

Internal Mid-Term Evaluation
Executive Summary
Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) Pilot project

Prepared by the EASO Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation Sector

Introduction

Since the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, EU+ countries (EU+) have been resettling refugees from Turkey with increased intensity. In this context, EASO has set up a Pilot Project of 18 months (April 2019 – October 2020) for the establishment of a Resettlement Support Facility as a ‘one-stop-shop’ that will support EU+ resettlement operations from Turkey. The project is implemented through a framework contract (FWC) with ICMC combined with coordination and technical assistance efforts from EASO and interested EU+.

At impact level, the RSF project aims to facilitate the arrival of at least 1500 third-country persons in need of protection in the EU from Turkey through its operations and in line with the EU+ resettlement pledges in 2019 and 2020. The RSF Pilot Project intends to enhance operational coordination of EU+ resettlement operations from one dedicated facility, stimulating cooperation between EU+, supporting EU+ in fulfilling their pledges, testing new practices to increase effectiveness of the process, providing operational support to EU+, increasing cost efficiency and testing a replicable model of EU cooperation in the field of resettlement.

This mid-term evaluation is undertaken by the EASO Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation Sector (PMES) in the period December 2019-March 2020 in close collaboration with the Resettlement Sector/ Horizontal Tools and External Dimension Unit (HOEDU) and multiple EASO relevant actors, covering the period from the end of April 2019 to the end of January 2020. It aims at responding to three complementary questions:

- Is the RSF project on track in achieving the planned results?
- Is there initial evidence of added value of the Project to EU+?
- Taking into account lessons learned, what directions should EASO take within and beyond the current project?

This evaluation extracts evidence based on a literature review, monitoring data, semi-structured interviews with EASO staff, EU+ and other stakeholders, focus group discussions with EU+, a survey instrument and anonymised interviews with refugee families during an observation mission to the ICMC premises. It remains limited in nature because of its internal character, focus on outputs and processes and its small budgetary volume.

Findings

- *Is the RSF project on track in achieving the planned results?*

In terms of **effectiveness**, the RSF Pilot Project has as main intended impact result to contribute to the resettlement of 1500 refugees. During the first half of the project between May 2019 and end of January 2020, 506 refugees were resettled. Internal target setting was ambitious aiming at 600 resettled refugees in the first semester of project implementation. It seems, however, that with the upcoming missions planned, the total is very likely to be achieved and potentially exceeded.

The project intervention logic is structured around two complementary result outcomes:

- (1) An EASO coordinated, EU-wide, collaborative pilot mechanism for resettlement of refugees from Turkey, creating added value and efficiencies.
- (2) EU+ engagement in increased technical collaboration and innovative practices for resettlement.

During reporting period, the *first result area*, focusing on the one-stop-shop infrastructure approach, has achieved many of the intended targets. At outcome level, four of the six EU+ participating in the pilot have benefitted from the RSF infrastructure in line with the pilot project result matrix. At output level, selection missions of the so far involved four EU+ covered 474 refugees, which is less than the intended target for the first semester. This is mostly due to changes in the planning by EU+. There were no requests for performing medical assessments in line with intermediate expectations. 465 refugees have benefited from cultural orientation sessions, which was substantially higher than the intermediate targets (200 for first semester).

The *second result area* aims at increased technical collaboration and innovative practices among EU+. At the outcome level, the project team refers to at least five examples of exchanges between EU+ on resettlement practices mainly in the form of exchange visits, which is higher than intended. However, while many achievements are in line with intermediate targets, it would be advisable to prioritise more this results area.

It is too early in the process to identify documented evidence of innovations in EU+ resettlement practices linked to project support. At output level, a two-day meeting in October 2019 initiated the process of planning technical cooperation around the RSF project. Preliminary concepts are currently under review and preparation.

The current mid-term evaluation constitutes an analytical review including the first lessons learned as well as indications for potential replicability of the same or adjusted model of support in other geographical areas.

The pilot project can be characterised as **efficient** in its start with the swift procurement of a framework contract and the mobilisation of a project team. In terms of quality, stakeholders interviewed (including EU+ and refugees) were satisfied with the RSF facility. Overall, challenges related to the complexity of the project including on internal workflows were identified, in particular around the purchasing of services and equipment in Turkey, the limited 18-month timeframe of the project creates challenges related to the increased workload of the project-team. The limited human resources are diverted away from the day-to-day operational workflows and allocated to the re-launching of the tender process.

The current evaluation finds a high level of **relevance** of the project as it responds to common and specific EU+ needs. The RSF project is in direct support of strategic EU migration policies such as the EU-Turkey statement, the European Commission, and EU+ resettlement commitments. In the reporting period, four out of the six EU+ involved in the pilot use the RSF (the other two EU+ intend to use the RSF during the next reporting period). A number of additional EU+ not yet involved in the pilot have expressed firm interest to use the facility in 2020, increasing the potential project relevance.

The first experiences of the project can be considered as **coherent** to EU and EU+ policies and are complementary to other resettlement support activities. It is important that RSF-initiatives are implemented in cooperation, coordination and in synergy with relevant stakeholders, such as the UNHCR and IOM. The project **impact** (beyond the number of resettled refugees), is not yet very measurable at these first stages of the pilot. Intangible effects such as “ease of intervention” of EU+ resettlement missions and “trust building” are elements of relevance mentioned by interviewee respondents of the pilot phase. As the project is a response to time-limited EU+ needs, the **sustainability** (in the sense of continuity) of the intervention depends on the volume of EU+ use linked to multiple external factors and risk management.

- *Is there initial evidence of added value of the Project to EU+?*

The 2018 feasibility study paid special attention to the following possible strands of added value:

- a. Enhancing operational coordination of EU+ resettlement operations from one dedicated facility;
- b. Stimulating cooperation between EU+ and fostering convergence;
- c. Supporting EU+ in fulfilling their pledges;
- d. Testing new practices for increased effectiveness of the process;
- e. Enhancing operational support to EU+;
- f. Increasing cost efficiency with a common EU structure;
- g. Testing a replicable model of EU cooperation;

Feedback and evidence gathered through this mid-term evaluation confirm that the RSF project effectively provides added value on operational support to EU+ (point e). While planning and testing out new practices are under preparation (point d), there are sufficient indications to suggest that the remaining expected elements of added value are at least partially covered. Multiple perspectives support the observation of potential cost-efficiency (f). It remains, however, too premature to be conclusive. Additional data (in particular on economies of scale and costs) and analyses are needed.

The project has strong potential to be relaunched in Turkey. The participating EU+ in the pilot have expressed their wish for project continuation and new EU+ have expressed strong interest to participate as well. Pre-conditions such

as EU+ demand, minimum volume, security, coherence, capacity, added value and mitigation of multiple risks form the backbone of a future RSF-concept and should be taken into account when considering replicability. The context of Turkey is special because of multiple reasons such as the overall EU-Turkey policy context, and the number of EU+ resettling from Turkey. The existence of processing structures -such as those of the US Resettlement Programs- should also be considered.

Conclusions and recommendations

The RSF project is on track in achieving many of its intended results and therefore this evaluation outlines a positive overall appreciation of the pilot project. The project has a significant symbolic value as it embeds a first physical resettlement setting shared by different EU+ in a Third Country.

This mid-term evaluation also reviews the possible directions and potential for the pilot to continue, both within and beyond its current geographical scope and operational set up and based on its first experiences. The project structure and design is coherent, including a one-stop-shop infrastructure and service delivery component and a collaborative element. Taking into account its pilot project nature, it has invested strongly in its first half in tendering and organising the Framework contract, planning and designing workflows, preparing human resources, and coordinating and building trust. While there is still work in progress, the favourable feedback of EU+ and partners indicates that the project has delivered on its expectations in relation to its first result area. It would be useful to test and implement the services, which were not yet requested by EU+ (f.e. health screening), during the second half of the pilot-period.

The second result area, with specific reference to innovations, is longer term and expectations differ amongst stakeholders. This needs to be a focus area of the second half of the pilot period. Given that the results framework allows for flexibility and taking into account the first ad-hoc experiences, there is scope for strategic planning around the concepts of collaboration and innovation.

The current mid-term evaluation proposes following recommendations:

1. In agreement with the relevant governing bodies and international actors, EASO needs to strengthen its commitment through the extension of the project, the relaunch of associated contracts and to resettlement support in general;
2. As the project gradually shifts from a pilot phase to a more established operational activity, consider adopting a more long-term approach to planning and delivery, with due consideration to the unpredictable nature of the operational context;
3. Strengthen risk management processes and scenario planning;
4. Carefully design and test new RSF services aiming to support as many as possible EU+ -and specifically those who resettle from Turkey- to maximise impact;
5. Optimise and streamline project management roles, workflows and contract arrangements in light of a post-pilot operational mode;
6. Increase and plan further EASO capacity and expertise in the field of resettlement to maximize added value in the mid and longer term.
7. When considering adjusting the model beyond the current project, undertake an objective in-depth SWOT analysis of relevant options in function of key factors such as EU priorities, EU+ pledges, security, risks, EASO complementarity and the existence of available support infrastructure.



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 page was added to the report on 24/07/2024

