



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

Ex post evaluation report

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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
ARC	Assessment of reception conditions
AtP	Access to procedures
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of origin information
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
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
SCRM	Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration
UAMs	Unaccompanied minors
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



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 Serbia for the period October 2020 to 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 at supporting the refinement and rollout of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to support the implementation of legislation on asylum, strengthening the national training system on asylum and reception, strengthening access to the asylum procedure, ensuring the effective identification and assessment of applicants with special needs, reinforcing the country of origin information (COI) unit, enhancing reception services with a special focus on vulnerabilities and supporting the endorsement of a contingency plan.

The **participatory approach in the design of the Roadmap and the flexibility to adapt to changing needs made it highly relevant to the needs of the authorities**. 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 and alignment with the EU acquis, and provided added value in this respect.

The **effectiveness of the Roadmap overall was modest**: a total of 13 activities out of 27 were fully implemented (48%), four partially implemented (15%) and ten were not delivered (37%). While considerable progress was made in some identified priority areas through the organisation of train-the-trainer sessions and the translation of guidance, key milestones, such as the approval of the final M&E system, the endorsement of a reception contingency plan or the development of an age assessment process were still work in progress, requiring further support. However, that is contingent on the Serbian authorities meeting certain preconditions and thus largely beyond the control of the EUAA. Progress was significantly hindered by **COVID-19¹-related restrictions** which impeded the possibility to travel for 19 out of the 24 months of implementation and consequently impacted the implementation of some of the envisaged face-to-face activities (on-the-job coaching and expert missions in particular). At the same time, it had the positive effect of allowing for higher participation in training sessions, as more people were able to join online. Despite not delivering all the intended support, the Roadmap was effective as it continued to increase the capacity of national authorities.

While there were **no financial resource constraints in relation to the implementation of the envisaged activities, the management and coordination set-up of the Roadmap placed considerable human resource constraints on the Agency**. This was further hindered by the lack of a formal system for the prioritisation of tasks, as well as COVID-19-related restrictions as mentioned above.

Where applicable, **the support provided by the Agency in Serbia was complementary to the support provided by other actors in the field**, most notably the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The **relative strength of the Agency compared to other actors also evidences the EU added value of the Roadmap in relation to the accession process of Serbia**. The added value of

¹ Coronavirus disease 2019.



the Agency stems from its mandate and its unique role ensuring the practical implementation of the CEAS which facilitates buy-in from the authorities with an intention to join the EU.

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

Recommendation 1: Prioritise the provision of support in areas where progress has been partially achieved

Support in areas where effectiveness was limited but support is still required should be accelerated, if they are still considered relevant according to the needs assessment. In particular, the Agency could consider reassessing the possibility of providing practical support for the adoption of a rights-compliant national age assessment process, expanding the provision of training in areas identified and requested by national authorities, further supporting the rollout of national training modules and extending the involvement of the Serbian authorities in additional Agency practitioners' networks.

Recommendation 2: Ensure better alignment between the Roadmap's objectives 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 3: Enhance the Roadmap's results framework and monitoring plan to ensure continuity between preceding and future iterations of the Roadmaps

Results derived from the evaluation of the first Roadmap need to be adequately transformed into a clear set of indicators which can subsequently be systematically used to establish target values in the second Roadmap. Thus, going forward the Agency should ensure continuity in support through the establishment of a more robust Roadmap results framework (including baseline and target values) and ensuring it is regularly updated. Additionally, the Agency should consider involving national authorities in the setup of target values with a view to further enhancing their level of ownership. The deployment of an EUAA expert on the ground, in light of the Agency's new mandate, should be considered as this would intensify the cooperation and contribute to the follow-up of the activities implemented.

Recommendation 4: Ensure alignment and a common understanding between the Agency and national authorities concerning the intervention approach

To avoid misalignments in the understanding of what the Agency is able to do as per its (new) mandate, the Agency should ensure clarity of its mandate and the implications for third countries. This could be done through the development of a catalogue of services and/or organisation of a presentation and Q&A session (at regional level, ideally).



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

The overall objective of the Roadmap was to **enhance the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in line with the CEAS and EU Member States’ practices**. The Roadmap identified priority areas where the support from the EUAA to the Serbian authorities has an added value and, where possible, contributes towards the accession process with a direct impact on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the European Commissions’ Progress Reports, in particular those aimed at meeting the criteria under Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security. Serbia has been an official candidate for membership of the European Union since March 2012. By December 2021, 22 out of the 35 EU accession negotiation chapters had been opened.³

The main asylum and reception authorities in Serbia, and main counterparts of the Roadmap, are the Serbian Asylum Office and the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) respectively. The Asylum Office, part of the Ministry of Interior, decides on asylum claims at first instance. The SCRM is the state authority responsible for receiving and accommodating asylum seekers, managing asylum centres and integrating people who were granted international protection.

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 for Cooperation with Serbia. 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 Serbian authorities or other stakeholders. The evaluation sought to answer the following priority questions:⁴

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

² On 19 January 2021, Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 was adopted. This Regulation extended the mandate of the Agency and changed its name from the European Asylum Support Agency (EASO) to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). The Roadmap being evaluated in this report was agreed before the new Regulation entered into force, so it is titled ‘EASO-Albania 2020-2022 Roadmap’. For the purpose of this report, reference is made to the EUAA or the Agency instead.

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

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

To answer these 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 Serbia's accession process), with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with the Serbian authorities, international organisations and EUAA staff. These sources of information were used to provide an in-depth assessment of the results of the intervention (see Annex 1 for more details on the methodology). Based on the results, the evaluation draws conclusions and presents lessons learnt from the implementation of the intervention, including by following up on the management response (see 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 Serbia 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 Balkans 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 (see Annex 4) 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 **seven intended outcomes** (objectives), each consisting of several activities and intended outputs.

Outcome 1: Operationalised M&E system for the implementation of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection

- Output 1.1: M&E system piloted.
- Output 1.2: Periodic M&E system implemented.

A series of expert missions to support the pilot phase of the M&E system that was developed during the first iteration of the Roadmap were planned. Subsequently, the Roadmap foresaw follow-up expert meetings to support the implementation of the M&E system.

⁵ The original question was 'Is there a consistent understanding and approach to cooperation with 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.



Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception

- Output 2.1: Increased capacity of national authorities to carry out systematic training on asylum and reception, relying mainly on the Agency's core modules as per curriculum.

The Roadmap envisaged the organisation of a range of capacity building activities, to train new staff⁶ and to enhance the Serbian authorities' capacity to plan and implement training nationally. Thus, aside from offering training modules in areas deemed relevant to meet the needs of the authorities, the Roadmap foresaw the provision of a workshop on how to apply the Agency's training needs assessment and training methodologies, and an introduction to basic methodology for training evaluation. Additionally, the Roadmap envisaged the provision of support to the national rollout of one core module training session on inclusion.

Outcome 3: Strengthened access to the asylum procedures in line with the CEAS and EU standards

- Output 3.1: Improved capacity and knowledge of first contact officials to fulfil their obligations to ensure access to the asylum procedure.

The Roadmap foresaw the improvement of the capacity/knowledge of first contact officials to fulfil their obligations to ensure access to the asylum procedure through the provision of materials in Serbian and the organisation of operational training on registration and participation in workshops of relevant migration authorities.

Outcome 4: Effective identification and assessment of persons with special needs developed and implemented

- Output 4.1: Strengthened capacity of the Serbian authorities to identify and assess persons with special needs.
- Output 4.2: Rights-compliant national age assessment Process developed.

To strengthen the capacity of the Serbian authorities to identify and assess persons with special needs, the Roadmap foresaw capacity building on identification of persons with special needs and referral procedures for the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities. The Roadmap aimed at developing a rights-compliant national age assessment process through the organisation of expert missions to introduce best practices in the field, an analysis of legislation matters to identify obstacles for rights-compliant age assessment, and the translation of the [Practical guide on the best interest of the child in asylum procedures](#).

Outcome 5: Standardised COI system

- Output 5.1: The knowledge of COI section staff in the Ministry of Interior and its capacity to produce high-quality material is enhanced.

⁶ The Serbian Act of Systematisation foresaw the incorporation of new officials at the Asylum Office in the Section for COI and Section for determining right to asylum. The Act foresaw 30 workplaces in these two sections, of which 24 were filled by the time the 2020-2022 Roadmap was endorsed.



Following up on the work done during the first iteration of the Roadmap in relation to the enhancement of the COI system, the second Roadmap intended to reinforce the knowledge of COI section staff to produce high-quality input through conferences and expert missions.

Outcome 6: Reception services and conditions enhanced with a special focus on vulnerabilities

- Output 6.1: Improved reception conditions for unaccompanied children in line with EU standards.
- Output 6.2: Increased exchanges with EU Member States and associate countries (EU+ countries) as part of the Agency's reception network.

The Roadmap aimed at improving the reception conditions for unaccompanied children in line with EU standards through the participation of reception officials in the Agency's train-the-trainer module on reception, the organisation of on-the-job coaching and workshops, and translation of materials, namely the [Practical guide on family tracing](#) and [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators](#). Moreover, the Roadmap intended to increase exchanges between the Serbian authorities and representatives from EU+ countries through their participation in the Network of Reception Authorities.

Outcome 7: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

- Output 7.1: A contingency plan in line with the Agency's guidance is endorsed.

Finally, the roadmap foresaw the organisation of workshops to prepare the basis to draft a contingency plan, and missions to provide expertise to guide the authorities in the drafting of the contingency plan.

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 ongoing Roadmap in an effort to outline the points of comparison against which the implementation is assessed in chapter 4 of the report.

In the past few years, the Serbian authorities have taken **steps to enhance the legal and institutional framework for asylum and reception** to further regulate international protection in Serbia and align their legal framework with the EU acquis. In 2018, the new [Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection](#) was passed, with the objective to ensure Serbia's compliance with EU standards in the field of asylum. In this context, during the first Roadmap, as per the Action Plan for Chapter 24,⁷ steps were taken to establish an M&E system which operationalised and supported the implementation of the new law.

⁷ [Revised Action Plan for Chapter 24](#) – Justice, Freedom and Security.



More work was needed to finalise the M&E system to make it fully operational, and further improve its structure and indicators.

The **effective identification and reception of vulnerable groups remains a priority in Serbia**. In the previous iteration of the Roadmap, the Agency translated and proofread the Serbian version of the [Tool for identification of persons with special needs](#) and organised regional and national workshops on its use. However, there was still no age assessment procedure in place by October 2020, nor a formal procedure in relation to the identification of minors and age assessment.

In relation to **COI**, during the first Roadmap, the Agency facilitated a series of regional workshops on COI (December 2016 and December 2019), on-the-job coaching (November 2017) and train-the-trainer on COI (October 2017). A need to continue to support national authorities in enhancing COI capacity for the second Roadmap was however identified.

During the first Roadmap, 67 staff members⁸ from different national administrations took part in EUAA training modules. Moreover, the Agency supported the national rollout sessions of the EUAA core modules on Inclusion (June 2018), Interview Techniques and Evidence Assessment (September 2018). However, the need to provide further training to increase capacities, particularly among newly recruited staff, remained.

According to the evaluation of the first Roadmap, the intervention was highly effective as it managed to implement most of the envisaged activities. However, the impact of the action and the achievement of the envisaged outcomes was difficult to measure due to the limited timeframe of the Roadmap and the fact that the activities implemented contribute to structural changes, which take time to be observed. As such, most of the areas addressed in the first iteration of the Roadmap continued to be relevant to address, which is why the cooperation was extended. Therefore, to formulate and design the Roadmap, a **demands-driven needs assessment was carried out** between September 2019 and March 2020 together with national authorities and other stakeholders (i.e., EU Delegation, European Commission, International Organisation for Migration, UNHCR, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Belgrade Human Rights Centre and the Council of Europe, amongst others) to understand where requests for support would be relevant and feasible.

3. Implementation of the action: current state of play

The **Roadmap is a bilateral cooperation instrument between the EUAA and the Serbian authorities**. The formulation and implementation of the Roadmap was funded through a **combination of funds** from the core budget of the Agency,⁹ and the project '[Regional Support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey](#)' funded by the IPA II. The IPA II project allocated € 1,475,500 to help advance the 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

⁸ [EASO-Serbia 2020-2022 Roadmap](#), page 9.

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



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. Besides human resources and expert support, which constituted the largest share of activity costs of the Roadmap, the second largest share concerned the translation, proof-reading and layout of practical tools and guides.

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 Agency's Western Balkan team and the External and International Cooperation Unit as a whole. Thus, a full-time equivalent of 0.25 was allocated to the coordination of the Roadmap. This Roadmap coordinator was supported by experts from other parts of the EUAA. Notably, there was one focal point on training, one focal point on asylum, and one focal point on reception. Other staff from across the Agency was mobilised based on needs and availabilities.

At activity and output levels, the Roadmap partially delivered what it intended to. A total of **13 activities out of 27 were fully implemented (48%), four partially implemented (15%) and ten were not delivered (37%)**.

Outcome 1: Operationalised M&E System for the implementation of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection

Out of the three activities planned, one (33%) was fully implemented and two (66%) were not implemented. In December 2020 and February 2021, meetings were held between the EUAA and the Asylum Office and the SCRM to discuss the state of play of the M&E system, discuss recommendations on pending tasks and next steps. In June 2021, an expert mission to support the pilot phase of the M&E system took place and a proposed methodology, action plan and template for monitoring and reporting was presented to the authorities for validation. In December 2021, a second meeting was organised to discuss the first data collection and the overall structure of the pilot monitoring report. Following this meeting, the authorities were expected to endorse the action plan and submit a draft of the M&E report, however, this did not take place. Thus, expert missions to support its periodic implementation could not be held.

Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception

Out of the five activities planned, four activities (80%) were fully implemented and one (20%) was not delivered. In March 2021, the Agency conducted a workshop on training needs assessment and training methodology for Serbian asylum and reception authorities. The workshop included a presentation of the organisational structure and national training system conducted by the Asylum Office and the SCRM, a presentation of the training needs analysis methodology and the [European Sectoral Qualification Framework](#) and the [EASO Training Needs Analysis tool](#) by the Agency, and discussions about designing a training plan. Between January and September 2021, 20 persons were trained as trainers, ten more than originally planned. The average satisfaction rate of the training modules was 89%.



Table 1. Train-the-trainer modules

Train-the-trainer modules	Number of participants ¹⁰
Inclusion	1
Inclusion advanced	1
Exclusion	2
Reception	2
Gender identity sexual orientation	2
Trafficking in human beings	1
Evidence assessment	2
Interviewing children	2
COI	3
Interviewing vulnerable persons	1
Management in reception context	2
Management in the asylum context	1
Reception of vulnerable persons Block A	1

Source: List of Serbian participation in EUAA train-the-trainer modules.

Outcome 3: Strengthened access to the asylum procedures in line with the CEAS and EU standards

Out of the four activities planned, two (50%) were fully implemented, one was partially implemented (25%) and one (25%) was not implemented. While the [AtP tool](#) was translated and disseminated online and Serbia participated in the regional workshop on AtP organised under the IPA II project, the operational modules on registration could not be implemented.

Outcome 4: Effective identification and assessment of persons with special needs developed and implemented

Out of the six activities planned, two (33%) were delivered, one was partially implemented (17%) and three were not implemented (50%). Not much progress was made in relation to the **identification of applicants with special needs**. While an operational training on identification of persons with special needs was planned, this did not take place. Similarly, on-the-job coaching to look into the national referral procedure for identification and assessment of vulnerabilities leading to recommendations on the use of the [Tool for identification of persons with special needs](#) was not conducted.

On age assessment, experts from Germany and Sweden presented good practices at a regional workshop in November 2020. Moreover, the Agency supported the revision and analysis of the current legal framework on age assessment by providing guidance and experiences from operational support

¹⁰ Some train-the-trainer modules were taken by the same person, as per the Agency's recommendation on participation to advanced module.



to the Centre for Research and Social Development – IDEAS (IDEJE in Serbian)¹¹ who carried out the analysis. The [Practical guide on the best interest of the child in asylum procedures](#) was also translated and disseminated.¹² Additionally, outside of the scope of the Roadmap, the Agency provided examples of age assessment protocols to national authorities and advice on age assessment protocols between the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health, and on the treatment of minors of foreign origin arriving in Serbia.

Outcome 5: Standardised COI system

Out of the three activities planned, two were delivered (66%) and one was not implemented (34%). Following up on the work done during the first Roadmap regarding the **standardisation of the COI system**, an EUAA advanced workshop on COI Methodology, Writing and Referencing was organised in Vienna on 2-3 March 2022 and brought together five participants. Serbian COI experts also took part in a series of COI country briefings delivered by the Agency. Expert missions did not take place to the extent desired by the Agency.

Outcome 6: Reception services and conditions enhanced with a special focus on vulnerabilities

Out of the six activities planned, five (83%) were implemented and one (17%) could not be delivered. Three reception officials took part in the train-the-trainer module on reception (January 2021) and reception of vulnerable people (October 2021). Additionally, a national rollout on reception was delivered in October 2021, involving 20 participants. The translation and publication of [Guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children](#) and the [Practical guide on family tracing](#) were carried out as well. On-the-job coaching to support the implementation of practical guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied minors (UAMs) was provided by an expert from Italy in June 2021, who presented the [assessment of reception conditions \(ARC\) tool](#)¹³ and its application. Moreover, reception authorities participated as observer in the EUAA Network of Reception Authorities during the months of June 2020, December 2020, April 2021 and December 2021.

Outcome 7: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

None of the two activities planned under this pillar could be delivered.

¹¹ IDEAS is a non-profit public policy development, research and evaluation organisation based in Belgrade

¹² It had previously been translated into Croatian and Bosnian, so a decision was made not to translate it into Serbian, as the languages are sufficiently similar for the Serbian authorities to understand and use the guidance.

¹³ This IT tool provides a practical solution for EU+ countries as it allows the authorities to conduct self-assessments of reception conditions at national level. It rests on the common reception standards and indicators outlined in the two EASO guidance documents on reception published in 2016 (general) and 2018 (unaccompanied children).



4. Evaluation findings

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

The Roadmap was moderately successful concerning the delivery of the intended activities. Overall, support provided by the Agency was appreciated by the authorities who reported that the Agency supported them implementing the strategic goals outlined in the Chapter 24 report, while enabling them to reach EU standards through the provision of training and good practices.

During the implementation period, **hindering factors** such as the restrictions derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, the celebration of elections in the country (April 2022) and limited human resource capacities on the Agency's side had an impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Roadmap. The Maltese authorities put a travel ban in place from July 2020 until July 2022, i.e., for 19 months out of the total 24-month implementation period of the Roadmap. During this time, EUAA staff (residents of Malta) could only travel to Serbia with special prior permission from the Ministry of Health, and even then, they had to be placed in a mandatory 14-day quarantine regardless of vaccination status. The Agency itself also restricted travel during this period, only allowing EUAA staff to travel for special missions with prior approval from the Executive Director and agreement to either quarantine for 14 days in Malta or in another ('green corridor') country at their own expense. **Because of the travel ban, only two expert missions could be carried out** – one on piloting the M&E system of the asylum legislation and one on COI. As for human resource constraints, the Western Balkan team relied on the provision of expert support from staff from other centres who also have a wide portfolio of other activities to work on (e.g., development of practical tools and guides, implementation of training for EU+ countries, supporting operations, etc.). According to them, there was no formal system in place for the prioritisation of tasks, and work on the Roadmap was often delayed as a result.

In terms of financial resources, there were no constraints. According to interviewed EUAA staff and EU officials, there was sufficient budget available through IPA II to implement the planned activities.

The **support provided by the Agency in Serbia was complementary to the support provided by other actors in the field.** Both the Agency and the EU Delegation in Serbia reported excellent cooperation as regular coordination meetings and debriefings during missions to the country were organised. For instance, the Agency took part in International Liaison Officers meetings organised by the EU Delegation in Serbia and the European Migration Liaison Officer is a regular guest speaker at meetings of the Agency's Third Country Cooperation Network working group on the Western Balkans. The Agency's support also complemented efforts by other organisations, notably UNHCR. This was ensured by the different mandates of the organisations together with good information flow derived from regular exchanges, which reportedly improved over time. Complementarities with UNHCR notably exist in areas where the Agency is unable to provide support, due to a lack of mandate to do so or because it needs to maintain its independence.¹⁴

¹⁴ For instance, the provision of legal aid to asylum applicants is an area where support should be enhanced as per Chapter 24 of the Serbia report, but since this falls out of the scope of the Agency, UNHCR is responsible for providing this type of support.



Outcome 1: Operationalised M&E System for the implementation of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection

Modest progress was made in this area as the ultimate intended outcome (i.e., the effective rollout of the M&E system) did not materialise. While the Serbian authorities had started using the system to collect data, they did not approve the proposed full set of tools and working group mandate. Thus, while the methodological approach and the template for monitoring and reporting was ready, its use in practice remained beyond the Agency's control. Because of this, the efficiency of the resources invested in these activities remained to be seen. Nevertheless, the support provided was highly appreciated by the Serbian authorities who highlighted the good cooperation between the Agency and the authorities in the development of the M&E system. Discussions about potentially organising study visits to countries with an M&E system in place, for learning purposes, were ongoing at the time of writing. This points to the willingness of the Serbian authorities to continue cooperation in this field, though the support provided by the EUAA will remain contingent on the formal endorsement of the M&E system by the authorities.

Despite not fully achieving the intended outcome in this area, the support is an example of the **benefits derived from ensuring continuity between preceding and future iteration of the Roadmaps.** Having supported the setup of an M&E system during the first iteration of the Roadmap enabled the Agency to draw on past achievements and accelerate the eventual rollout of the M&E system.

Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception

The Serbian training system for asylum and reception officials was considerably supported by expanding their pool of trainers as well as the organisation of national rollouts. Serbia has a pool of 38¹⁵ national trainers at its disposal, comprised by reception officers, COI experts, case officers and staff from the Asylum Office. This enabled them to roll out a national training on reception in November 2021, resulting in 20 additional staff improving their capacities in this field. This represents an important step in relation to the sustainability of the support, as it is an example of the multiplier effect of the Agency's train-the-trainer methodology. Training is also an area where **complementarities with other organisations** on the ground, most notably UNHCR, were observed. The mandate and certification of the EUAA training positions the Agency in a privileged position to directly train national administrations working in the asylum and reception system, while the role of UNHCR in terms of training is more linked to its advocacy work.

The success of the capacity building activities was helped by the high degree of willingness to learn on the side of the authorities, as is clear from the high volume of modules (16) requested by national authorities at the design stage of the Roadmap. Another **factor that unexpectedly helped in this respect was the COVID-19 pandemic.** While restrictions derived from the COVID-19 outbreak impacted the completion of certain envisaged activities which were not possible to conduct online (e.g., on-the-job coaching and expert missions), in the case of training it reportedly had a positive effect. The fact that the Agency managed to adapt swiftly to the pandemic by implementing online

¹⁵ At the beginning of the implementation period, there were 18 national trainers which along with the 20 trained during the 2020-2022 implementation period amounts to 38 national trainers in Serbia.



training triggered higher participation rates as more people were available to join online, thus enabling more people to be trained.

Nevertheless, more work is needed to build capacity in relation to **training needs assessment and training methodology** for the Serbian Asylum Office and the SCRUM. While the workshop held in March 2021 was very well received (average satisfaction rating of 3.7 out of 4), more practical examples of how the Serbian system compared to the [European Sectoral Qualification Framework](#) and the [EASO Training Needs Analysis tool](#) could have been useful, according to one of the participants. The fact that the Serbian authorities decided not to take part in the training activities organised regionally in the context of the Agency's cooperation with the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative, particularly in workshops on how to conduct training needs assessments, was considered a missed opportunity by the EUAA, because this would have been more efficient for the Agency. The Agency nevertheless decided to provide such support to Serbia bilaterally because the authorities had the human resource capacities to carry out a training needs assessment at national level, which was not the case for other Western Balkan countries with smaller administrations. Therefore, while this caused a certain degree of overlap with the support provided in the regional context and was less efficient for the Agency, it was justified in light of the local context.

Another **element that was missing** in relation to the strengthening of the training system, according to interviewees, was the provision of a basic methodology for training evaluation. This had been identified in the needs assessment but was not implemented because staff from the Agency's Training and Professional Development Centre felt that it was important to build up a training system and implement national rollouts before considering the implementation of a system for evaluating the impact of the training carried out.

Outcome 3: Strengthened access to the asylum procedures in line with the CEAS and EU standards

The Serbian authorities participated in the regional workshop on AtP organised under the IPA II project, but not in the EUAA train-the-trainer module on registration, which was a prerequisite to further capacity building activities on registration at national level.

Outcome 4: Effective identification and assessment of persons with special needs developed and implemented

Through their participation in a regional workshop organised by the Agency for Western Balkan countries and Turkey, the **Serbian authorities learnt from the experiences of experts from Sweden and Germany in applying age assessment procedures**. Despite this knowledge exchange, a proposal on age assessment procedures was not put in place, because more practical support with its development was needed. While this was planned during the 2020-2022 period, the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic hindered its implementation.

Support in this area was complementary to that of other actors as well. For instance, the fact that the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs cooperates with UNHCR but is not one of the main counterparts of the Agency is a good example of how efforts to avoid duplications can lead to strengthening the capacities of different authorities.



Outcome 5: Standardised COI system

The Agency's contribution to the **enhancement of capacities of COI personnel was one of the key benefits of the Roadmap**. The authorities who participated in the EUAA advanced workshop on COI Methodology, Writing and Referencing (March 2022, Vienna) reported that it was very useful, particularly because they were provided with practical examples on how to draft reports and conduct peer reviews. According to the authorities, this workshop, along with their observer status in the Agency's network for COI, **led to an increase in the quality of COI reports**. They assessed that this ultimately resulted in a higher quality of the decisions made, though this is difficult to judge as quality is subjective and there is no mandate for the EUAA to monitor it. The interviewees from the Asylum Office saw this as a good example of an individualised approach to the country's needs, as it took into account the capacities and size of the COI team.

Potential duplications in the area of COI can potentially be observed with the work conducted at regional level. While it is important to promote the presence of Serbia in regional activities, COI-related activities at national level are justified in light of Serbia's relatively advanced position in the region as the only country with a dedicated COI department in place. Serbia therefore was, during the 2020-2022 period, the only country in the region where advanced support on COI was needed. As COVID-19-related restrictions hindered the implementation of the envisaged expert missions, further efforts in this field are required, in light of the recruitment of the new staff and the establishment of a COI department following the recommendation of the EUAA. There is interest from certain EU+ countries, such as Switzerland, to support Serbia through expert missions going forward.

Outcome 6: Reception services and conditions enhanced with a special focus on vulnerabilities

The **continuous support provided by the Agency to increase exchanges with and learning from EU+ countries** through observation of the Network of Reception Authorities was highly appreciated by the Serbian authorities. They explained that participating in the network and other meetings organised by the Agency enabled SCRM staff to stay informed about the practice applied in reception across the EU+ as well as the guidelines issued by the EUAA. This was important in light of Serbia's advanced status in the EU accession negotiations process.

Likewise, the follow-up **support to improve the reception conditions of UAMs** through train-the-trainer sessions on reception and reception of vulnerable persons, the translation of the EUAA guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children, and the presentation of the use of the ARC tool by an Italian expert were described by the SCRM as being of exceptional importance for improving the standards of the reception conditions and work with UAMs.

Outcome 7: Enhanced preparedness for a scenario of high influx in the field of reception for asylum seekers

The Serbian **authorities learnt from the experiences of EU+ countries in relation to contingency planning** through their participation in the Agency's Network of Reception Authorities. However, no contingency plan was endorsed because the Serbian request to deploy an expert on the ground to collect data fell out of the scope of the Agency's mandate. Before the entry into force of the new [EUAA Regulation](#) in January 2022, the Agency's mandate to operate in third countries was limited to the



provision of capacity training and hence, the deployment of experts on the ground was not feasible. In light of the new mandate to facilitate and encourage operational cooperation between EU Member States and third countries,¹⁶ there may be scope to adjust this support going forward.

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

The 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 ensuring the practical implementation of the CEAS which facilitates buy-in from authorities with an intention to join the EU. This is magnified by the Agency's close contact with the European Commission and hence, its leverage in the framework of the country's accession journey.

The Serbian authorities perceive the **Agency as a priority partner without which understanding the legal and regulatory framework of the EU and implementing the activities defined in the Action Plan for Chapter 24 would have been more difficult**. This is evidenced by the provision of support to the authorities in the development of an M&E system which monitors the implementation of the Law on Asylum, a key action point of the Action Plan. According to the authorities, without the Agency's support, the creation of such a system would have been slower or additional resources would have been needed, because they would not have had the same opportunities to learn from the experience of EU+ countries.

While it is **difficult to directly attribute the progress made in certain areas to the actions of the Agency** through the Roadmap, due to the short implementation period and the partial implementation of some of the envisaged activities, the continuous exposure to EU+ countries' practices (e.g., through participation as observer in the Agency's practitioners' networks) were pointed out by stakeholders as an area of support which only the Agency could deliver. Moreover, the provision of materials in line with EU standards enabled the country to align national standards to the CEAS. For instance, as the latest Chapter 24 report acknowledges, reception conditions are regularly monitored in view of the guidance on reception conditions through use of the ARC tool, which was developed by the EUAA.

4.3. Is the action relevant?

The **participatory approach in the design of the Roadmap and the flexibility to adapt to changing needs made the Roadmap highly relevant to the needs of the authorities**. 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 and alignment with the EU acquis, as explained above.

The Roadmap is a **flexible and timebound instrument that is able to adapt to emerging needs of national authorities**. Although the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of face-to-face activities, the Agency was able to rapidly adapt by providing online meetings and training sessions to still deliver the expected results, within reason. Moreover, despite not being envisaged in the

¹⁶ Article 35 of the [EUAA Regulation](#) defines the cooperation with third countries and specifies that the Agency shall 'facilitate and encourage operational cooperation between Member States and third countries', within the framework of the Union's external policy.



Roadmap, meetings concerning the Afghan crisis took place with national authorities in response to the high influx of Afghan nationals following the take-over of the country by the Taliban. For national authorities, the existence of an agreed, continuous and mutual cooperation framework that is constantly improving was of great importance.

An element highlighted by EU stakeholders and national authorities which contributed to the relevance of the Roadmap was its **tailor-made approach**. Moving away from a regional 'one size fits all' approach by designing a Roadmap specific to the country was pointed out as being highly relevant. For instance, the support provided in the area of COI was appreciated by the authorities who considered it relevant in view of their growing COI unit, and capacity building at national level rather than via a regional approach was reportedly preferred.

A related element which contributed to the relevance of the action stems from the **relationship of trust between the Agency and the authorities built over the years**. The Agency is perceived to be a trustworthy partner that is knowledgeable of the situation in the country, and an actor with which the Serbian authorities are willing to engage. The successful implementation of the first Roadmap and the engagement in a second iteration are good examples of this. In other words, the **relevance of the action is linked to its follow-up nature**. The Roadmap not only built on the work done during the first iteration of the Roadmap, but also expanded its support to areas not clearly defined in the first Roadmap. For instance, according to the SCRM, the needs of vulnerable people, including children, were not appropriately tackled during the first Roadmap but adapted and included in this second iteration. Nevertheless, remaining shortcomings were highlighted in relation to the needs assessment process by a representative of national authorities, who believed that results from the evaluation of the first Roadmap were not adequately transformed into a clear set of indicators which could then have been used to establish target values in the second Roadmap.

In relation to specific areas and types of support, **on-the-job training was perceived to be very relevant for the SCRM**. Interviewed SCRM staff explained that having experts on the ground who pointed out the correctness of the implementation of procedures by using real-life examples was very useful. The interviewed SCRM representatives expressed regret that support in this area was hindered by the COVID-19 outbreak during the 2020-2022 Roadmap due to the impossibility to travel to Serbia and said that they hoped to intensify the cooperation in this regard in the future.

There were **other activities which were perceived to be highly relevant, that could not be implemented during the 2020-2022 period**. For instance, a reception contingency plan was not endorsed, despite being regarded as highly relevant by the SCRM. In this regard, there seemed to be a slight misalignment in the authorities' understanding of what the Agency was and was not able to do as per its mandate. The authorities seemed to prefer a model of cooperation similar to the operational cooperation model followed by the Agency in EU Member States, which envisages the deployment of experts on the ground to provide hands-on support. However, this was not part of the Agency's mandate in third countries at the time. Despite not delivering the envisaged support in this area, supporting the endorsement of a contingency plan in line with the CEAS continues to be relevant in Serbia, particularly in light of the country's accession journey.

In terms of **future cooperation**, national authorities emphasised their willingness and capacity to intensify the cooperation and expand it to other areas such as the application of the Dublin Regulation



or the cancellation of refugee status. The authorities also expressed a wish for Serbia to access the online EUAA data platform, stating that this would have a positive effect on increasing harmonisation with the practices of EU countries (e.g., in relation to COI).

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 was **highly relevant**, particularly in light of its contribution to ensure alignment of the Serbian asylum and reception system with the EU acquis, which is necessary in view of the accession process of Serbia. The relevance of the Roadmap was maximised by the participatory approach applied to its design, which resulted in activities being tailor-made to the local context, and its flexibility to adapt to changing needs.

The support in relation to COI was highly relevant in view of the newly established COI department (outcome 5). In the area of training (outcome 2), the support concerning the rollout by the Asylum office of a Reception module was highly relevant, especially in this second iteration of the Roadmap after a relatively large pool of national trainers had been built. Despite not being formally endorsed by national authorities, the provision of support concerning the establishment of an M&E system (outcome 1) was relevant to support the implementation of the asylum law in line with the CEAS, as were activities related to improving implementation of specific aspects of the CEAS (outcomes 3, 4, 6). The support related to contingency planning (outcome 7) was relevant to meet the needs of the authorities when it was planned, but its relevance decreased because foreseen activities could not be implemented.

What were the key benefits of cooperation for national authorities? What are the lessons learnt for the future? (Effectiveness)

In the **field of asylum**, the operationalisation of an M&E system was very well received by the authorities as it provided them with a framework to support the implementation of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (outcome 1), however, the framework was not yet endorsed so the impact of the support was somewhat limited. The provision of support concerning the strengthening of the training system on asylum and reception (outcome 2) was the most effectively implemented and will be sustainable because a pool of trainers who can multiply the efforts of the EUAA through national rollouts was established. The effectiveness of the support concerning the strengthening of access to the asylum procedures in line with the CEAS and EU standards (outcome 3) and the identification and assessment of persons with special needs (outcome 4) was more limited due to hindering factors which impeded implementation, and an effective process for identification of persons with vulnerable needs was not fully put in place. While relative progress was made in the area of age assessment, through the participation of the authorities on a regional workshop and the translation of materials, an age assessment procedure was not established in the country either. The Agency's contribution to the enhancement of capacities of COI personnel (outcome 5) constituted one of the key benefits of the Roadmap because it helped strengthen the capacities of experts of the Serbian COI department.



In the **field of reception**, the effectiveness of the intervention was mixed. While the rollout of the reception training by national trainers, the introduction of the ARC tool and the participation of the authorities in the Agency's Network of Reception Authorities (outcome 6) was very well received by the authorities and reportedly increased their knowledge and capacities, the endorsement of a contingency plan could not be carried out (outcome 7).

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

Sufficient financial resources were invested into the implementation of the Roadmap. However, conclusions on the overall **efficiency of the Roadmap** are difficult to draw due to the difficulty of linking investments to specific outcomes or activities. The delivery of the envisaged support was generally hindered by COVID-19-related restrictions (travel ban for 19 out of the 24 months foreseen for the Roadmap's implementation), changes in the compositions of the government after the elections in April 2022 and human resource limitations within the Agency. Nevertheless, the provision of support concerning training (outcome 2) was found to be particularly efficient as the rollout of training could be conducted by national trainers who had been trained by the Agency during the previous iteration of the Roadmap. The fact that Serbian translations of practical guides and tools (outcomes 3, 4, 6) can also benefit Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina makes the investment into their translation worthwhile. The efficiency of the remaining outcomes (outcomes 1, 5, 7) was more limited because less was achieved.

To what extent is the intervention in Serbia coherent with other interventions that have similar objectives? (Coherence)

The Roadmap was **coherent with and clearly supported the advancement of the overall aims of the IPA II project**, and by extension, EU policy priorities in the field of asylum. The support was also coherent with EU Member States' actions, which was ensured through Serbia's participation as observer in EUAA practitioners' networks (outcome 6). While the bilateral support on COI (outcome 5) and training needs assessment (outcome 2) could be considered as overlapping with the regional support provided in the IPA II framework to the region, it was justified considering the relatively advanced position of Serbia.

Where relevant and applicable, the **support provided by the Agency in Serbia was complementary to the support provided by other actors in the field**, across all activities. This was most notably the case in the field of training (outcome 2) and support with identification of persons with special needs (outcome 4), where the EUAA provided support on different topics and to different stakeholders than other actors. While no specific synergies were identified in relation to the remaining outcomes (outcomes 1, 3, 7), there were also no duplications or overlaps, so coherence is considered good.

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

There was **considerable added value of the Roadmap in relation to Serbia's accession process**, particularly regarding the implementation and alignment with Chapter 24 of the EU acquis and the CEAS (outcome 3, 4). The added value of the Roadmap was most notably observed in the provision of support in areas which built on the first Roadmap, such as the refinement of the M&E system (outcome



1), the provision of support in COI (outcome 5) and the support in the delivery of training (outcome 2). Additionally, learning from different EU+ countries in the field of reception services (outcome 6) provided high added value that could not have been delivered by other actors, though the added value in the field of contingency planning (outcome 7) was reduced by the fact that no plan was adopted.

Table 2. Evaluation criteria by outcome objective

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5	Outcome 6	Outcome 7
Relevance	Very good	Very good	Fair	Fair	Very good	Very good	Fair
Effectiveness	Good	Very good	Good	Fair	Good	Very good	Insufficient ¹⁷
Efficiency	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Fair
Coherence	Good	Very good	Good	Very good	Good	Very good	Good
EU added value	Very good	Very good	Very good	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

The **relationship between the Agency and the Serbian authorities**, established through the first Roadmap, led to higher buy-in from counterparts. Thus, intensifying the cooperation through a more regular presence of the Agency on the ground in a post-COVID-19 situation would potentially benefit the implementation of future iterations of the Roadmap.

Relatedly, the **tailor-made approach** of the intervention and the continuous exchange between the Agency and national authorities from early stages of the intervention was perceived as a good practice by national authorities. The authorities preferred bilateral support over a regional approach (e.g., to COI and training) because of their more advanced positioning in the accession process and comparatively larger administrations, though a regional approach is more efficient for the Agency, especially as it is hindered by the lack of sufficient human resources.

While COVID-19-related restrictions led to the postponement of many envisaged activities, the Agency's **ability to swiftly shift to online modalities**, mainly concerning the provision of training, was identified as a good practice. The online provision of training triggered higher participation rates, and

¹⁷ This is rated as insufficient because no support was provided by the Agency as the support requested by the Serbian authorities fell out of the scope of the mandate of the Agency during the implementation period. This was, however, outside of the control of the Agency.



can be more efficient for both parties as well as produce a modest reduction in their environmental footprints. The experience shows that this modality can be kept in future iterations of the Roadmap, for activities where this is considered appropriate by the EUAA and the authorities.

The **engagement of experts from EU Member States and the increased exchanges with and learning from EU+ countries** through observation of the Network of Reception Authorities was highly appreciated by the Serbian authorities and should be retained.

5.3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Prioritise the provision of support in areas where progress has been partially achieved

Support in areas where effectiveness was limited should be accelerated, if they are still considered relevant according to the needs assessment. The Agency could consider:

- reassessing the possibility of providing practical support for the adoption of a rights-compliant national age assessment process in future iterations of the Roadmap;
- expanding the provision of training in areas identified and requested by national authorities (e.g., asylum procedures directive, fundamental rights and international protection in the EU, and identification of potential exclusion cases);
- further supporting the rollout of national training modules;
- extending the involvement of the Serbian authorities in additional Agency networks.

Recommendation 2: Ensure better alignment between the Roadmap's objectives 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.

Recommendation 3: Enhance the Roadmap's results framework and monitoring plan to ensure continuity between preceding and future iterations of the Roadmaps

Results derived from the evaluation of the first Roadmap need to be adequately transformed into a clear set of indicators which can subsequently be systematically used to establish target values in the second Roadmap. The Agency could consider:



- ensuring continuity in support through the establishment of a more robust Roadmap results framework (including baseline and target values) based on the results achieved in preceding phases of the cooperation;
- involving national authorities in the setup of target values with a view to further enhancing their level of ownership;
- accelerating the deployment of an EUAA expert on the ground, in light of the Agency's new mandate, to intensify cooperation and contribute to the follow-up of implemented activities;
- upgrading and regularly updating the results framework (e.g., on a monthly basis or any time milestones are reached).

Recommendation 4: Ensure alignment and a common understanding between the Agency and national authorities concerning the intervention approach

To avoid misalignments in the understanding of what the Agency is able to do as per its (new) mandate, the Agency could consider:

- reflecting on the possibility of meeting the Serbian request for deployment of an expert to support with contingency planning;
- ensuring clarity in the Agency's mandate and the implications for third countries, e.g., through the development of a catalogue of services and/or organisation of a presentation and Q&A session.¹⁸

¹⁸ This could be organised at regional level for the sake of efficiency, as it is relevant to the region as a whole.



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, the evaluation of the EASO-Serbia 2018-2020 Roadmap, 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 13 interviews (eight of them specifically about Serbia, five covering all four Roadmaps being evaluated). Some of the interviews were carried out as group interviews, so a total of 16 stakeholders were consulted in total across all 13 interviews. The stakeholders consulted include relevant staff members from the EUAA, the authorities in Serbia, other (international) actors active in the field of asylum and reception in Serbia, and relevant EU representatives.

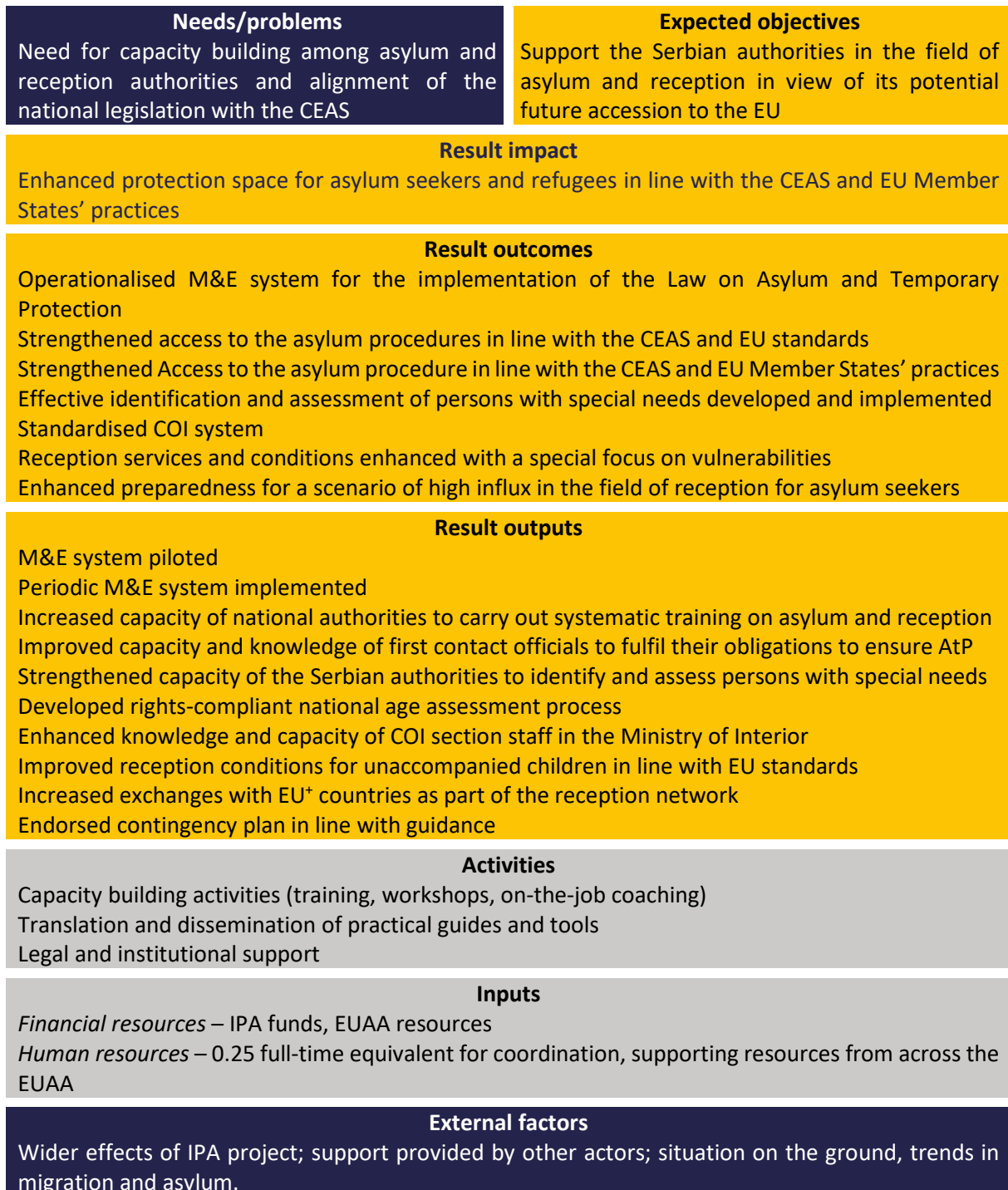
The primary and secondary evidence collected underwent a process of **triangulation and synthesis**, with a view to deriving robust, evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions, and formulating conclusions and lessons learnt for the future on that basis.

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 3. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
Relevance: To what extent was the intervention in Serbia relevant to its stakeholders, in light of their original needs and any changes therein?	<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>	✓	✓
Effectiveness: What have been the (quantitative and qualitative) effects of the intervention and to what extent can these be credited to the intervention in Serbia rather than external factors?	<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 learnt for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓
Efficiency: To what extent are the costs of the intervention in Serbia justified given what has been achieved, and what factors influenced the efficiency of the	<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
intervention in Serbia?	<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 learnt for the future?</i></p>		
Coherence: To what extent is the intervention in Serbia coherent with other interventions that have similar objectives (i.e., UNHCR)?	<p>Priority question: Was the Agency's work complementary to UNHCR support in Serbia?</p> <p><u>Prompts</u></p> <p><i>Was there unnecessary overlap or duplication?</i></p> <p><i>What lessons can be learnt for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓
EU added value: To what extent has the EUAA's intervention in Serbia 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 learnt for the future?</i></p>	✓	✓



Annex 4: Follow-up on the previous evaluation

Table 4. Follow-up on the recommendations of the previous evaluation

Recommendations of the evaluation	Status
<p>Recommendation 1: The positive findings of the current evaluation call for an enhanced EASO – Serbia partnership on asylum:</p> <p>This recommendation includes ensuring long-term predictability of the EASO-Serbia cooperation, securing budget and human resources, and further participation of Serbian counterparts in EASO networks.</p>	<p>Partially achieved. A second iteration of the Roadmap was designed and implemented as part of the Regional Support to protection-sensitive migration managements in the Western Balkans and Turkey, under the IPA-funded project phase II (2019-2021). However, the present evaluation found that human resources constraints remain on the Agency's side.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: The scope of the Roadmap needs to be better articulated:</p> <p>This includes ensuring clarification of the scope for future similar Roadmaps, exploring the design of future capacity building activities around different result layers and limiting 'Roadmap-transition' periods to ensure formalised continuity.</p>	<p>Achieved. The new Roadmap template includes a clearer intervention logic with a set of outcomes, outputs, and deliverables, which make it more result oriented.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. The Roadmap intervention logic needs better alignment with related Planning or Strategic documents such as the Chapter 24 Action Plan:</p> <p>This includes as well clarifying which activities will be achieved at regional or national levels and simplifying the design of the Roadmap intervention logic and formulation.</p>	<p>Achieved. The design of the Roadmap intervention logic is simplified and mentions to synergies between regional and national activities are specified.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: The operationalisation of capacity building activities need to be adapted to the context and capacities:</p> <p>This includes finding sustainable ways of delivering activities, optimising investments in train the trainers, in view of staff turnover, ensuring timely translations in preparation of national training, participant profiling and selection.</p>	<p>Partially achieved. Efforts were made in the second Roadmap to increase the sustainability of capacity building activities through training needs assessment and plan, the build-up of a pool of national trainers and the roll out of core modules by national trainers. However, further efforts ensuring the sustainability of the action remain, and there is scope for Serbia to be more involved in regional training activities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5. Collaboration within EASO has proven instrumental but can be further enhanced:</p>	<p>Achieved. Collaboration within the Agency was enhanced, though there is room for improvement from a human resource and prioritisation perspective.</p>



Recommendations of the evaluation	Status
<p>This recommendation includes enhancing a balanced involvement of the relevant EASO Units, applying harmonised evaluation tools for training activities and ensuring they are shared, and collaborating towards a training work plan clarifying roles and division of work.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 6: There is a need for better coordination, communication and follow-up: Coordination should take into account the multiple national actors, the formalisation of the Roadmap as a way to increase ownership with EASO and national authorities, and enhancing its visibility.</p>	<p>Partially achieved. Despite COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the Roadmap coordinator travelled to Serbia five times to ensure continuity in the work and cooperation with the authorities. The authorities appreciated the participatory nature of the Roadmap and the ability of the Agency to solve problems as they arose. However, presence on the ground through the appointment of a Liaison Officer has not taken place yet.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Develop an improved but light monitoring system allowing smooth follow up: This recommendation includes defining a monitoring plan, ensuring the use of result and process indicators, harmonising activity feedback surveys, monitoring the overall outcome and follow-up actions beyond the different activities, and enhancing a better results-based budget monitoring tool.</p>	<p>Achieved. A monitoring system was put in place for the 2020-2022 period. Budget monitoring could be enhanced to include details at the level of specific outcomes, however.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: Transform needs assessment findings into priority results and leverage interventions with in-house high value expertise: There is a need to focus where support is most needed from scale and CEAS standard perspectives. There is scope to further articulate in a more results-oriented way the different EASO outputs building on its added value. EASO should aim at reducing administrative workflows in favour of expanding in-house expertise and widening the nature of its interventions.</p>	<p>Achieved. The thorough needs assessment process ensured alignment with needs of different stakeholders and the structure of the Roadmap (activities aligned with specific outcomes) was improved.</p>