



External evaluation of the EUAA's Roadmap for cooperation with North Macedonia

Ex post evaluation report

Prepared by Ramboll Management Consulting, Merita Zulfiu-Alili

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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
EU⁺	EU Member States and associate countries
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
MOI	Ministry of Interior
SOP	Standard operating procedure
UAMs	Unaccompanied minors
UN	United Nations
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 North Macedonia for the period October 2020 – September 2022. It was the second of its kind, and built on the first Roadmap (2017-2019). 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 strengthen the asylum system with regard to persons with special needs and unaccompanied minors (UAMs), strengthen the training system on asylum and reception, increase the quality of asylum decisions and strengthen the reception system for vulnerable migrants and UAMs.

The Agency and the authorities learned from the experience gained from the first Roadmap. In particular, the **structure of the Roadmap was improved and its activities better aligned with the needs of the authorities**. This alignment was ensured during the second Roadmap through structured consultation and dialogue with national counterparts during the needs assessment process.

The **broad nature of the Roadmap allowed the Agency to adjust to the changing needs and expectations of the authorities**, increasing its relevance even after its finalisation. This was reflected in the response to the COVID-19¹ pandemic, where training on online interviewing and support in the development of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) on remote procedures (ongoing) was provided, enabling the authorities to continue processing applications when other Western Balkan countries did not.

The **main benefits of the Roadmap were brought to bear in the field of asylum**. According to the EUAA and national authorities, the Roadmap contributed to an improvement in the quality of registration and examination of asylum claims. Support with strengthening the asylum system with regards to persons with special needs and UAMs made moderate progress because significant delays were encountered due to turnover within the national administrations and disagreements on who was responsible for age assessment, though the intended support was in preparation at the time of writing. Support with strengthening the training system on asylum was highly effective, though more coordination is needed for the training to be fully integrated into the national training system, through more active participation of the authorities in EUAA train-the-trainer sessions. **Limited benefits were observed in the field of reception** because very few activities were implemented. Aside from translations of guidance, no work could be carried out due to the COVID-19-related travel ban (in place for 18 months out of the 24-month implementation period) and lack of clarity on the scope of the Agency's mandate within the Agency itself.

There was **considerable added value of the Roadmap in relation to the accession process of the country**, particularly regarding the implementation and alignment with Chapter 24 of the EU acquis.² The Agency offers expertise that other actors cannot offer to the same extent. Unlike other

¹ Coronavirus disease 2019.

² European Commission (2020), [North Macedonia 2020 Report](#), Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, SWD (2020) 351 final (hereinafter, 'North Macedonia 2020 Report'), p. 43.



stakeholders who provide support in the country in line with international standards (e.g., 1951 Refugee Convention in the case of UN (United Nations) organisations) or their own experiences (in the case of EU Member States providing bilateral support), the Agency was seen as enabling the country to harmonise the North Macedonian system in line with EU standards and good practices from different EU Member States and associate countries (EU+ countries). The expertise the Agency provides is considered unique, in particular, the availability of experts that facilitate learning from different EU+ countries were highlighted as beneficial aspects that no other organisation or bilateral cooperation could offer to the same degree. The **added value of the Roadmap was larger in the field of asylum than in the field of reception**, however, because most of the foreseen activities in the field of reception were put on hold.

Overall, taking into account wider policy preconditions and without prejudice to the outcome of the needs assessment preceding a future Roadmap, there is **scope for an enhanced EUAA-North Macedonia partnership on asylum and reception**. There is a need for more strategic, longer-term and increased partnership and more resources, as the partnership has a number of distinctive strengths, in particular if the overall policy environment remains committed to the EU accession context. This includes securing long-term budget and human resources and foreseeing risk management and scenario planning.

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

Recommendation 1: Continue supporting the North Macedonian authorities with the implementation / rollout of asylum and reception practices in line with the CEAS and EU practices

In light of the constraints encountered, there is a need to finalise the activities that were planned but could not be implemented in full during the 2020-2022 period, with a focus on providing practical support. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment preceding a future Roadmap, the Agency could consider focusing on supporting the development of SOPs on age assessments (contingent on the authorities establishing a working group and assigning responsibilities amongst themselves), and discussing ways in which EUAA training methodology and curricula could be integrated into the national training system in North Macedonia.

Recommendation 2: Provide more tailored support corresponding to the specificities and abilities of the authorities

In view of striking a balance between providing support that is tailored to the needs of the North Macedonian authorities while ensuring the Agency acts within its mandate and its human resource constraints, the Agency could consider making more advanced training modules available to the North Macedonian authorities if they have sufficient absorption capacity to follow them, evaluating the possibility of involving national trainers as trainers in regional and/or EU training sessions, and exploring possibilities to integrate the North Macedonian authorities into the EUAA's practitioners' networks.

Recommendation 3: Ensure better alignment between the Roadmap's outcomes and the implementation capacity of the Agency

In light of the increase in scope of the Roadmap and decrease in human resources allocated to its coordination, the Agency could consider re-assessing the short, medium, and long-term capacities of the Agency's staff working on the Roadmap in back-to-normal conditions following the COVID-19



pandemic, and adapting accordingly if considered appropriate. It would also be beneficial to introduce a clear prioritisation system to allow for the most relevant activities to be carried out to minimise the impact of insufficient capacity within the Agency.

Recommendation 4: Reconsider the approach to staffing the Roadmap

In light of the Agency's strained human 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 and/or hiring assigning expert staff with in-depth knowledge of the context and legal framework in the Western Balkan region to the Western Balkan team specifically, as well as increasing physical presence in North Macedonia or the Western Balkan region to facilitate the coordination and implementation of the Roadmap.



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 North Macedonia (hereinafter ‘the Roadmap’).³ The evaluation was 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 is to **enhance the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in line with the CEAS and EU Member States’ practices**. The Roadmap identifies priority areas where the Agency’s support to national 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 Commission’s Progress Reports, in particular those aimed at meeting the criteria under Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security (hereinafter ‘Chapter 24’). North Macedonia applied for EU membership in March 2004 and accession negotiations were started in July 2022.⁴

The main asylum and reception authorities in North Macedonia, and main counterparts of the Roadmap, are the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). The Sector for Asylum (SA) within the MOI is responsible for the asylum procedure. The MLSP is responsible for accommodation, healthcare as well as for guardianship of unaccompanied children and special measures for vulnerable persons.

In line with the [European Commission’s Better Regulation Guidelines](#), the evaluation assessed the **effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, EU added value and relevance** of the EASO-North Macedonia 2020-2022 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 North Macedonian authorities or other stakeholders. The evaluation sought to answer the following priority questions:⁵

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 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, so it is titled ‘EASO-North Macedonia 2020-2022 Roadmap’. For the purpose of this report, reference is made to the EUAA or the Agency instead.

⁴ European Commission, DG NEAR, [North Macedonia](#) (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 evaluation questions can be found in Annex 3.



3. To what extent is the intervention in North Macedonia **coherent** with 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 questions, the evaluation combined evidence from secondary data (notably monitoring data from the EUAA, the Roadmap document, the evaluation and management response of the previous Roadmap, and reports from the European Commission in relation to North Macedonia's accession process), with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with the authorities in North Macedonia, international organisations, and EUAA staff. These sources of information were used to provide an in-depth assessment of the outcomes 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, including by following up on the management response (Annex 4), in view of a next generation of Roadmaps.

2. Intended results of the action

2.1. Description of the action and its intended results

Formalised cooperation between the Agency and North Macedonia started with the endorsement of the first Roadmap (2017-2019) in the context of the project '[Regional Support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkan and Turkey](#)' under Phase I (September 2016 – June 2019) of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The second Roadmap (subject of the present evaluation) built on the recommendations stemming from the evaluation of the first Roadmap and the needs identified during a needs assessment.

The implementation period of the second Roadmap was 24 months, from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2022. The Roadmap had **four intended outcomes** (objectives), each consisting of several activities and intended outputs.

Outcome 1: Strengthened asylum system with regards to persons with special needs and UAMs

- Output 1.1. Strengthened capacity of national authorities to identify and assess persons with special needs.
- Output 1.2. Enhanced rights-compliant age assessment procedure in North Macedonia.

Following the first Roadmap, where the Agency's [Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs](#) was translated to Macedonian, the second Roadmap sought to operationalise its use in practice to strengthen the capacity of the local authorities in this area. This was planned through operational

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 will be covered in the horizontal report. 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) instead.



training on best case examples and practice, on-the-job coaching and *ad hoc* expert support. Additionally, the Roadmap sought to enhance the right-compliant age assessment procedure in North Macedonia through the translation of the [Practical guide on age assessment](#), the development of age assessment process procedures, instruments and tools supplemented by expert mission(s), on-the-job coaching and workshops.

Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception in North Macedonia

- Output 2.1: National authorities are able to deliver prioritised, national EUAA core training modules on asylum and reception.

A second way in which the Roadmap sought to contribute to the strengthening of asylum-related legislation, institutions and systems was through building up the national training system on asylum and reception. This was to be done through the integration of the EUAA training curriculum core modules (Inclusion, Interviewing Techniques, and Evidence Assessment) into regular training plans of the MOI, which included translation of the Agency's core module curricula, training, provision of support in transferring the methodology and practical knowledge of organising the online and face-to-face sessions and by supporting the creation of a national pool of trainers. Additionally, the national trainers were to be paired up with EU Member State experts to deliver the first sessions. The same was planned for the MLSP, for the EUAA modules on inclusion and interviewing vulnerable persons. In addition, the participation of national authorities in advanced train-the-trainer modules in the relevant areas was expected.

Outcome 3: Increased quality of asylum decisions in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices

- Output 3.1: Asylum case officers empowered to conduct personal interview, evidence assessment, qualification for international protection and exclusion in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices.
- Output 3.2: Enhanced quality of the examination and registration process.

Following the first Roadmap, SOPs on registration and examination were developed. The second Roadmap foresaw the application of the SOPs in practice with an aim of furthering the quality and consistency of decision making on asylum. Furthermore, the Agency planned to support the operationalisation of several practical guides ([Personal Interview](#), [Evidence Assessment](#), [Qualification for international protection](#) and [Exclusion](#)) by having them translated, printed and shipped to North Macedonia and through expert support and on-the-job coaching on their use, in order to enhance the quality of the asylum process and asylum decisions taken in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices.

Outcome 4: Strengthened reception system for UAMs and vulnerable migrants, in particular migrants with health needs

- Output 4.1: Strengthened capability of the North Macedonian authorities to provide enhanced reception services and conditions to UAMs and vulnerable migrants.
- Output 4.2: Protocol on reception addressing: a) health needs of asylum seekers and b) necessary procedures in the COVID-19 context developed and operationalised.



- Output 4.3: Increased coordination between the MOI and MLSP aimed at addressing cases of disturbing peace and quiet at the reception centre(s).

The Roadmap foresaw the operationalisation of by-laws on reception standards and reception of unaccompanied children and vulnerable individuals under international protection through the translation of relevant Agency guidance, and capacity building activities such as training, on-the-job coaching and study visits. It also foresaw the development and operationalisation of a protocol on reception addressing (a) health needs of asylum seekers and (b) necessary procedures in the COVID-19 context through expert support with medical screening, organising short-term medical quarantines, providing 'home' care and health support, and mental health support at the reception centre. Finally, the Roadmap foresaw expert support to develop a protocol on communication to address temporary limitations of movement in cases of disturbing and safety at the reception centre(s).

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.

The evaluation of the first EUAA-North Macedonia 2016-2019 Roadmap took place from November 2019 to January 2020. Its main purpose was to draw lessons learnt and good practices for future activities and collaborations. Most recommendations from the evaluation of the first Roadmap were taken on board in the design of the second Roadmap (see Annex 4). Specifically, an expansion of the scope of the support was observed in the **increased number of desired outputs from three to eight**. Furthermore, the intervention logic of the Roadmap is now presented in a table linking desired outcomes, outputs and activities, improving its articulation and clarity. The activities in the 2020-2022 Roadmap were all aimed at particular outcomes (rather than an activity being an outcome in itself), which also meant that the 2020-2022 Roadmap required the establishment of processes to develop certain procedures and institutionalisation of those into the system of North Macedonia (e.g., in relation to training). Finally, a monitoring framework was established to keep track of the implementation status of the foreseen actions.

During the 2017-2019 period, significant progress was made in North Macedonia. The law on international and temporary protection, adopted in April 2018, was considered to be largely **aligned with the EU acquis, though asylum procedures still needed to be implemented fully in line with the EU acquis**.⁷ In 2020, SOPs related to the registration of asylum seekers and to refugee status determination procedures were adopted. The law provides the right for family reunification, but concerns remained in relation to delayed family reunification for persons under subsidiary protection, two years following status recognition, while refugees can benefit from it immediately. As subsidiary protection is the prevalent form of protection granted in the country, and is often granted to

⁷ [North Macedonia 2020 Report](#), p. 43.



unaccompanied children, such delays may significantly affect the right to family unity and, in the case of children, contravene the principle of the best interest of the child.⁸

Access to asylum procedures continued to be ensured. In 2020⁹, 211 applications for asylum were submitted (490 in 2019). By the end of 2020, there was no backlog in asylum cases, although the majority of cases were discontinued, due to the high rate of claim abandonment. Over 2020, the SA issued two decisions granting subsidiary protection, 39 negative decisions for 46 persons and 201 decisions for the discontinuation of asylum procedures for 215 persons. There had been no positive decisions granting refugee status since 2018.¹⁰

The **quality of asylum adjudication remained a concern**, also at the appeal stage. Most of those granted protection are vulnerable persons and unaccompanied or separated children. The length of the entire asylum procedure can be very long and often there is not enough emphasis on the specific needs of the persons concerned.¹¹

Despite good conditions in the centre for asylum seekers in Vizbegovo, the high rate of onward movements of asylum seekers continued. The absence of the right to work for asylum applicants outside of the centre hampers the prospects for inclusion. State-run **accommodation facilities for persons with specific needs are not available**.¹²

To help address these issues, a thorough needs assessment was conducted by the EUAA between November 2019 and June 2020, involving the MOI and MLSP of North Macedonia, as well as consultations with other stakeholders (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, amongst others). At the Agency, the needs assessment and design of the Roadmap was coordinated horizontally (with inputs from different centres, notably in relation to relevant training and practical guidance and tools to be mobilised) and approved at different levels of management before its formal endorsement by the Agency's Executive Director and the Minister of Interior of North Macedonia.

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,¹³ 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

⁸ European Commission (2021), [North Macedonia 2021 Report](#) Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, SWD (2021) 294 final (hereinafter: 'North Macedonia 2021 Report'), p. 43.

⁹ Since the Roadmap only started in October 2020, it is relevant to mention 2020 data as an element of comparison.

¹⁰ [North Macedonia 2021 Report](#), p. 43-44.

¹¹ [North Macedonia 2021 Report](#), p. 44.

¹² [North Macedonia 2021 Report](#), p. 43.

¹³ 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.



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 financial resources used for the implementation of the 2020-2022 North Macedonia Roadmap corresponded to costs associated with the translation of practical guides and tools and training material¹⁴ to Macedonian. The remaining costs related to travel for missions, interpretation services, proofreading, and layout services.

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 centres of the EUAA. Notably, there was one focal point on asylum, one focal point on reception, and one focal point on training. Other staff from across the Agency was mobilised based on needs and availabilities. These experts and other staff also had other tasks and responsibilities.

At activity and output levels, the Roadmap partially delivered what it intended to. Of the 18 planned deliverables, 12 were delivered (67%). Of the 20 planned activities, nine were completed (45%), and eight are still in preparation (40%). Two *ad hoc* requests (i.e., activities not foreseen in the Roadmap) were approved. At the time of writing, one of them was completed and another was in preparation.

Outcome 1: Strengthened asylum system with regards to persons with special needs and UAMs

All (100%) activities under this outcome were delayed and were under preparation at the time of writing. As concerns the deliverables, one was delivered (50%) and one was delayed (50%). Operational training related to best case examples on practice on identification of persons with special needs for first contact officials and social workers, case officers and representatives from non-governmental organisations was initially delayed but was being prepared at the time of writing. Because this training could not take place, there was also not yet a need for on-the-job coaching or *ad hoc* expert support on implementing the best interest of the child in practice. While the [Practical Guide on Age Assessment](#) was translated to Macedonian and disseminated to the authorities, a right-compliant age assessment guidance or procedure for North Macedonia could not be delivered. Expert support and mission(s), on-the-job coaching to support implementation best practices in EU on age assessment procedures and methods were under preparation at the time of writing.

¹⁴ For both online (i.e., manuscript and subtitling or voice over for videos) and face-to-face (e.g., manual and handbook) modules.



Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception in North Macedonia

The activities under this outcome were largely implemented: six out of 11 activities were fully implemented (55%), two were partially implemented (18%), and three were delayed (27%). As concerns deliverables, four out of six were delivered (67%) and two were delayed (33%). The Agency provided support for the integration of EUAA core module curricula into regular training of the training centre of the MOI by (a) translating the online part of the training into Macedonian; (b) providing training and expert support in transferring the methodology and practical knowledge of organising the online and face-to-face sessions of the EUAA core module curricula; and (c) providing support in creating the national pool of trainers on EUAA core module curricula. However, the delivery of the first national rollout by coupling up a Member State expert with the national trainers as part of the regular training of the training centre of the MOI was delayed. Five MOI staff were trained as national trainers. The Agency also translated the Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module into Macedonian, through the provision of training and expert support in transferring the methodology and practical knowledge of organising the online and face-to-face sessions of the EUAA core module curricula and support in creating the national pool of trainers on EUAA core module curricula was delayed. The delivery of the first national rollout on inclusion and interviewing vulnerable persons as part of the regular training of the MLSP by coupling up a Member State expert with the national trainers was being implemented at the time of writing.

Outcome 3: Increased quality of asylum decisions in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices

All of the planned activities (100%) under this outcome were delivered. In addition to the planned activities, the Agency supported the North Macedonian authorities with one *ad hoc* request (50%), while another *ad hoc* request was under implementation (50%) at the time of writing. All five deliverables were delivered (100%), and an additional one (SOPs on remote registration and examination) was in preparation at the time of writing.

The Agency translated, printed, shipped and disseminated practical guides on [Personal interview](#); [Evidence assessment](#); [Qualification for international protection](#); and [Exclusion](#) and supported asylum office staff to implement them through expert support and on-the-job coaching. The Agency also provided support for the operationalisation of the SOPs on examination and registration which were developed during the first Roadmap, through on-the-job coaching expert support.

In addition to the planned activities, *ad hoc* support was requested as a response to a new need introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EUAA provided webinars on remote personal interviews (29 May 2020, one participant from North Macedonia) and on communication with and provision of information to asylum seekers in the context of the COVID-19 response (19 May 2020, one participant from North Macedonia). EUAA practical recommendations on [remote registration](#) and [remote personal interviews](#) were also translated into Macedonian and shared with the authorities. The authorities also requested assistance in the development of SOPs on remote procedures. At the time of writing, this assistance had been on hold since December 2021, when initial discussions took place. *Ad hoc* support for capacity building on activation and implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive in the context of UAMs influx to North Macedonia was also provided, despite not being foreseen in the Roadmap.



Outcome 4: Strengthened reception system for UAMs and vulnerable migrants, in particular migrants with health needs

The Agency translated and disseminated its [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children/minors](#), but did not support in its implementation. The activities that were foreseen in relation to addressing health needs of asylum applicants and operationalising procedures in the COVID-19 context and increasing coordination between the MOI and MLSP in relation to cases of disturbing peace and quiet at the reception centre had not started at the time of writing.

4. Evaluation findings

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

In general, the **authorities in North Macedonia were satisfied with the support they received from the EUAA**. They found that the Agency kept an open line of communication and found solutions to issues as they arose, sometimes even going beyond what was planned by providing *ad hoc* support (e.g., on remote processes to address COVID-19 challenges). They appreciated efforts such as the provision of online training, although this was perceived as being less effective than in-person training. The authorities stressed that their cooperation with the EUAA had been smooth and productive. They appreciated that the Roadmap was a **partnership for cooperation** between the Agency and the authorities, rather than being a top-down mechanism in which measures are imposed on them. The fact that this was the **second Roadmap helped with its implementation**, as a certain level of trust had been built up during the 2017-2019 period. Relatedly, according to the Agency and international organisations, a supporting factor of the effectiveness of the intervention was the high degree of motivation of the North Macedonian authorities to benefit from the support provided by an EU Agency in the context of the broader EU accession plans, which is likely to further increase as negotiations for North Macedonia's accession to the EU were formally opened in July 2022.

The **key benefit of the Agency's support to the North Macedonian authorities related to its expertise on the CEAS and EU Member States' practices and standards**, which the authorities acknowledged they need to align with in view of their potential future accession to the EU. For this reason, support provided through capacity building activities and the translation and dissemination of practical guides and tools was highly appreciated and believed to have increased the capacity of the authorities to improve their processes and procedures in the fields of asylum and reception. According to the authorities, the EUAA tools, guidance and training modules were used in daily work and disseminated in accordance with needs. They believed that the same degree of progress would not have been made in the absence of support from the Agency.

While the **financial resources available for the implementation of the Roadmap were sufficient, the insufficient (and overburdened) human resources at the Agency supporting the day-to-day implementation of the Roadmap** led to inefficiencies because they caused delays. The Roadmap was broader in scope than its first iteration (increase from three outputs to eight outputs), yet the human resources available to coordinate the work decreased (from 0.5 FTE per Roadmap in 2017-2019 to 0.25 FTE per Roadmap in 2022). Thus, there was an increase of 167% in the number of outputs, paired with a decrease in FTE for coordination of 75%, signifying human resource constraints for the implementation of the planned activities. This challenge also affected the supporting staff from the



wider Agency, who needed to balance their support to the Roadmap with their work in the internal dimension (e.g., as part of operational support or more general support to EU+ countries), but were reportedly not given a clear system of prioritisation of tasks to do so.

These **challenges were exacerbated by the COVID-19-induced travel restrictions**. Out of the 24-month implementation period, a travel ban was in place for 18 months. During this period only two expert missions involving staff from the Agency's Asylum Knowledge Centre could take place (one focusing on asylum, another on reception). The Roadmap coordinator travelled five times to North Macedonia to ensure continued coordination, communication and smooth implementation to the extent possible with the authorities, at their own risk. In the absence of COVID-19-related travel restrictions, more missions could have been organised and thus more planned activities implemented.

Outcome 1: Strengthened asylum system with regards to persons with special needs and UAMs

As many of the planned activities could not be implemented, the **EUAA's contribution to strengthening the asylum system with regard to persons with special needs and UAMs was limited**.

In relation to the **rights-compliant age assessment procedure**, the authorities learned about different EU Member States' experiences and the benefits and drawbacks of different methods in order to promote a rights-compliant age assessment process. Beyond knowledge sharing, however, the more practical support for development of SOPs could not be implemented because the competent authorities did not establish a working group on age assessments, which was a precondition to the Agency's support. This appears to be because of a lack of clarity on who is responsible for the age assessment process, i.e., the MOI or MLSP, based on the interviews conducted with both parties. Having different administrations involved in these types of procedures made it more difficult for the Agency to effectively and efficiently provide support. It required additional resources from the Agency to coordinate the work between different actors, compared to activities that involve only one counterpart. According to staff from the Agency, there were insufficient human resources available to fully implement the foreseen activities from their side for this reason, which is why a decision was taken not to implement the support until a working group to facilitate it was set up by the authorities. Consequently, there was still no age assessment procedure in North Macedonia at the time of writing. However, should this be solved (i.e., with the authorities designating a coordinating institution to take the lead on age assessment), it will be appropriate for the Agency to find a way to mobilise the necessary resources to provide support and guidance in this field to meet its commitments as laid out in the Roadmap.

On-the-job coaching and *ad hoc* expert support to the MLSP on implementing the **best interest of the child in practice** was not started, because of travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as these activities required physical presence of experts to support the daily work of MLSP officials in this field. Other international actors who were working with the authorities on these types of activities were hindered by the same constraint. As such, there was no duplication of efforts in this regard. Even if the activities had been implemented, they were expected to be complementary, as the Agency's support concerned the operationalisation or rollout of the already developed procedures, on the basis of experiences from EU Member States.



Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception in North Macedonia

As concerns **strengthening the training system on asylum and reception, the outcomes were partly achieved**. As outlined in chapter 3, there were discussions with the MOI and MLSP to identify training needs, and preparatory work in the form of translating the online parts of the training modules was carried out by the EUAA. A pool of trainers on EUAA core modules was established within MOI, though not in MLSP. Compared to other Western Balkan countries, North Macedonia participated the least in training activities despite this being a specific intended outcome of the Roadmap. This was due to high rates of turnover within the North Macedonian administrations, and the limited availability of relevant staff with sufficient knowledge of English to take part in EUAA train-the-trainer sessions. As a result, no national rollouts took place, although national trainers from North Macedonia (with support from EUAA trainers) did deliver one regional training on evidence assessment in March 2022, in the framework of the regional training plan (i.e., not as part of the Roadmap, but nevertheless with support from the Agency). The support of the Agency, through the Roadmap and the regional training support, was therefore complementary and more efficient than it would have been if support had only been provided bilaterally from the Agency to the authorities in North Macedonia.

According to the SA of North Macedonia, the [EUAA-Frontex Toolkit on access to procedure](#) was **successfully integrated into their regular training plan** for the border police and first contact officials. Beyond this, limited tangible impact in terms of transferring the EUAA methodology and curricula into the national training systems was observed. Such a transfer requires meetings between experts from the EUAA, EU Member States and persons responsible for national training systems in North Macedonia, which could not take place because of human resource constraints within the Agency and limited active participation of the authorities in training activities. If successful, it would be the first time that EUAA curricula became part of the formal professional development process in a third country.

The **consulted authorities were satisfied with the training provided and believed that the support through the Roadmap resulted in effectively trained personnel**. The authorities added that, aside from the core modules, they would like to be included in advanced modules, and that they would appreciate a more personalised, tailor-made approach. This relates to the specific characteristics of North Macedonia, which differ from most EU Member States for which training modules, guides and tools were originally developed. However, the Agency develops its products on the basis of the CEAS and EU Member States' practices, and is not in a position to tailor them to the needs of the authorities in third countries. Doing this would require significant additional resource investment, which is difficult to justify for third countries, who are secondary beneficiaries of the Agency's support. National practices and procedures should rather be covered in national training, which can be addressed by the authorities when they start implementing national rollouts.

Outcome 3: Increased quality of asylum decisions in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices

The **third outcome of the Roadmap was the most successful**, as all planned outputs were achieved, building on the preparatory work carried out during the first Roadmap. Through the translation, printing and shipping of the Agency's practical guides ([Personal Interview](#), [Evidence Assessment](#), [Qualification for international protection](#) and [Exclusion](#)), as well as expert support and on-the-job coaching, the Agency assisted the authorities in the adoption of the SOPs on examination and



registration in practice. In 2021, a year after the introduction of the SOPs, the EUAA had the opportunity to observe their application by the SA and noted an **improvement in the quality of registration and examination of asylum claims**. Consulted staff from the asylum unit also noted feeling better prepared, as they now had clear instructions to guide them in the decision-making process. As such, considering the reported improvement in the quality of the work, the resources invested in this support were worthwhile.

SOPs on remote processes were not agreed because the work stalled due to limited human resources within the Asylum Knowledge Centre. However, the **workshops that were held and the translation of relevant EUAA guidance enabled all personal interviews with asylum applicants to be moved online** in North Macedonia, which the authorities believed they could not have done in the absence of the EUAA's support. According to the EUAA, North Macedonia appeared to be applying these procedures in line with the corresponding European Commission Guidance. This practice ensured that, unlike in other Western Balkan countries,¹⁵ North Macedonia did not interrupt or delay the registration of asylum applications and examination of the asylum cases. The fact that the guidance on remote registration was actively used by the authorities signifies that the investment was worthwhile. Moreover, the provision of this *ad hoc* support, while not fully implemented, highlighted the flexibility of the Roadmap framework, and the EUAA, to respond to new needs as they emerge.

Outcome 4: Strengthened reception system for UAMs and vulnerable migrants, in particular migrants with health needs

While the Agency translated and disseminated the [Practical guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators](#) into Macedonian, its **implementation through coaching or study visits to another reception centre in the region or in an EU country could not take place due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions and human resource limitations at the Agency**. Only one expert from the Asylum Knowledge Centre was assigned to support the Roadmap activities related to reception in North Macedonia. They were limited in how often they could travel to the country due to the pandemic, which in turn hindered their potential to gain a deep understanding of the local context, which is required to support the establishment of a procedure that involved more than one actor.

Issues related to the interpretation of the mandate of the Agency resulted in a standstill in the implementation of the remaining activities of this objective. The decision on whether the Agency can provide support on the development of a protocol on reception with a specific focus on health issues to tackle reception and accommodation issues and the protocol on communication to address temporary limitations of movement in the event of cases of disturbing peace and quiet at the reception centre(s) was still pending at the time of writing. Nevertheless, the authorities considered this type of support to be highly relevant so a solution should be sought.

¹⁵ For example, in Albania asylum processes were limited during the pandemic, and after borders reopened in June, only 50 asylum referrals were recorded until the end of 2020. Source: European Commission (2021), [Albania 2021 Report](#) on EU Enlargement Policy, SWD (2021) 298 final.



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

Overall, evidence suggests that there was **considerable added value of the Roadmap in relation to the accession process** of the country, particularly regarding the implementation and alignment with Chapter 24 of the EU acquis. The added value of the Agency stems from its mandate and its unique role as guarantor of the CEAS which facilitates buy-in from national authorities with an intention to join the EU. The authorities perceive the Agency as a priority partner in their accession journey, without which understanding the legal and regulatory framework of the EU and the implementation of the activities aimed at fulfilling the recommendations presented in the Chapter 24 report would have been more difficult. This is seen through the provision of support to the authorities to strengthen their capacities to identify and assess persons with special needs and to enhance the rights-compliant age assessment procedure (outcome 1) which contributes to improving protection-sensitive profiling, a key recommendation under Chapter 24.

The **Agency offered expertise that other actors cannot offer to the same degree**. Unlike other stakeholders who provide support in the country in line with international standards (e.g., 1951 Refugee Convention in the case of UN agencies), the Agency enables the country to harmonise the North Macedonian system in line with EU standards and practices. While EU⁺ countries could provide such expertise from their own perspectives, the added value of the EUAA was that it pooled experiences and good practices from different EU⁺ countries that the North Macedonian authorities could learn from. The expertise the Agency provided was considered unique; in particular, the practical nature of guides and tools and the availability of EU experts who bring their own experience were highlighted as beneficial aspects that no other organisation or bilateral cooperation could offer. The consulted authorities believed this added value could be maximised if they were involved in EUAA networks, that would further facilitate learning from EU⁺ countries.

The **added value of the Roadmap was larger in the field of asylum than in the field of reception**, because most of the foreseen activities in the field of reception (outcome 4) were put on hold. The high perceived added value despite the fact that a considerable share of the activities and deliverables were not implemented (notably in relation to outcome 4), highlights the **need for further cooperation to continue to improve capacities of the North Macedonian authorities** in the field of asylum and reception.

4.3. Is the action relevant?

The **participatory approach in the design of the Roadmap and the flexibility to adapt to new needs made the Roadmap's objectives and activities highly relevant to the needs of the authorities**. The first Roadmap was extensive and overly ambitious, which resulted in not all of the intended objectives being achieved. The second Roadmap (subject of this evaluation) reflected this and was designed with a focus on flexibility. The flexibility and the sufficiently long implementation period of the Roadmap were listed as advantages which should be maintained in future cooperation. The broad nature of the Roadmap allowed the Agency to adjust to the changing needs and expectations of the authorities, increasing its relevance even after its finalisation. This was reflected in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where training on online interviews and support in the development of the SOPs on remote procedures were requested and (to a certain degree) delivered. The adjustments made to the activities under the Roadmap reflect well the changing needs of the North Macedonian authorities.



The **relevance of the Roadmap was supported, for example, by the selection of experts involved in the activities**, because they brought expertise and good practice suggestions from different EU+ countries. Nevertheless, the activities, including training, guides and tools, offered were designed for the EU Member States and so were perceived as not fully applicable to the North Macedonia context. This required the North Macedonian authorities to be selective when choosing which training or guides/tools were relevant for them. For example, in the field of reception, a need for more practical support with social work and identifying vulnerable cases was expressed. At the same time, it should be noted that the authorities chose not to implement some of the training activities or guides/tools and recommendations because they encourage transit rather than enhancing their decision making and granting protection in line with their own legislation and the CEAS.

Moreover, by contributing to the strengthening of the asylum and reception system of the country, the **Roadmap was highly relevant to the accession process of the country** and its alignment with the EU acquis, as explained above (section 4.2). This is important because on 19 July 2022 the EU started the opening phase of the accession negotiations with North Macedonia.¹⁶ However, while all interviewed stakeholders acknowledged improvements in North Macedonia in terms of alignment with the CEAS, they believed that there were still gaps for North Macedonia in the area of vulnerability and fulfilling CEAS standards. They argued that while national laws have been adapted to EU legislation, adaptation alone does not guarantee implementation. Interviewed international organisations suggested that their implementation requires targeted, tailored support by the Agency, which they believe would be facilitated if the Agency was physically present in North Macedonia, or at least in the region, which was hindered to a large extent by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2022 period.

Relatedly, the authorities themselves also expressed a wish for **more intensive support in the form of face-to-face rather than online training and study visits** (which were limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-2022 period), as well as further involvement of the relevant North Macedonian authorities in the networks of practitioners coordinated by the Agency, notably in relation to country of origin information. The MLSP expressed a wish to establish their own pool of national trainers, and both them and the MOI expressed a wish to eventually roll out training themselves (at national and/or regional level) to apply what they learned from the EUAA. However, as previously mentioned, their participation rates in train-the-trainer sessions were low relative to other countries in the region.

¹⁶ European External Action Service (EEAS) website, [the European Union and North Macedonia](#) (last accessed on 3/11/2022).

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)

Overall, the Roadmap, its objectives and the planned activities to achieve them were **highly relevant and aligned with the needs** identified in North Macedonia, in the field of asylum (outcomes 1, 2, 3). The participatory nature of the Roadmap and the role of the EUAA as a centre of expertise on the CEAS and EU Member States' practices was highly appreciated and provided high added value for the North Macedonian authorities in view of their accession process. It remains relevant to finalise implementation of the activities that could not be delivered in the field of asylum, with a focus on practical, hands-on support to the authorities. The **objectives and activities in the field of reception were relevant when they were established**, but since they could not be delivered during the 2020-2022 period due to concerns about the mandate of the EUAA, their relevance decreased (outcome 4). The COVID-19-related protocol was no longer needed, though the authorities still considered the protocols on health needs and communication to be relevant to develop in the future.

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

The **main benefits of the Roadmap were brought to bear in the field of asylum**. Support with strengthening the asylum system with regards to persons with special needs and UAMs (outcome 1) made moderate progress because significant delays were encountered, though the intended support was in preparation at the time of writing and should be continued. Support with strengthening the training system on asylum and reception (outcome 2) was highly effective in asylum and less so in reception, where no pool of trainers could be established. More coordination is needed for the support to have an impact by being fully integrated into the national training system. This requires active participation from the North Macedonian authorities in EUAA train-the-trainer modules and coordination with the Training and Professional Development Centre to support the integration of the training curricula into national practice.

Activities concerned with increasing the quality of asylum decisions in line with the CEAS and EU Member States' practices (outcome 3) were the most effectively implemented, as all intended activities were delivered. This was in part because the activities under this outcome required fewer resources and less coordination within the Agency to deliver than the others. According to the EUAA and the authorities, the SOPs led to an improvement in the quality of registration and examination of asylum claims. North Macedonia was also the only Western Balkan country that introduced remote procedures in registration and examination of asylum seekers as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak, ensuring that there was no interruption or delay in the registration of asylum applications and examination of the asylum cases. **Limited benefits were observed in the field of reception** because very few activities were implemented. Aside from translations of guidance, no work could be carried out due to the pandemic and lack of clarity on the scope of the Agency's mandate within the Agency itself (outcome 4).

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

The **financial resources available for the implementation of the Roadmap were sufficient, and led to a good return on investments in some cases**. For instance, the investments made into translations of practical guides and tools (outcome 3) led to a measurable improvement in asylum processes, according to the EUAA. However, the Roadmap implementation was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic as there was a travel ban in place for 18 months out of the 24-month implementation period, limiting the possibility of carrying out expert missions. There were also instances in which **insufficient (and overburdened) human resources at the Agency supporting the day-to-day implementation of the Roadmap** led to inefficiencies because they caused delays. Further measures are required to address the lack of staff implementing the Roadmap, especially since this constraint was already highlighted in the evaluation of the first Roadmap.

Nevertheless, **the EUAA made efforts to mitigate these constraints**. It provided support remotely where this was feasible across all activities. As a decision was taken to postpone support in relation to the age assessment process (outcome 1) until the authorities set up a working group to coordinate it, no resources were invested unnecessarily. The involvement of the North Macedonian authorities in training / train-the-trainer sessions (outcome 2) at regional level was also more efficient for the Agency than it would have been to provide such support bilaterally, though there is scope to further improve this if participation rates from North Macedonia increase and the pool of national trainers is extended (in size and thematic areas covered).

The **efficiency of the Roadmap in the field of reception was limited** because few activities were implemented (outcome 4), though at the same time limited investments were made.

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

The Roadmap was **coherent with and supported the advancement of the overall aims of the IPA II project**, and by extension, EU policy priorities in the field of asylum. Within the IPA II project framework, the **Roadmap also complemented the Agency's work at regional level** through workshops and training delivered at regional level, e.g., on country of origin information and access to procedure. The activities that were implemented were limited in their risk of overlap or duplication with the work of other actors, though there were no specific examples of synergies being created, so the coherence of the Roadmap overall can be considered good.

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**, which helped advance North Macedonia in its accession process. All asylum-related activities of the Roadmap (outcomes 1, 2, 3) played a role in this. The added value in the field of reception (outcome 4) was limited in light of the limited support provided.



Table 1. Evaluation criteria by outcome objective

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

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) 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 considered.

5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

It is clear that **the Agency and the authorities learned from the experience gained from the first Roadmap**, as - aside from the resource issue - the recommendations of its evaluation were fully reflected in the second Roadmap. In particular, the structure of the Roadmap was improved and its activities better aligned with the needs of the authorities. This alignment was ensured during the second Roadmap through **structured consultation and dialogue with national counterparts during the needs assessment process**. The communication with and involvement of national authorities in the development of the second Roadmap was positively perceived and increased the will of the authorities to implement it.

The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the support was additionally ensured by the **flexibility shown by the Agency** to address unforeseen needs, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, through the support with exchanges on remote procedures and the (ongoing) development of SOPs in this field. However, this approach of providing requests beyond the framework of the Roadmap 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.

Despite the fact that the draft Roadmap and its foreseen activities were approved at different levels of management within the Agency, disagreements about whether the activities foreseen under outcome 4 in relation to establishing protocols on reception addressing (a) health needs of asylum seekers and (b) necessary procedures in the COVID-19 context developed and operationalised in North Macedonia, as well as a protocol on communication to address temporary limitations of movement in the event of cases of disturbing peace and quiet at reception centres, arose after the adoption of the Roadmap. **Agreeing to activities that cannot be delivered creates a reputational risk** for the Agency and should be avoided.



5.3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Support the North Macedonian authorities with the implementation / rollout of asylum and reception practices in line with the CEAS and EU practices

In light of the constraints encountered, there is a need to finalise the activities that were planned but could not be implemented in full during the 2020-2022 period, with a focus on providing practical support. Without prejudice to the results of a needs assessment to design the next Roadmap, the Agency could consider:

- providing support for the development of SOPs on age assessments, contingent on the authorities establishing a working group and assigning responsibilities amongst themselves;
- reassessing ways in which EUAA training methodology and curricula could be integrated into the national training system in North Macedonia.

Recommendation 2: Provide more tailored support corresponding to the specificities and abilities of the authorities

In view of striking a balance between providing support that is tailored to the needs of the North Macedonian authorities while ensuring the Agency acts within its mandate and its human resource constraints, the Agency could consider:

- making more advanced training modules available to the North Macedonian authorities if they have sufficient absorption capacity to follow them;
- evaluating the possibility of involving national trainers as trainers in regional and/or EU training sessions;
- exploring possibilities to integrate the North Macedonian authorities into the EUAA's practitioners' networks, e.g., as observers.

Recommendation 3: Ensure better alignment between the Roadmap's outcomes and the implementation capacity of the Agency

In light of the increase in scope of the Roadmap and decrease in human resources allocated to its coordination, the Agency could consider:

- re-assessing the short, medium, and long-term capacities of the Agency's staff working on the Roadmaps in back-to-normal conditions following the COVID-19 pandemic;
- in the short-term, adapting, on the basis of the above assessment, the activities to be carried out within each outcome objective to avoid creating a mismatch between what is expected by the authorities and the implementation capacity of the Agency;
- introducing a clear prioritisation system to allow for the most relevant activities to be carried out to minimise the impact of insufficient capacity in supporting centres/sectors;
- carrying out a legal assessment to decide whether the support that was foreseen under outcome 4 in relation to developing protocols on health and communication falls within the EUAA's mandate.



Recommendation 4: Reconsider the approach to staffing the Roadmap

In light of the Agency's strained human 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;
 - 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);
- increasing physical presence in North Macedonia or the Western Balkan region to facilitate the coordination and 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), the evaluation of the previous Roadmap, 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 North Macedonia Roadmap, five covering all four Roadmaps being evaluated). Some of the interviews were carried out as group interviews, so a total of 23 stakeholders were consulted in total across all 12 interviews. The stakeholders consulted include relevant staff members from the EUAA, the authorities in North Macedonia, other (international) actors active in the field of asylum and reception in North Macedonia, and relevant EU representatives.

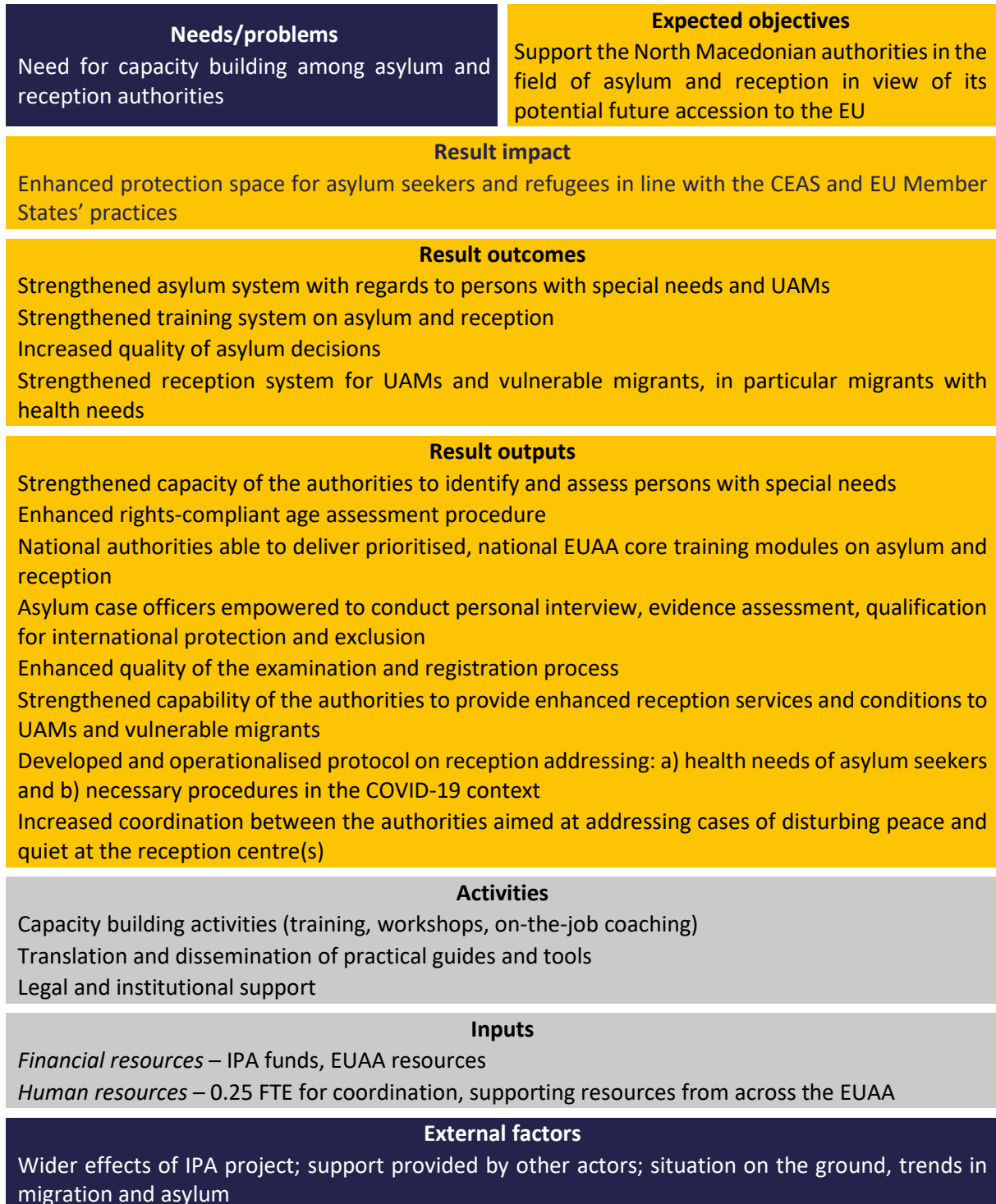
The primary and secondary evidence collected underwent a process of **triangulation and synthesis**, with a view to deriving robust, evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions, and formulating conclusions and lessons learnt for the future on that basis.

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. Intervention logic





Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Table 2. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<p>Relevance: To what extent was the intervention in North Macedonia 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 North Macedonia 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 North Macedonia justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced 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</i></p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
efficiency of the intervention in North Macedonia?	<p><i>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>		
Coherence: To what extent is the intervention in North Macedonia coherent with other interventions that have similar objectives (i.e., UNHCR)?	<p>Priority question: Was the Agency's work complementary to UNHCR support in North Macedonia?</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>	✓	✓
EU added value: To what extent has the EUAA intervention in North Macedonia 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>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> <p><i>To what extent has the Roadmap contributed to the progressions made within the accession process?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learned for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓