



External evaluation of the implementation of Operating Plan 2019 (OP2019) of EASO intervention in Greece, Italy and Cyprus

**Cross-country analytical report &
Evaluation strategic recommendations**

Final

04/05/2020

Authors

This report was prepared by:

André Estignard, Partner

BearingPoint

Tour CBX

1, Passerelle des Reflets

92913 Paris La Défense Cedex

France

andre.estignard@bearingpoint.com

Wim Palmers, Senior Manager

BearingPoint

Rue Montoyer Straat 25

1000 Brussels

Belgium

T: +32(0)23201022

M: +32(0)475456744

wim.palmers@bearingpoint.com

Lyra Jakuleviciene – Senior Quality Assurance evaluation expert

Kenneth Brant Hansen – Country evaluator Greece

Claudia Micciche – Country evaluator Italy

Tatiana Kistruga – Country evaluator Cyprus

Maria Trullen Malaret - Evaluator



Disclaimers

The sole responsibility for this report lies with the author. The EUAA is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

This report includes non-validated operational data provided to the evaluators during data collection. Some data may differ from those presented in other reports because such data may have been updated through subsequent internal data reviews or validation exercises.

This report may include provisional data available at the time of production of the report. Some data may therefore differ from those in validated and official statistics subsequently submitted to Eurostat (in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2020/851 amending Regulation (EC) 862/2007) and published on the Eurostat website <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/asylum>.

This page was added to the report on 08/01/2024



Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 CROSS-COUNTRY EVALUATION FINDINGS	6
2.1 Impact of specific country contexts on EASO activities	6
2.1.1 Summary of findings.....	6
2.1.2 Recommendations	7
2.2 Approaches to measures on reception and asylum procedures.....	7
2.2.1 Approach to registration processes	7
2.2.2 Approach to backlog management	8
2.2.3 Approach to vulnerability assessment and referral.....	10
2.2.4 Approach to reception	11
2.2.5 Approach on support to coordination	12
2.3 Application of the results framework and monitoring framework.....	12
2.3.1 Summary of findings.....	13
2.3.2 Recommendations	14
2.4 Existence and operation of systems, tools and mechanisms to manage quality.....	14
2.4.1 Summary of findings.....	15
2.4.2 Recommendations	16
2.5 Effect and sustainability of training.....	17
2.5.1 Summary of findings.....	17
2.5.2 Recommendations	18
2.6 Horizontal lessons learned	18
3 CONCLUSION: EVALUATION STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS	22

List of abbreviations

C3	Registration form in Vestanet
CAS	Cyprus Asylum Service
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
DCLI	Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration
DPS	Department of Public Security
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
GAS	Greek Asylum Service
KEEPLNO	Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MS(s)	Member State(s)
NAC	National Asylum Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRMF	National Reception Monitoring Framework
OP	Operating Plan
OP2019	Operating Plan for 2019
RIC	Reception and identification centre
RIS	Reception and identification service
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SUA	Sistema Unico de Asilo
TC	Territorial Commission
TtT	Train-the-Trainer programme

1 Introduction

In December 2019, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) launched the external evaluation of its operations under the 2019 Operating Plans (OP2019) in Greece, Italy and Cyprus. This evaluation sought to assess the achievement of OP2019 objectives, determine the relevance and achievement of results, assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities performed, assess the coherence and added-value of the interventions in the respective countries, highlight good practices and lessons learned, and provide appropriate recommendations. Separate evaluation reports were compiled for each of the three countries.

This cross-country analytical report captures the commonalities and differences in findings between the three evaluations. It covers the following elements:

- The impact of the specific context in each country on EASO activities;
- A comparison of approaches to measures on asylum procedures and reception;
- The implementation of the results and monitoring frameworks;
- The existence and operation of systems, tools and mechanisms to manage quality;
- The effect and sustainability of training activities;
- Good practices and lessons learned, their application to internal learning within EASO and shaping of similar operations in the future.

At the end of the report the evaluation's strategic recommendations are captured, combining the strategic recommendations from the country evaluations and those from this analytical report.

2 Cross-country evaluation findings

2.1 Impact of specific country contexts on EASO activities

2.1.1 Summary of findings

Each country has its own specific context, within which EASO must operate. These differences in the specific context shape operations in a way that makes it difficult to compare. In addition to the differences in needs of national authorities, key external factors impacting EASO activities were: a) political context; b) increasing flows of applicants for international protection; c) complexity of the migratory situation and multifaceted asylum procedures; d) high dependency on actions of national authorities and/or multifaceted nature of the reception system; e) frequent institutional changes within the national authorities.

Although some of these elements might accelerate EASO operations, most act as factors influencing the achievement of outputs of the intervention, depending on the country. In Italy, for instance, **politically volatile circumstances** saw a change of government coalition at the beginning of September 2019. This affected implementation of OP2019, which was negotiated with one government and part-implemented with another. The change of the governing party in Greece in mid-2019 caused slight delay in the implementation of OP2019, as the country team needed to re-build communication channels with stakeholders in the authorities, but it did not cause any major implications. There was, however, no evidence of any such effect in Cyprus.

2019 saw a **15% increase in new arrivals** to Greece and an unprecedented 70% increase in arrivals to Cyprus, impacting on EASO's efforts to support the authorities in reducing the backlog in first instance. These increases placed substantial pressure on Greek and Cypriot authorities to register and process asylum applications, with the rate of influx and numbers of pending cases surpassing the capacity of the authorities. Italy, by contrast, experienced a 30% drop in arrivals, allowing EASO and the authorities to focus their attention on backlog reduction targets. The Italian authorities were able to boost their own capacity, adding almost 300 new personnel to the Territorial Commissions (TCs) and accelerating the clearing of backlogs. This enabled EASO to focus on building sustainability in the system and handing over to the national authorities.

In Greece, the **complexity of the situation, reflected in the asylum procedures** (implementation of EU – Turkey Statement), also affected achievement of the targets for regular asylum procedure, with attention shifted almost entirely to the border procedure for processing applications.

The **EASO intervention is highly dependent on the national authorities (actions, structures and capacity)**. In Cyprus, for example, among the factors impacting on EASO's possibilities to substantially contribute to improving reception conditions was the complex social system that involved a number of national authorities that EASO did not directly deal with (in particular, the referral system for vulnerable applicants). Similar observations apply to Italy, where the reception system is multi-faceted. In Greece, the possibility to achieve more strategic targets in the area of reception were influenced by the **frequent institutional changes** within the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) in 2019.

The impact of these external factors on the operations can only be mitigated by EASO flexibility as an organization. It indeed demonstrated such flexibility in some situations of 2019 (e.g. by addressing the needs related to disembarcations and allocating ad hoc budgets for that in Italy).

2.1.2 Recommendations

- Flexibility to address -when relevant- changing needs of MS is important to maintain a high added value of the EASO intervention. Currently any possible changes to the intervention, (e.g. impact of foreseeable political transitions, like the upcoming/likely elections and possible changes in government) are reflected upon in the risks and assumptions of the needs assessment. To ensure transparency and clarity of any changes to the OP and their implications to all parties involved, it is recommended that any **changes in the intervention (e.g. in measures) are documented and approved** with the Government (addendum, official letter). Internal monitoring mechanisms should be modified accordingly.
- For unpredictable events happening (e.g. migratory flows) a **pre-defined mechanism should be established for transparent choices of de-prioritisation**, increasing/decreasing intervention or revising targets.
- EASO should realistically **reassess its involvement in view of its ability to influence the achievement of certain outcomes** where it primarily depends on stakeholders and/or authorities and has only limited control over results. It is obvious that there is certain interdependency between the national stakeholders and EASO's ability to achieve the outcomes of intervention. However, for certain types of involvement such interdependencies have a more direct impact on outcomes achieved than for others. For example, EASO support in asylum procedures has been seen as more stable and less dependent on the actions by the authorities (with some exceptions of provision of space), whereas reception is clearly a less predictable area in view of a number of stakeholders involved and complexity of systems.

2.2 Approaches to measures on reception and asylum procedures

This section assesses the approaches to selected horizontal aspects of EASO operations in the three countries in light of 2019 results and their impact on efficiency and effectiveness of the interventions. As the results monitoring framework is a recent introduction and not all data captured can be compared, only those issues that played an important role in achieving OP2019 results are analysed. An additional limitation to the analysis is the specific context of each country, making a direct comparison between the countries not always feasible (e.g. conducting interviews or workflows on vulnerability assessments, etc.).

2.2.1 Approach to registration processes

2.2.1.1 Findings

The EASO interventions in Greece, Cyprus and Italy involved support to the national authorities (the Greek Asylum Service (GAS), Cyprus Asylum Service (CAS) and Department of Public Security (DPS), respectively) in the registration of applicants for international protection. Such support aimed to reduce the median time between lodging and registration of applications for international protection. The evaluation found that **EASO achieved good results** in reducing the time limits for registration and provided substantial contribution to the national authorities. The median duration of registration of applicants who entered irregularly was reduced from 55 days in 2018 to 11 days in 2019 in Cyprus. In Greece it was kept almost the same between expression of interest to apply for asylum and/or pre-registration) until lodging of application (full registration) (43 days in 2019 (for both procedures) and 42 days in 2018). The median from entry to registration for Italy is not comparable (192 days), as over half of all applicants entered the country more than 6 months before lodging their claim. Contributions ranged from around 63% of all applications in Cyprus (a total of 8,959 registrations) (increase since 2018), 51% of the overall number of registrations

in Italy (18,161 registrations, above targets) and 47% in Greece (17,888 registrations, covered also regular procedures, below the targets).

The **approach** in Greece and Cyprus was to maintain registration services in the face of increasing numbers of arrivals in 2019. This was earlier agreed as a contingency measure in the context of the authorities' limited capacity to deal with these additional registrations. In Italy, EASO worked towards embedding quality elements in the registration process, in addition to delivering actual registrations in Questura. Here, the approach sought to include specific elements in registration documents/systems, in particular annexes (*Allegati integrative*) to the so-called C3 form in the DPS registration system (with potential for inclusion in a new asylum information system, SUA, in 2021). This approach will contribute to building certain elements of sustainability of quality aspects in the system and prepare for EASO's withdrawal from the registration process in the short-term, while simultaneously increasing the impact of EASO's support with registrations. There were, however, some practical limitations, as time constraints meant that the police did not always use the annexes in their registration interviews, which indicates a potential risk in the future when registrations are done without EASO support.

Synergies with other activities/measures are particularly relevant for registrations. Addressing the quality of registrations had a positive effect on: a) the identification of vulnerable persons (e.g. complementary to Measure 2 in Italy, as EASO support facilitated prioritised registration of 1,958 vulnerable persons); b) the quality and completeness of the information gathered for first instance interview preparation and scheduling (Italy, Cyprus); c) the coherence of national procedures by enabling exchange of information and communication between various authorities (Cyprus). However, in all three countries, the successful support of EASO in the area of registration indirectly meant more cases being channeled to the first instance that already had a substantial backlog, demonstrating incompatible outcomes (i.e. one achieved at the expense of another).

Good practice: EASO's deployment of temporary workers for registrations succeeded in introducing civilian registration assistants to police structures, which national authorities view as a good practice that particularly benefits vulnerable applicants.

However, the approach of using temporary workers has the limitation on the assessment of quality of the work performed/outputs produced by these personnel, as they were working within the national asylum structures (GAS, CAS and the Immigration Police, and DPS, respectively), thus largely outside EASO quality control system. The evaluation also found negative effects on the ability of registration assistants to perform their work, as they were asked to complete tasks that did not form part of their job descriptions (Cyprus and Italy).

2.2.1.2 Recommendations

- Even when involved in registration as direct support to the authorities' function, EASO should strive to build in elements of gradual transition to national authorities to prevent unnecessarily long dependency on this type of support.
- Coordinate coherent target setting between measures to avoid inadvertent contradictions, e.g. registration and backlog reduction in the first instance.

2.2.2 Approach to backlog management

2.2.2.1 Findings

The EASO intervention in all three countries foresaw support to the national authorities (GAS, CAS and DCLI, respectively) in processing applications for international protection. The aim was to reduce the backlog and thus the median time between the registration of applications for international protection and interviews, and between interviews and delivery of opinions. More than half of EASO's efforts in Cyprus in 2019 focused on backlog management of first instance asylum applications, with 43 EASO experts contributing 764 interviews and 515 opinions. In Italy, EASO conducted 18,161 interviews and delivered 26,287 concluding remarks, contributing to 27,061 first instance decisions. In Greece, EASO produced 8,833 interviews and 8,213 concluding remarks in both procedures, contributing to 32,618 decisions. These numbers demonstrate the important contribution to the national system but cannot be used for comparison as the workflows and interviews are not fully comparable (e.g. full-fledged admissibility and eligibility interviews in Greece, while only eligibility in Cyprus). However, a common feature in all the countries was that EASO was below targets or 2018 baselines on backlog management. The difference of deployment model in Italy from direct model by EASO (Cyprus and Greece), does not make it possible to fully attribute the results of reducing the backlog to EASO. Where available, the **median duration** between the date of registration and the date of first instance support action was 659 days in Italy, lodging to interview was 489 days in Cyprus (longer than in 2018), while, in Greece, the median time between registration and interview was longer than in 2018, due to the large influx of people from September onwards. However, the median number of days between interview and opinion in Greece reduced from 28 to 18 days, likely due to piloted backlog management initiatives. In Cyprus, recruitment of new and inexperienced staff and some short deployments of MS experts (who left a backlog in opinions) resulted in the median between interview and opinion increasing from 9 to 29 days. Alongside these reasons, successful clearing of backlog at registration could have contributed to increasing first instance pending cases.

The approach to backlog management saw a number of pilot initiatives in 2019, with mixed or positive results:

- a) The introduction of shifts in Greece and Cyprus had significantly different effects. Whereas this worked successfully in Greece, it had little positive effect in Cyprus. Although an assessment seems to have been performed before introducing the shifts in Cyprus, certain pre-conditions have not been fully addressed. The issue of transportation – although eventually resolved (e.g. in Lesvos) – was a major constraint in Cyprus, resulting in shifts disrupting workflows (some interviews could not be completed in one day).
- b) Changes in the interview process in Greece and Cyprus reduced the time of interviews due to fewer quality control related interruptions to include the team leader, without compromising the quality of interviews.
- c) Changes to workflows that saw interviews conducted for one week, followed by a week of opinion drafting (Greece). Cyprus also established a dedicated 'opinion room' to facilitate drafting of opinions.
- d) Other initiatives to increase the effectiveness of the intervention in Greece included team leaders and field coordinators tracking backlogs and increased daily interviews in Lesvos. From October 2019, the target per caseworker was set at seven interviews per week, which increased productivity.

Good practices: *Some backlog reduction pilot initiatives produced tangible results (e.g. revision of team leaders involvement in interviews for quality assurance, shifting days/weeks for interviews/opinions and improving conditions for opinion writing (dedicated quiet spaces, teleworking), as well as tracking the backlog at the level of caseworker/team leader). These could be replicated in other operations to ensure standardisation of the approach, where relevant.*

2.2.2.2 Recommendations

- Replicate good practices in backlog management initiatives from Greece in other operations (e.g. team leaders/field coordinators tracking backlog at caseworker level).
- Undertake a thorough analysis of potential negative/positive implications of pilot initiatives and the pre-conditions for their success (e.g. introduction of shifts), in order to create such pre-conditions where possible.

2.2.3 Approach to vulnerability assessment and referral

2.2.3.1 Findings

The EASO intervention in all three countries included support to the national authorities (both asylum and reception) in the identification and referral of vulnerable applicants to asylum procedures and the social services. Besides the national specificities of the needs in the countries that impact on shaping EASO operations, the evaluation concluded that EASO's intervention in the area of vulnerability identification and/or referral in the three countries was incoherent and unclear overall (for Greece until mid-2019). Firstly, as vulnerability issues are relevant both for asylum procedures and reception, the measures/activities overlapped. In Cyprus, it was addressed both through registration (where EASO registration assistants identified 13% of all cases as vulnerable) and reception (deploying vulnerability experts in Pournara). In Greece, it was partially an issue for asylum procedures until mid-year, and for reception, through the deployment of vulnerability teams to five islands (identifying and assisting more than 6,590 vulnerable persons in first line reception and referrals in second line of reception, with 4,722 persons referred for access to procedures and to private accommodation schemes). The deployment of Vulnerability Focal Points (VFPs) to the five islands in Greece appeared to have been very effective (more than three times as many persons with special vulnerabilities were referred than in 2018). In two countries, the approach could lead to greater sustainability, for example the coordination of efforts to develop a common vulnerability assessment (Cyprus) or embedding C3 annexes at registration (Italy). Where the approach was clarified during the year, it led to good results (e.g. revision of workflow in Greece enabled completing most of the interviews and apparently reduced the interview duration). The results of vulnerability identification varied between the countries, according to the approach taken by the national authorities and EASO (e.g. restrictive application of vulnerability criteria by GAS in Greece and more flexible application of vulnerability criteria by EASO, leading to large numbers of vulnerable persons identified; focusing on visual vulnerabilities only by police in Cyprus with very low numbers identified and progress linked to embedding vulnerability assessments in workflows in Pournara, which were not yet ready in 2019; lack of time for police officers to focus on additional questions during registration in Italy). Secondly, EASO support was highly dependent on other actors in the system, over which it had very little influence (e.g. complex systems of referrals in Cyprus between CAS, medical department, social welfare services and others).

2.2.3.2 Recommendations

- Clarify overall intervention logic, the approach and tools to embed vulnerability assessments in the process, seek a coordinated approach with other stakeholders, and revisit involvement where EASO has little influence over results.

2.2.4 Approach to reception

2.2.4.1 Findings

The approach to EASO's support in reception included measures at both the strategic level and at the local level of direct service provision. Despite this, the intervention logic was not entirely clear in any of the countries and reception measures involved a wide range of activities, with mixed success. More tangible results were evident where efforts were more strategically positioned and existing EASO tools were used (e.g. piloting the National Reception Monitoring Framework (NRMF) in Greece). In Italy, the personnel deployed at DCLI headquarters assisted the authorities with technical functions in improving reporting to external stakeholders but did not have any strategic impact.

The approach in Cyprus was to address various workflows in the reception centres, thereby contributing to the management system of the Kofinou centre and coordinating efforts for a common template on vulnerability assessment (or referral) in Pournara. This made the support more sustainable and impactful than service provision alone.

The involvement of Member State (MS) experts in reception proved to be valuable, generating added value where they brought specific expertise to the management of reception facilities (e.g. good practices in Cyprus, where MS experts coordinated the preparation of 70% of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for management of the Kofinou centre).

The current approach to reception does not seem to be based on a clearly identified EASO added value proposition or areas where it could have substantive control over achievement of results. This creates an unclear relationship between the activities performed and the outcomes of improved reception conditions and strategic management of the reception system. It also risks duplication of efforts, as multiple stakeholders operate in the area of reception and EASO provides direct services support alongside other service providers and (often) more specialised NGOs.

2.2.4.2 Recommendations

- Define EASO's role and added value in the area of reception for each country. EASO is recommended to clearly define its intended involvement in reception. The EASO intervention logic on reception should be developed based on: a) the areas where EASO could bring most added value in line with its mandate; b) the areas where EASO can achieve a relatively good degree of control and/or influence within the scope of the OP for the country. This would help to strategically position the EASO intervention at strategic and/or operational level and define tangible outputs, outcomes and related indicators that are logically interconnected. One possible input may be the areas identified in the country evaluations where EASO's added value seems particularly high. It is understood that this work has started by the time of writing of this report.
- Consider differentiating the approach of EASO intervention in reception, depending on whether it responds to more broad strategic objectives (where EASO has clear added value and tools to support development at country level) or to daily needs stemming from national authorities' lack of capacity. Even where it is involved in direct services, EASO should strive to build in elements of gradual transition to prevent development of dependencies in the system.

- Continue involving MS experts in reception, where they can bring specific expertise to respond to the needs of the authorities.

2.2.5 Approach on support to coordination¹

2.2.5.1 Findings

The EASO intervention in the three countries involved coordination with other stakeholders. Although sometimes difficult to measure in tangible results, the overall outputs involving coordination efforts demonstrate the added value of EASO involvement and are consistently acknowledged by the authorities interviewed. A key asset of EASO is that it is seen as a neutral body that can bring together different stakeholders in both asylum procedures (e.g. the National Asylum Commission (NAC) and stakeholders in Italy) and reception systems (e.g. Cyprus, where EASO was particularly effective in coordinating events delivered by other stakeholders in the Kofinou centre, coordination of volunteer organisations, establishing a common vulnerability assessment template in Pournara). In Italy, the coordination mechanism established between the DPS, NAC and the Dublin Unit is acknowledged as vital to the asylum process, while coordination of various stakeholders (including the European Commission) on disembarkation criteria allowed optimisation of the process of voluntary relocation. While Greece has a need for substantially better coordination between the many ministries, departments, agencies, international organisations and NGOs involved with asylum and reception, EASO more proactive coordinating role did not seem to be clearly articulated by the authorities. In 2019, EASO participated in different coordination bodies but held no lead role (e.g. the main coordination platform in reception was Technical Assistance Project run by UNHCR).

Good practice: *The coordinated approach to activities that involve various stakeholders to make processes more effective and efficient (e.g. the creation of a new template circulation list and agreed criteria by all stakeholders working on voluntary relocation in Italy reduced the need for multiple interviews of the same applicants).*

2.2.5.2 Recommendations

- Consider strengthening EASO's positioning in supporting coordination and collaboration throughout the intervention, given that this is clearly an area where the added value brought by the organisation is found to be high.
- While it is not uncommon to have coordination meetings as an output of certain measures of intervention, phrase deliverable descriptions in more precise/tangible way and provide details what EASO wants to achieve with coordination at outcome level (e.g. Italy and Cyprus).

2.3 Application of the results framework and monitoring framework

The 2018 external evaluation recommended that EASO develop and apply a results framework to the design, implementation and evaluation of OPs in order to make its support more results-focused and allow for objective measurement of progress. This section assesses the extent to which the results framework and the related monitoring framework were applied.

¹ Coordination in this context does not imply EASO to steer, but rather to support national authorities in bringing together various external stakeholders.

2.3.1 Summary of findings

The evaluation reports suggest that EASO has made significant progress in monitoring and measuring results. A multiannual (2019-2021) **results framework** has been established for operations in the three countries subject to this evaluation, specifying the overall objective (impact), specific objectives (outcomes) for each measure, outputs and inputs (resources). Baseline values and annual targets were set for each of these elements, as well as sources and means of verification and - where relevant - assumptions. The existence of these indicators and targets have greatly benefitted this evaluation, making its evidence base more tangible and robust. As indicated in the country evaluation reports, the results framework also facilitated better coherence between the outputs and their related outcomes and impacts. Exceptions were identified, such as Measure 4 in Cyprus and some Measures in Italy. The results framework was new to EASO, requiring the development of an approach and template suited to the organisation, as well as buy-in from relevant actors across the organisation. Notwithstanding these challenges, the quality of the results framework is considered good, with the potential for enhancements to further streamline the logic and relevance of the indicators (e.g. indicators such as “operational initiatives to improve reception conditions” and “case management system quality enhanced” are not specific and therefore not easy to objectively measure progress against). This potential for further enhancement is acknowledged by EASO management.

A **Fidelity Monitoring Plan** was set up to monitor progress of implementation and allow corrective action to be taken where necessary. The purpose of the monitoring is to strengthen operational preparedness to adapt to a dynamic environment by facilitating feedback loop mechanisms that embrace both process and results monitoring. The monitoring system is characterised by a combination of centralised (e.g. analytical reports, monthly reports, process indicator database) and decentralised (e.g. comprehensive quantitative data collection on a weekly/monthly basis, end of mission reports, MS experts lessons learned and feedback matrix, narrative reports from islands) monitoring. For centralised monitoring, indicators captured in the results framework were embedded in the results monitoring. For process monitoring, efforts focused on monitoring resource consumption (MS experts, interpreters, temporary workers) per (sub)-measure, which itself represents considerable progress in the space of one year.

This monitoring framework is new to EASO and any such framework would require several iterations to become fully fit-for-purpose. The evaluation identified the following improvements to the monitoring and reporting framework:

- Some of the indicators used measure outcomes that are beyond EASO’s control. An example is the indicator “percentage of backlog reduced”. Backlog is highly dependent on the influx of asylum seekers and/or may be the result of other actions (e.g. higher cases processed in first instance often leads to an increase in backlog in second instance). It is therefore recommended to use indicators directly influenced by EASO’s intervention.
- Despite being important characteristics of the intervention, very few efficiency and quality indicators were found in the monitoring reports. Where exceptions exist (some efficiency indicators appear in Cyprus reports and quality is partially covered in the Italy reports), these cover only part of the intervention.
- The monitoring of resources, actions and outputs foreseen in the OP is scattered throughout various reports, following a rationale of responsibility rather than focusing on the information needed to assess the intervention. For example, resource monitoring of operations covers neither workdays of EASO staff related to the intervention nor costs related to training provided. Information related to outputs for the country but produced by EASO teams outside of the Operations Unit (e.g. training) is

captured in reporting by those teams and not integrated into the country reports (e.g. monthly reports).

- Monitoring of resource consumption is performed per (sub-)measure and not per output type, making it impossible to assess the costs per output.

It thus remains difficult to assess the quality, efficiency and cost-benefit of measures and outputs based on the current monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

2.3.2 Recommendations

- As the results framework is still new, it is recommended to **perform an annual (internal) review of the country's frameworks** to embed lessons learned and further enhance the indicators and targets to maximise their use in assessing internal coherence, outcomes and impacts. Focus on indicators that are directly linked to EASO's intervention and which can be influenced by the Agency, and remove inadvertent contradictions between targets (e.g. high volume of registrations leading to increase in backlog in first instance). Once users find the results frameworks sufficiently robust, the frequency of such reviews may reduce.
- Once the existing indicators and their supporting measurement and reporting flows are found to be stable by their main users, EASO is recommended to **gradually include more complex criteria** in the indicator set, thus covering **efficiency** and **quality** of operations. This is difficult to implement for all activities and outputs, thus should focus only on the most important activities and outputs (e.g. most resource-intensive outputs). Set clear targets for quality and efficiency and measure progress against these. Particularly in the context of asylum, efficiency indicators should not be read in isolation but, rather, in combination with other indicators, such as quality. Internal and external benchmarking may be applied to better assess performance based on the values obtained (e.g. quicker access to asylum procedures or protection for applicants). KPIs should not be measured to start a 'blame' culture but to understand what works well and what can be improved.
- If EASO aims to achieve the capability to compare the costs of its interventions with the benefits generated and to steer its work accordingly, **activity-based planning and monitoring** would be recommended. Such an approach would ideally take a holistic view of all costs related to activities and their related outputs (according to the Total Cost of Ownership principle). It is understood that such an approach would need to be driven by EASO headquarters and would potentially go beyond the scope of the interventions covered by this evaluation. Pragmatic intermediary solutions limiting this approach to the main activities of the intervention may themselves yield benefits without requiring a high transformation effort.

2.4 Existence and operation of systems, tools and mechanisms to manage quality

This section assesses the quality management systems, tools and mechanisms, together with their interaction with national authorities' quality mechanisms and their impact on efficiency and effectiveness of the interventions.

2.4.1 Summary of findings

This evaluation found that EASO has developed a **comprehensive and tested quality system**, composed of various elements, such as training on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and national systems, quality guidance for caseworkers, a quality helpdesk (per country and with support from headquarters when needed), training, on-the-job coaching and review of work by a team leader.

Good practice: *Piloted monthly meetings with all team leaders in 2019 helped to align practices and contribute to enhanced quality across the operations (Greece, Cyprus).*

The general quality of the interventions is considered good, based on feedback received from the various stakeholder profiles interviewed, and analysis of samples of queries and quality guidance. However, the following observations were made:

- Quality deals with meeting standards. While CEAS is often referred to as the overarching quality standard, the evaluation found that, in practice, various sets of standards are used during the interventions. In the case of a quasi-parallel system (Greece), or staff shortages at the national authorities for quality assurance (Cyprus), EASO standards are applied (interviewing process, templates for interviews and interview scripts, first and second quality assurance, etc.). Temporary workers seconded to national authorities work under the standards set up by those authorities (once reviewed by EASO), yet MS experts - due to their short-term deployment - likely apply the quality standards from their own MS. While training is provided by EASO to support a common understanding and implementation of the CEAS, it cannot be assessed whether these sets of standards are fully aligned or possibly sometimes contradict each other or are applied differently. However, the operational reality of using different standards and tools complicates the assessment of whether standards were met or understandings of a parallel system (Greece).

Good practices for quality and sustainability in embedding the EASO approach were in various processes in Italy:

- *Registration (the inclusion of C3 annexes in the system, with potential of inclusion into SUA in 2021);*
- *Information provision (the development of a comprehensive study on EASO standards and procedures in the Italian context, enabling police to create a self-assessment mechanism, in line with the long-term plan to phase out of the DPS in 2022);*
- *Consolidation of good practices in processing asylum applications in the first instance through establishment of a 'Good practices compendium in the Territorial Commissions' (Compendio Raccolta di Buone Prassi nelle Commissioni Territoriali) that was handed over to the TCs together with training, was an important element of ensuring sustainability ahead of EASO phase-out in December 2019).*

- The analysis found it difficult to find objective data that systematically and holistically capture the quality of outputs produced and the services provided by the EASO intervention. This is linked to the general absence of quality-related indicators in EASO's monitoring framework for operations.

The **challenge of achieving high quality outcomes while maintaining high levels of productivity** was identified throughout this evaluation. The current system of quality management promoted by EASO rightly takes a strong legal focus, i.e. compliance with CEAS. Those parts of operations where EASO developed (part of) the quality management approaches represented a concrete opportunity to apply quality management practices and tools promoted by the Agency in a concrete context in the field. This seems however to have led to working practices that appear less efficient and/or poorly adapted to asylum

emergencies – where stakeholders find that the same legal requirements may be met in a different way. This begs the question whether some of the practices encouraged by EASO are sufficiently efficient or whether in some cases an equally good result could have been achieved at lower cost and shorter time.

All stakeholders interviewed, as well as EASO staff and temporary workers, recognised that the review system, the comprehensive interview template and other quality checks have an impact on the number of interviews and subsequently on the number of draft opinions produced by individual caseworkers. This, in turn, indirectly impacts on the waiting periods of applicants to access protection, including those in evident protection cases. They agreed that EASO should demonstrate and use existing good practices, and that quality should be a cornerstone of the support to MSs. Nevertheless, in the particular context of an asylum crisis - characterised by difficult living conditions in reception facilities and long processing times for applications - with numbers of asylum applications again on the rise in 2019 in Greece and Cyprus, there is a need to strike the appropriate balance between efficiency and quality. Several stakeholders noted that quality and speed of handling of an asylum application are not necessarily contradictory ideas, as timely receipt of a well-grounded decision itself represents a quality service. In fact, CEAS also requires certain maximum timelines to be respected in dealing with asylum applications. Some interviewees also indicated that the problem may not necessarily be with the quality guidance itself but rather with the way in which it is implemented, with too much focus on following templates and guidelines other than what is actually needed to come to a conclusion.

Good practice: *The internal COI database created and maintained by the legal rapporteurs in the Appeals Authority in Greece enhanced the effectiveness of file preparation.*

2.4.2 Recommendations

- **Where possible and available, use the quality mechanisms and practices** for asylum interviews of the authorities and maintain EASO standards and tools only where these add value for CEAS implementation and/or where red lines need to be established. This approach allows for a single set of standards to be followed and measured and supports the sustainability of results of the intervention. It requires however an agreement between EASO and the national authorities on minimum quality standards and -where needed- openness from national authorities to revise certain practices of their quality management system (potentially with EASO support).
- Continue to explore avenues to better monitor the **quality of work of EASO's temporary workers** by enhancing monitoring mechanisms to assess whether these are upheld. Explore whether the EASO self-assessment tools could be used to this end.
- **Investigate how EASO can better embed productivity and efficiency considerations when promoting good practices related to quality management to Member States.** One way forward may be to explore the option of including additional requirements - going beyond solely compliance to CEAS – when developing guidance to enhance quality management and thus maximise its take-up in Member States. According to good practice, a quality management system should correspond to various sets of requirements: legal requirements (CEAS), organisational requirements (e.g. efficiency) and stakeholders/clients' requirements (requirements of national authorities). By this logic, quality standards should be further enhanced (and documented) to meet these requirements to the extent possible and be clearly understood and maintained by EASO personnel. Legal requirements are evidently mandatory but where different options exist to apply these legal requirements, they should be aligned with organisational/stakeholder requirements. EASO is recommended to investigate how it can better embed productivity and efficiency in its quality management system, providing improved tools and methods and/or adapting existing ones to maintain high quality standards while increasing

efficiency and shortening the procedures end-to-end. An interim step would be to indicate how to do so while maintaining CEAS requirements.

- **Prioritise the development of tools and methods to reduce backlog and enhance efficiency and promote these in the context of operations.** Facilitate the transfer of know-how from other MSs on backlog management to benefit the authorities from any country facing a backlog, in particular those countries facing the highest asylum pressure. Building on the successful experience of stabilising backlog and the development of tools to track case worker's backlog in Greece, EASO is recommended to build a toolbox and methods on backlog reduction/stabilisation and make this available to MSs authorities. This is expected to maximise the opportunity/leverage to possibly strengthen CEAS in cases of asylum crisis.

2.5 Effect and sustainability of training

2.5.1 Summary of findings

A number of measures in the three countries embedded training as part of EASO's capacity-building efforts. A comparison of training results across each country was difficult, in the absence of consolidated reporting that would give a full picture of training through the OPs and the Training and Professional Development Centre (C2) at EASO headquarters. In Greece, across all measures, capacity-building activities resulted in 69 training sessions with 1049 participants (above targets), and in Italy, 31 session covered 759 participants. No consolidated data on total number of participants for all trainings was available for Cyprus.

Overall, EASO offered several types of training to the countries evaluated, including, but not limited to:

- a) *Operational training* that is usually organised by the country offices for temporary workers with a view to ensuring quality in their work. Due to the high turnover of temporary workers and the fact that their intervention is not designed to be sustainable, this type of training is not aimed at generating results beyond the duration of the intervention.

Good practice: *Embedding a 'national approach' (including presentations by national authorities in Greece and Cyprus) had a very positive effect as it assisted personnel to not only understand EASO standards but also the national approach and regulations, better preparing them to work together with national authorities and better integrate into the framework of national authorities.*

- b) Training under *Train the Trainer* (TtT) methodology (within the EASO training curriculum) typically involves the contribution of EASO Malta and focuses on training national authorities. The underlying rationale is that the trainees subsequently train their peers in the national services, creating a multiplier effect. For instance, such training in Greece in 2019 included 86 people trained as trainers, resulting in a multiplier effect of 10 (increase from 7 in 2018), while in Cyprus, 9 trainers out of 42 participants had a multiplier effect of 4, and in Italy 49 trainers out of 498 participants with a multiplier effect of 9 was noted. This training is more sustainable in nature, as turnover of trainees is lower than among temporary workers.

Stakeholders consistently viewed the overall quality of training as positive. However, the success and impact of EASO training could be increased by making it more practical, differentiating it according to the needs and experience of the participants, and using trainers who are more familiar with the specific country context.

2.5.2 Recommendations

- Align reporting on training in the intervention countries (as a pre-condition for having a full picture) to facilitate evaluation of results (some activities do not seem to be covered by the OPs) and comparison of results between countries.
- The sustainability and impact of training could be enhanced by:
 - Considering expanding follow-up to training activities, which appears somewhat limited in all three countries;
 - Differentiate experienced and non-experienced participants, to avoid repetition for more experienced participants;
 - Use the trainers with country-specific exposure or knowledge who can ground the training in the country context;
 - Enhance the practical side of training content, thus better responding to the needs of particular participants (e.g. module on vulnerability to include new case studies).

2.6 Horizontal lessons learned

2.6.1.1 *Introducing an explicit reference to the expected evolution of the intervention over the years*

2.6.1.1.1 Summary of the findings

The main planning document for EASO intervention in each country is the OP, which captures the main priorities agreed with the national authorities on an annual basis. The yearly outlook of the OP is derived from EASO's legal framework, with budgets approved on an annual basis by the budgetary authorities. A three-year multiannual roadmap was developed for each country, laying out the background of the intervention, expected results, risks, assumptions, preconditions and sustainability considerations. Results are captured at a very high level. These multiannual roadmaps have been developed for internal EASO purposes and are not validated by MS authorities.

While the multiannual roadmaps provide a longer-term view, they do not contain explicit reasoning behind the expected evolution of EASO's deployment for the measures (i.e. indicating evolution from an emergency to a stable transition to an eventual exit) or the type of actions and outputs that would facilitate this transition. Some elements of transitioning towards an eventual exit were noted, for example in the OP for Italy (e.g. development of a handbook for the Questure, the development of a comprehensive study on EASO standards and procedures in the Italian context, enabling police to create a self-assessment mechanism). The absence of such clearly stated transitioning seems to lead to OPs continuing to focus on addressing urgent needs for assistance from MSs, and not necessarily reflecting on how best to move to the next phase of deployment. The choice to focus on emergency support is clearly deliberate in some countries but the absence of an explicit phase-oriented view of the intervention may foster dependency on EASO's intervention and reduce national authorities' sense of urgency to take sole ownership of the situation.

2.6.1.1.2 Recommendations

- Current **strategic planning documents (multiannual roadmap, OP, etc.) need to reflect the different phases of deployment.** Certain parts of the intervention may focus more on emergency support, others more on creating a stable transition, and yet others on preparing the gradual exit of EASO's intervention. By considering these phases of deployment, differentiated approaches may be chosen for certain parts of the intervention (e.g. sub-measures), choosing types of action and/or outputs

depending on the phase of deployment. This approach will clarify the ambition levels and their transition over time and prevent unnecessary dependence on the EASO intervention. In concrete terms, EASO is recommended to build a phase-out strategy/action plan that would integrate gradual transitions, shifting approaches to staffing and varying measures to address capacity-building, as appropriate. This could include the coordination of quality assurance systems, the introduction of hybrid working arrangements, etc.

2.6.1.2 Making the OP structure and content more comparable between the countries

2.6.1.2.1 Summary of the findings

The document structure of the OPs is the same. However, the **structuring of the intervention into measures** and - in the case of Greece, sub-measures – varies between the countries. This is because the current structure is defined based on the corresponding responsible country's authorities, meaning that the level of detail of monitoring/reporting may differ significantly for the same type of activity (e.g. registration, reception, etc.). While the context of the intervention is different in every country and due care is required before making direct comparisons, this difference in structure results in low comparability of data for underlying activities, outputs achieved, etc. Such insights would enhance understandings of key success factors and facilitate the identification of good practices.

Fidelity Monitoring Plans were developed for all three countries, specifying the indicators, but the **extent to which indicators were included in the OPs differed**. The Italy and Cyprus OPs contained KPIs but the Greece OP did not². The evaluation suggests that in all cases, the rationale and underlying assumptions behind targets were not always clear, with several targets seemingly unrealistic compared to the previous year's performance and/or level of resources. This finding should be understood in the context of organisational learning, where the introduction of targets into OPs represented a new approach, and will naturally require several iterations before 'getting it right'. OPs represent a formal agreement with national authorities - and are therefore public documents – so to include unrealistic targets may undermine the credibility of future OP ambitions.

2.6.1.2.2 Recommendations

- Bearing in mind the need to be able to link (sub-)measures to the respective responsible national authorities, assess the possibility of **applying a more comparable structure in terms of measures and sub-measures between the different OPs**, thus ensuring comparable levels of detail in planning, monitoring and reporting. Potential 'standard' dimensions EASO could consider when defining this structure of measures and sub-measures are the type of procedure (border procedure, regular procedure) or the type of activity (registration, interviews, opinions, training).
- The inclusion of targets and related indicators in high-level public planning documents is good practice and helps to make the ambitions tangible and assessment of their achievements transparent. Ensure **a clear process and sound methodology in setting targets** for each of the (sub)measures of the intervention, making the rationale and underlying assumptions clear and setting the ambition as a function of the risk exposure of the actions. Indicators that are sufficiently stable and relevant for external communication purposes are recommended to be included in the OP.

² Due to the size of the operations in Greece and the OP being a high aggregated document signed with the Minister it was decided to have all KPIs captured in the result matrix, which was shared with GAS and RIS.

2.6.1.3 Translating the OP into an operational implementation plan

2.6.1.3.1 Summary of the findings

The OPs are defined at high level, with little detail on actual implementation, an approach deliberately chosen to retain flexibility in their implementation. Project management tools are in place that monitor implementation but it is not always clear/transparent how the summarily described objectives in the OP are translated into actions and outputs. The rationale behind resource allocation is also not always easily deduced from the OP. EASO management is aware of this and indicated that the translation of the OPs into operational planning is an ongoing process.

2.6.1.3.2 Recommendations

- **Define a tangible working plan to translate the high-level OP into actual implementation actions.** A document outlining the details of how the OP will be implemented based on the priorities set out in the OP would provide clarity on the concrete actions and outputs to be implemented, as well as explaining why these actions and resource allocations were chosen to achieve the desired outcomes. It will facilitate discussions in EASO on roles and responsibilities of the different Centres at EASO HQs, making it clear what contributions are expected from whom by when and increase the joint ownership of all teams to achieve the OP's objectives.

2.6.1.4 Enhancing continuity and stability of human resources

2.6.1.4.1 Summary of the findings

Interventions in the three countries heavily rely on the continuity and stability of human resources, in the form of EASO staff, MS experts and temporary workers. The evaluation found that:

- Unlike Greece, operations in Italy and Cyprus were specifically constrained by the lack of resident statutory staff in the country or slow processes of recruitment of measure coordinators. In Cyprus, this impacted on the overall spending, delivery of activities, recruitment, management of various administrative tasks, and continuity of interactions with national authorities and other stakeholders. A similar observation was made for Italy, where slow recruitment of dedicated measure coordinators (in particular for Measures 1, 3 and 5) resulted in limited interest of the authorities to continue with planned activities and impacted the effectiveness of planned delivery of results. In the case of unforeseen events or need for additional support to the intervention, EASO has struggled to mobilise additional staff.
- 2019 was characterised by a very low rate of nominations for MS experts, resulting in low deployments that affected the achievement of targets or completion of activities in the three countries. Despite being a key component of EASO's way of working, this nevertheless demonstrates that this type of deployment is vulnerable and heavily susceptible to MS capacity to deliver staff.
- The added value of MS experts is highest for clearly defined deliverables, requiring specific technical know-how and achievable within the limited period of their deployment.
- The increased use of temporary workers boosted the effectiveness and coherence of the intervention in several countries. In some cases, interim personnel contracts created risks for workflows, as their deployment was characterised by frequent contract interruptions (practice of the current supplier)

2.6.1.4.2 Recommendations

EASO has undertaken an analysis of its personnel deployment. This analysis is recommended to consider the following elements:

- Establish an internal and external **roster system** and accompanying flexible deployment mechanisms to be able to quickly mobilise experts from across the organisation and/or from around Europe in case of unforeseen needs for (additional) support to a MS.
- While maintaining the temporary nature of the contracts, further **improvement in the conditions of temporary workers (contract duration, interruptions)** would avoid loss of know-how and limit turnover, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of EASO's support. EASO is recommended to analyse how other EU Agencies with comparable interventions approach this matter, and to engage in discussions with its service providers on whether/how interruptions of service may be reduced/eliminated where possible and useful, within the limits of national labour laws and EU case law.
- Continue to **deploy MS experts, in particular for tasks where specific technical expertise is required.** Given the limited duration of their deployment, it is recommended to focus their work on non-recurrent activities of the intervention but, rather, on clearly defined deliverables (e.g. performing a technical study, establishing a specific report or procedure) that can be realistically achieved within the duration of the deployment. This approach may require MS experts of considerable experience and expertise.

3 Evaluation strategic recommendations

Below the evaluation's strategic recommendations are defined, based on the strategic recommendations from the country evaluations and the recommendations captured in the previous chapter.

E-SR1: Consider different modus operandi to strengthen the continuity and stability of resources (including human resources) for the intervention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whereas the annual nature of the budget is a given, an indicative multi-annual planning of resources (embedded in the multi-annual part of the SPD and aligned with the multi-annual roadmap) could provide visibility on the expected level of resources for the coming years, which may in turn facilitate procurement, contracting, etc. As such multi-annual planning is mainly beneficial for internal EASO purposes, its validation is recommended to stay within EASO as well.• Establish an internal and external roster system and accompanying flexible deployment mechanisms to be able to quickly mobilise experts from across the organisation and/or from around Europe in case of unforeseen needs for (additional) support to a MS.• While maintaining the temporary nature of the contracts, further improvement in the conditions of temporary workers (contract duration, interruptions, job descriptions) would avoid loss of know-how and limit turnover, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of EASO's support. EASO is recommended to analyse how other EU Agencies with comparable interventions approach this matter, and to engage in discussions with its service providers on whether/how interruptions of service may be reduced/eliminated where possible and useful, within the limits of national labour laws.• Continue to deploy MS experts, in particular for tasks where specific technical expertise is required. Given the limited duration of their deployment, it is recommended to focus their work on non-recurrent activities of the intervention but, rather, on clearly defined deliverables (e.g. performing a technical study, establishing a specific report or procedure) that can be realistically achieved within the duration of the deployment. This approach may require MS experts of considerable experience and expertise.
E-SR2: Align and enhance the contents and structure of strategic planning documents (multi-annual roadmap, OP, etc)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current strategic planning documents (multiannual roadmap, OP, etc.) need to reflect the different phases of intervention. Certain parts of the intervention may focus more on emergency support, others more on creating a stable transition, and yet others on preparing the gradual exit of EASO's intervention. By considering these phases of deployment, differentiated approaches may be chosen for certain parts of the intervention (e.g. sub-measures), choosing types of action and/or outputs depending on the phase of deployment. This approach will clarify the ambition levels and their transition over time and prevent unnecessary dependence on the EASO intervention. In concrete terms, EASO is recommended to build a phase-out strategy/action plan that would integrate gradual transitions, shifting approaches to staffing and varying measures to address capacity-building, as appropriate. This could include the coordination of quality assurance systems, the introduction of hybrid working arrangements, etc.• Bearing in mind the need to be able to link (sub-)measures to the respective responsible national authorities, assess the possibility of applying a more comparable structure in terms of measures and sub-measures between the different OPs, thus ensuring comparable levels of detail in planning, monitoring and reporting. Potential 'standard' dimensions EASO could consider when defining this

structure of measures and sub-measures are the type of procedure (border procedure, regular procedure) or the type of activity (registration, interviews, opinions, training).

- The **inclusion of targets and related indicators** in high-level public planning documents is good practice and helps to make the ambitions tangible and assessment of their achievements transparent. Indicators that are sufficiently stable and relevant for external communication purposes are recommended to be included in the OP.
- Flexibility to address -when relevant- changing needs of MS is important to maintain a high added value of the EASO intervention. Currently any possible changes to the intervention, (e.g. impact of foreseeable political transitions, like the upcoming/likely elections and possible changes in government) are reflected upon in the risks and assumptions of the needs assessment. To ensure transparency and clarity of any changes to the OP and their implications to all parties involved, it is recommended that any **changes in the intervention (e.g. in measures) are documented and approved** with the Government (addendum, official letter). Internal monitoring mechanisms should be modified accordingly.
- Define a **tangible working plan to translate the high-level OP into actual implementation actions** in a transparent and systematic way. The OP remains high-level whereas the implementation plan in MS Project is of very detailed nature. A document outlining the details of how the OP would be implemented based on the priorities set out in the OP would provide clarity on the concrete actions and outputs to be implemented as well as on why these actions and resource allocations were chosen to achieve the desired outcomes.

E-SR3: Advance the level of maturity of results-based planning, implementation and monitoring.

- As the results framework is still new, it is recommended to **perform an annual (internal) review of the country's frameworks** to embed lessons learned and further enhance the indicators and targets to maximise their use in assessing internal coherence, outcomes and impacts. Once users find the results frameworks sufficiently robust, the frequency of such reviews may reduce.
- Ensure **a clear process and sound methodology in setting targets** for each of the (sub-) measures of the intervention, making the rationale and underlying assumptions clear and setting the ambition as a function of the risk exposure of the actions. Coordinate coherent target setting between measures to avoid inadvertent contradictions, e.g. registration and backlog reduction in the first instance.
- **Make some of the indicators more tangible**, making it easier to assess whether they have been achieved. For example, phrase outcome descriptions related to coordination actions in more precise/tangible way and provide details what EASO wants to achieve with this coordination.
- Once the existing indicators and their supporting measurement and reporting flows are found to be stable by their main users, EASO is recommended to **gradually include more complex criteria** in the indicator set, thus covering **efficiency** and **quality** of operations. This is difficult to implement for all activities and outputs, thus should focus only on the most important activities and outputs (e.g. most resource-intensive outputs). Set clear targets for quality and efficiency and measure progress against these. Particularly in the context of asylum, efficiency indicators should not be read in isolation but, rather, in combination with other indicators, such as quality. Internal and external benchmarking may be applied to better assess performance based on the values obtained (e.g. quicker access to asylum procedures or protection for applicants). KPIs should not be measured to start a 'blame' culture but to understand what works well and what can be improved.
- If EASO aims to achieve the capability to compare the costs of its interventions with the benefits generated and to steer its work accordingly, **activity-based planning and monitoring** would be recommended. Such an approach would ideally take a holistic view of all costs related to outputs and

activities (according to the Total Cost of Ownership principle). It is understood that such an approach would need to be driven by EASO headquarters and would potentially go beyond the scope of the interventions covered by this evaluation. Pragmatic intermediary solutions limiting this approach to the main activities of the intervention may themselves yield benefits without requiring a high transformation effort.

- The **implementation** of the results framework requires enhancing cooperation among the Centres within EASO HQs (Operations, Training and Asylum Knowledge Centres, or C1, C2 and C3). The need for such cooperation is particularly relevant in: a) the development of a joint intervention logic, followed by discussions on roles and responsibilities, and corresponding discussions on communications and reporting lines; b) the needs assessment phase for their particular areas of interest, including when discussions are held with relevant national authorities. This will help target the intervention and already ensure a higher level of ownership and availability to support from each of the Centres' side.
- **Align the monitoring and reporting instruments** (monthly reports, monitoring tools, operational factsheets and operational analysis) to ensure a single validated set of data is used and serves as "single source of truth". Ensure that reporting is done for all the targets in the results framework. Clearly define how actions in the field are measured and reports and use the same methods across reporting channels (e.g. reception in Greece)
- **Integrate reporting on training in the country reporting** (as a pre-condition for having a full picture) to facilitate evaluation of results (some activities do not seem to be covered by the OP) and comparison of results between countries.
- Undertake a thorough analysis of potential negative/positive implications of **pilot initiatives** and the pre-conditions for their success, in order to create such pre-conditions where possible.
- **Prioritise the development of tools and methods to reduce backlog and enhance efficiency and promote these in the context of operations.** Facilitate the transfer of know-how from other MSs on backlog management to benefit the authorities from any country facing a backlog, in particular those countries facing the highest asylum pressure. Building on the successful experience of stabilising backlog and the development of tools to track case worker's backlog in Greece, EASO is recommended to build a toolbox and methods on backlog reduction/stabilisation and make this available to MSs authorities. This is expected to maximise the opportunity/leverage to possibly strengthen CEAS in cases of asylum crisis.

E-SR4: Harmonise the implementation of quality management in operations with those of national authorities and investigate how EASO guidance on quality to Member States may better embed productivity and efficiency considerations

- **Where possible and available, use the quality mechanisms and practices** for asylum interviews of the authorities and maintain EASO standards and tools only where these add value for CEAS implementation and/or where red lines need to be established. This approach allows for a single set of standards to be followed and measured and supports the sustainability of results of the intervention. It requires however an agreement between EASO and the national authorities on minimum quality standards and -where needed- openness from national authorities to revise certain practices of their quality management system (potentially with EASO support).
- Continue to explore avenues to better monitor the **quality of work of EASO's temporary workers** by enhancing monitoring mechanisms to assess whether these are upheld. Explore whether the EASO self-assessment tools could be used to this end.

- **Investigate how EASO can better embed productivity and efficiency considerations when promoting good practices related to quality management to Member States.** One way forward may be to explore the option of including additional requirements - going beyond solely compliance to CEAS – when developing guidance to enhance quality management and thus maximise its take-up in Member States. According to good practice, a quality management system should correspond to various sets of requirements: legal requirements (CEAS), organisational requirements (e.g. efficiency) and stakeholders/clients’ requirements (requirements of national authorities). By this logic, quality standards should be further enhanced (and documented) to meet these requirements to the extent possible and be clearly understood and maintained by EASO personnel. Legal requirements are evidently mandatory but where different options exist to apply these legal requirements, they should be aligned with organisational/stakeholder requirements. EASO is recommended to investigate how it can better embed productivity and efficiency in its quality guidance, providing improved tools and methods and/or adapting existing ones to maintain high quality standards while increasing efficiency and shortening the procedures end-to-end. An interim step would be to indicate how to do so while maintaining CEAS requirements.

E-SR5: Improve the EASO intervention logic where it is insufficiently clear

- **Define EASO’s role and added value in each country for areas where this is insufficiently clear (e.g. reception, vulnerability).** EASO is recommended to clearly define its intended involvement in these areas. The EASO intervention logic should be developed based on: a) the areas where EASO could bring most added value in line with its mandate; b) the areas where EASO can achieve a relatively good degree of control and/or influence within the scope of the OP for the country. This would help to position the EASO intervention at strategic and/or operational level and define tangible outputs, outcomes and related indicators that are logically interconnected. One possible input may be the areas identified in the country evaluations where EASO’s added value seems particularly high.
- EASO should realistically **reassess its involvement in view of its ability to influence the achievement of certain outcomes** where it primarily depends on stakeholders and/or authorities and has only limited control over results. It is obvious that there is certain interdependency between the national stakeholders and EASO’s ability to achieve the outcomes of intervention. However, for certain types of involvement such interdependencies have a more direct impact on outcomes achieved than for others. For example, EASO support in asylum procedures has been seen as more stable and less dependent on the actions by the authorities (with some exceptions of provision of space), whereas reception is clearly a less predictable area in view of a number of stakeholders involved and complexity of systems.
- Consider **strengthening EASO’s positioning as supporting national authorities’ coordination efforts and mechanisms** throughout the intervention, given that this is clearly an area where the added value brought by the organisation is found to be high.
- **EASO is recommended to clearly define its intended involvement in reception** and consider **differentiating the approach of EASO intervention in reception**, depending on whether it responds to more broad strategic objectives (where EASO has clear added value and tools to support development at country level) or to daily needs stemming from national authorities’ lack of capacity. Even where it is involved purely in direct services, EASO should strive to build in elements of gradual transition to prevent development of dependencies in the system.
- **Develop a communication strategy to accompany EASO’s intervention in a country**, adapted to the sensitivities and specificities of the context in each country in order to position EASO's intervention in relation to the various stakeholders. It will enhance the effectiveness and impact of the intervention.

E-SR 6: Further enhance the sustainability and impact of capacity-building

- **Integrate reporting on training in the country reporting** (as a pre-condition for having a full picture) to facilitate evaluation of results (some activities do not seem to be covered by the OP) and comparison of results between countries.
- The sustainability and impact of capacity-building (training, coaching) could be further enhanced by:
 - Considering expanding follow-up to training activities, which appears somewhat lacking in all three countries;
 - Differentiating training and coaching between experienced and non-experienced participants, to avoid repetition for more experienced participants;
 - Using trainers with country-specific exposure or knowledge who can ground the training in the country context;
 - Enhancing the practical side of training content, thus better responding to the needs of particular participants.