

Intended for
European Asylum Support Office, EASO

Document type
Final Report

Date
01 February 2021

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EASO TOOLS 2018 FINAL REPORT



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 25/02/2025



EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE EASO TOOLS 2018 FINAL REPORT

Revision **2**
Date **01/02/2021**
Prepared by **Vanessa Ludden, Angeli Jeyarajah, Fredrik Albert Hahn, Arianna Pedrini**
Checked by **Karin Attström**
Approved by **Karin Attström**
Description **Final Report**

Ramboll
35, Square de Meeûs
1000 Brussels
Belgium

T +32 02 737 96 80
F +32 02 737 96 99
www.amboll.com

CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Background to the evaluation	9
2.1.1 EASO's mission and role	9
2.1.2 EASO Quality Matrix Process	11
3. Evaluation methodology	18
3.1 Explanatory Interviews	18
3.2 Desk Research	18
3.3 Survey to all EU+ States	18
3.4 International / EU-Level Interviews	19
3.5 Case studies and field work	19
3.6 Data Triangulation	19
3.7 Validation and SWOT Workshop	20
3.8 SWOT Analysis	20
3.9 Strength and weaknesses in data and approach	21
3.9.1 Desk research	21
3.9.2 Survey	21
3.9.3 EU/International level interviews	22
3.9.4 Case studies	22
4. Evaluation findings	23
4.1 Awareness	23
4.1.1 Extent of Awareness (EQ: 1, 2, 4)	23
4.1.2 Promotion Channels (EQ: 2, 5, 7)	27
4.1.3 Promotion Cost-Effectiveness (EQ: 6)	29
4.2 Relevance and Use	34
4.2.1 Relevance of Tools (EQ: 8, 13)	35
4.2.2 Extent of Use and Encouragement (EQ: 9, 10, 11, 12)	37
4.2.3 Language (EQ: 14, 15)	43
4.3 Quality of Content	45
4.3.1 Assessed Quality (EQ: 16, 17)	46
4.3.2 Extent Objectives are Met (EQ: 18)	48
4.3.3 Development Process (EQ: 19, 20, 21)	49
4.3.4 Coherence (EQ: 22, 23)	50
4.4 Format: Ease of Use	50
4.4.1 Use and Experience with Current Formats (Eq: 24, 25)	51
4.4.2 Scope for Improvement in Format (EQ: 25, 26)	54
4.5 Impact	54
4.5.1 Impact in Member States (EQ: 27, 29, 31, 32)	55
4.5.2 Impact Related to CEAS (EQ: 30, 34)	59

4.5.3	Impact on EASO Image and Other Activities (EQ: 28, 33)	59
5.	Conclusions	60
5.1	Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats	60
5.2	Conclusions	61
6.	Recommendations	64
6.1	Overarching recommendations	64
6.2	Specific recommendations	64

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Evaluation Questions

Appendix 2

[REDACTED]

Appendix 3

[REDACTED]

Appendix 4

[REDACTED]

Appendix 5

[REDACTED]

Appendix 6

[REDACTED]

ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of an evaluation of practical tools and guides developed by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The aim of developing this guidance was to provide direct practical support for staff working on the ground and to translate the legal obligations and good practices in Member States into user-friendly tools. As such the associated purpose of this evaluation was to support EASO with solid and robust knowledge on the extent to which, and how, the different tools have been used by EU+ countries and whether they have contributed to a coherent implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The study covers all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland, from the publication of each tool to February 2018.

The study assesses the awareness of EASO tools within Europe as well as the extent to which the they have been used and are perceived as relevant at national level. It subsequently presents feedback on the quality of the content and format of the tools, presenting and analysing views relating to the accessibility and digestibility of the information they include. Finally, the study presents evidence on the impact of the tools, therein also assessing their link to the harmonisation process of European asylum procedures and the degree to which they are perceived as contributing to the CEAS. The overall assessment is based on the triangulation of evidence collected via interviews with EU and international level stakeholders, an online survey sent to all EU+ countries, case studies based on fieldwork conducted in 10 Member States, as well as desk research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an evaluation of practical tools and guides developed by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The aim of developing this guidance was to provide direct practical support for staff working on the ground and to translate the legal obligations and good practices in Member States into user-friendly tools. As such the associated purpose of this evaluation was to support EASO with solid and robust knowledge on the extent to which, and how the different tools have been used by EU+ countries and whether they have contributed to a coherent implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The study covers all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland, from the publication of each tool to February 2018.

The study assesses the awareness of EASO tools within Europe as well as the extent to which the they have been used and are perceived as relevant at national level. It subsequently presents feedback on the quality of the content and format of the tools, presenting and analysing views relating to the accessibility and digestibility of the information they include. Finally, the study presents evidence on the impact of the tools, therein also assessing their link to the harmonisation process of European asylum procedures and the degree to which they are perceived as contributing to the CEAS. The overall assessment is based on the triangulation of evidence collected via interviews with EU and international level stakeholders, an online survey sent to all EU+ countries, case studies based on fieldwork conducted in 10 Member States, as well as desk research.

Overall there is a mixed awareness across EASO tools, EU+ countries and target groups, with a typically higher level of awareness of the tools in Southern and some parts of Eastern Europe and "Personal Interview" and "Evidence Assessment" guides seemingly most well-known. Common methods to raise awareness of the tools included training sessions, social media and informal communication between colleagues in the work place. It was however recommended that more emphasis be placed on the facilitation of in-country visits by EASO representatives to present and explain the tools directly to the target group.

At a theoretical level, the EASO tools are **relevant to most EU Member States** but appear to largely be relevant in terms of practical use for countries that lack a nationally developed alternative. Whereas reference was positively made more broadly to the use of the tools (primarily as reference guides, to identify good practices, and to support training sessions) there were fewer references to the tools having been used in a more practical day-to-day capacity. The tools were overall judged to be too lengthy, detailed and theoretical to be used in a practical situation where an asylum seeker sits on the other side of the table. The importance of language was also highlighted when consulting the target group with translations highlighted as valuable in making the tools more accessible to frontline staff who may not speak English. The quality of translations (i.e. the correct translation of key technical terms and phrases) was also flagged as important for ensuring the clarity and accuracy of messages conveyed.

The **content of the tools was overwhelmingly found to be of a high standard** but there was however considerable feedback that the tools were at times too lengthy and did not include enough context-specific detail. Critically the tool development process was valued and specifically credited with increasing the legitimacy of the tools and with facilitating cooperation between Member States. The importance of ensuring relatively even Member State representation in terms of contributions was however highlighted. **A number of key suggestions were made in relation to the format of the EASO tools**, wherein the importance of easily navigable documents was emphasised for ease of use and the creation of more condensed versions of the tools was also proposed. There was also praise for the visual presentation of information and suggestion that this be extended, in the form of more extensive use of decision-trees and infographics for example. Mixed views were expressed with regards to whether the tools should be produced online or as hard versions, pointing

to a need for EASO to reconsider the format of its tools to encourage wider use, including in more practical situations. That being said, checklists were highly valued.

Overall, the impact of the EASO tools has been relatively mixed. In both high and low use countries reference was made to the impact the tools had made in acting as a knowledgebase and source of guidance, at times inspiring the development of national level tools or legislation. The EASO tools were seen as important for the harmonisation of working practices in Europe as part of the CEAS and in addition were seen as potentially useful sources of inspiration for third countries looking to develop their own standards and tools. Overall the creation of a network amongst those participating in the tool development process was linked to increased cooperation between countries, which is in line with the aim of the CEAS.

Based on the findings and conclusions outlined above, the **following overarching recommendations are made**, namely that EASO consider:

- Whether to focus the dissemination efforts on the Member States that most need such support including those with less developed processes or limited resources to dedicate to migration, reception and asylum.
- Whether to differentiate more between tools intended to be used as reference tools for policy makers and tools intended to support case/field officers in their daily work.

Where a decision is taken to continue to focus efforts on tool development more generally or in relation to given Member States or specific uses, it is recommended that a **targeted, user-centric approach** be taken to the development and dissemination of tools in order to maximise their relevance, use and ultimately impact:

- For each of the *existing tools*, a dissemination plan should be developed, setting out the main target group(s), messages and channels to be employed to increase awareness and use. The messages and means should be tailored to the different target groups, whether these encompass one or more for a given tool.
- For any *new tools* developed, thought should be put from the outset into who the tool is aimed at and what format best fits the target audience(s) to ensure its relevance. As in the case of existing tools, a dissemination plan should be developed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present report is the Final Report for the *evaluation of EASO practical tools and guidance and relevant products developed under the EASO Quality Matrix activities*. It presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

The evaluation aimed to support EASO with solid and robust knowledge on the extent to which and how the different products produced by EASO have been used by EU+ countries and how they have contributed to a coherent implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The study covered all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland (EU+). The time scale for the evaluation ran from the first publication of each EASO tool through to February 2018.

The evaluation consisted of three main stages:

- **Inception Period:** during which the evaluation questions and evaluation methodology and tools were developed and initial desk-based research and meetings with the responsible EASO staff were carried out.
- **Evaluation stage 1:** focussed on the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to answer the evaluation questions, primarily through a survey of end users of EASO's tools and guidance and EU/international level interviews.
- **Evaluation stage 2:** encompassed further data collection in the form of case studies as well as the systematisation and the in-depth analysis of data collected. A workshop was also organised with EASO staff to discuss preliminary findings and help develop a SWOT analysis of the tool development process. The reporting of the findings, conclusion and recommendations emerging from the study was completed as part of this stage.

The Final Report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter two** – sets out the background to the evaluation, describing EASO's mission and role and the Quality Matrix Process;
- **Chapter three** – presents the study's methodology and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the data collected and the approach;
- **Chapter four** – details the findings of the study according to the evaluation criteria of awareness, relevance and use, quality of content, format and impact;
- **Chapter five** – presents the conclusions derived from the findings;
- **Chapter six** – sets out the study's recommendations.

In addition to the findings presented in chapter four, the detailed findings from each data collection tool are presented in the appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Evaluation questions
- Appendix 2 – [REDACTED]
- Appendix 3 – [REDACTED]
- Appendix 4 – [REDACTED]
- Appendix 5 – [REDACTED]
- Appendix 6 – [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2. BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION

2.1.1 EASO'S MISSION AND ROLE

Established under Regulation No. 439/2010 of the European Parliament and the Council, the European Asylum Support Office started operating as an EU agency in February 2011. As stated in Article 1 of the Regulation, EASO's mission is to "to help to improve the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (the CEAS), to strengthen practical cooperation among Member States on asylum and to provide and/or coordinate the provision of operational support to Member States subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems."¹

EASO's mission is articulated around seven main goals:

- "providing operational support to Member States with specific needs and to Member States facing particular pressure in their asylum and reception systems
- contributing to the implementation of the EU relocation programme
- acting as a centre of expertise on asylum
- contributing to the development of the CEAS by facilitating, coordinating, and strengthening practical cooperation among Member States on the many aspects of asylum
- helping Member States fulfil their European and international obligations to give protection to people in need
- providing practical and technical support to Member States and the European Commission
- providing evidence-based input for EU policymaking and legislation in all areas having a direct or indirect impact on asylum."²

Furthermore, EASO's mandate excludes the direct and indirect powers with regard to decision making on individual applications for international protection, and excludes, as well, the adoption of legally binding documents aimed at instructing Member States about the grant or refusal of these applications.³ It also has a legal basis (Article 2 and Article 7 of the EASO Regulation from 2010) to be involved in the external dimension of the CEAS.

As a centre of expertise on asylum, EASO focuses on contributing to the **effective, coherent, and consistent practical implementation of the EU asylum acquis**. It fulfils its information and analysis role through reports, the Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) as well as its web portal. It produces three major publications the Annual Work Programme (AWP), the Annual Activity Report, and the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union.⁴

With regards to support activities for the Member States, EASO implements both permanent and special support activities. Permanent support includes a wide range of activities, such a common training curriculum, common quality process, Country of Origin Information (COI), or practical cooperation. Special support to Member States is provided through tailor-made assistance and capacity.⁵

¹ Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office, Article 1 "Establishment of the European Asylum Support Office"

² EASO (2016) European Asylum Support Office Brochure, "About us"

³ <http://eutarn.blogactiv.eu/2017/04/10/the-european-asylum-support-office-in-action-comments-on-the-changing-nature-of-practical-cooperation-in-the-eu-asylum-policy/>

⁴ EY (2015): European Asylum Support Office: Independent External Evaluation of EASO's activities covering the period from February 2011 to June 2014, Final Report

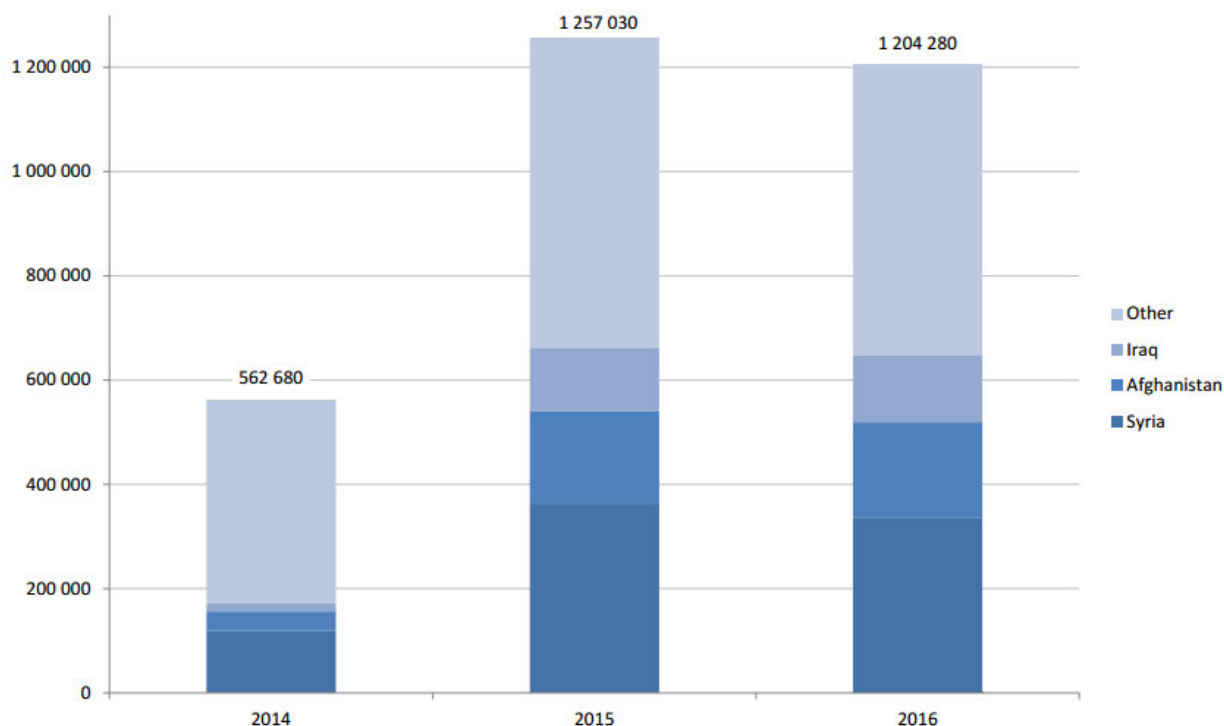
⁵ EY (2015): European Asylum Support Office: Independent External Evaluation of EASO's activities covering the period from February 2011 to June 2014, Final Report

Since its creation, EASO has gathered within its thematic networks a diversity of professionals from Member States. Meetings from the EASO Asylum Process Network, the EASO Reception Network, the EASO Exclusion Network, the EASO COI Specialist Network, or the EASO Network of Dublin Units gather, depending on the topic, experts from Member States' national authorities, Justice and Home Affairs Agencies, European Commission, the UNHCR, trainers, journalists, and researchers. EASO also engages with civil society, notably through the Consultative Forum bringing together participants from NGOs and European civil society organisations, as well as ad hoc consultations on topics such as the drafting of the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU.

EASO has trained over 16 000 participants in its training modules, released over 9 000 COI documents, interviewed and registered the application of thousands of asylum seekers in the hotspots since its creation in 2011.

Over the past two years, EASO has been set on a path towards an extended mandate, as well as further operationalization, in the context of the reform of the CEAS. In the wake of the migratory crisis in the Mediterranean from the beginning of 2015, migration has become a key priority for the EU institutional bodies, in particular the Commission. The establishment of a new policy on migration was one of the ten priorities of the Political Guidelines of the Juncker Commission.⁶ In May 2015, the Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration, tackling the challenges of the ongoing crisis, and aiming at equipping the EU with tools to better manage migration in the medium and long term, while introducing the "hotspot" approach.

Figure 1: Number of first time asylum applicants registered in the EU Member States



Source: Eurostat Press Office

⁶ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2433_en.htm

The reform of the CEAS was officially launched in April 2016, when the Commission published the communication "Towards a reform of the Common European Asylum System and enhancing legal avenues to Europe"⁷. Among the five main priorities, a proposal for a new mandate for EASO was included, namely involving an extension to its policy-implementing role, and strengthening of its operational role by providing sufficient resources and legal means. The new mandate for EASO would facilitate the functioning of the CEAS and the revised Dublin distribution mechanism, develop target actions in key areas, and ensure more harmonized assessment of the protection needs across Europe.

In May 2016, as part of a first package of reform of the CEAS - including a proposal to reform the Dublin system, and another to amend the Eurodac system - the Commission presented a proposal for a new Regulation, aiming at transforming EASO into a European Union Agency for Asylum. As a fully-fledged Agency, the European Union Agency for Asylum would have the necessary tools to pursue its five priorities:

- enhance practical cooperation and information exchange on asylum
- promote Union law and operational standards to ensure a high degree of uniform application of the legal framework on asylum
- ensure greater convergence in the assessment of protection needs across the Union
- monitor and assess the implementation of the CEAS
- provide increased operational and technical assistance to Member States for the management of the asylum and reception systems, in particular in cases of disproportionate pressure.⁸

Following the first set of proposals in May 2016, the European Commission presented in July 2016 legislative proposals "to move towards a fully efficient, fair and humane asylum policy – one which can function effectively both in times of normal and in times of high migratory pressure."⁹

These recent and ongoing developments were taken into account throughout the evaluation. In fact, the evaluation provides an assessment of the extent to which, and way in which, EASO's products contribute to the process of strengthening the CEAS, thereby contributing to an evidence base to assist EASO in the preparation for an enhanced mandate of the Agency, in particular with regard to the development of guidance and to its envisaged monitoring role.

2.1.2 EASO QUALITY MATRIX PROCESS

In line with the objective to support EU+ States¹⁰ in improving the quality of their asylum processes and achieving common quality standards within the CEAS, EASO launched the Quality Matrix activities in 2012, aiming to comprehensively "map the practices of EU+ states in implementing the common legal framework and to identify examples of good practice, quality tools and mechanisms and relevant projects and initiatives."¹¹

⁷ COM (2016) 197 final https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards_a_reform_of_the_common_european_asylum_system_and_enhancing_legal_avenues_to_europe_-_20160406_en.pdf

⁸ COM (2016) 271 final https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160504/easo_proposal_en.pdf

⁹ European Commission (2016): Completing the Reform of the Common European Asylum System: towards and efficient, fair, and humane asylum policy, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2433_en.htm

¹⁰ EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland

¹¹ EASO (2016): Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union

The Quality Matrix process supports EASO in analysing Member States' support needs, while creating room for discussion on the challenges encountered by Member States in their asylum practices as well as on the possible common solutions. Furthermore, particularly since 2014, EASO has put a focus on the development of practical tools, to support asylum and migration officials in their daily work, by providing common guidance in various formats adapted to the use of each tool.

The EASO Quality Matrix process is articulated around four main steps:

Figure 2: EASO Quality Matrix process



Source: EASO website

- ✓ First, the thematic mapping is based on information provided by Member States, and aims at capturing the current state of Member State's practices, quality tools and mechanisms, relevant projects, as well as at identifying potential common challenges and needs for support.
- ✓ Second, the main results of the initial mapping are presented in a thematic meeting, which provides Member States with the opportunity to discuss the good practices and current challenges on a particular topic. While some of these meetings are set back-to-back with Contact Committee meetings organised by the European Commission, participants gain further benefit from both a thorough overview of current practices and an in-depth legal analysis of the relevant provisions of the asylum *acquis*.
- ✓ Third, the main findings verified by Member States and the key results of the thematic meetings are compiled into the EASO thematic reports, which present a comparative overview of current practices and synthesize discussions on challenges and potential solutions related to the implementation of the common legislative framework. The main target group of these thematic reports is internal, primarily consisting of Member States' administrations, EASO, the European Commission and UNHCR.
- ✓ Fourth, practical tools are developed, based on the information gathered during the Quality Matrix process, as well as on the Member States' expertise and additional input from the Commission, UNHCR and other relevant organisations depending on the topic and nature of the tool.¹²

So far, 12 thematic reports have been produced. Quality Matrix thematic reports are not public documents; they are shared with the EASO Asylum Processes Network, and if applicable, with other specific Networks (e.g. EASO Network of Reception Authorities, EASO Network of Dublin Units, EASO Exclusion Network), as well as the general EASO contact points in Member States authorities.

¹² EASO Website (2017): Asylum Processes (Quality), <https://www.easo.europa.eu/training-quality/asylum-processes-quality>

2.1.2.1 EASO's products and tools

As presented earlier, the rationale of EASO products and tools consists in providing practical support to each target group, and in developing applied and practical tools and guidance on how to implement the existing European legal framework.

The EASO practical tools were initiated at the beginning of 2014, with the pilot **"EASO Practical Guide: Personal interview"**, published shortly before the **"EASO Practical Guide: Evidence assessment"**. The tool development process typically involves a Working Group made up of five to eight experts selected through a call that develops a given tool, and a Reference Group composed of representatives of the European Commission, UNHCR, ECRE, and sometimes other relevant organisations such as FRA, NGOs like the Red Cross etc., that plays an advisory role, providing input as required and commenting on drafts. Once a tool has been reviewed by the Reference Group, Member States are consulted in relation to the final draft. EASO tends to coordinate the tool development process and plays a quality assurance role, ensuring the tools are in line with EU legislation. Only in certain cases do EASO staff get more involved in the production of the tools, and only with agreement from the Working Group. The main purpose of the tools designed under the Quality Matrix process consists in providing direct practical support for those on the ground and translate the legal obligations and good practices in user-friendly tools, such as checklists, guidance, web-based interactive tools, etc.

It was agreed that all tools officially launched before February 2018 would be included in the evaluation, however most recent tools will not be included in the survey (since little awareness can be expected at an early stage)¹³. The EASO practical tools and products have each a specified target group, and can be classified according to three main categories:

1. The practical tools developed within the EASO Quality Matrix process (7 products)
2. The practical tools concerning applicants belonging to vulnerable groups (4 products)
3. The guidance developed in the framework of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities (2 products).

Table 1 presents the practical tools and guidance documents to be examined as part of this study.

In addition to these products, the Quality Matrix Process is included in the scope of the evaluation in so far as it contributed to the development of the tools/guidance, but is not part of the main focus; all the Quality Matrix reports will be grouped together and evaluated as one tool/product.

Table 1: EASO practical tools and products

Subject of Evaluation	Target Group	Format	Month/year publication
Practical tools developed for core asylum processes			
Access to the asylum procedure			
1. Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily first-contact officials for third country nationals at the borders or in detention facilities as specified in Article 6 APD recast, i.e. border guards (including coast guards), police, immigration authorities and personnel of detention facilities Potentially first contact officials can also include initial reception centres, 	Four different formats	February 2016

¹³ When delivering the inception report, the EASO Guidance Contingency planning has been published early March 2018. As other tools have not been published, they will not be included in the evaluation.

Subject of Evaluation	Target Group	Format	Month/year publication
	custom officers, determining authority		
Practical Guide on Access to the Asylum Procedure	First contact officials for TCN	Practical guide	February 2016
Poster on Access to the Asylum Procedure	First contact officials for TCN	Poster	February 2016
Pocket Book on Access to the Asylum Procedure	First contact officials for TCN	Booklet	February 2016
Leaflet on Frequently Asked Questions	First contact officials for TCN	FAQ Leaflet	February 2016
Examination of the application for international protection			
2. EASO Practical Guide: Personal interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily case officers Supervisors and quality assessors In some countries interviews are also conducted by law enforcement officials, border guards, immigration officers, reception officers 	Practical guide	December 2014
3. EASO Practical Guide: Evidence assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily case officers Supervisors and quality assessors Relevant in some countries: authorities involved in the process of evidence assessment during the initial collection of information, interviews and via other means, analysis and decision making for the asylum procedure (i.e. law enforcement officials, border guards, immigration officers, reception officers, etc.) 	Practical guide	March 2015
4. EASO Practical Guide: Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily case officers Supervisors and quality assessors 	Practical guide	January 2017
5. EASO Quality Assurance Tool	Quality Assessors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisors Quality specialists Staff with quality assurance functions 	Publication and tools	Pending
6. EASO Practical Guide: Qualification for international protection	Case officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily interviewers and decision-makers Policy officers Legal advisers 	Publication	Pending
Practical tools concerning applicants belonging to vulnerable groups			
7. EASO Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily first contact officials, reception officers (reception authorities and/or non-governmental reception organisations), officials responsible for the intake/dispatching of applicant, registration officers, case officers, social and welfare services and legal practitioners Supervisors and quality assessors 	Online tool	2016

Subject of Evaluation	Target Group	Format	Month/year publication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police 		
8. EASO Age assessment practice in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily policy officers and specialists on children and vulnerable groups Case officers, registration officers, migration authorities Other actors involved in the treatment of children, (i.e. medical and legal practitioners, child psychologists, social workers or guardians) 	Publication	December 2013
9. EASO Practical Guide on age assessment (Second edition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily policy officers and specialists on children and vulnerable groups. Case officers, registration officers, migration authorities. Other actors involved in the treatment of children, (i.e. medical and legal practitioners, child psychologists, social workers or guardians) 	Publication	March 2018
10. EASO practical guide on family tracing	Primarily staff working for authorities and non-governmental organisation who are responsible for or have a role in the family-tracing process (i.e. asylum authorities, immigration authorities and child protection services at national and at local levels)	Practical guide	March 2016
Guidance developed in the framework of the EASO Network of Reception Authorities			
11. EASO Guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily policy makers in reception and Management of reception authorities, organisations and centres, reception training officers. Quality managers in reception facilities. 	Publication, guidance	September 2016
12. EASO Guidance Contingency planning	Primarily policy makers in reception and Management and middle management of reception authorities, organisations and centres.	Publication, guidance	March 2018
EASO Thematic Reports			
13. EASO thematic reports (process)	For internal use by Member States' administrations, EASO, the European Commission and UNHCR	Report	

The main sources of information for the development of these were the familiarisation interviews conducted at the beginning of the study, EASO's website, and documentary sources provided by EASO.

2.1.2.2 Stakeholders of EASO's products

Different stakeholders are involved in the process of developing, disseminating and implementing or using the EASO products. In the evaluation, it was important to focus on gathering information from the primary target groups of each product and tool, but also to consult managers, NCPs, policy-makers and other users, as well as the wider group of stakeholders to get a complete picture of awareness, use, quality, format and impact of the process and the products. Table 2 classifies the main stakeholders of the EASO Products addressed as part of the evaluation. It includes an assessment of interest and influence of each type of stakeholder group, as well as an indication their engagement in the evaluation.

Table 2: Draft stakeholder mapping of EASO Products and Practical Tools Targets Groups

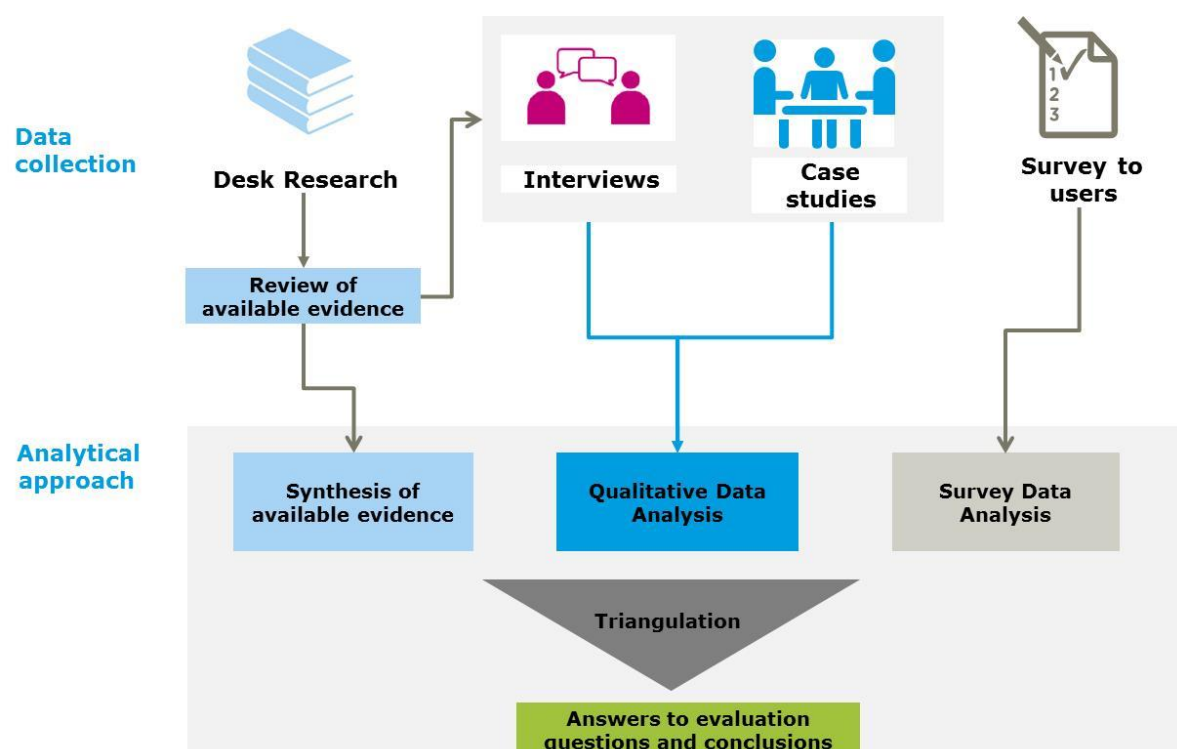
Description of stakeholder group				Assessment of interest and influence	
Main group	Specific types of organisations	Example stakeholders	Relation to the tools/products*	Interest	Influence
Public authorities at EU level	- EU Commission	- DG HOME policy officials	Consults the tool 10 Participates in elaborating the tools	High	High
	- EASO	- EASO Management Board - EASO staff	Consults the tool 10 Produces or Participates in elaborating the tools	High	High
	- Other relevant EU agencies	- Frontex staff - Europol staff - FRA staff	Participate in elaborating the tools	High	Medium to High
National authorities in EU+	- EASO Networks	- EASO Asylum Process Network members - EASO Reception Network members - EASO Exclusion Network members - EASO Network of Dublin Units members	Use the tool 10 Participate in elaborating the tools	High	High
	- Relevant national ministries (Ministries of Interior, Labour/Employment, Justice, Social Security) and departments (department and offices of immigration, asylum, Social security, integration, etc.)	- Policy officials	Use the tools 6, 8, 10	High	Medium

Description of stakeholder group				Assessment of interest and influence	
Main group	Specific types of organisations	Example stakeholders	Relation to the tools/products*	Interest	Influence
	- Border authorities	Border guards/border police National police Detention/prison officers	Use and communicate tools 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,	High	Medium
	- Law enforcement bodies	Law enforcement officials	Use tool 1, 2, 3	High	Medium
	- National and local reception authorities	- National Contact Point - Managers - Senior officers - Trainers - Quality experts - Specialised officers (registration, reception, etc)	Use tool 1,2,3, 4,5, 6, 7,8, Communicate all tools with officers – except 4 and 10	High	Medium to High
	- National asylum authorities	- Asylum officers	Use tools 2,3,4, 5,6,7,8,10	High	Medium
	- National immigration authorities	- Immigration officers	Use tools 1,2,3,4, 5,6,7,8,10	High	Medium
	- Other responsible stakeholders	- Actors with specific duty of care and welfare (tutor of children, supervisor, legal practitioners, social workers, etc.)	Use tool 5, 6, 7	High	Low
Civil Society	- NGOs	- European Council on Refugees and Exiles - Specialized National/local NGOs (reception, asylum, etc.)	Participate in elaborating the tools (i.e. ECRE for tool 2, 5,6) Use tools 5, 6,7,8,	High	Medium to High
Courts and tribunals	- National courts and tribunals		Indirectly participate in the elaboration in tool 5	Low	Low
Internal organisations and public authorities	- UN	- UNHCR	Use the tool 10 Participate in elaborating the tools	Medium	Medium

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was based on data collection from key stakeholders at EU and national levels. This section is aimed at providing a brief overview to the various tools employed, outlined below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Data collection and analysis in the evaluation



3.1 Explanatory Interviews

The first stage of the evaluation consisted of a series of six face-to-face interviews with key EASO members that worked on the development and implementation of the products. These served to develop a better understanding of the rationale and objectives for each tool, which underpinned the subsequent development of intervention logics for each product.

3.2 Desk Research

The next stage of the evaluation centred around desk research which was used to map product-specific intervention logics. These fact-sheets detailed the development and dissemination processes of each tool, as well as each tool's addressed needs, intended target group and expected results. The main sources of information used for the development of these fact-sheets consisted of the explanatory interviews, EASO's website, and documentary sources provided by EASO.

Desk research was also used to produce a map detailing the ways in which secondary sources can feed into the evaluation, as well as identifying gaps which were not covered by secondary and primary data sources.

3.3 Survey to all EU+ States

After the initial stage, a series of surveys were conducted in all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. This stage focused on obtaining input on the evaluation question from five to 10% of

the target group. The questionnaire was based on the evaluation questions and took into account the discussions during the kick-off meetings. It was constructed and carried out using Ramboll's in-house survey software, SurveyXact.

The survey was addressed to the end users of EASO tools such as front line and/or policy staff dealing directly with individuals applying for international protection. In order to reach the desired target sample, careful considerations were given to the sampling methodology. To ensure validity and usefulness of the results, national contact points were consulted to gather feedback on the dissemination methods. As a result, a flexible dissemination strategy was employed. This consisted of sending the survey to national contact points who were asked to share the link with all relevant contacts identified as part of the preparatory phase. These contacts were also asked to further share the survey through the snowballing principle. To increase the reach of the survey, it was translated in all EU Member State languages and in Norwegian.

3.4 International / EU-Level Interviews

The next step in the data collection procedure was to conduct a series of stakeholder interviews. It was decided at the kick-off stage to remove the national-level interviews and focus only on the EU and international-level. These interviews were used to gather insights on the tools and to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the approach followed in the development and promotion of the products. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with international/EU level stakeholders. These were conducted face-to-face if the contact was based in Brussels, or on the telephone, if based elsewhere.

3.5 Case studies and field work

In order to collect more targeted, in-depth and qualitative data on the tools, the evaluation carried out a number of case studies. These explored the impact of the EASO products and their contribution to the strengthening of the asylum systems and practices. The case studies were used to complement the desk research and survey data, as well as validate key results and help the evaluators extract the main conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation exercise. They were carried out by national experts, with knowledge of the field and in-country language expertise, based on a case study "package" put together by the evaluation team which contained a set of tools and templates.

The countries were selected based on a non-probabilistic selection method that employed a set of selection criteria which, when combined, led to a balanced mix of countries with different characteristics. That being said, changes were made to the sample due to certain countries among the original selection not being able to assist in the organisation of a case study (i.e. Ireland was replaced by Slovakia). A total of ten case studies were conducted (i.e. in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and Romania), the findings of which are all included in this report.

3.6 Data Triangulation

The next step of the evaluation consisted of checking the quality of the gathered data and the triangulation of the results. Because the present evaluation utilised mixed methods such as interviews and online surveys, triangulation was needed to check the consistency of the findings and increase the chance to control some of the threats or multiple causes influencing the results.

The triangulation method, illustrated in Figure 4, was applied by cross-analysing data obtained through desk research, survey, interviews and case studies. Moreover, evidence from different stakeholder groups was cross-analysed using the "360 principle".

Figure 4: The principle of triangulation of methods applied to the evaluation



3.7 Validation and SWOT Workshop

A validation workshop was conducted with key EASO staff. The workshop had a dual purpose:

- To gather feedback on the findings through a collaborative session but also to collaborate on developing the conclusions and recommendations;
- To identify and discuss the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to EASO's tools development process.

Conclusions and in particular recommendations are only useful if the people in charge of implementing them feel ownership of the recommendations and consider them to be valid and fair.¹⁴ This is why our goal was to make the validation phase a consultative process, as there is a greater tendency for people to consider the outcome as favourable and *fair* if they feel that the process leading to it has been inclusive.¹⁵

3.8 SWOT Analysis

After the data triangulation, the evaluation team put together an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the approach used to develop and promote the products. This was done by triangulating the results gathered and was used to assess the current status and role of the EASO products in the context of an evolving policy landscape and trends in migration and asylum seekers. The SWOT analysis should not be viewed specifically as an evaluation method as such, but rather as an analytical tool. It helped structure the evaluation findings with a forward looking perspective and ensured that external factors are appropriately taken into account.

¹⁴ Patton, M. Utilization-focused Evaluation 4th Edition. 2008

¹⁵ Bo Vestergaard: *Fair proces af ledelse af inkrementel innovation – mod et strategisk procesdesign*; in Thorkil Molly-Søholm, Nikolaj Stegeager & Søren Willert (red.), "Systemisk ledelse – teori og praksis"; chapter 18; p. 302.

3.9 Strength and weaknesses in data and approach

The main strengths and weaknesses related to the data gathered through the different data collection tools presented above are set out below. Overall, despite the bias contained in the survey results, the process of data triangulation employed and fact that the reporting takes account of this bias has allowed for a fair assessment of EASO's tools.

3.9.1 DESK RESEARCH

Documents made available to the evaluation team by EASO were an insightful and relevant source of information to conduct the desk research. All the documents contained in the shared folder by EASO were used to conduct the desk research (i.e. assessment of development process, assessment of stakeholders' expectations).

3.9.2 SURVEY

While the survey is biased due to the reasons presented below, this does not make its results invalid. Care should simply be taken when reading and interpreting the results of the survey on its own. Caveats have been added to this effect where relevant in the findings chapter.

The actual dissemination and response rate were highly dependent on the support and knowledge of NCPs. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As shown in the table below, the number of responses collected through the dissemination of the survey varied across countries. Where NCPs were available to cooperate, and engage in the exercise, the number of responses collected was high (e.g. RO, HR, BE). Also, the timing of the launch of the survey influenced the number of responses. Delays in the dissemination of the survey resulted in the actual launch during the summer months, when people tended to be on holiday. This was confirmed by several NCPs after the decision to extend the survey closure date.

Moreover, an estimation of the overall response rate could not be performed. The estimations of target group numbers provided by NCPs were incomplete or NCPs declared that they were unable to provide an estimation. This resulted in the impossibility to perform an estimation of the overall rate of response. It also did not prove possible to determine a response rate for given target groups, e.g. case officers.

Despite efforts made to attempt to engage NCPs in the dissemination of the survey and follow-up to monitor the actual dissemination, the whole process consistently depended on NCPs' attitude towards the exercise. [REDACTED] this resulted in non-uniform response rates, which implies an overrepresentation of a minority of countries. Moreover, as further detailed in the survey analysis, overall, the majority of respondents worked in the field of asylum (69%), which – while the main target group of the tools – may also have influenced the responses provided and introduced a bias.

A few means were employed to test the degree of bias introduced, namely:

1. The results were re-assessed by removing the responses from the countries where a large number of responses was received in order to test whether a bias was introduced by these countries. Where this was the case, it has been mentioned.
2. Where relevant, the results were further broken down by respondent type.
3. It was verified whether there was a large deviation from the mean in any Member State responses. Where this was the case, it was mentioned.

3.9.3 EU/INTERNATIONAL LEVEL INTERVIEWS

The data collected through interviews with stakeholders varied considerably in terms of quality. In some cases, the top-middle management was not interviewed due to time constraints (DG HOME, Head of Units), but alternatives were provided. In one case, the person identified by EASO and his/her superior were not able to conduct the interview due to clauses in the type of contract within the organisation (DG NEAR), but an alternate was found. In another instance, the person suggested by the initial contact stated that he had limited knowledge of EASO's practical tools and guidance.

However, despite these difficulties, the interviews conducted allowed for the collection of detailed and insightful inputs from a wide range of relevant international and EU level stakeholders

3.9.4 CASE STUDIES

For the overwhelming majority of the case studies, interviews and focus groups were conducted with the target groups foreseen, representing the areas of reception, migration (including border control) and asylum and stakeholders ranging from the policy level to case workers and reception officers. It should be noted however that in some cases it was only possible to consult a limited number of stakeholders given challenges around organising case studies over the summer and with securing national-level buy-in due to heavy caseloads. This is particularly the case in Germany where a reduced case study (in terms of number of interviewees) was conducted due to organisational constraints. In most cases however case studies were able to gather information from various sources on the awareness, relevance, use, format, and impact of EASO tools.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The results are presented by thematic groups of evaluation questions in order to facilitate the reading. The findings presented below are based on survey responses, ten case studies and 12 interviews conducted with key international and EU level stakeholders.

Survey analysis is based on responses from a limited number of Member States, with larger proportions of respondents recorded in Croatia (11%), Romania (11%) and Greece (10%).

The results presented below should be interpreted in relation to how long tools have existed as responses in relation to factors like awareness and overall use may to some degree be indicative of how long the tools have been available for.

4.1 Awareness

Overall, there is a mixed awareness across EASO tools, EU+ countries and target groups. Geographically, there seemed to be an overall higher awareness of the tools in southern Europe, and Romania and Bulgaria. Across user types, there was higher awareness among the respective tools' target users than other end-users. There were also some tools that overall were more well known to end-users, including the "Personal Interview" and "Evidence Assessment" guides.

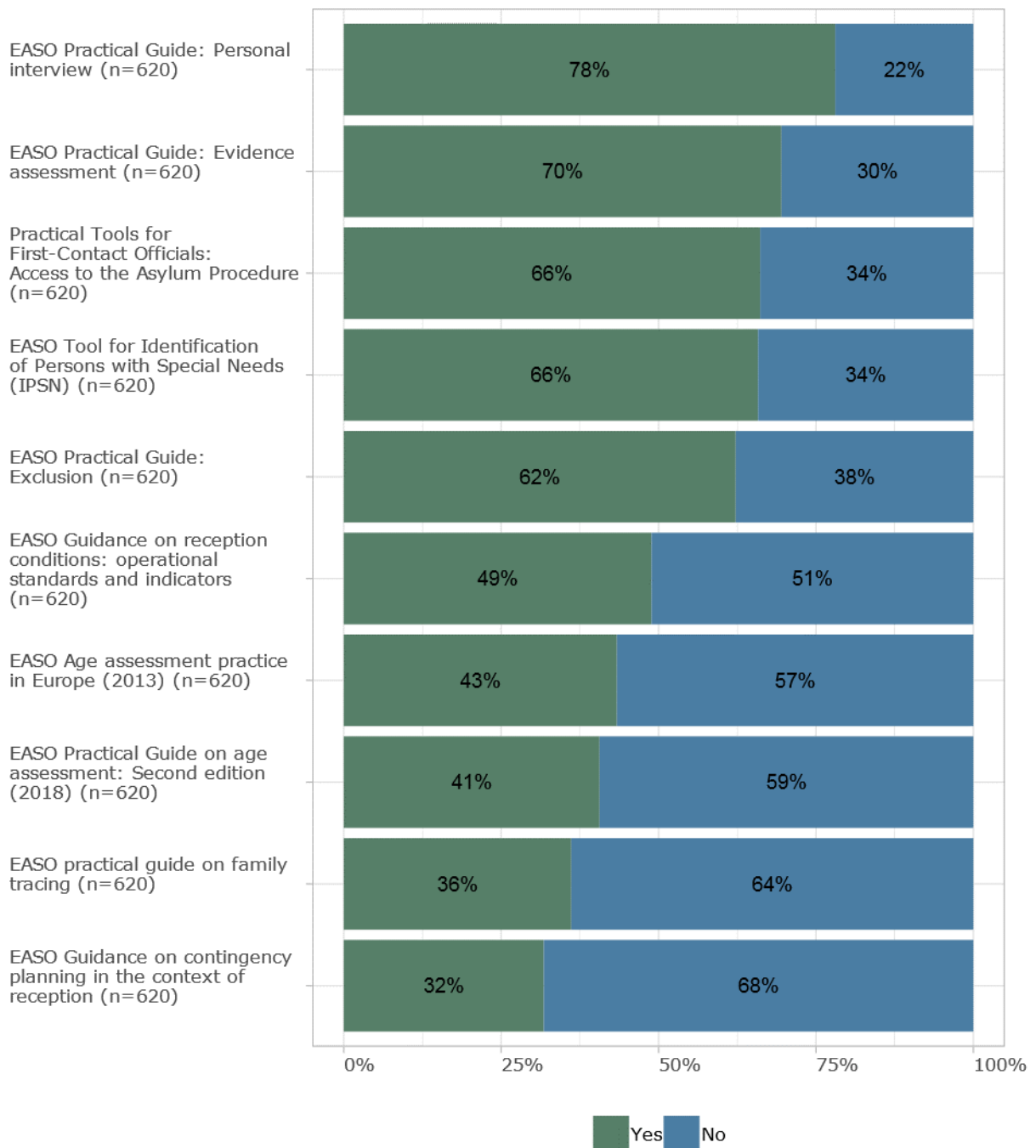
The most effective channels in reaching the end users to date is via the EASO website and social media, and trainings, as well as internal communication and end-users' work places. The most effective channel varies, however, somewhat by target group. Although the tools are generally easy to find, disseminating EASO tools on the intranet of the migration authorities of the EU Member States would increase their accessibility.

A main recommendation for increasing the awareness of EASO tools was for EASO to send representatives physically to Member States, to present the tools to end users and explain their purpose and how they are relevant.

4.1.1 EXTENT OF AWARENESS (EQ: 1, 2, 4)

Overall there is a mixed awareness across EASO tools, EU+ countries and target groups. Specifically, the survey results points to overall higher awareness of the EASO tools in south-east Europe and the Balkans. However, when each tool is considered separately, most of Europe had fairly high awareness of the personal interview, exclusion, evidence assessment, and IPSN tools. Similarly, the level of awareness of the tools varied across the stakeholder groups. Although case officers indicated, in the survey, higher awareness than the average for "EASO Practical Guide: Evidence assessment" and "EASO Practical Guide: Personal interview"; border guards tended to have higher awareness than average for "Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure"; and reception officers had higher awareness than average of the "EASO Guidance on reception conditions" thereby indicating that these tools are reaching their relevant target groups.

Figure 5: (Q6) Are you aware of the existence of the following products developed by EASO (even if you never read or consulted them)?

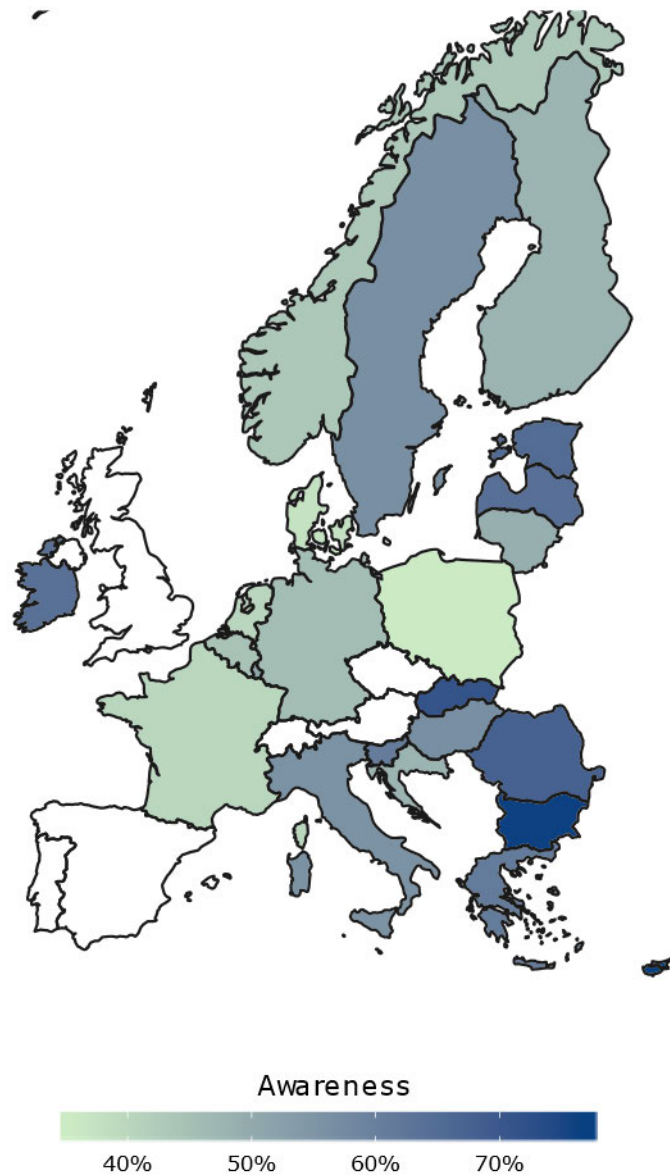


Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

The case studies also point to mixed awareness across EU+ countries and target groups. In Slovakia, Romania, Latvia, and Greece, there was generally high awareness of the tools. In these countries, the main channels through which target groups were made aware of the EASO tools were email dissemination, promotion by NCPs or EASO representatives and trainings. In contrast, in the Netherlands, France and Sweden, the level of awareness was low among asylum case workers and first contact officials. In both countries, the tools had not been systematically promoted to the target groups, primarily due to a feeling that the EASO tools duplicate national alternatives and were less specific to national context. The level of awareness was generally low among the private sector and NGOs across all case studies.

Therefore, although international and EU level interviewees expressed uncertainty in relation to the degree of awareness of the tools at national level among frontline and more junior staff, the survey and case study findings show that there does seem to be awareness of the tools among these groups and therefore that the tools are reaching target users. Nevertheless, the level of awareness varies across target groups and countries.

Figure 6: Percentage of average awareness of the EASO Practical Tools



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

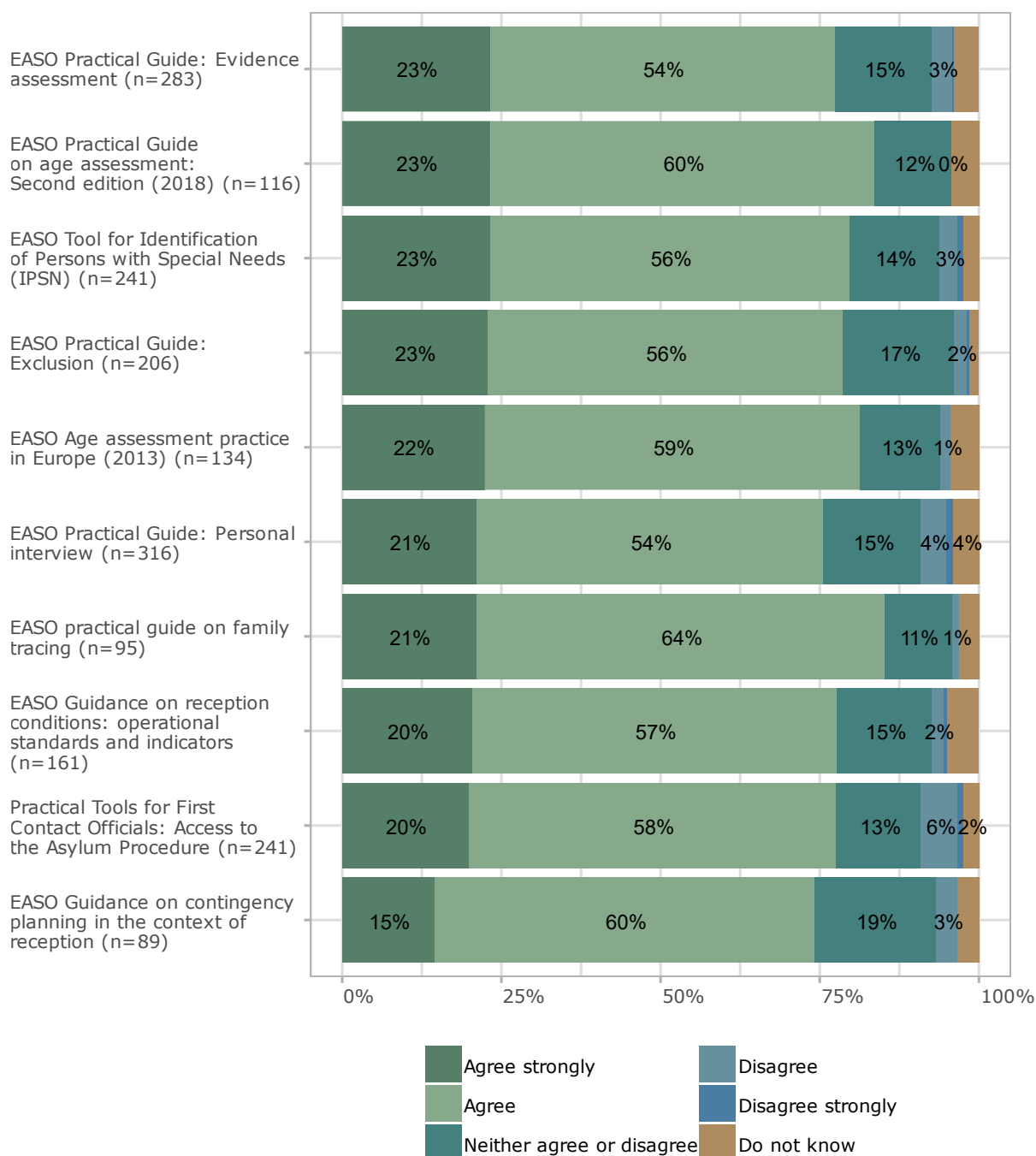
Overall key international and EU level stakeholders who were interviewed had varying degrees of awareness of the EASO tools; for example, two had been heavily involved in the development of one of the tools, others had provided comments on tools during the development stage and two interviewees were largely unfamiliar with the tools having not come across them or used them in their work. In most cases interviewees were able to comment on between one and three tools that they had directly engaged with.

4.1.2 PROMOTION CHANNELS (EQ: 2, 5, 7)

Overall, internal communication activities as well as the EASO website and trainings were the most effective channels of raising awareness about the tools. Based on the survey results, most respondents indicated that they had heard about the EASO tools first via an internal communication activity (i.e. from a colleague, a superior, an internal training or communication – all indicated by about a third of the respondents) or via the EASO website or a training (33% and 28% respectively). These channels were also cited as the most efficient ones across the case studies. For example, in Greece, Latvia, and Romania, the trainings were mentioned as a main awareness-raising channel. In Greece, new case workers are trained in EASO tools during an induction training course, and during non-EASO focused trainings, hard copies of the EASO tools are handed out. Likewise, in Germany, case officers were introduced to the tools via EASO trainings conducted nationwide for all case officers. In Latvia, it was also mentioned that the workplace is a main channel through which they hear of the EASO tools – managers in the workplace that are knowledgeable of the EASO tools promote it to their teams. In Romania, it was said that the EASO website and social media communication were important sources of information about the EASO tools. In Slovakia, the tools were promoted internally between colleagues via email with hard copies also available at EASO Day and via the on-site library of the Migration Office of the Ministry of the Interior. EASO tools were also referenced during training sessions as additional resources in Slovakia.

Thus, the promotion of tools by international and EU level stakeholders is not a main channel by which target groups are reached. Specifically, EU level and international stakeholders mentioned in their interviews that their main efforts to raise awareness about the tools were via meetings, linking to them via company websites and sending them directly staff. However, the survey and case studies point to internal communication and the EASO website and social media, and trainings were the channels through which most heard of the EASO tools.

The tools are overall easy to find, however, accessibility could still be improved. At least 75% of the survey respondents highlighted the tools as easy to find (see figure below). The same finding is supported by the case studies in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Romania. However, in the Bulgarian case study, it was also pointed out that although the tools were easy to find, they could be more prominently placed on the EASO website. In the Swedish case study, several participants pointed out that the EASO tools are not easily accessible on the intranet and computer system of the Swedish migration authorities. Since Swedish case workers tend to search for support materials 90% of the time on their intranet and computer system, the consequence is that many Swedish case workers then do not find the tools, even if they search for them. Similarly, it was suggested in the Dutch case study that links to EASO tools could be better integrated on their intranet. Thus, the EASO tools could have been more accessible if they were made available on the intranet of migration authorities in the EU countries.

Figure 7: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It is easy to find"

Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

The survey results also points to the fact the different information sources have had differing importance in raising awareness for different tools. Specifically, most of those who said they were aware of the "Personal Interview", "Evidence Assessment", and "Exclusion" tools had been informed of these via an internal training (15% or more). On the other hand, most of those who said they were aware of the "IPSN", "age assessment", "family tracing", "reception conditions" and "contingency planning" tools had heard of these first via the EASO website (15% or more). The same level of detail could not be found in the case studies.

The most effective communication channel also varies somewhat by target group. For example, in the Bulgarian case study, **border guards** were found to be primarily informed by their centralised administration system, which provides each border guard with a hard copy of the “Access to asylum” tool and information about EASO tools in their introductory package. The Greek case study found that the only systematic promotion of EASO tools to **civil society** was via the EASO Consultation Forum. In Italy, whilst there was no targeted promotion for the **private sector**, awareness among **International Organisations** was raised via technical meetings and the EASO website. In the Netherlands, **Policy Officers** were primarily informed of EASO tools via EASO meetings, EC meetings, and NCP networks. Finally, Romania and Slovakia, case workers generally hear from their NCP or EASO representatives, as well as from the EASO websites and training.

Both the survey results and the case study outcomes points to other EASO activities being only used to a limited extent for effectively communicating about the EASO tools. In response to the survey, about a third of the respondents said they had discovered the EASO tools via an EASO training, and 15% and 8% of the respondents said they had heard of the tools via EASO Practical Cooperation meetings or Info Day presentations. Although EASO trainings were reported to have been a source of awareness about the EASO tools in Germany, Greece and in Italy, it was felt in the Netherlands and in Sweden that EASO trainings was an unexploited venue for promoting the tools. Moreover, International Cooperation meetings were also seen as a way of promoting the tools that hitherto had not been used, in Greece (the other case studies made no mention of this).

Several suggestions were made in the case studies for improving the awareness raising of target groups regarding the EASO tools. In Germany and Slovakia for example the suggestion was made for a newsletter to be published to inform frontline staff about new EASO publications. A main recommendation that was made in multiple case studies (Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden) was for EASO to send representatives to Member States physically to present the tools to target groups and explain their purpose and relevance to them, and to take questions from end-users. Similarly, in Slovakia emphasis was placed on the value of in-person meetings to explain the tools which also supports this point and in France a recommendation was made to make better use of EASO Day to distribute more hard copies of the tools to staff. In Sweden, it was reported that when such meetings had been organised throughout the country’s regions for the dissemination of national tools, they had experienced a higher uptake rate of national tools. One EU level interviewee also referenced anecdotal evidence of having had the opportunity to explain the potential use of the “EASO Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN)” to the target group and subsequently had positive feedback about it having come to understand the useful role it could play.

Another key recommendation was to organise trainings for end users on a more frequent basis, as this was an important potential way to learn about the tools and how to use them (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Slovakia). It was also suggested in the Netherlands and in Romania that hard-copies of the tools could be disseminated at such trainings. A third key recommendation was to make better use of the inter-agency consultations, where government bodies, international organisations and civil society are present – key target groups could then be reached – a venue for dissemination that is currently not used (Greece, Romania). Lastly, it was recommended in Sweden and in the Netherlands to make sure the tools are available on the intranets of Member States’ intranets.

4.1.3 COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF PROMOTION (EQ: 6)

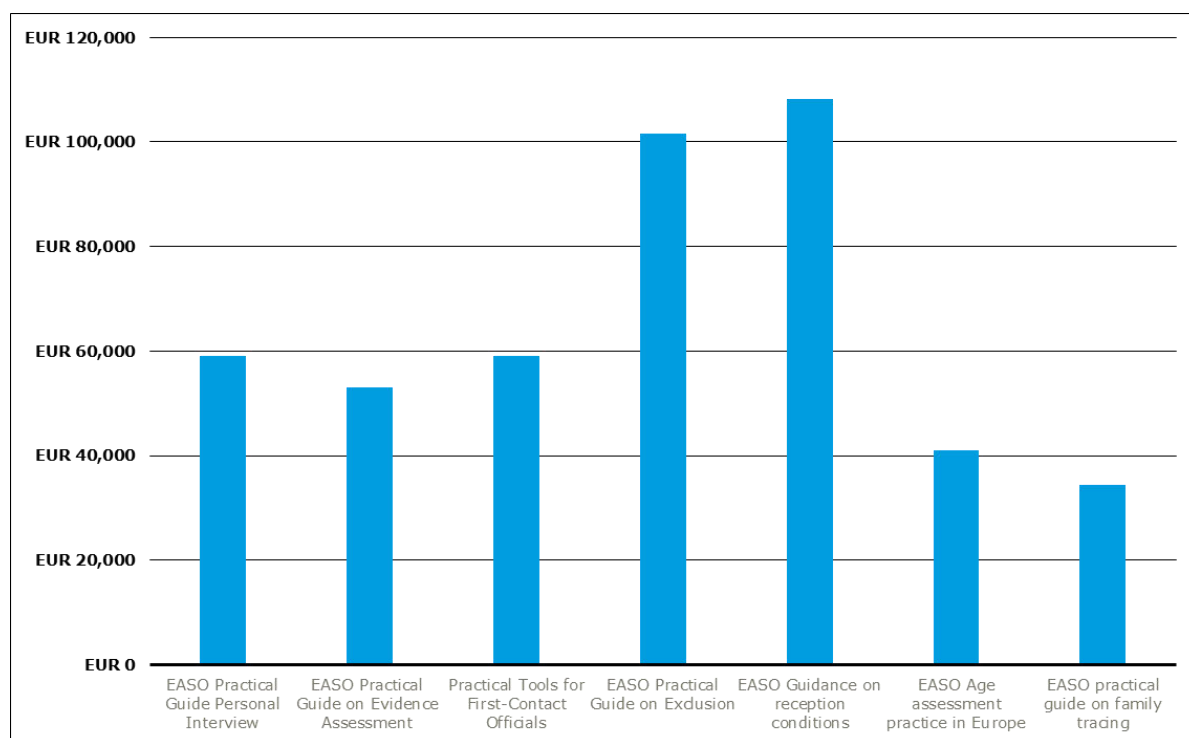
The data that could be used to assess cost-effectiveness with a sufficient amount of reliability and accuracy was limited. However, that limited data, triangulated with input from the online survey and case studies results, gives a general indication on EASO’s returns on investment for the promotional activities related to the tools.

4.1.3.1 Translations

Based on data provided by EASO, the average cost of translating a tool amounted to an average of EUR 82 per page. In total, seven of the ten tools in the scope of this study were translated. These are:

- EASO Practical Guide Personal Interview that was translated into 18 languages and has 40 pages;
- EASO Practical Guide on Evidence Assessment that was translated into 18 languages and has 36 pages;
- Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure that was translated into 18 languages and has 40 pages;
- EASO Practical Guide on Exclusion that was translated into 20 languages and has 62 pages;
- EASO Guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators that was translated into 22 Languages and has 60 pages;
- EASO Age assessment practice in Europe that was translated into 5 languages and has 100 pages;
- EASO practical guide on family tracing that was translated into 4 languages and has 105 pages.
- Based on the figures above and the average cost per page and the number of pages translated, the total cost of translation can be estimated to be EUR 460,184.

Figure 8: Total translation cost per tool



Source: Ramboll based on data provided by EASO

The results of the online survey show that the majority of the respondents, 78%, would still use the products even if they were available only in English, suggesting that having translated versions of the tools was only a necessity for 22% of survey respondents.

However, the survey results also show that the translation of the tools is more important for some languages than others. In the case of Bulgaria, Germany and Croatia, the majority of the respondents indicated that they would not use the tools if they were not translated into their respective national language. These results are further confirmed by the case studies, which suggest that national language versions of the tools are important to ensure wider access to the tools and ease of use/understanding. For example, as previously mentioned, the Bulgarian case study indicates that translation is of importance for the use of EASO tools in Bulgaria, as most case workers and administration first-line officers do not speak English and being proficient in English is not a requirement for employment. This trend is highlighted in all case studies to different extents.

Translation of the tools has therefore increased their accessibility, notably in certain countries, such as Bulgaria, Germany and Croatia. The investment made in translating the tools has therefore allowed for a wider user-base, especially for some countries.

4.1.3.2 IT Development

A specific type of investment used by EASO was the development of a web-based interactive approach for the "EASO Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN)". In total, this effort amounted to EUR 14,950, where EUR 8,000 was spent on analysis, design and implementation and EUR 6,950 was spent on hosting and maintenance for one year.

The results of the online survey show that 77% of the respondents are satisfied with the format of the tool. This picture is corroborated by the case studies. In most of the countries, there were positive opinions with regards to the tool and its format. In the case of Romania, respondents indicated that all tools should be produced similar to the IPSN. The exception to this rule are the respondents from Sweden and the respondents from Italy who indicated that tool displays too much irrelevant information for it to be user-friendly.

Therefore, the IT development can be seen to have been beneficial.

4.1.3.3 EASO Info Days

The EASO Info Days is another means used to increase the awareness for EASO products. In 2017, EASO printed 216 fliers and 76 branded materials; the costs of these were not available.

In terms of effectiveness, the online survey shows that only 8% of the respondents had first heard about the EASO tools via EASO Info Days. This is confirmed by the case studies where only very few respondents referred to the Info Days. In all three cases where it was mentioned (France, Italy and Latvia) this promotional tool is presented as a secondary awareness enhancing measure. For example, in the Latvian case study, interviewees mentioned that among others "the channels of awareness raising are also telephone conversations, EASO information days, inviting representatives from Malta's bureau".

Although cost data is lacking for dissemination materials used on EASO Info Days, the scarce referencing of the Info Days in the survey and the case studies imply that EASO Info Days are not as effective a means of promoting awareness as other means employed.

4.1.3.4 Videos

The cost of producing a promotional video for the IPSN was EUR 32,000. In the case studies, several references are made to the video, but opinions were divided on its value. In the French and Romanian case studies, the video gathered positive feedback and it was recommended that similar videos be developed for other EASO tools. However, respondents in the Dutch case study questioned whether the information contained in the IPSN video was too technical to be presented in this format.

The result of the investment into making a promotional video for the IPSN tool was therefore mixed.

4.1.3.5 Print format

Other methods were used to increase the awareness for EASO products such as printing the tools or printing fliers, booklets to promote the tools. In total, 10,542 materials were printed between 2016 and 2018.

The case studies indicated that the printed versions of the tools are important in increasing awareness. According to participants in the French case study, printed versions are very important for awareness-raising purposes. This is because the chance that people will read the materials increases with the paper format.

By far, the tool for which the most printed handouts were produced was the "Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure". In 2017, 6,576 handouts of this tool were printed. According to the results of the survey, 66% of the respondents were aware of the tool. This percentage placed the tool in third position among the most known EASO products. It is important to note that the most known EASO tool was the "EASO practical Guide to Personal interview", where 78% of the respondents indicated awareness. For this tool, only 182 materials were printed. This may suggest that the dissemination of print copies of the tools has had a limited impact in terms of awareness-raising.¹⁶

In several case studies, such as in the Italian case, it was mentioned that the printed version was particularly important. This was the case for the "EASO Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure", aimed at first-contact officials that lack online access. 32% of survey respondents indicated that they use the tool in hardcopy, representing the tool for which this was most the case.

The provision of printed material has therefore served to promote the awareness and use of the tools.

¹⁶ Note, however, that print data only exists for the years 2016-2018. Thus, the dissemination of tools prior 2016 is excluded from this analysis.

Table 3: Number of print copies between 2016 and 2018

Tool	Year	Number of print copies
EASO Age assessment practice in Europe	2018	2
	2017	85
EASO Guidance on Contingency Planning	2018	462
	2017	5
EASO Practical Guide on Age Assessment - second edition	2018	107
EASO Practical Guide on Evidence Assessment	2018	70
	2017	10
EASO Practical Guide: Evidence assessment	2018	2
	2017	21
EASO Practical Guide: Exclusion	2018	2
	2017	10
EASO Practical Guide: Personal Interview	2018	2
	2017	180
EASO Guidance on Reception Conditions: operational standards and indicators	2018	50
	2017	830
Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure	2018	330
	2017	6,576
EASO Practical Guide on Family tracing	2017	680
	2016	1120
Total:		10,542

Source: Ramboll based on

4.2 Relevance and Use

The relevance of the EASO tools varies broadly by theoretical and practical use-cases. At a theoretical level, the EASO tools are relevant to most EU Member States as reference documents that can be consulted in developing own national tools or legislation. For practical use, however, the tools seem relevant only to countries that lack a nationally developed alternative to the EASO tools – if a national tool exists, it usually takes precedence in practical use. Most Member States saw it as necessary to adapt tools to national context, whereas those that do not have the resources to do so would use the tools without adaptation.

The tools were seen as a relevant means to promote common standards and approaches to the asylum procedure in the CEAS.

The extent to which the tools were used was generally higher in eastern and southern Europe and lower in western and northern Europe. However, the “Evidence Assessment” and “Personal Interview” tools seemed to have a more widespread take-up across Europe. Both low-use and high-use countries tended to use the tools as theoretical reference documents for revising own national tools and legislation, whereas mostly high-use countries tended to use the tools in practical settings by frontline staff.

Use of the tools were generally not encouraged in Member States – some would provide a formal recommendation for use, but not strategically encourage its use.

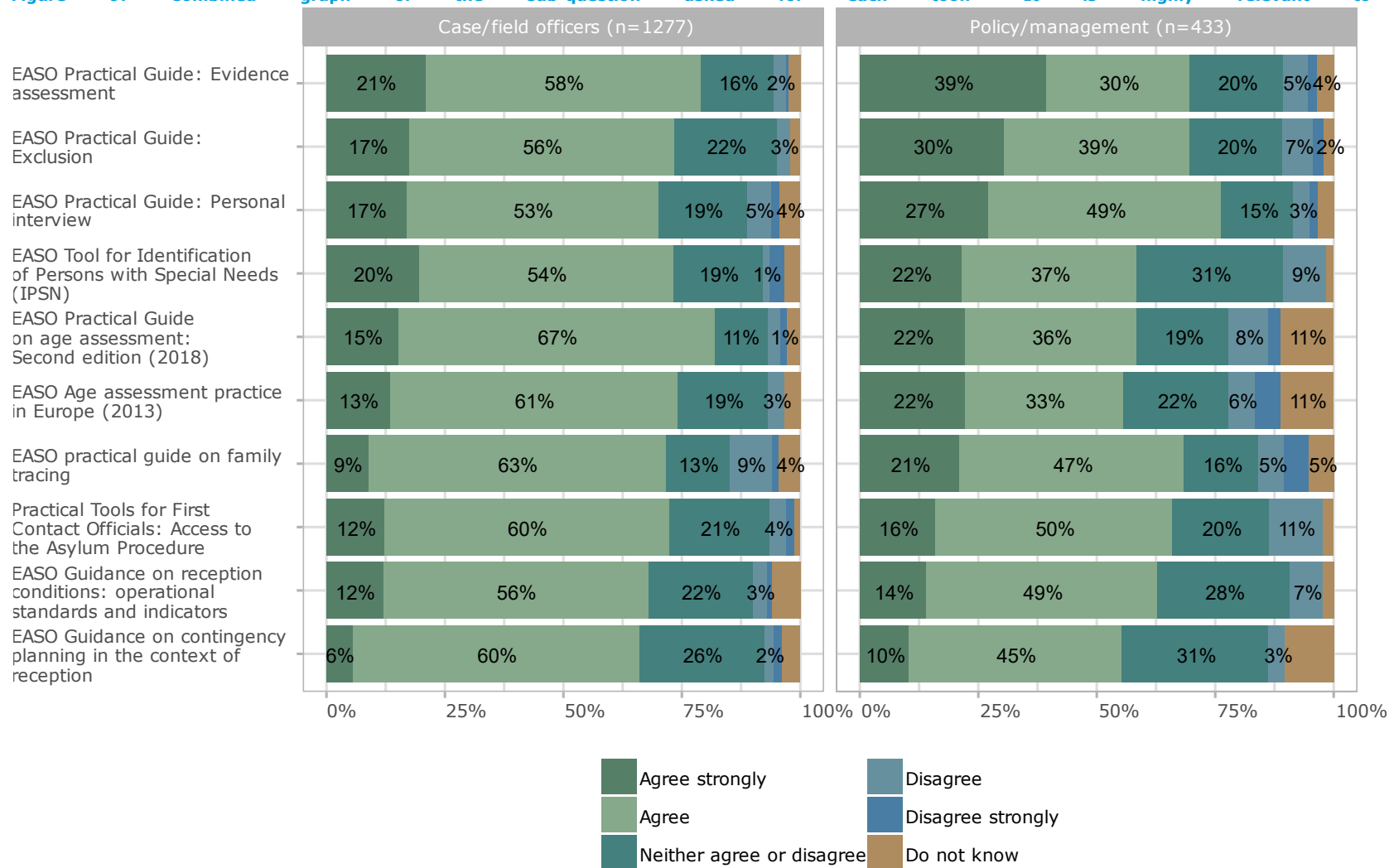
Although most end-users would continue using the EASO tools should they only be available in English, most Member States also see added value in having native translations as a way to save time by making them more readily understandable (i.e. to be able to skim read when sitting with an asylum seeker for example) as well as to make the tools more accessible for staff with little to no knowledge of English. Translations to national languages are also valuable in reducing the risks of misinterpretation of the guidance, even for members of the target group who are familiar with speaking and reading English.

4.2.1 RELEVANCE OF TOOLS (EQ: 8, 13)

The EASO tools have varying relevance for different countries and for different use-cases. Overall, the survey results point to a high relevance of the EASO tools (at least 65% of respondents indicated agreement to whether particular tools were highly relevant to their needs). Broadly, the EASO tools have some relevance to most Member States either for use on a management or policy level or for frontline workers. As can be seen from Figure 9, in response to the survey, policy officers/management level workers tended to find the tools more relevant to their work overall than case/field officers¹⁷. Moreover, the case studies paint a more nuanced picture with varying levels of relevance to different Member States and different stakeholders. The tools appeared relevant to **policy officers** in both Member States with a well-developed asylum procedure, where the tools served as reference documents when national tools were updated or developed (Netherlands, Sweden), as well as Member States with a less developed asylum procedure, where they were studied in the development of the legislative framework (Latvia, Romania). However, the tools only seemed relevant to **frontline workers** in Member States without a direct national alternative. That is, in Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, Greece and in part Italy and Bulgaria, national tools that are tailored more specifically to the respective national context pre-existed the EASO tools. In most of these countries, the EASO tools are seen as less context specific and therefore of less relevance. In Slovakia the lower relevance of the tools for frontline workers was also attributed to low staff turnover and the substantial accumulated experience of those working with asylum procedures. As such these relatively new tools were not deemed so relevant in terms of detail and specificity, at least not for more experienced staff. In contrast, in Romania and in Latvia, the EASO tools were seen as highly relevant to asylum case workers and border guards, where they serve as models for good practice.

¹⁷ Respondents classified as **case/field officers** were: Administrative support, Asylum case officer, Border guard/Border police, Country of Origin (COI) officer, Legal officer, Legal support services, Reception officer, Registration officer, Social support services. Those classified as **policy/management** were: Management/team leader/supervisor, Policy officer, Training and capacity development. Respondents excluded from the graph were: "Other" and "Advocacy".

Figure 9: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It is highly relevant to my needs"



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018

For practical use, most Member States had a preference for tools that were adapted to the national context. As mentioned above, a main reason for the tools to be of less relevance in Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Sweden and Italy was because these countries already had national tools that were more adapted to national contexts. Moreover, in the Swedish case study, one participant mentioned that Swedish case workers need to take the Swedish law and directives into account. These would encompass the EU directives, but also give national recommendations that go beyond these too. In the Netherlands, it was pointed out that some national working practices differ from those proposed by EASO, and in such cases, that the national guidelines would take precedence. In Slovakia, the lower number of asylum applications means that frontline staff would prefer more targeted guidance on how to deal with particularly complex cases rather than generalised information. In France the Personal Interview and Exclusion tools have strongly impacted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) although adaptation was needed to make guidance applicable to the French context. In these countries, it therefore seems necessary to adapt the tools to the national context.

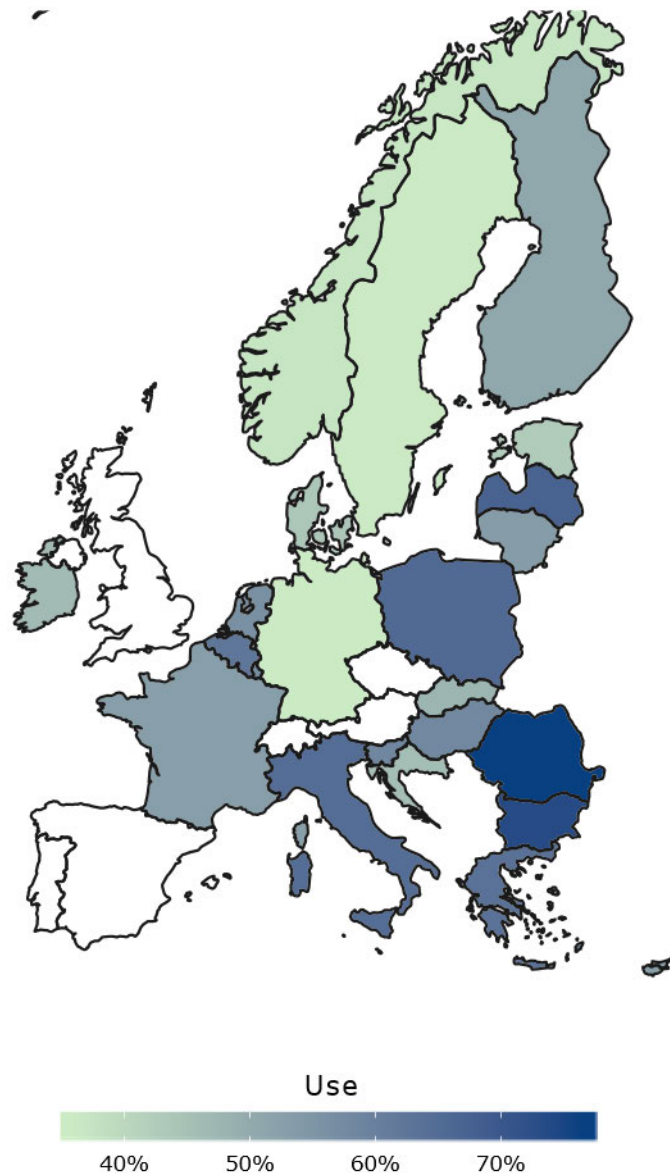
In the Latvian case, however, it was stated that there was a lack of resources to develop national tools, and that the EASO tools would be used without adaptation. In Bulgaria, the tools would be used without adaptation in a training context, however, EASO tools are used as inspiration for the development of national tools in practical use. These examples underline the fact that Member States would prefer some adaptation of the tools to their national context but that a generic tool could be used in the absence of an alternative. The data on the relevance of the tools to other stakeholders is limited. Due to few survey respondents representing other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs and private sector) and little mention in the case studies, only limited findings were revealed on this topic. Nevertheless, in the Greek case study, it was mentioned that the EASO tools are relevant to NGOs insofar it helps them understand the criteria decision-makers apply to the asylum procedure. NGOs in Romania also seemed to find the EASO tools relevant. Furthermore, one NGO consulted in Slovakia agreed that the tools appeared very relevant to their work providing legal support to asylum seekers, although they confirmed that they had not yet used them in practice due to not having been aware of the vast majority prior to being interviewed.

Beyond the practical and theoretical use of the EASO tools, the Member States also consider them as a relevant means to support the harmonisation of CEAS. Specifically, in Greece, Sweden, Italy, and Romania, the EASO tools were seen as instrumental in achieving common standards and increasing the minimum level of quality of processes in CEAS. Moreover, even though some countries do not find the EASO tools relevant due to the existence of more specific national alternatives (Sweden, Netherlands), these Member States still would like to contribute to the development of the EASO tools to have an influence on the CEAS standard.

4.2.2 EXTENT OF USE AND ENCOURAGEMENT (EQ: 9, 10, 11, 12)

Overall, the EASO tools are mostly used in eastern and southern Europe. According to the survey results, the overall use (across all tools) are highest in eastern and southern Europe, where about 60% or more of respondents indicated use of the tools. This mirrors somewhat the degree of the different Member States' awareness of the tools. Nevertheless, some tools are used more in some Member States. At the one hand, southern European countries indicated somewhat high use (around 50% or above) for most of the tools, the "Evidence Assessment" and "Personal Interview" tools seem to have more widespread take-up across Europe, including central and northern European countries (e.g. Finland, Norway, Germany). This was largely corroborated in the case studies, in which western and northern countries (Netherlands and Sweden) reported less use of the tools than eastern and southern European (Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria). Exceptions to this are Greece and Slovakia which have relatively low levels of use as shown in Figure 10 below.

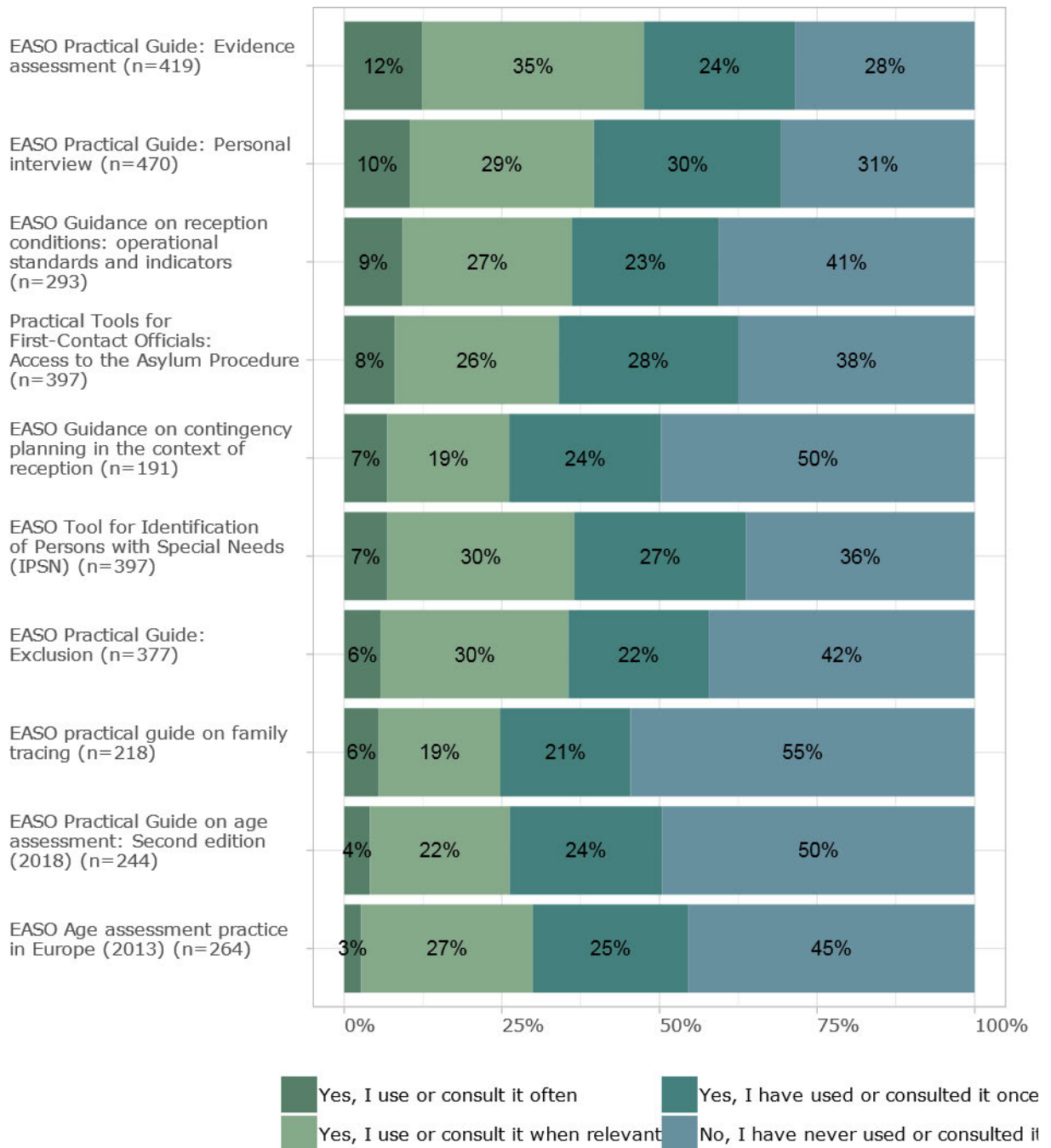
Figure 10: Level of use of EASO Practical Tools



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

Moreover, the frequency of use varies per tool. Specifically, the survey results show that a minority of all respondents reported having “often” used or consulted any particular tool, the largest proportion of respondents responding positively to this question were linked to the “EASO Guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators” and “EASO Practical Guide: Evidence assessment” perhaps indicating a committed yet small population of regular users of these tools. The figure below outlines overall responses to the question on whether survey respondents had used the different tools.

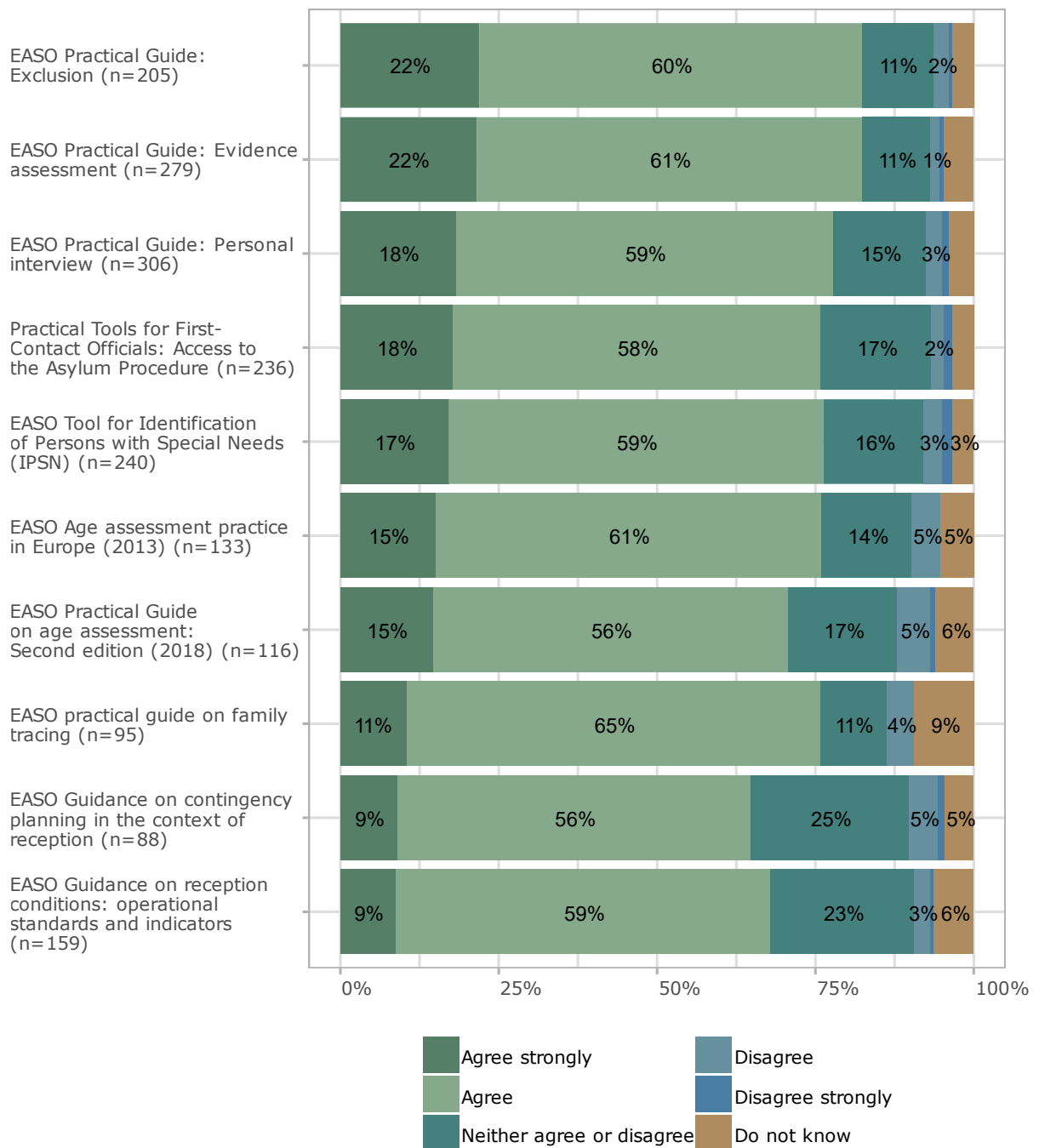
Figure 11: (Q8) Have you ever made use of, or consulted, the following products?



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

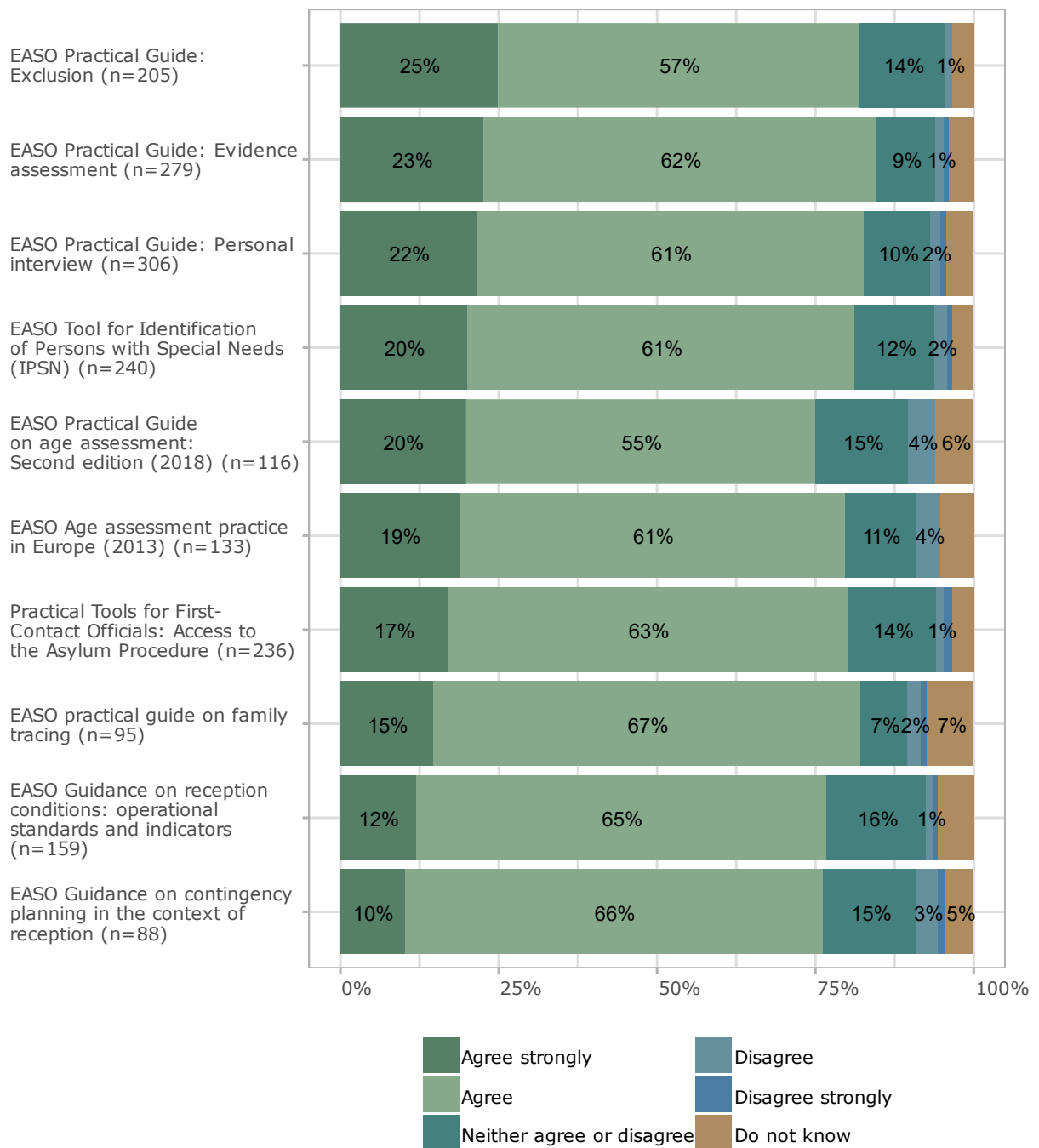
The main user groups of the tools differed between low-use and high-use countries. In low-use countries, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, the tools were mainly used as reference documents for policy officials in the development of national tools (yet to a limited extent). In Slovakia, where use was also fairly low, the tools were most typically occasionally used as reference points for definitions and clarification on working practice by frontline staff. In high use countries, the tools were often used in training of frontline staff, such as case workers and border guards (Bulgaria, Romania), as guidance for case workers in solving complex cases (Italy, Latvia) and by policy officers in the development of national tools and legislation (Bulgaria, Romania). From the survey, it emanated that the two most important ways that the EASO tools are used are in providing information on good practices for daily work, which reflects the finding that the tools are used as a way for case workers to refresh their knowledge from the Latvian case study, and that it provides guidance in daily work, underpinning the finding that EASO tools can guide complex cases and that Romanian border guards are instructed to rely on EASO tools.

Figure 12: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It provides me with good guidance for my work"



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

Figure 13: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It informs me of good practices to apply in my work"



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

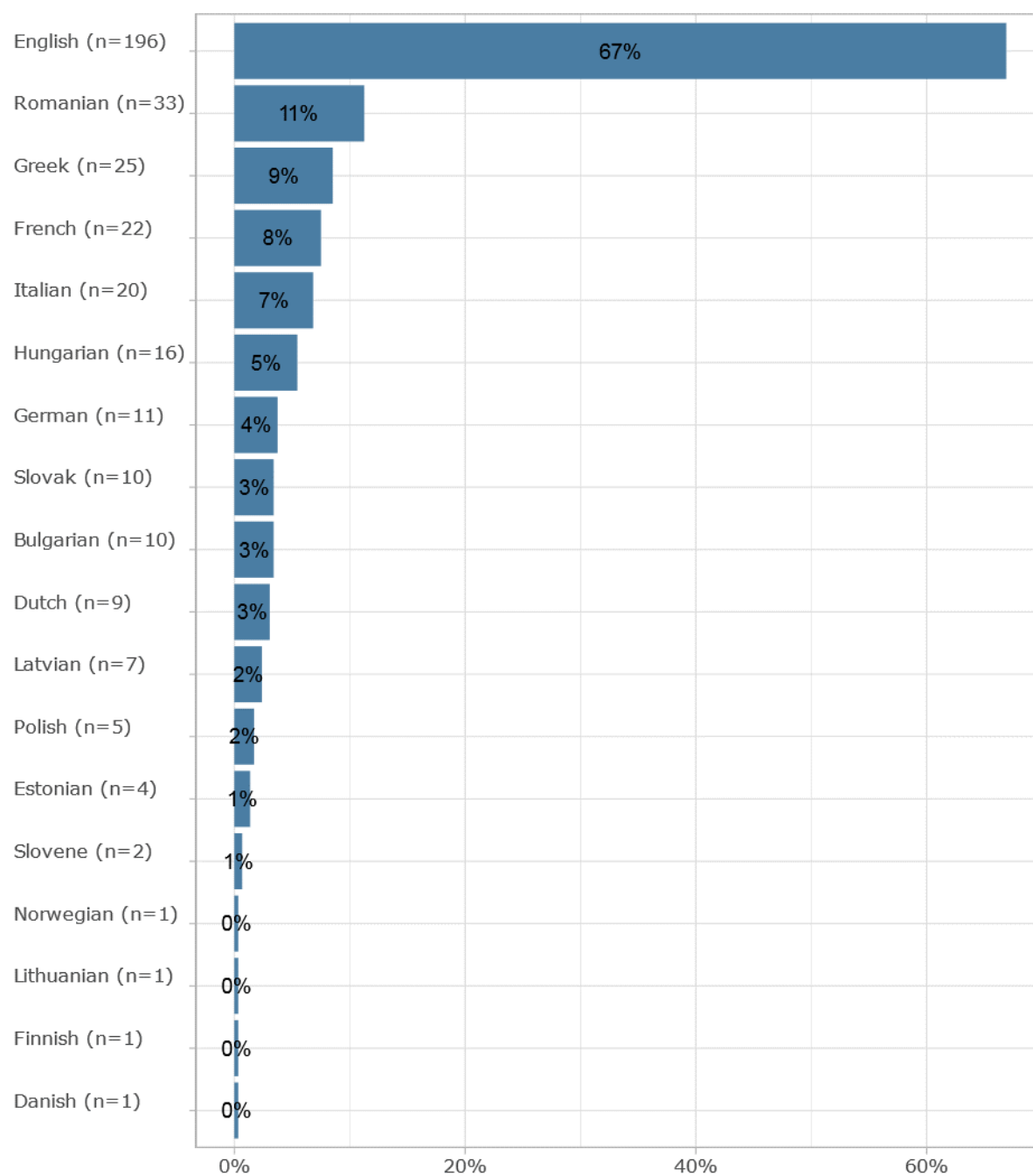
Generally, use of EASO tools was not widely encouraged in the case study countries. In low-use countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands, there was no centralised strategy for encouraging take-up of the EASO tools. Instead, it was left to the discretion of team leaders as to whether they promote use of the tools. Similarly, in high-use country Bulgaria, the tools were officially recommended to be used, but no active encouragement strategy was in place, so it was left up to the discretion of the individual. In contrast, in one country, Romania, the working routine of border guards had been updated to ask the individual to take account of the EASO tools in their daily work. Thus, there does not seem to be a direct correlation between the encouragement of use and the level of usage.

Little was found with regards to the extent of use of the EASO tools by other stakeholders. Nevertheless, the Bulgarian case study highlights that an international organisation uses the EASO tools as a reference in trainings organised for border police.

4.2.3 LANGUAGE (EQ: 14, 15)

Overall, the EASO tools are mostly used in English. According to the survey results, about 7/10 respondents indicated that they use the EASO tools in English. Nevertheless, the use of native language versions varied per Member State. Generally, respondents from Southern and Eastern Europe emphasised use of the tools in their native language. Particularly Bulgarian and Romanian respondents used tools in their own language, as well as Latvian, Greek, Italian, Slovak, Slovene and Hungarian respondents. This is consistent with the case study reports, where participants from these countries highlighted the importance of the availability of translated versions of the EASO tools.

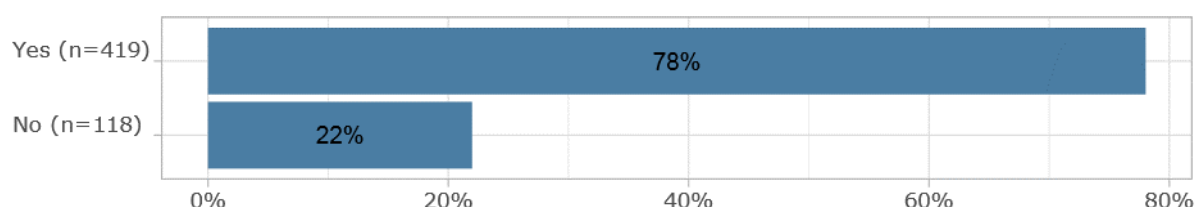
Figure 14: (Q32) In what language(s) do you use the "EASO Practical Guide: Personal interview"? (N=374, I=293)
[Displayed to Subset, Mandatory, Multiple answer, EQ14]



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

All Member States see benefits to having a translated version of the EASO tools. Although 80% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they would continue using the tools should they only be available in English, only about half of the respondents from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, indicated the same. Specifically, the importance of the availability of tools in the national language was highlighted in the German case study, with translation issues cited as a reason why staff are more likely to turn to national tools. More generally, respondents from southern and eastern Europe were less likely to use the EASO tools only in English. In the Greek case study, it was emphasised that English is not a requirement for frontline workers, so not having a native version would make the EASO tools inaccessible to some. Similarly, in the Italian case study, it was seen as necessary to have a native version for police officers, NGOs, and municipal staff, whose knowledge of English were not always high. The same point was made in France, as well as Slovakia where the lack of Slovak translations was said to exclude frontline staff – many of whom do not speak English – from using the tools. Overall, the case studies generally show that all countries see benefits in having native versions. The most important among these were that it would help users understand terminology (which may be different in English) and so save time and reduce risk of misinterpretation of the texts.

Figure 15: (Q41) Would you still use EASO's products if they were only available in English?



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

4.3 Quality of Content

Although the content of the tools was generally found to be of a high standard, it was found to be written in an overly theoretical style and to be lengthy. This reduced the practical value of the tools. In addition, the tools were found to be too generic, updated too infrequently, lacking introduction, and not covering the next steps after application of a tool.

The EASO tools are internally coherent, but overlaps with national tools. Some Member States see the EASO tools as providing a perspective on EU law and national tools on national law, and so sees little overlap. Others see their national tools as more specific and comprehensive than the EASO tools, and thus the EASO tools are perceived as overlapping with the national ones.

The tool development process was judged as strong in terms of bringing together a series of experts. This was credited with increasing the legitimacy of the final products as well as with contributing to increased Member State cooperation via the exchange of good practices and common challenges during the production process. Challenges relating to securing appropriate experts is however raised as an issue that at times compromises the quality of the tools and the need to create tools that different Member States can agree on is linked to the creation of generalised tools that impede their practical application at national level.

EASO tools are also coherent with other EASO activities, but could be made more integral to EASO trainings.

4.3.1 ASSESSED QUALITY (EQ: 16, 17)

Overall, users find the content of the EASO tools to be of a high standard. Specifically, about 70% or more of the respondents to the survey expressed each of the tools to be of good or very good quality. The most highly regarded tools (i.e. those with the highest proportion of respondents indicating that they rated the quality of products as “high” or “very high”) were the: “EASO Practical Guide on age assessment: Second edition”; “EASO Tool for the Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN)”; “EASO Practical Guide: Personal Interview” and the “EASO Practical Guide on Exclusion”. The case studies also support the findings that the quality of the tools is good overall. For example, they were found to be complete, comprehensive, consistent, not contain erroneous information and to be well presented (e.g. with useful visualisation such as flowcharts, checklists, and graphics). There was also a broad consensus among international and EU level interviewees that the quality of the content was good and that this was at least in part linked to the participatory nature of the production process that involved discussion between different stakeholders and the contribution of different experts in the field.

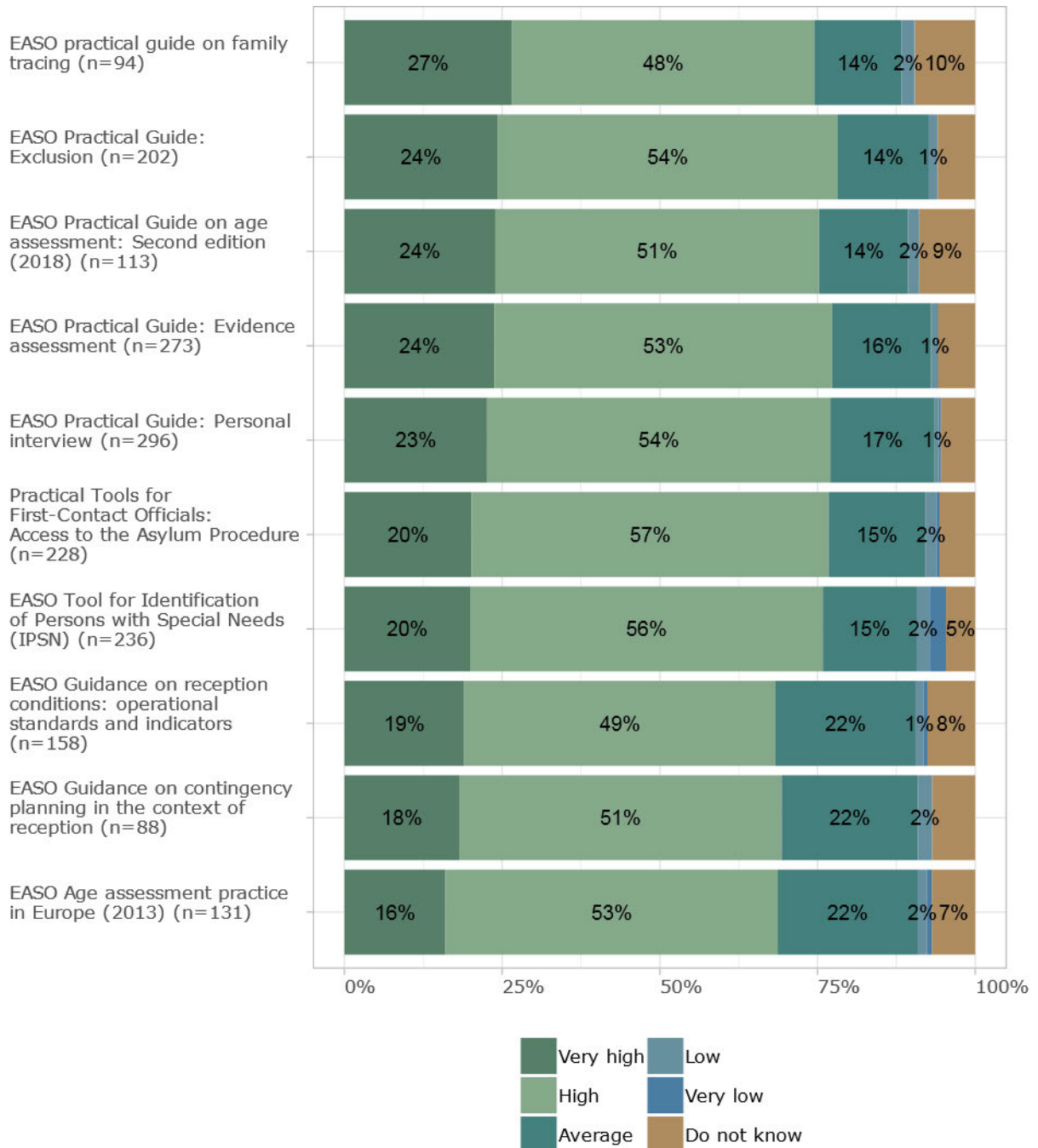
Nevertheless, although the content was held to have a high standard, some case studies pointed to them being overly lengthy or theoretical for practical use (France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden), with the consequence that they were less usable in the field. The survey supports this finding as particularly border guards expressed that some of the tools were of lower quality (as opposed to, for example, asylum case officers or reception officers). Other case studies, notably Italy, Romania, and Bulgaria did not provide this feedback and found the tools to be overall easy to use and understand.

The case studies and EU level and international interviews also pointed to three other factors that diminished the quality of the content of EASO’s tools.

- Firstly, the participants of some case studies found the content to be too generic. For example, an NGO in the Greek case study said that the tools are so general that someone without any prior knowledge of a given topic could start reading the EASO tools. This was echoed in the Swedish case study where it was said that the tools would be useful as an introduction to a topic, but in a country like Sweden, where case workers are trained and expected to have knowledge of their field, the usefulness of such generic tools is low. Similarly, in Germany national guidelines are preferred as they are more able to provide country-specific and in-depth information compared to EASO tools.
- Secondly, in Greece, Italy, and Latvia, it was found that the tools are too infrequently updated. For example, in the Italian case study, it was pointed out that one of the EASO tools does not account for an important recent legislative change. In Slovakia a similar point was made wherein uncertainty was expressed around if and when the tools would be updated the potential implications this may have on the quality of content of the tools.
- Thirdly, in the Swedish and Greek case studies, it was mentioned that the purpose (educational or operational tool) and origin (quality matrix procedure) of the tools are not well understood by the reader as there is no introductory section that provides this information.
- Lastly, a number of international and EU level interviewees mentioned that the tools do not suggest a clear course of action. While there was acknowledgement that this was linked to the fact that EASO does now have the capacity to mandate a particular approach within its remit, the guidance is nonetheless subsequently more open to interpretation by different users. This seemed to have been echoed in the Latvian case study, where it was pointed out that the tools do not outline the practical steps that follow, for example after a person

with special needs have been identified using the IPSN tool. Thus, some stakeholders seem to wish for a more holistic coverage of the asylum procedure.

Figure 16: (Q29) How would you rate the quality of the content of the following product(s)?



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

Several suggestions were made as to how the quality of the content could be improved in the case studies. The main recommendations that were brought up were as follows:

- **Updates:** Update content more frequently to reflect, for example, important legislative changes. (Italy, Greece, Latvia, Slovakia)

- **Summary:** Provide a summary version of the tools (e.g. a pocket book) or an executive summary of the tools. The current "Access to Asylum" tool with its pocket book, poster, and Q&A procedure was mentioned as a good example (Bulgaria, Latvia).
- **Introduction:** introduce users to the tools' purpose and how they were created, and by whom. This could be done via a more detailed introductory section (Greece, Sweden). The co-creation process could also be introduced in the format of a video (Romania).
- **Style:** Make the text and analysis of the tools less theoretical and more practical, including practice examples of particularly complex cases (France, Germany, Greece, Slovakia)
- **Language:** Include an explanation of the most important terminology in the tool and provide a translation of important terms for tools not translated to the native language (Latvia).
- **Caveats:** When the reader is required to make a choice between practices, the reader should be made aware when there are multiple best practices. It would help the reader to have a matrix that lists the pros and cons related to each best practice to facilitate the choice.

4.3.2 EXTENT OBJECTIVES ARE MET (EQ: 18)

Taking as a starting point the purpose of the tools as defined by EASO "... to provide practical support to those on the ground... [and to] translate the legal obligations, standards and good practices into commonly agreed guidance in various user-friendly formats, including checklists, pocket books, posters, web-based interactive tools etc." it is possible to make an assessment of how far the EASO tools are effective in meeting their objectives.¹⁸ This section sums up key findings with regards to the practicality of the tools but it should be noted that these points are explored in more depth in other parts of the report.

In terms of the **practical support** provided by the tools, there is a somewhat mixed outcome. Whereas the tools have been utilised in a practical sense to inform the development of national level tools and legislation, as well as reference points for key definitions and explanations, there was also considerable feedback in cases studies relating to the *lack* of practicality of the tools, particularly for frontline workers (or those working on the ground). Issues with the **user-friendliness of the tools** in relation to the length of the tools was flagged as an issue in some cases, with dense text and hard to navigate documents cited as drawbacks when assessing their overall practical applicability. A key point raised in case studies and as outlined above was the need to provide more context specific and less generalised guidance as a way to make the tools more effective when it comes to supporting the work of frontline staff.

Whilst it is positive that the tools have been used to inform the formulation of national-level guides and even legislation, this is also indicative of their reach to policy level stakeholders rather than ground level staff. Nonetheless checklists were regarded particularly positively during interviews and case studies. Praise was also given for the inclusion of decision-trees and other forms of visual representation of information. As such the EASO tools are – at least in some if not all cases – meeting their objective in terms of user-friendliness. As highlighted above however there is still work to be done to reduce the length of others and to increase the specificity and applicability of the guidance included for them to fully realise their objective.

¹⁸ <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Practical%20Tools%20brochure%20-%20A5%20-%20March%202017.pdf>

4.3.3 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (EQ: 19, 20, 21)

The strengths and weaknesses of the tool development process is presented below and are based on findings emerging from interviews with international and EU level stakeholders, as well as discussions held at a stakeholder workshop held in Malta in October 2018. These discussions rendered a range of views on the development process which are summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 4: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Tool Development Process

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Legitimacy of the tools. The involvement of multiple experts from Member States in designing and developing the tools helps to ultimately raise the quality of the tools and give them legitimacy once finalised. The expertise of EASO staff involved is another complementary factor here.</p>	<p>Securing appropriate experts. It can be hard to identify the right experts to involve in the development process and once identified, getting them involved. Once secured, experts sometimes have different levels of experience which can result in chapters that vary in quality. On top of this experts are not remunerated on top of daily duties which can lead to varying levels of commitment.</p>
<p>Creation of a common standard. The development process helps to streamline, standardise and thus increase convergence along a common approach to asylum. EASO's role as a facilitator ensures that a common standard is identified that is coherent with other tools and activities.</p>	<p>Need for generalised content. The products are not adapted to specific situations in Member States and instead present a generalised picture with no clear guidelines to follow. This is due to the need to produce tools that recognise different national interests during the development process but ultimately impedes the practical implementation of the tools.</p>
<p>Network approach and increased Member State cooperation. The development process crucially involves bringing together experts which increases connectivity between Member States. This process facilitates the exchange of good practices as well as constraints experienced in different countries. This opportunity to exchange has the potential to increase cooperation between countries and lead to agreement on a set of procedures.</p>	<p>Communication on and presentation of tools. EASO should be an ambassador of its products but at present there is a lack of internal communication on the existence and potential use of the tools. A lengthy publication process also slows down dissemination. Finally, a lack of in-house expertise on graphic design has led to a weakness in being able to effectively present the content of the tools visually.</p>
<p>The value of translation. Translating tools into national languages helps to increase their overall accessibility.</p>	<p>Office location in Malta. The situation of the EASO office in Malta is a potential barrier to being able to gather experts in one location as it is harder to access and may act as a disincentive for people to participate in the development process.</p>
<p>Piloting helps Member States to assess their own tools. The process of piloting tools in Member States has led countries to identify gaps in their own tools.</p>	<p>Geographical representation. There is a lack of a balanced geographical representation of experts during the tool development process.</p>

Source: Ramboll based on the stakeholder workshop held in October 2018 and interviews with EU and international level stakeholders.

4.3.4 COHERENCE (EQ: 22, 23)

The EASO products are coherent among each other but sometimes overlap with national tools. Few case studies discussed the coherence between EASO tools, but of those that did (Bulgaria, Italy), the voiced opinion was that the EASO tools complement each other. For example, in the Italian case study, the tools were said to be coherent as well as logically connected. However, the tools were found to overlap with tools provided at a national level in some Member States. On the one hand, in Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands, the tools, standards, or routines provided at a national level covered the same topic as the EASO tools but were seen to be more adapted to national context and more stringent, and in Germany the EASO tools were described as competing with national guidelines. In France the EASO tools were not actively disseminated due to a preference for staff to use internally delineated procedures (although tools have been used to develop internal SOPs and legislation as outlined in section 4.2.1). In contrast, even though the EASO tools were seen to overlap with national tools in Bulgaria in terms of topical coverage, it was not seen as an issue, as the EASO tool would provide a means to look at an issue from a different angle. Similarly, the EASO tools were said to complement national tools in Greece as the EASO tools would provide a perspective on an issue in context of EU law, whereas national tools would consider national laws. In Latvia, there are no nationally developed tools, so the EASO products are seen as purely complementary.

There may be some overlap between EASO tools and other tools. Specifically, in Italy and Romania, participants mentioned that the EASO tools overlap with the UNCHR tools (e.g. the UNCHR manual) and with FRONTEX tools (e.g. FRONTEX Manual on Fundamental Rights). It was suggested that the development of EASO tools could be better coordinated with external organisations such as UNCHR in the future to reduce the risk of such overlap.

There were somewhat mixed views on the coherence between the EASO tools and other EASO activities. On the one hand, the case studies in Latvia and Romania emphasised that the EASO tools were consistent with the EASO training activities (EASO Training Curriculum). On the other hand, it was suggested in the Swedish case study that the EASO trainings could better integrate the EASO tools to spread awareness and develop an understanding for what cases the tools are useful for. This discrepancy in coherence between the tools and the trainings may correlate with the overall level of use and awareness of the tools in a country and also reflect the possibility that national trainers in ETC courses are not encouraged by EASO to make this link.

4.4 Format: Ease of Use

The EASO tools are used most often in their online format, however, it is necessary for some target users to have offline versions of the tools, as they may not always have access to the internet.

Although the tools are overall usable, some find them difficult to navigate as the tools often lack forms of indexation (e.g. a main menu or list of keywords).

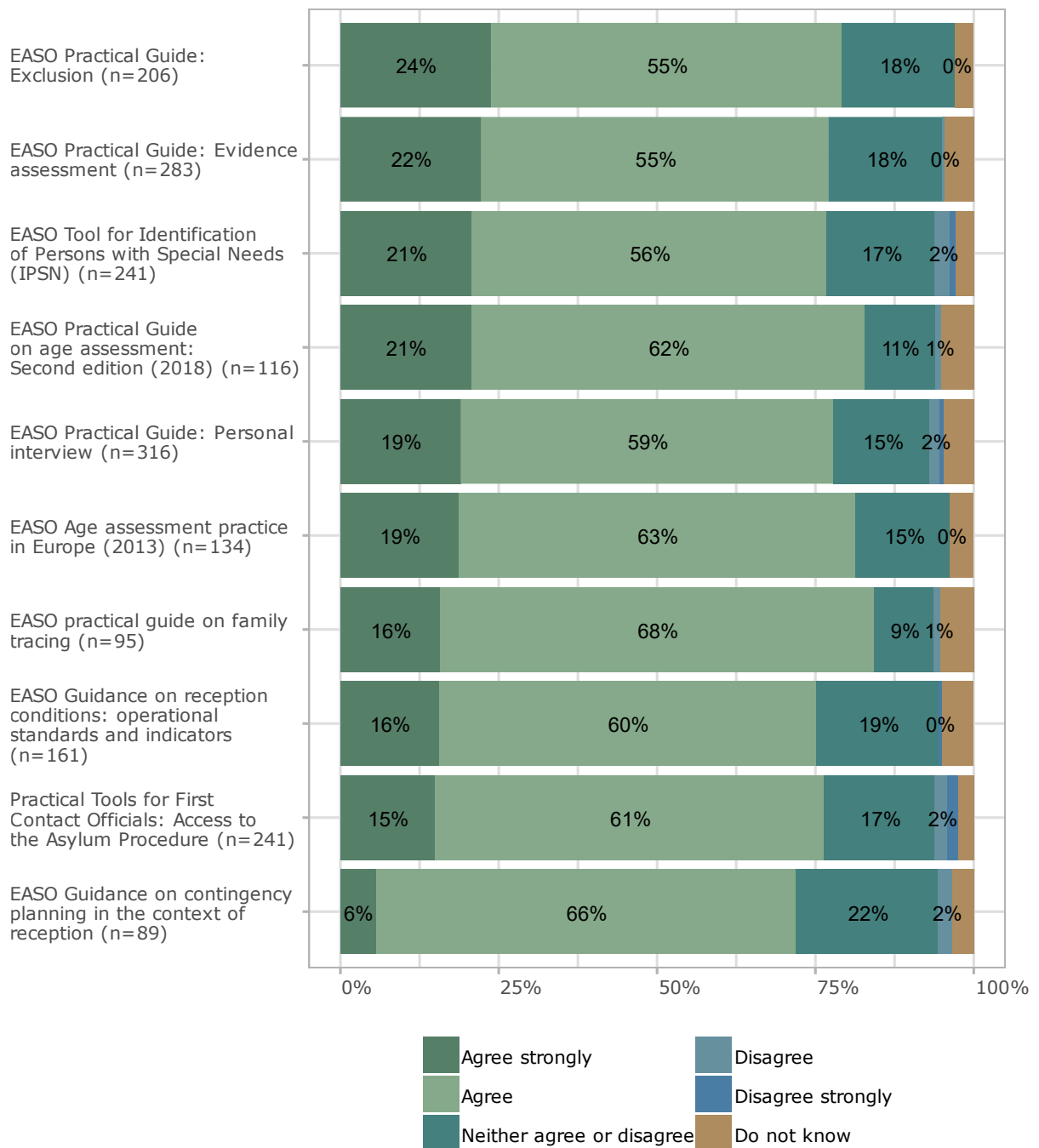
A key suggestion to improvement in format was the adoption of a more flexible online format. This would ensure easier navigation and searchability, as well as easier to update by the tool providers. It was also suggested to make available a synthesised, "pocket version" of the tools, for quick reference in field work.

4.4.1 USE AND EXPERIENCE WITH CURRENT FORMATS (EQ: 24, 25)

There were overall somewhat mixed views about the user-friendliness and efficiency of the format of the EASO tools. Roughly 75% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they found the format user friendly across all tools. Several case studies also found that the tools were easy to use (Netherlands, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and Italy). These case studies commended the tools for having a clear structure (Netherlands, Slovakia),¹⁹ well-made videos (Netherlands, Romania), and effective graphics (Romania, Greece). Nevertheless, some case studies pointed to difficulty of use with at least some of the tools (Italy, Greece, Slovakia, Sweden). In France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden, case study respondents said that the text in some of the tools was too lengthy, which made them difficult to use in a practical situation rather than as a reference document. Suggestions were made to make it possible for the reader to more easily select content that is relevant to their own knowledge, and this way reduce the amount of text they need to read. Moreover, the tools were found to be insufficiently indexed (e.g. a keyword list or a main menu), which made it difficult to navigate the documents. In addition, some respondents indicated dissatisfaction with there not being a sophisticated search function with filters in the various tools.

¹⁹ In the case of Slovakia however this was specifically in relation to comments made on the Personal Interview tool.

Figure 17: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It is user-friendly in terms of format"

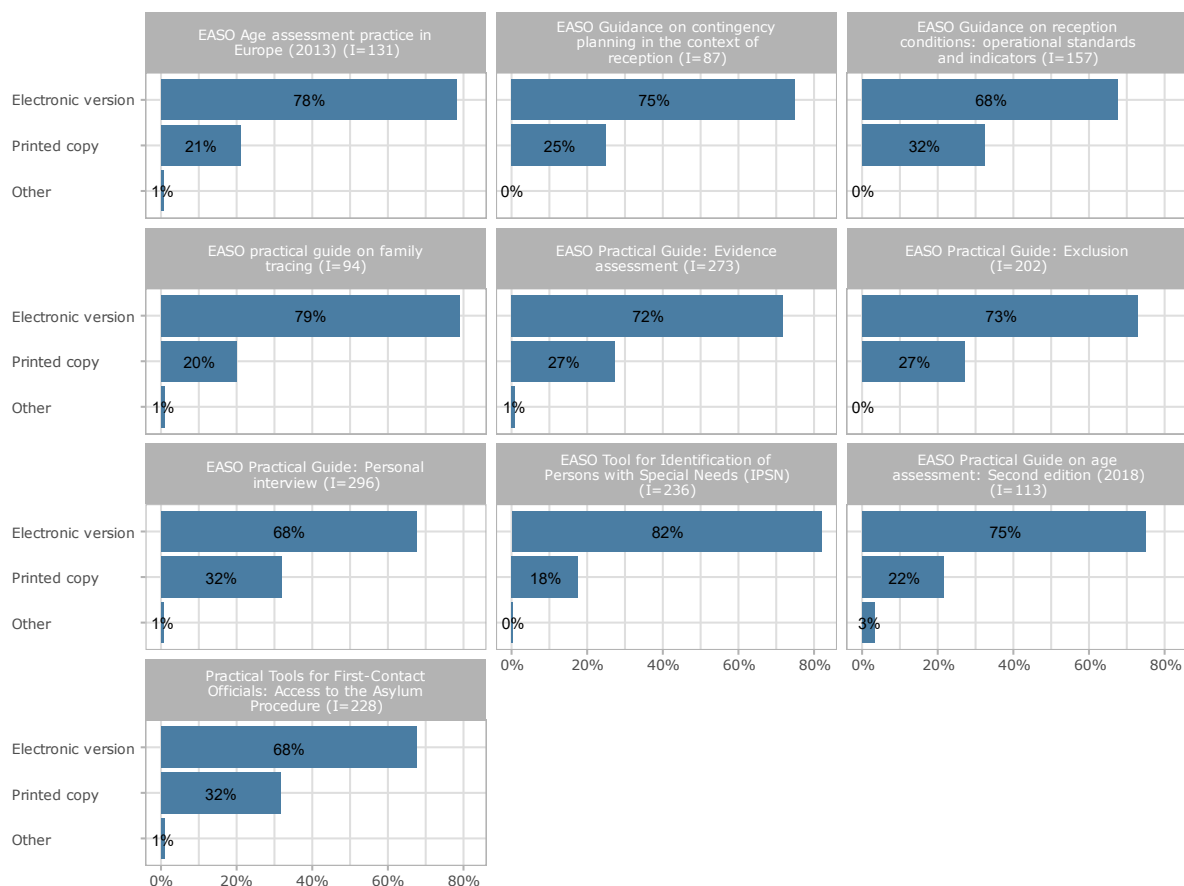


Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

Online versions of the tools are most often used, but offline versions may be necessary for those without internet connection. Specifically, about 70% of survey respondents indicated that they primarily use the online versions of EASO's tools. On the other hand, about 30% of the respondents indicated that they use the print version. This was also the consensus from the case studies. The online format is often used because it is easier to search for information in, has links (to, for example, case law) and are more portable as they do not take up additional space (Greece). However, for user groups with low access to the internet, especially border guards and police officials, it was found to be essential to use the print versions of the tools (Latvia, Italy). In Italy there was a request for a consistent number of copies to be printed and distributed, whereas in Latvia the PDF version was printed locally. There was also some demand for printed versions in Greece as it allows for personalisation (handwritten notes) and easier organisation of information as well as a reduction in working time in front of a screen.

Checklists were held to be particularly useful. Specifically, participants in the Latvian, German, Dutch, Slovakian, and Swedish case studies pointed out that the checklists were useful. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that it would be useful to have the checklists provided in an annex so that it would be easy to find and print them, rather than having to go into the main body of the document to retrieve the checklists.

Figure 18: (Q30.A) In what format do you use the following product(s)?



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

The Swedish and Romanian case studies found that some stakeholders believe that the separation between the different EASO tools does not correspond to the separation between procedures in their home countries. Specifically, in Romania, it was proposed that the “Personal Interview”, “Evidence Assessment”, and “Qualification for International Protection” tools could be merged to provide greater coherence for case officers working in that phase of the asylum procedure. In Sweden, participants highlighted that only one Swedish authority is responsible for the entire asylum procedure, which makes the separation between EASO tools feel artificial.

4.4.2 SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN FORMAT (EQ: 25, 26)

Several case studies suggested the adoption of a more flexible online format. Participants in the Dutch, Greek and Swedish case studies expressed a wish for an online format that allowed for easier navigation and to tailor the content displayed better to the knowledge of the person accessing it. A participant in the Swedish case study working in the department for digitisation in the Swedish migration authorities pointed out that there has been a national move away from PDF documents to HTML documents. The HTML format gives several benefits to both the content provider and the viewer. On the one hand, HTML enables the provider to: update content without having to roll out a new version of a PDF; monitor usage of content (what text is copied, what text is often read, what are usual search terms); and to integrate multimedia content in tools (e.g. videos). On the other hand, it enables those accessing content to: navigate content easier through more efficient indexation (e.g. tailoring of content via a decision tree; navigating through a main menu; filtering content; or searching via a search engine). In the Latvian case study there was also a wish for being able to access the tools via smartphone apps. This could also be facilitated by storing the tools in an HTML format.

In two case studies it was pointed out that it would be useful to have synthesised editions of the tools. In both Italy and Romania, case study participants pointed out that it would be useful with a “pocket version” with some relevant tools. The proposed idea was that content could be summarised and provided in a physically smaller hard-copy than what is currently available. This would help border guards and police when they are in the field. Also international and EU level interviewees highlighted the value in creating condensed versions of the tools and making sure they are not too long, and including checklists for example. Similarly, in Slovakia, there was a desire for a clearer presentation of information, with frontline workers noting that they appreciated more visual presentation (e.g. in the form of decision trees) rather than text heavy documents. Interviewees in France echoed this point, praising the use of visuals in the text and stating that more would facilitate the assimilation process. The main message from interviewees surrounded the digestibility of the information; whilst this appeared to have been achieved in the case of the “Practical Tools for First-Contact Officials: Access to the Asylum Procedure” (2016) which also takes the form of a poster and pocket book, other interviewees spoke generally about the need to make sure that the main points covered by the tools could be quickly interpreted, through animated online infographics or removable checklists as proposed respectively by two interviewees.

4.5 Impact

The impact of the EASO tools varies in nature between low-use and high-use countries. The direct impact of practical use was higher in high-use countries, where frontline workers use the tools as a knowledgebase and as guidance in their work. The tools have also had an indirect impact in both low-use and high-use countries by serving as reference documents for the development of national tools and legislation. In addition, the tool development process had an indirect impact via the development of national guidelines.

The EASO tools reduced duplication in Member States without pre-existing national tools. In countries where national tools serving the same purpose as the EASO tools exist, they do overlap to some extent.

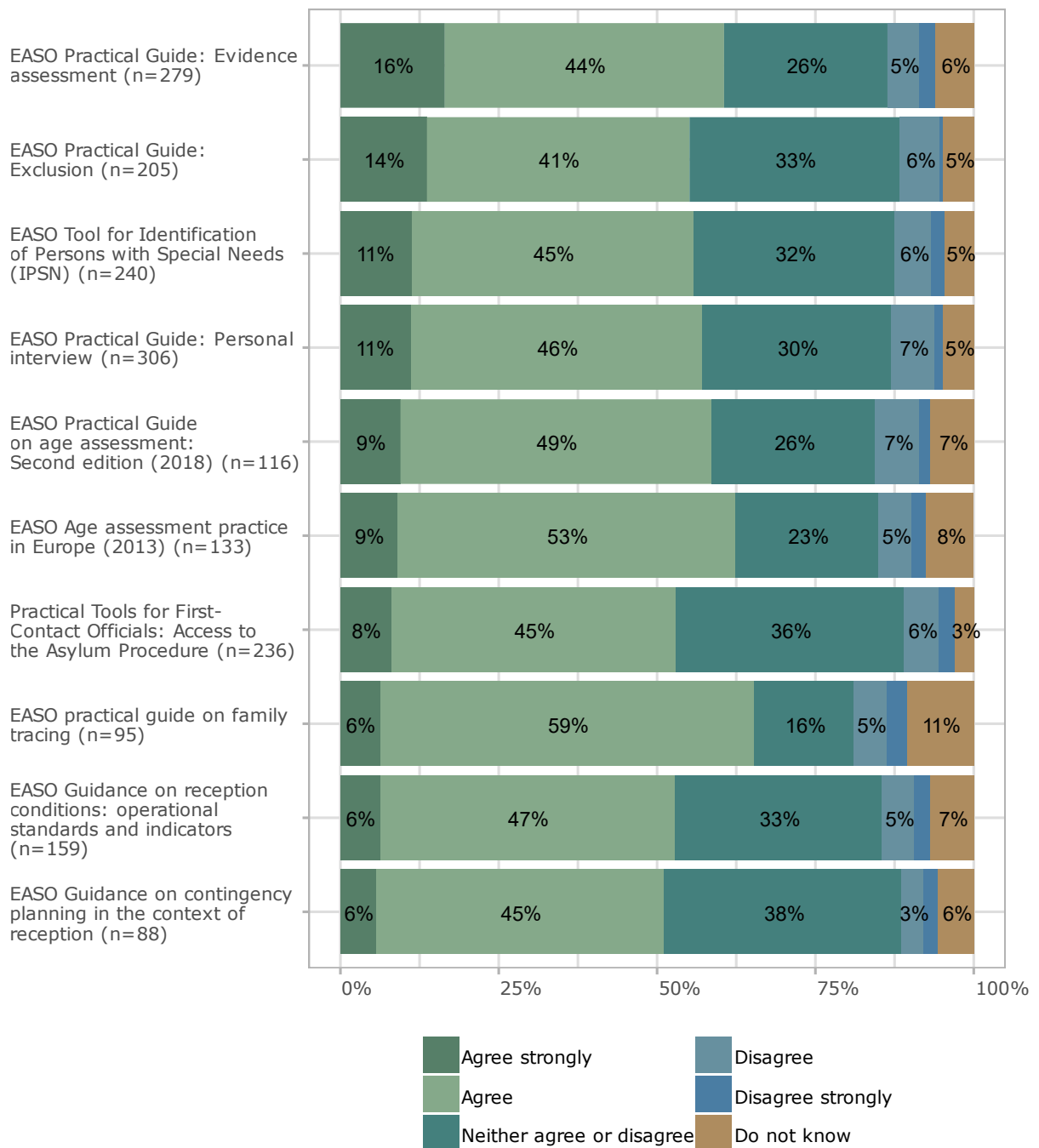
The EASO tools are seen as important for the harmonisation of working practices across CEAS. They were also seen as useful as inspiration for third countries that would like to develop their own standards and tools.

The tools were seen as an important demonstration of EASO's rationale as the concrete outcome of the EASO co-creation processes, which supports EASOs image.

4.5.1 IMPACT IN MEMBER STATES (EQ: 27, 29, 31, 32)

The direct impact of the tools on Member States is higher in the Member States that reported a higher use than in those reporting a lower use of the tools. In lower-use countries such as Netherlands, Sweden the direct impact was limited as awareness of the tools among frontline workers remain low and use is not actively encouraged. Also, in Greece, the direct impact of the tools was limited. In higher-use countries, however, many case studies reported an impact of the tools. For instance, in Bulgaria, there was a reported impact on the level of knowledge on identifying people with special needs and an improved system for working with children. In Latvia, the tools had also served as a knowledge base, which had supported practical work and amendment of legislation. In Romania, the EASO tools had improved judges' understanding of evidence assessment and so improved the quality of their decisions in court. In Italy, the behaviours and working practices of case workers had changed due to the EASO tool on the "Personal Interview", which had made their interview techniques and assessment of documents more objective. Similarly, thanks to the integration of guidance from the EASO tool on "Individual Assessments" in France, the role and tasks of interviewers is now better defined. This is consistent with the findings from the survey that the two most important effects of the EASO tools was that it informs workers with good practices and guidance in their work and that roughly 50-60% of the respondents indicated that EASO tools had contributed to a change in how respondents carry out their work.

Figure 19: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It contributes to a change in how I conduct my work"



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

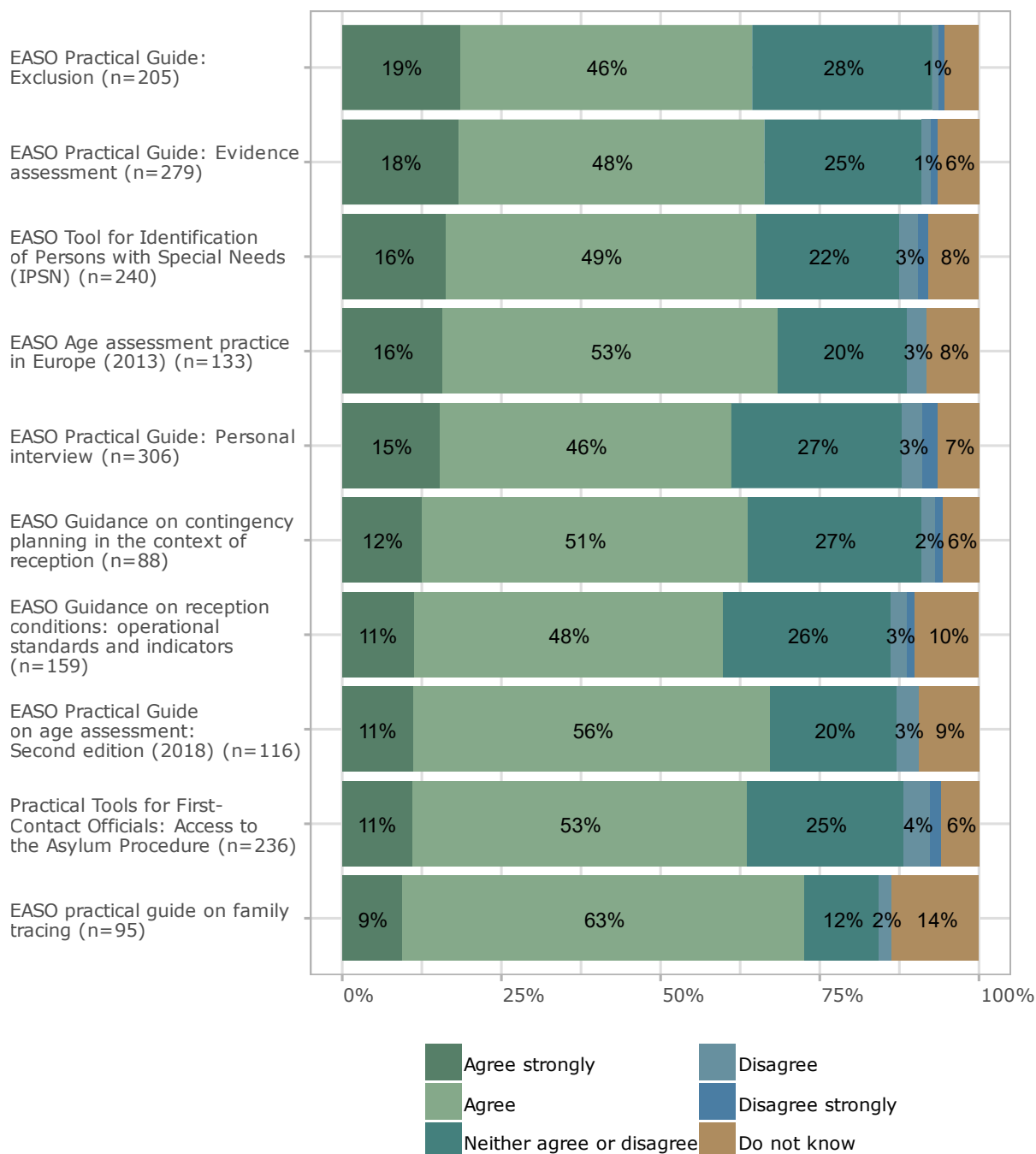
The EASO tools were also found to have a series of indirect impacts, which was pronounced in both low-use and high-use Member States. For instance, in the Netherlands, although the tools have had a limited impact on working practices, they were reported to have inspired national guidelines. Specifically, although the Dutch asylum system allows migrants to arrange their own accommodation, the corresponding financial allowance had not been specified. Once this was discovered in an actual use-case, the national guidelines were updated with the amount recommended in an EASO tool. More generally, participants in the Dutch case study expressed that EASO tools are considered when national tools are updated. The EASO tools also were held to have had an impact on the revision of national legislation in Latvia. Thus, although working practices were not necessarily directly impacted by EASO tools in Member States, national guidance and legislation often was to some degree.

The co-development process for the tools was found to, in itself, have had an indirect impact on Member States. In Sweden, the development process of the IPSN tool was said to have forced Swedish representatives to consider their own national tools in comparison with the consensus developed through EASO. The piloting of the IPSN tool had revealed some shortcomings in national guidance on the same topic, which was subsequently updated. International and EU level interviewees also highlighted the significance of the cooperative production process wherein experts and international organisations have worked collaboratively to produce the tools. This was seen as having had a positive impact in terms of providing an opportunity for different stakeholders to come together, express their views and explain the challenges they face, this leading to a sense of mutual understanding and as ultimately being supportive in the harmonisation process.

Whilst some doubt and uncertainty was expressed on how far the tools have had an impact by stakeholder interviewees at international and EU level, the survey and case studies show that the impact on working practices has been varied and that there has been some indirect impact on the formation of national tools and legislation. Nevertheless, it was mentioned in several case studies that since there is no formal feedback collected at Member State or EU level on the use of the EASO tools, their impact cannot be accurately ascertained.

In general, the EASO tools reduced duplication of work in Member States without pre-existing tools on the same subject, but duplicated work where national alternatives existed. Specifically, EASO tools filled a gap in Latvia, where EASO tools did not exist and resources were lacking for developing national tools. The EASO tools were therefore purely complementary in Latvia. However, in Greece, Netherlands and Sweden, it was mentioned that the national tools are too specific and the national systems too strong for EASO tools to replace national tools. This was also mentioned in the EU level and international interviews where it was expressed that national interests would ultimately determine how far tools are really used. Instead, the national tools were relied upon exclusively in these countries, which implies high duplication behind the work of the EASO tools. Nevertheless, in both Netherlands and Sweden, the EASO tools were seen to be an effective means of raising the minimum standards across the EU and to be of particular use to countries with a less developed asylum system. The survey supports the finding that the EASO tools do provide added value over national tools to some 3/5 of the respondents.

Figure 20: Combined graph of the sub-question asked for each tool: "It has an added value compared to what is being developed at national level or elsewhere"



Source: Ramboll based on the results of the Online Stakeholder Consultation on EASO Practical Tools 2018.

4.5.2 IMPACT RELATED TO CEAS (EQ: 30, 34)

It is widely held that the EASO tools are important for harmonisation of working practices in the CEAS. In all case studies this point was echoed. Specifically, by providing a common guidance on asylum, the EASO tools fosters a convergence in outcomes of asylum cases across the EU (Netherlands). This was seen as particularly important in light of the principle of free movement of people enacted by the Schengen treaty. In Italy, the tools were said to complement the EASO trainings in bringing about a common view on the asylum procedure in the EU. Nevertheless, it was emphasised in Bulgaria that it is important to retain the national aspect in the EASO tools (the EASO Guidance on Reception Conditions was proposed to have a good balance) and in Slovakia reference was made to the capacity for harmonisation to sometimes lower pre-existing national standards due to the need to find common ground between Member States e.g. in terms of realistic timescales for asylum procedures.²⁰

The initial point regarding the importance of harmonisation was however also supported by the findings from the stakeholder interviewees at international and EU level, where there was broad agreement that the tools had a wider value in terms of promoting or at least disseminating knowledge of EU asylum policy in a clear and systematic way. The overarching point made by many interviewees was that the tools were significant in acting as a kind of one stop shop for information on relevant EU legislation.

Some EU and international level interviewees mentioned that the EASO tools were potentially useful in providing a point of comparison for standard setting as well as inspiration for third countries looking to design and implement their own set of similar measures. A number of interviewees also perceived the tools as helpful both for accession countries looking to adapt their legal frameworks to meet European requirements and for third countries as a point of comparison and even inspiration to change or develop their own systems.

4.5.3 IMPACT ON EASO IMAGE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES (EQ: 28, 33)

Little evidence was found on the impact of the EASO tools on EASO's image and other activities. Nevertheless, in the Dutch case study it was highlighted that seeing concrete tools being produced as the result of much effort and time spent on the EASO processes is an important demonstration of EASO's rationale. However, factual mistakes and potential political bias in the development of the EASO tools had a negative impact on EASO's image.

²⁰ In Slovakia the total time for processing asylum claims has reportedly increased from around 3 months to 6 months following the latter being given as an upper limit in EU legislation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Figure 20 below sets out the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats linked to EASO's tool development process, which is described in section 4.3.3.

Figure 21: SWOTs linked to EASO's tool development process

Strengths	Weaknesses
Legitimacy of the tools. The involvement of multiple experts from Member States in designing and developing the tools helps to ultimately raise the quality of the tools and give them legitimacy once finalised. The expertise of EASO staff involved is another complementary factor here.	Securing appropriate experts. It can be hard to identify the right experts to involve in the development process and once identified, getting them involved. Once secured, experts sometimes have different levels of experience which can result in chapters that vary in quality. On top of this experts are not remunerated on top of daily duties which can lead to varying levels of commitment.
Creation of a common standard. The development process helps to streamline, standardise and thus increase convergence along a common approach to asylum. EASO's role as a facilitator ensures that a common standard is identified that is coherent with other tools and activities.	Need for generalised content. The products are not adapted to specific situations in Member States and instead present a generalised picture with no clear guidelines to follow. This is due to the need to produce tools that recognise different national interests during the development process but ultimately impedes the practical implementation of the tools.
Network approach and increased Member State cooperation. The development process crucially involves bringing together experts which increases connectivity between Member States. This process facilitates the exchange of good practices as well as constraints experienced in different countries. This opportunity to exchange has the potential to increase cooperation between countries and lead to agreement on a set of procedures.	Communication on and presentation of tools. EASO should be an ambassador of its products but at present there is a lack of internal communication on the existence and potential use of the tools. A lengthy publication process also slows down dissemination. Finally, a lack of in-house expertise on graphic design has led to a weakness in being able to effectively present the content of the tools visually.
The value of translation. Translating tools into national languages helps to increase their overall accessibility.	Office location in Malta. The situation of the EASO office in Malta is a potential barrier to being able to gather experts in one location as it is harder to access and may act as a disincentive for people to participate in the development process.
Piloting helps Member States to assess their own tools. The process of piloting tools in Member States has led countries to identify gaps in their own tools.	Geographical representation. There is a lack of a balanced geographical representation of experts during the tool development process.
Opportunities	Threats
Prepare for revised mandate. An extended mandate for EASO would create opportunities in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using tools as monitoring mechanisms/standards - Additional resources/staff for the Agency - A stronger mandate to implement CEAS 	Participation fatigue. Member States may become less energised to participate in the development of the tools over time.
Monitoring of use of tools in Member State. Monitoring the use of tools at national level could involve EASO participation in national projects and the promotion of tool sharing.	Lack of transparency surrounding the tool development process. According to case studies, some case workers are not aware that the tool development process includes NGOs and experts from different Member States, and instead believe that EASO themselves are developing the tools.

<p>Develop new tools to meet changing needs. There is scope for the creation of new tools to meet the developing needs of Member States.</p>	<p>Perceived race to the bottom. The idea that the tools represent minimum standards in terms of asylum processes is linked to the image of EASO. The high visibility of bad cases could also increase the negative reputation of EASO.</p>
<p>Adoption of a more operational role. EASO could adopt a more operational role to allow for the application of standards and increased cooperation with Member States. It could be worthwhile to have a basis of compulsory standards ready. There is perhaps scope to make the standards included in the tools clearer and more instructional.</p>	<p>Political sensitivity. Given that asylum continues to be a politically sensitive issue, there is a risk that Member States will come to contest EASO intervention in this area. Related to this is the likelihood that national level interests will ultimately determine the degree to which the actions outlined in the tools are taken on board.</p>
<p>New ICT solutions. New ICT solutions could be created to prepare, compare and analyse.</p>	<p>Divergent situations. Increasingly divergent situations in Member States could make it harder to balance different viewpoints.</p>
<p>Greater public interest in migration. The public is now more engaged with issues relating to migration, which creates scope for the creation of more content-based communication.</p>	
<p>Accession Countries. Working more closely to support accession countries (although they may lack the capacity to immediately implement all measures required by the CEAS).</p>	
<p>EASO could take a more prominent role: EASO could be more visible, and take stronger position on issues being discussed in the field of migration.</p>	

5.2 Conclusions

This section sets out the conclusions of this evaluation of EASO's tools, as derived from the findings presented above.

Overall, many stakeholders are aware of the tools, which are being used to varying degrees (primarily as reference guides, to identify good practices, and to support training sessions) and are therefore relevant in contributing to the CEAS. This evaluation however, suggests that there is more that could be done by EASO, be it in relation to tools or to its activities more widely. The varying (rather than uniformly high) levels of awareness and use of EASO's tools, as further concluded on below, may point to a broader need to consider:

- Whether to focus the dissemination efforts on the Member States that most need such support including those with less developed processes or limited resources to dedicate to migration, reception and asylum.
- Whether to differentiate more between tools intended to be used as reference tools for policy makers and tools intended to support case/field officers in their daily work.

Awareness

The level of awareness of the EASO tools varies across countries, stakeholder types and the tools concerned. Awareness of EASO tools was raised via internal communication (colleagues, superior, internal training), the EASO website, but also EASO training sessions. Factors which play a key role in the varying levels of awareness include the degree to which:

- Alternative tools exist at national level and consequently whether there is a will in-country for EASO tools to be disseminated
- The tools have been (centrally) disseminated in country, within given relevant authorities and to stakeholders
- Given target groups have received training in EASO's tools, be it from EASO or at national level

Relevance and use

EASO tools have an important role to play vis-à-vis the CEAS as they provide information on EU legislation and support harmonisation of practices. They were also seen as key in ensuring minimum requirements are met, notably in those countries with less developed processes and/or where fewer asylum requests are received, such as given Eastern European countries or among candidate countries (Turkey, the Balkans).

However, despite EASO having included an option to adapt the tools to national context by including editable pdf boxes to add country-specific examples or information, the tools are not tailored to different country contexts, including to existing national directives and guidelines. Moreover, rather than being used by case workers/reception officers in their daily work with asylum seekers, the tools are mostly used as reference documents and for guidance/inspiration for good practices. The tools were overall judged to be too lengthy, detailed and theoretical to be used in a practical situation where an asylum seeker sits on the other side of the table.

While a fair number of survey respondents would use the tools if available in English, case studies suggested that having the tools in national language increases their accessibility and also allows for a greater uptake. This was notably said to be the case where translations were of sufficiently high quality which was said not to be the case in all instances – at times the wrong or unclear terminology was used.

Quality of content

The quality of the content of EASO tools was overwhelmingly judged to be high. They were however seen as lengthy which reduced their overall practical value.

The tools are a product of a process that puts Member State experts at the centre with input from other key stakeholders including the European Commission, IOs and NGOs. This increases the tools' legitimacy and Member State buy-in as they are not an EASO product, though EASO staff play a key role in coordinating the process and for given tools (e.g. those related to children) also get involved in the drafting. The input of experts from different Member States during the tool development process was linked to ensuring that the tools were of high quality and was credited with fostering an exchange of ideas and increased cooperation between Member States. Concerns were raised however around the challenge of securing appropriate experts with comparable levels of experience and who represented a broad enough geographical spread in order to ensure the quality of the content of the tools.

The content was also considered to be coherent with that of national tools which often go further than EASO tools or are more adapted to work directly with asylum seekers.

Format

The mixed views expressed on the format of EASO tools with regards to whether the tools were difficult or easy to use and whether online or hard versions should be further developed, points to a need for EASO to reconsider the format of its tools to encourage wider use, including in more practical situations. That being said, checklists were highly valued.

Impact

Overall, the impact of EASO tools has been relatively mixed. Examples were provided of instances where the tools helped shape national tools or legislation; acted as a means to cross-check Member State practices to ensure consistent with EU legislation; and played a key role in the training of case workers. However, the tools have limited impact on practice, as referred to above.

The tools were seen as a first step towards harmonisation within the CEAS, even though EASO does not have a mandate to directly impose standards (although if the mandate is extended as outlined as a potential opportunity in figure 20 above, harmonisation within the CEAS could be enhanced). The tool development process was credited with increasing connectivity between different countries and helping to facilitate an exchange of good practices and increase mutual understanding of difficulties encountered in different national contexts. Overall the creation of a network amongst those participating in the tool development process was linked to increased cooperation between countries, which is in line with the aim of the CEAS. The EASO tools were also linked to potentially acting as a source of inspiration for third countries looking to develop their own asylum systems.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overarching recommendations

Based on the overall conclusion set out above, it is recommended that EASO first consider:

- Whether to focus the dissemination efforts on the Member States that most need such support including those with less developed processes or limited resources to dedicate to migration, reception and asylum.
- Whether to differentiate more between tools intended to be used as reference tools for policy makers and tools intended to support case/field officers in their daily work.

Where a decision is taken to continue to focus efforts on tool development more generally or in relation to given Member States or specific uses, it is recommended that a **targeted, user-centric approach** be taken to the development and dissemination of tools in order to maximise their relevance, use and ultimately impact:

- For each of the *existing tools*, a dissemination plan should be developed, setting out the main target group(s), messages and channels to be employed to increase awareness and use. The messages and means should be tailored to the different target groups, whether these encompass one or more for a given tool.
- For any *new tools* developed, thought should be put from the outset into who the tool is aimed at and what format best fits the target audience(s) to ensure its relevance. As in the case of existing tools, a dissemination plan should be developed.

6.2 Specific recommendations

Specific recommendations relating to increasing the awareness, relevance and use, and improving the format of the tools are set out below.

To **increase the awareness of EASO tools**, it is recommended that:

- **The network of NCPs is strengthened:** This study found that there are varying levels of engagement among NCPs and that means could be sought to increase their buy-in to the process and thereby be more active promoters of EASO tools. A possible option could be to increase the number of NCPs per country. EASO could focus its efforts in this respect on countries that have shown less buy-in.
- **Training is used as a key vector to promote awareness:** EASO and national trainings are an effective means to promote EASO tools and further efforts should be made in this vein. A "train the trainer" approach could be considered in order to maximise the effect of multipliers and reduce the cost implications for EASO.
- **EASO carry out field visits to promote tools at national level:** EASO should go out to regions in countries and explain how the tools work, why they are useful, and answer any questions relating to them in order to ensure a better uptake. Whilst national authorities would be targeted, EASO could also consider reaching out to volunteer groups, advocacy partners and non-governmental organisations in order to broaden awareness of the tools (as suggested in one case study). While this would be a good means to promote EASO tools, it would need to be agreed at Member State level and could prove resource intensive. One possible means of limiting the expense related to such visits would be to combine them with other planned visits.
- **Develop a promotional newsletter and videos:** While promotional videos have been developed for two of the tools included in the scope of this study, this could be considered as a promotional means for other tools, as deemed relevant. Care would need to be taken

to develop videos for tools for which this makes sense, i.e. in terms of the target audience. A promotional newsletter could be disseminated via email alerts.

To **increase the relevance and use of EASO's tools**, it is recommended that:

- **Tools are translated in cooperation with national authorities** to facilitate uptake and improve the quality and ensure nation-specific terminology is used: While EASO seeks input from national authorities as part of the quality assurance process integrated in the tool development, it often proves difficult to get the feedback required. Strengthening the NCP network, notably in countries showing less engagement will likely help in increasing buy-in to this task (see recommendation above).
- **Facilitate the adaptation of tools to the national context:** EASO could consider adapting its tools to the national context (e.g. the text of the tools could change depending on what country you indicate you are from). This could be a difficult recommendation for EASO to achieve in practice due to its limited resources and mandate, but it is a recommendation that could go hand-in-hand with focussing most on the countries where their assistance is most needed, as suggested above. Such tailored tools would need to be developed in conjunction with national authorities to ensure their relevance to the national context.

To **improve the format of EASO tools**:

- **Facilitate the user experience:** A more succinct layering approach to the information presented could be used. Top level indexes and brief summaries of relevant information could be included to allow for the information to be easily found and quickly understood, followed by more detailed information for those requiring it. An example raised in a case study suggested the creation of 'light' editions (i.e. condensed pocket versions) of tools to accompany the full versions. In addition, EASO could consider presenting information in the form of animated online infographics or include more removable checklists as part of the tools where not already included.
- **Consider new, more practical formats:** Condensed, pocket-book versions of given tools could be developed for direct use with asylum seekers. To ensure that formats are best matched to final use, EASO could consider more at the start of the development process, what kind of format would be best adapted to both the subject and intended target group.
- **Consider other online formats:** Moving from PDF to HTML format, for example, allows for better indexing (e.g. decision tree and top-level index/key points with the possibility to read more), changes to be made more easily to the tools without having to redistribute them (as in the case of a PDF); and exporting and printing if required.

To **improve the quality of EASO tools**:

- **Include more good practice examples** from Member States, including detail on challenges encountered and how they were overcome.
- **Update the content of the tools more frequently** or make plans for updates clearer so that people can be assured that information is up to date.
- **Ensure that experts involved in the tool development process represent a balanced geographical distribution**, perhaps via considering ways in which meetings could be held in more easily accessible locations than Malta.

To **facilitate the future evaluation of EASO tools**:

- **Seek more regular feedback Member States and those involved in development process:** EASO could seek to facilitate more cross-country and stakeholder knowledge sharing on the tools in order to assess their main strengths, weaknesses and gather

suggestions for improvement. This could be done, for example, six months to a year after a launch of a tool.

- **Expand on the piloting stage of the tool development process by carrying out follow-ups:** The piloting stage was seen as a good means to ensure that Member States take an in-depth look at EASO tools and compare them with their own. A follow-up could be undertaken after 6 months or a year to see whether any revisions or adaptations to national tools were made further to the pilot.

In paying due consideration to the overarching recommendations set out above which will help to define the future direction of EASO and its tools, and implementing the specific recommendations above, it is expected that the impact of EASO and its tools will be increased, thereby further contributing to the CEAS.

APPENDIX 1

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

No	Evaluation questions	Survey target groups	of	Interviews stakeholders	Interviews EASO	Desk research	Case studies
Awareness							
1	To what extent are managers and other specific actors (National Contact Points in relevant EASO Networks, quality experts, trainers, policy-makers, etc.) aware of the existence of the EASO products?	X		X	X		X
2	To what extent is the respective target group aware of the availability of the EASO products?	X					X
3	Is it easy to find the relevant EASO products?	X		X			X
4	To what extent was the target group informed of the purpose and objectives of the products?	X		X	X		X
5	How effective were the channels used for informing the target group and for promoting the respective products?			X	X		X
6	How cost-efficient were specific promotional efforts (brochure and leaflet, videos, EASO Info Day presentations)?				X	X	
7	Are other EASO activities/initiatives used effectively in order to raise awareness about the products (e.g. EASO training, practical cooperation meetings)?	X		X	X	X	X
Use and relevance							
8	To what extent are the products relevant to EU+ States and in particular to the target group?	X					X
9	To what extent is the target group encouraged to use the EASO products, and how?				X		X
10	To what extent are the products used by EU+ States and how (directly in daily work, indirectly by incorporating in national guidance, indirectly for quality monitoring, etc.)?	X					X
11	To what extent and how are the products used in other EASO activities?			X	X		X
12	To what extent and how are the products used by other stakeholders, in particular the European Commission or other institutions and agencies of the EU and UNHCR?			X			
13	If adaptations are necessary to use in the national system, what is the cost-benefit of using the EASO products for EU+ States?						X
14	In what language are the different products used?	X					
15	To what extent does having the translations in national languages bring value (cost-benefit analysis)?	X					X

No	Evaluation questions	Survey target groups	of	Interviews stakeholders	Interviews EASO	Desk research	Case studies
Quality of content							
16	How do specific stakeholders (e.g. management, National Contact Points in relevant EASO Networks, quality experts, trainers, European Commission, UNHCR) assess the quality of the content? Could it be improved? What else is expected, would be useful?	X		X			X
17	How does the respective target group assess the quality of the content? Could it be improved? What else is expected, would be useful?	X					X
18	How effective are the products in meeting their objectives?	X		X	X		X
19	To what extent is the methodology followed in the development of the products conducive to ensuring high quality of content?			X	X	X	
20	To what extent is the methodology followed in the development of the products conducive to ensuring an efficient use of resources? What could be improved without decreasing the quality of the content?			X	X	X	
21	What is the cost-benefit of the involvement of EU+ States' experts in the development of products?			X	X	X	
22	To what extent are the products coherent among each other?			X	X	X	X
23	To what extent are the products coherent with other EASO products (e.g. EASO training material)?				X	X	X
Format: Ease of use							
24	To what extent is the format of the products user-friendly and efficient to use? Could it be improved?	X		X			X
25	In what format are the different products used (online, on desktop, printed version, etc.)?	X		X			X
26	What is the cost-benefit of the different formats (online tool, offline applications, interactive pdf files, printed toolkits, etc.)?				X	X	X
Impact							
27	To what extent have the products had an impact at national level? Have they contributed to change of behaviours and practices at work?	X					X
28	To what extent have the products had an impact on other EASO activities and products?				X		
29	To what extent have the products succeeded in promoting good practices?	X		X	X		X
30	To what extent have the products increased harmonisation in the implementation of the CEAS?			X	X		X
31	To what extent do the products reduce duplication of work (at national, regional level, etc.)?	X		X			X
32	What is the European added value of the products compared to what could be achieved by EU+ States at national and/or regional levels?	X		X			X

No	Evaluation questions	Survey target groups	of	Interviews stakeholders	Interviews EASO	Desk research	Case studies
33	To what extent do the products have an impact on the way EASO is perceived by EU+ States?			X			X
34	To what extent have the products contributed to the external dimension of the CEAS, in particular through EASO's cooperation with third countries?			X	X		