that limited support was requested by the authorities.

¹⁹ Given the unavailability of granular data, no assessment of the efficiency per outcome could be made. It is considered 'fair' across the board because there were some delays and resource constraints but the costs incurred were proportionate to what was achieved.



Finally, in light of the significant presence of international (and local) stakeholders in asylum and reception context in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **effective communication between the actors** is crucial to avoid potential duplication and the risk of ‘overcrowding’ in a way that national authorities can no longer absorb the support. While no major problems were encountered during the implementation period 2020-2022, it is important that strong lines of communication are maintained in the future.

The evidence collected suggests that the capacity development activities delivered by the Agency would benefit from a system which monitors/assesses the degree to which learnings from the introduction and use of practical guides, tools, peer-to-peer exchanges and training sessions are applied by staff in the national administration, and the extent to which they perceive it contributed to enhance their capabilities and facilitated their everyday work. Thus, while this is in part the aim of this evaluation, a broader evidence base could be reached through more systematic monitoring and data collection. This would not only facilitate and enable the evaluation of the provided support in a given context and how it contributed to enhance the capacities of the users, but it would also contribute to the assessment of the materials per se and the potential unveil of new areas of support. While the design of the questionnaire can be generic so they can be used in given contexts, the reporting of the findings should be as disaggregated as possible to facilitate the evaluation of the use of practical tools and guides, exchanges amongst peers and training outcomes in a given context.

5.3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Accelerate support concerning the implementation of the asylum legislation

Given the partial completion of some of the activities during the Roadmap’s implementation period, a finalisation of their implementation would be beneficial. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment preceding a future Roadmap, the Agency could consider:

- further supporting national authorities to implement the new asylum legislation in practice;
- including the support on reception management in high-level working arrangements rather than a future Roadmap, if a decision is made to make use of working arrangements.²⁰

Recommendation 2: 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;
- embedding reception and asylum experts in the European and International Cooperation Unit specifically, rather than working with staff from other centres (already foreseen as part of IPA III);
- establishing a physical presence to facilitate closer interaction with the authorities and other organisations on the ground.

²⁰ Article 35 of the EUAA Regulation foresees that the Agency can conclude working arrangements with the authorities in third countries. These need prior approval from the European Commission, Parliament and Council so they would bear more political weight. If a decision is taken to make establish working arrangements with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Roadmap could be used as a short term ‘work plan’ that excludes reception support until the responsibilities are transferred.



Recommendation 3: Put in place systematic financial/monitoring data collection mechanisms

To improve monitoring and subsequent evaluation of the Roadmap in the future, the Agency could consider:

- developing and distributing tailored questionnaires per train-the-trainer session and practical guide / tool distributed among first liners (rather than only at the higher political level) a few months after their delivery to assess the degree of use and usefulness of the products;
- disaggregating training satisfaction data per country in the region;
- reporting the implementation costs of the Roadmap per (group of) activity/outcome so a cost-effectiveness analysis can be conducted after the implementation of the Roadmap.



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 keep 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 Bosnia and Herzegovina Roadmap, five covering all four Roadmaps being evaluated). Some of the interviews were carried out as group interviews, so a total of 22 stakeholders were consulted in total across all 12 interviews. The consulted stakeholders include relevant staff members from the EUAA, the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, other (international) actors active in the field of asylum and reception in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 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 are 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 3. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<p>Relevance: To what extent was the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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?</p> <p>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 Bosnia and Herzegovina 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? What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓
<p>Efficiency: To what extent are the costs of the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina</p>	<p>Priority question: Has the EUAA provided enough resources to meet the objectives of the Roadmap?</p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<p>justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced the efficiency of the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina?</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> <p><i>To what extent internal and/or external factors influenced the efficiency of the intervention?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>		
<p>Coherence: To what extent is the intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina coherent with other interventions that have similar objectives (i.e., UNHCR)?</p>	<p>Priority question: Was the Agency's work coherent with and complementary to UNHCR support in Bosnia and Herzegovina?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><i>Was there unnecessary overlap or duplication?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓
<p>EU added value: To what extent has the EUAA intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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?</p>	<p>Priority question: To what extent and how did the Roadmap add value over other actors' interventions?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><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 States, etc.)?</i></p> <p><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></p> <p><i>What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the existing Agency's intervention?</i></p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
	<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>		