



# External evaluation of the EUAA-Italy operational plan 2022-2024

## Ex post evaluation report

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## Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
<b>AST</b>	Asylum support team
<b>CEAS</b>	Common European Asylum System
<b>CoC</b>	Court of Cassation
<b>COI</b>	Country of origin information
<b>DCLI</b>	Central Directorate for immigration and asylum services
<b>DPS</b>	Department for Public Security
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUAA</b>	European Union Agency for Asylum
<b>GPO</b>	General Prosecutor's Office
<b>IO</b>	Immigration offices
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IP</b>	International protection
<b>IPSN</b>	Identification of persons with special needs
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>NAC</b>	National Asylum Commission
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>OP</b>	Operational plan
<b>SAR</b>	Search and rescue
<b>SGA</b>	Sistema Gestione Accoglienza (Reception Management System)
<b>SSM</b>	Scuola Superiore della Magistratura (School for the Judiciary)
<b>SUA</b>	Sistema Unico Asilo (Single Asylum System)
<b>TC</b>	Territorial Commission
<b>THB</b>	Trafficking in human beings
<b>TPD</b>	Temporary Protection Directive
<b>UAM</b>	Unaccompanied minors
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UTG</b>	Ufficio Territoriale del Governo (Prefecture)
<b>VR</b>	Voluntary relocation
<b>VSM</b>	Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism

## Executive summary

Between 2022 and 2024, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) provided operational support in Italy, specifically in the area of asylum, reception, Dublin Regulation, voluntary relocation, and temporary protection. The EUAA-Italy OP 2022 – 2024 aimed to:

- Support the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications;
- Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure;
- Provide support to the management of the judicial backlog;
- Provide support to quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system;
- Support the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and contribute to timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as search and rescue (SAR) disembarkation events and voluntary relocations (VR);
- Support the access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs;
- Support the effective implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

Overall, the EUAA's support to Italy proved **effective**, yielding several intended outcomes, though with differing degrees of achievement across the measures. Measures 1, 3, and 7 were largely implemented in line with what was planned, while measures 2, 4, 5 and 6 were partially implemented. Challenges common to all measures were human resourcing difficulties, including recruitment and turnover of asylum support team (AST) experts and temporary workers, and the increased workload and pressure on the Italian asylum and reception system, mostly due to surges in arrivals, including after the invasion of Ukraine.

The **efficiency of the intervention was good**. The overall budget allocated for implementing the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 was considered sufficient, and financial resources were efficiently spent to deliver the intended outputs and outcomes. Despite human resource issues, the intervention produced several benefits, and the quality of outputs remained high.

The different measures of the OP 2022-2024 demonstrated a **high level of coherence** and worked well together to address the identified challenges. Each measure's objectives were aligned with the priorities identified in the needs assessment, ensuring a strategic and comprehensive approach. The measures complemented each other and were organised around the main thematic areas of the Common European Asylum System and the different phases of the asylum process, avoiding overlaps and duplication of activities. Whilst collaboration with the International Organization for Migration exemplified commitment to coordinated approach, collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was challenging, prompting ongoing discussions to enhance cooperation. Additionally, the EUAA's facilitative role in coordinating stakeholders, through mechanisms like regular meetings and joint initiatives, strengthened cooperation among national authorities and contributed to the overall coherence of the intervention.

The EUAA's support through the OP 2022-2024 brought **significant EU added value**, ensuring continuity, building on previous efforts, and contributing to strengthening of Italy's asylum and reception systems. All stakeholders recognised the added value of the EUAA's support across different measures.

Overall, the support provided by the EUAA was **highly relevant** to the needs of stakeholders and responsive to the challenges faced by Italy's asylum and reception systems. The needs that the intervention sought to address constantly evolved during the evaluation period and the OP was adapted to reflect these changes. Moreover, there were several benefits associated with the **move from a one to a three-year OP** in Italy which further contributed to its relevance, including the opportunity for long-term planning. The three-year OP framework also provides a more extended and strategic outlook.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, this evaluation proposes recommendations for the future.

**Recommendation 1. Address and mitigate the challenges in recruitment and retention of personnel**

Human resource issues (e.g., turnover, shortage of personnel) proved to be one of the most important obstacles to meeting the operational targets set for the reporting period. The EUAA could address these issues by:

- Enhancing awareness of the operational context and local challenges before personnel are brought on board, especially at disembarkation locations (e.g., Lampedusa, Crotone). Examples could include organising localised briefings that address the specific logistical and environmental challenges faced in these areas, particularly regarding high migrant arrivals, limited local infrastructure, and coordination with Italian authorities;
- Improving support to personnel to encourage retainment of knowledge and professional development. Examples could include psychological support, regular debriefing sessions, and access to counselling services to address the emotional toll of working in high-stress environments.

**Recommendation 2. Further enhance the support to the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM)**

To strengthen the VSM in Italy, the EUAA could implement the following targeted measures tailored to the local context:

- Improving information provision and communication with applicants (e.g., manage expectations, help them understand their obligations). For example, consider enhancing the provision of clear, concise, and visually engaging informational material in multiple languages, as well as supporting the organisation of individual counselling sessions for applicants to clarify the timelines, procedures, and their responsibilities within the VSM, helping to reduce misinformation.

**Recommendation 3. Improve information provision, including by gathering insights from applicants**

To enhance the effectiveness of information provision, the EUAA could adopt a more structured and iterative approach to gathering and integrating feedback from applicants, ensuring continuous improvement and responsiveness to their needs. Examples could include:

- Incorporating feedback in ongoing activities;
- Building on the EUAA's experience in relation to some specific tools (e.g. under measure 4), where feedback was gathered from users to improve their use;
- Enhancing cooperation with international organisations (e.g. UNHCR) to enhance outreach efforts and provide additional layers of support.

**Recommendation 4. Enhance the effectiveness and reliability of the cultural mediation service**

To enhance the effectiveness and reliability of cultural mediation services, the EUAA Italy sector team could take targeted actions tailored to Italy's specific needs and operational context:



- Introducing cultural mediators to support the Uffici Territoriali del Governo (or Prefectures) (measure 4);
- Increasing coordination meetings to monitor critical situations.

## 1. Introduction: purpose and scope

The ex post evaluation of the operational plan (OP) agreed between the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Italy focused on the period January 2022 to December 2024 (hereinafter 'EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024'). This report presents the findings of the evaluation carried out between September 2023 and December 2024 by Ramboll Management Consulting Belgium.

The aim of the evaluation exercise was to provide a summative ex post evaluation of the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024. The temporal scope of the study covered the implementation of the OP, from January 2022 to September 2024.

In line with the [European Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines](#), the ex post evaluation aimed to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, and European Union (EU) added value of the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 in a proportionate manner (see Annex 3: Evaluation matrix). Aside from the general evaluation questions associated with these criteria, the following priority evaluation questions were addressed in particular:

**Priority question 1:** To what extent was the support provided by the EUAA to Italian authorities on the capacity to manage the judicial backlog regarding asylum cases effective? What needs to be put in place to prepare for the EUAA phasing out its support in this area?

**Priority question 2:** How effective was the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism (VSM)? What were the key achievements of this mechanism? Were there any challenges or limitations that hindered the achievement of the objectives?

**Priority question 3:** How effective was the EUAA's support in enhancing the capacity of the Italian asylum and reception system to provide information to international protection applicants and to identify and refer vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs?

To answer these questions, the evaluation combined evidence from secondary data with primary data collected through stakeholder interviews with the national authorities, international organisations and EUAA personnel (see Annex 1: Methodology and analytical models used).

## 2. Intended results of the action

### 2.1. Description of the action and its intended results

The OP covering the period 2022-2024 was signed by the EUAA and Italy in December 2021. It was first amended in May 2022 to include a measure addressing the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) in response to the invasion of Ukraine launched by Russian armed forces. Then it was amended in March 2024 following the European Commission's 10-point Action Plan for Lampedusa to help Italy deal with the spike of arrivals by sea, in order to further support the Territorial Commissions (TCs). The main national counterparts were the Department for Civil Liberties and

Migration<sup>1</sup> (DCLI), Department for Public Security (DPS), National Asylum Commission (NAC), *Uffici Territoriali del Governo* ((Prefectures) UTG), Immigration Offices (IOs), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the specialised sections of the Tribunals, the Supreme Court of Cassation (CoC), and General Prosecutor's Office (GPO) at the CoC. The OP consisted of seven measures and related expected outcomes, each of which included several intended outputs and activities.

**Measure 1: Access to asylum procedures: support to the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications**

The EUAA supported the DPS in ensuring timely, quality and harmonised lodging of international protection (IP) applications and efficient implementation of Dublin transfers. This included: improving the capacity of the DPS to ensure timely access to the IP procedure, improving the capacity of the DPS for timely implementation of Dublin transfers, and improving the centralised quality coordination and knowledge about the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) among DPS staff at central as well as at IO level.

**Measure 2: Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure**

Within this measure, the EUAA focused on the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedures, supporting both the DCLI Dublin Unit and the NAC. The EUAA's support for the DCLI Dublin Unit aimed to strengthen the Italian asylum system by enhancing the capacity of the DCLI Dublin Unit to handle Dublin outgoing cases and appeals with high quality and efficiency. The EUAA continued to assist the NAC to enhance the quality and standardisation of the first instance asylum determination procedure at central and local level. This was expected to improve, amongst others, the capacity of the NAC to manage revocation and cessation, the harmonisation of asylum procedures at first instance, including improved country of origin information (COI) processes and products, the capacity of the NAC Quality Unit to improve harmonisation of the asylum procedure at first instance at central and local level, and the capacity of selected TCs to assess the phenomena of trafficking in human beings (THB) and exploitation of IP applicants.

**Measure 3: Support for the management of the judicial backlog**

The EUAA supported specialised tribunal sections in managing their backlog of cases, which in turn helped to improve the timeframe in which decisions were taken, file preparation quality, and consistent decision outcomes while respecting judicial independence. The EUAA assisted the CoC and its GPO in managing their case files and addressing backlog issues. Lastly, the EUAA continued to collaborate with the *Scuola Superiore della Magistratura* (SSM) by developing activities for magistrates and honorary judges to increase their expertise in the field of IP. Moreover, the Agency supported the MoJ in the mapping of needs and organisation of tailored professional activities addressed to the resources employed in support of the judiciary.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes the Planning of immigration and asylum services (Office 1), the Dublin Unit, and the National Asylum Commission (NAC)



#### **Measure 4: Support for quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system**

In 2022-2024, the EUAA aimed at enhancing and broadening the assistance previously provided in the area, by adopting a comprehensive integrated approach across all reception levels, including first-line reception, second-line reception, and unaccompanied minors (UAMs). This approach involved implementing a threefold strategy which included: monitoring arrivals and appropriately assigning applicants to reception facilities, managing, and overseeing the reception system, and continuously monitoring the quality of reception conditions and services.

#### **Measure 5: Support for the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and to improve timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as search and rescue (SAR) disembarkation events and voluntary relocations (VR)**

The EUAA maintained its support for the DPS, DCLI and DCLI-Dublin Unit by supporting the management and monitoring of VR exercises while also fostering coordination among Italian stakeholders at both central and local levels. Additionally, the EUAA provided support to capacity-building activities for local stakeholders to improve their capacity to inform applicants about VR procedures.

#### **Measure 6: Support access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs**

The EUAA expanded its support to Italian authorities by ensuring that comprehensive information about asylum and reception procedures was provided and by identifying applicants with vulnerabilities and special needs in a timely manner throughout the process. This effort involved coordination with other stakeholders to ensure complementary actions.

#### **Measure 7: Support the effective implementation of the TPD**

This measure involved further EUAA support to enhance the capacity of the Italian asylum and reception system to implement the TPD. This involved information tools and guidelines, deployment of asylum support teams (AST), and conducting coaching, workshops, and thematic sessions on the TPD with Italian national authorities.

## **2.2. Points of comparison**

Italy has traditionally been one of Europe's main arrival hotspots. Following an unparalleled surge in migrant arrivals between 2014 and 2017, which peaked in 2014 with the arrival of 170 100 migrants, the numbers experienced a decline in 2019, with 11 471 migrants disembarking<sup>2</sup>. In 2020, the numbers of arrivals increased again, even during the COVID-19<sup>3</sup> pandemic. This surge in arrivals, combined with health and safety measures, strained the asylum and reception system. Several hotspots were

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto\\_statistico\\_giornaliero\\_31-12-2019.pdf](http://www.libertacivilimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/cruscotto_statistico_giornaliero_31-12-2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Coronavirus 2019.



converted into quarantine facilities<sup>4</sup>, and transfers to first-line shelters were affected by containment measures<sup>5</sup>. Delays in the IP procedure and decision processing times, especially at the appeal stage, made it difficult to meet CEAS requirements. Geopolitical crises, such as the evacuation of Afghans in August 2021 and the arrival of 173 645 Ukrainian refugees in 2022, placed further pressure on Italy's capacity<sup>6</sup>.

After the informal summit held in Valletta on September 2019, where the joint declaration of intent known as the 'Malta Declaration' was adopted by the Ministries of Interior of France, Germany, Italy and Malta, several VR exercises were conducted with the assistance of the EUAA. Despite an indicative timeframe of four weeks, from landing to transfer to the competent Member State, for the completion of the VR procedure, exercises carried out in 2020 and 2021 experienced prolonged processing times. This delay was attributed to insufficient pledges from Member States, a high rate of absconding, and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The support from the EUAA led to a reduction in the backlog of asylum applications in first instance over the previous year, bringing the numbers within manageable levels for the Italian authorities. Despite this, a substantial backlog persisted in cases awaiting judicial review. This large caseload of second instance pending cases posed challenges for the specialised sections of the tribunals to adhere to the four-month timeframe mandated by Italian Law 46/2017 for the conclusion of judicial proceedings. Furthermore, it created difficulties for the Italian system to comply with the requirements of the CEAS.

The EUAA has been supporting Italy since 2013, when the first special support plan between the EUAA and Italy was signed. There was a shift in focus after 2016 towards providing structural and organisational support to enhance harmonisation, monitoring, capacity building, and sustainability. In 2021, the Agency focused its efforts on standardising and improving the quality of registration and appeals procedures while also assisting with VRs and SAR disembarkations.

In 2021, consultations were carried out with Italian authorities to understand and assess the situation and identify the main needs to be addressed in 2022-2024. In this context, an OP covering the period 2022-2024 was signed by the EUAA and Italy in December 2021. The recommendations arising from the previous evaluation of the OP included the following:

1. Support the timely identification of vulnerable applicants and strengthen their referral and intake in reception centres;
2. Improve support to information provision, especially in emergency situations;
3. Increase support to SAR disembarkation events and VR, provided that such a need arises;
4. Strengthen the DCLI Dublin Unit monitoring capacity of litigation cases;
5. Simplify the results indicators database; and,
6. Consider a phase-out plan regarding the support to the judiciary.

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<sup>4</sup> Three of the four Italian hotspots were designated as quarantine facilities for newly arrived migrant. This led to the adoption in October 2021 of new guidelines on the application of the "Hotspot SOPs" to disembarkation events in Italy.

<sup>5</sup> Such as health surveillance, between 10 and 14-day quarantine in equipped ships or in specific designated areas suitable for isolation.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/profughi-dallucraina-107380-quelli-giunti-finora-italia>

### 3. Implementation of the action: current state of play

This section explains what happened during the implementation of the OP and presents the state of play. This ex post report focused on the data from internal monitoring conducted by the EUAA for the period from 2022 to September 2024. The monitoring data contained target values per output for each of the three years under observation. Targets were set on a quarterly and annual basis and were progressively monitored over the three years. The data reported in this section compared the values achieved with the targets, thus providing a **quantitative** overview of achievements during the evaluation period.

For 2024, the internal monitoring data presented in this report compare the actual outputs with the progressive targets (where applicable) at the end of the third quarter of 2024. This implies that at the time this report was written it was not possible to assess whether the annual targets would be met or even exceeded at the end of the year. Nevertheless, this had a minimal impact on the results of this evaluation, as in most cases the annual targets were already overachieved (or at least met) by the end of the third quarter of 2024. The reasons for under or over-achievement of the planned targets are set out in Section 4 on evaluation findings.

**Table 1. Overview of asylum applications, backlog and TP decisions in Italy during the period 2022 – 2024**

	Asylum applications <sup>7</sup>	Pending asylum applications <sup>8</sup>	TP decisions <sup>9</sup>
<b>2022</b>	77 200	80 005	150 110
<b>2023</b>	130 565	146 940	21 395
<b>2024 (up to quarter 3)</b>	116 070 <sup>10</sup>	194 890	15 830 <sup>11</sup>

Source: Eurostat data (date of extraction 20/12/2024)

#### Measure 1: Access to asylum procedures: support to the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications

The EUAA provided support for the lodging of applications, handling of Dublin transfer-related queries, and quality coordination and knowledge through training activities. In 2022, the EUAA's ASTs supported the lodging of 7 560 IP applications in border areas and locations under particular pressure, exceeding the target of 5 800. In 2023, 15 578 applications were lodged, surpassing the annual target of 10 500. By September 2024, the EUAA's ASTs lodged 21 680 IP applications, exceeding the progressive target of 14 000.

In the first quarter of 2022, support for lodging applications was initially provided through the deployment of five EUAA personnel in four IOs, while in the second quarter of 2022, support for lodging

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr\\_asy.migr\\_asyapp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr_asy.migr_asyapp)

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asyapctzm\\_custom\\_14768348/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyapctzm_custom_14768348/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asytpfa/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr\\_asy.migr\\_asytp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpfa/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr_asy.migr_asytp)

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asyappctzm\\_custom\\_14768501/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctzm_custom_14768501/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asytpfq/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr\\_asy.migr\\_asytp](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asytpfq/default/table?lang=en&category=migr.migr_asy.migr_asytp)

applications expanded to 12 IOs, and was maintained until 2023. Further support was provided by the EUAA via the temporary deployment of cultural mediators. In 2024, support for lodging applications increased to 14 due to the high number of arrivals observed in 2023 and the consequent increase in the number of applications.

The EUAA also focused on activities to enhance the DPS's capacity for timely implementation of Dublin transfers. The EUAA planned to have all queries related to Dublin transfers closed by the DPS Helpdesk (Dublin transfers), for which the target of 100% was fully achieved in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

The EUAA continued to support the DPS's efforts to enhance harmonisation and the quality of registrations by identifying and addressing needs for capacity building activities/thematic workshops, as well as facilitating coordination between actors. In terms of the development and dissemination of tools for the harmonised lodging of applications for IP, in 2023, the dissemination of the quality tools package to all IOs continued via the helpdesk and during ad hoc support missions to selected IOs.

In total, 38 training sessions took place in 2022-2023, and 19 in 2024, covering topics such as registration of applicants for international protection, THB, and identification of potential Dublin cases. These sessions reached 320 learners' participations in 2022-23 and 326 by September 2024, with a satisfaction rate of 93 % on average.

The target of 80% of IOs was exceeded in 2022 (84 %), nearly achieved in 2023 (91 %) and overachieved in 2024 (97 %) (against a target of 95 % for 2023 and 2024). A total of 352 police officers from 88 IOs (out of a target of 105) or from DPS participated in national training sessions in 2022. The target of police officers reached was partially achieved in 2023 with 60 % (against a target of 95 %). Training materials on the CEAS for the trainers of the Police School were also developed in the course of 2022 and completed in the second quarter of 2023. By September 2024, a total of 103 IOs participated in national training sessions held during the year.

Over the OP period, the EUAA planned to have all queries coming from the IOs addressed and closed by the DPS helpdesk (procedure), surpassing the 95 % target and reaching a closure rate of 98 % in 2022, 100 % in 2023 and 98 % by September 2024.

## **Measure 2: Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure**

The EUAA continued its efforts to strengthen the Dublin Unit's capacity to manage and process requests sent to other Member States (outgoing cases) and transfers. In 2022, a total of 96 outgoing (take back and take charge) requests were processed with the EUAA's support against a target of 400. In 2023, 4 119 requests were processed (exceeding the target of 1 000). In 2024, 4 811 requests were processed (exceeding the progressive target of 3 300). The monitoring tool to track timeline and data on transfers, and to monitor transfers and litigation cases, was put on hold in the evaluation timeframe.

Moreover, the EUAA supported the NAC in increasing its capacity in cessation and revocation case management, with 1 824 cases assessed against a target of 1 200 in 2022, 1 364 cases in 2023 against a target of 1 600, and 1 044 cases in 2024 against a progressive target of 700.

In terms of support to the COI Unit, the feasibility study on an inter-ministerial COI Unit was developed in the second half of 2022, while its implementation was put on hold and not implemented neither in 2023 nor 2024.

All three planned country briefings were conducted in 2022, two in 2023 (out of three), and two (out of two) in 2024. In 2022, the EUAA produced six quality tools (out of ten planned) related to the harmonisation of the asylum procedure at first instance. In 2023, the target of developing 60 % of the methodological quality handbook was nearly achieved (with a 50 % achievement rate). The target of developing the handbook by a further 40 % was set to be achieved by December 2024 and therefore cannot be assessed at the time of writing (progressive target for the third quarter of 2024 was 0 %). In line with the plan, two monitoring visits were carried out with the EUAA in 2022, seven (out of eight) in 2023, and four (out of eight) in 2024.

In terms of improving the capacity of the NAC to manage financial and procurement workflows, no deliverable was planned for updating the monitoring and financial tool in 2022. In 2023, the target of updating 70 % of the monitoring and financial tool was achieved. In 2024, the target for updating the financial tool was fully achieved (30 %).

In relation to improving the capacity of selected TCs in identifying, monitoring, and reporting on the phenomena of THB, the EUAA achieved the target of presenting the final report on yearly data, meeting the planned completion rate of 40 % in 2022 and 30 % in 2023. From 2024 onwards, this activity was discontinued by the EUAA in agreement with the national authority. In 2024, an additional 11 legal experts were deployed to support the TCs in some locations, out of the 20 foreseen as part of the 2024 OP amendment. The EUAA's legal experts deployed in the TCs supported 4 560 files against a progressive target of 5 700.

Finally, 17 training sessions took place in 2022-2023, and 36 by September 2024, covering topics such as victims of gender-based violence, introduction to vulnerability, children in asylum process, and professional wellbeing. These sessions reached 41 learner participations in 2022-23 and 305 in 2024 (by September), with a satisfaction rate of 88 % on average.

### **Measure 3: Support for the management of the judicial backlog**

The EUAA provided support to the specialised sections of the tribunals to manage the judicial backlog in asylum cases. In 2022, the EUAA asylum second instance support experts deployed in Tribunals prepared 10 109 files, exceeding the target of 7 000. In 2023, 8 899 files were prepared against a target of 9 000, and in 2024, 5 082 files against a progressive target of 3 900.

In 2022, these experts conducted 4 950 COI researches (against a target of 4 000), 2 901 COI researches were conducted in 2023 (against a target of 3 000), and 1 717 researches in 2024 (up to September) against a progressive target of 1 600. In addition, the EUAA offered cultural mediation and interpretation services during hearings. The EUAA also supported the drafting of anti-trafficking protocols for the identification and referral of potential victims and victims of THB, in several specialised sections.

Moreover, the EUAA provided support to the CoC, including the GPO, to manage the judicial backlog. In 2022, the EUAA asylum second instance support experts deployed at the CoC GPO prepared 1 345 files against a target of 3 000. In 2023, 557 files were screened (against a target of 480) while in 2024 there were 232 files (against a progressive target of 360). In 2022, the experts conducted 181 jurisprudential and doctrinal researches, closely approaching the target of 200. In addition, they conducted six case law reviews (out of six) in 2023 and six in 2024 (against a progressive target of three).

By September 2024, four professional development activities (against a progressive target of four) were organised in cooperation with the SSM and MoJ. 17 training sessions took place in 2022-2023, and two by September 2024, covering topics such as introduction to the legal framework and fundamental rights, introduction to vulnerability, COI, and evidence assessment. These sessions reached 406 learner participations in 2022-23 and 51 by September 2024, with an average satisfaction rate of 92 %.

#### **Measure 4: Support for quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system**

In relation to the output of monitoring and analysis of arrivals and allocation of applicants to reception, the target for strengthening data management, analysis, and monitoring capacity was largely met as planned over the evaluation period.

The EUAA supported the data cleaning exercise to align data collected through the *Sistema Gestione Accoglienza* (SGA) with the same data collected at Prefecture level, in view of the transition to *Sistema Unico Asilo* (SUA). The alignment of data collected through the SGA with Prefecture-level data started in 2022 and was ongoing at the time of writing. Two comprehensive reports/tools were successfully drafted in 2022 and 2023 (as planned). However, the target of developing three tools by September 2024 was not achieved.

In addition, two tools to track Ukrainians' presence inside and outside the reception system were created in the first half of 2022. In the first quarter of 2023, the EUAA (i.e. measure 4 and 6 teams) also developed a workflow document to outline all procedures for disembarkations and communication flows at local/central levels. Moreover, the EUAA developed a vademecum to harmonise SAR non-governmental organisation (NGO) disembarkation procedures. It was noted that the DCLI wanted to produce this vademecum in light of the new port of safety rules for disembarkation of migrants rescued by NGO vessels in the centre/north of Italy. Therefore, it aimed to support those Prefectures with guidance in terms of coordination, responsibilities, communication, and logistics during the event.

Finally, in 2023, through the Data Analysis Unit at DCLI level, the EUAA supported the production, design and maintenance of operational tools aimed at monitoring arrivals and reception. The target for strengthening the capacity to process and track vulnerable applicants was achieved in the last quarter of 2023 through the development and integration of a monitoring tool. The tool was aimed at enhancing the allocation of vulnerable applicants in the reception system. In 2024, three reports out of three (progressive target) were produced outlining the state of play of the tracking database with a specific focus on vulnerability data.



The target for strengthening operational processing through workshops for local authorities was partially achieved: three workshops (out of three) were organised and delivered for local authorities in 2022, two (out of two) in 2023, while the target (two workshops) was not met in 2024. In the first quarter of 2022, although not foreseen, a workshop was organised and led by DCLI officials in the context of the response by the UTGs to the Ukrainian emergency.

The support to the UTGs increased during the evaluation period. In the second quarter of 2022, 19 UTGs were supported by 24 reception and information system officers for the management of arrivals data. By the end of 2022, this increased to 23 UTGs. In 2023, this increased to 32 experts and 36 UTGs, which further increased to 52 experts and 37 UTGs in 2024. The second OP amendment's commitment to deploy an additional 20 resources (two to the DCLI central level and 18 to Prefectures) in 2024 was not fulfilled at the time of writing.

The EUAA also supported the DCLI in strengthening the capacity to allocate applicants with special needs. For example, from the end of 2022, the EUAA started a closer collaboration with the Prefecture of Agrigento, to prioritise the transfer or the move to temporary facilities of vulnerable applicants in second line reception facilities.

In 2022, 438 legal notes and analyses to enhance capacity to manage and control the reception system at central level were drafted with the EUAA's support, exceeding the target of 330. In 2023, 421 legal notes and analyses were produced, nearly achieving the target of 450. In 2024, 235 out of 180 (progressive target) legal notes and analysis were drafted. The workflow for humanitarian admissions was successfully developed and implemented, at the end of 2022. In 2023 and 2024, the EUAA supported all the humanitarian admissions to Italy (100 %).

The EUAA supported the drafting of 54 policy documents and notes in 2022 (instead of 60). This support continued in 2023 with 119 policy documents (out of 130) and in 2024 with 111 documents out of 98 (progressive target).

Support to DCLI in the management of Afghan evacuees continued during the evaluation period. The EUAA also supported humanitarian corridors from Libya in the second half of 2022.

The EUAA supported the national capacity of monitoring reception conditions in first-line facilities. Six workshops (out of ten) were conducted for Nuclei Ispettivi in 2022, 34 capacity development activities in 2023 (out of 45), and 30 in 2024 (against 29 as progressive target).<sup>12</sup> These were organised jointly with the EUAA team at DCLI and DCLI offices and included sessions for Prefecture officials on the use of the monitoring methodology and tools developed with the support of the EUAA (SMAcc platform, guidelines, and tools, developed in line with the EUAA's ARC tool and officially launched at the end of 2022). The EUAA's reception experts deployed at Prefecture level supported a total of 127 monitoring visits of UTGs to reception centres in 2022, surpassing the target of 100. This support continued in 2023 with 480 visits, and 615 out of 325 (progressive target at the end of the third quarter) in 2024, exceeding the annual target.

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<sup>12</sup> These activities were neither organised by the Training and Professional Development Centre nor was it involved.

The Agency supported the monitoring of reception conditions in second line reception projects. In 2022, the EUAA drafted one report on data consolidation and analysis from monitoring visits undertaken by the *Servizio Centrale*, the authority leading the second line system. A target of two reports was foreseen for 2023. One consolidated report was scheduled to be developed by the end of the year but was finalised in early 2024. In 2024, the target of one new report was planned to be achieved by December 2024 and therefore cannot be assessed at the time of writing (progressive target for the third quarter was 0).

As for the support to the capacity to ensure harmonised first reception and care for UAMs among relevant stakeholders, the impact evaluation on the vademecum achieved 20 % development (against a target of 40 %) in 2022 and 60 % in 2023. The target of 20 % development was planned to be achieved by December 2024 and could not be assessed at the time of writing.

A total of 21 training sessions took place in 2022 and 2023, and 19 by September 2024, covering topics such as reception of vulnerable persons, introduction to vulnerability, and THB. These sessions reached 149 learner participations in 2022-23 and 227 in 2024 (up to September), with an average satisfaction rate of 91 %.

**Measure 5: Support for the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and to improve timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as SAR disembarkation events and voluntary relocations**

The EUAA provided support for the coordination of the cooperation and solidarity mechanism among EU Member States and of post SAR disembarkation activities for the timely implementation of the VR process. By December 2022, the EUAA had facilitated 100 % of SAR disembarkation activities and VR events following the request of the Italian authorities. In 2022, the EUAA supported 97 % IP applications of eligible applicants in the VR hub, while in 2023 the EUAA lodged 86 % applications, both years against a target of 100 %. In 2023, the EUAA lodged 2 670 IP applications, almost reaching the target of 3 000. In 2024, the EUAA lodged 276 IP against a progressive target of 850 at the end of the third quarter. It also supported the development and implementation of a coordination mechanism between national authorities at the central and local level. More specifically, the EUAA facilitated ten (above the target of eight) operational and other coordination meetings in 2022, seven (out of ten) in 2023, and four (out of the progressive target of five) in 2024.

The EUAA also provided support for the concentration of VR activities in locations identified with national stakeholders and in coordination with DCLI as responsible authority in charge of the allocation and transfer of applicants.

The EUAA supported the matching exercise by preparing matching lists of applicants to be relocated according to available pledges: all matching lists proposed by the EUAA were endorsed by national authorities (or the European Commission before the adoption of the Solidarity mechanism) in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The EUAA also provided support for Member State delegations' interviews for VR, including preparatory information provision for concerned applicants, logistical support, and linguistic support.



The EUAA supported the national authorities with the fulfilment of their resettlement and/or humanitarian admission commitments. More specifically in 2023 and 2024, it supported 93 % of humanitarian admissions, resettlement, humanitarian corridors to Italy under the DPS's responsibility (target of 80 % in both years).

One training on resettlement was organised for Police Officers in the second quarter of 2022, achieving the target. The EUAA also supported the coordination and administrative activities related to the arrival and transfer phase of evacuees.

In 2022-2024, 22 training sessions took place, and four by September 2024. These sessions covered topics such as introduction to the legal framework and fundamental rights, introduction to vulnerability, and THB. They reached 112 learner participations in 2022-23 and 19 by September 2024, with an average satisfaction rate of 89 %.

**Measure 6: Support the access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs**

The EUAA provided support in the area of information provision on asylum and reception procedures and the timely identification of applicants with vulnerabilities and special needs. The target was to develop three information provision and vulnerability tools and materials in 2022. However, only two were developed during the reporting period. In 2023, the target was to achieve a percentage of 98 % in the development and/or translation of these materials, with an achievement of 81 %. In the third quarter of 2024, the progressive target was 28 %, which was achieved.

In relation to the deployment of vulnerability and information provision teams, the EUAA deployed experts in critical locations with the purpose of ensuring the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants. In 2022, the EUAA carried out a total of 529 visits in reception facilities or at disembarkation events (target was set at/reduced to 30 visits) to support the identification of vulnerabilities and special needs. In 2023, the EUAA experts carried out vulnerability assessments in 89 % of the events against a target of 90 %. By September 2024, 5 270 sessions on pre-identification of vulnerability indicators were carried out by the EUAA experts, against a target of 7 600.

In 2022, 93 % (against a target of 50 %) of detected events received support from the EUAA's ASTs through information provision sessions. In 2023, the EUAA's experts carried out information provision sessions on the CEAS in 100 % of the events, overachieving targets (90 %), while in 2024 the number of sessions on the CEAS was 11 404 against a target of 9 000.

No capacity building activities were foreseen in 2022, while five activities were conducted in 2023 (out of 5). In 2024, capacity building activities for reception centres and IOs on CEAS information provision were deprioritised following discussion with the stakeholders. In 2022-2023, 26 training sessions took place with a further 10 by September 2024. These covered topics such as introduction to the legal framework and fundamental rights, identification of Dublin cases, introduction to vulnerability and THB. They reached 120 learner participations in 2022-23 and 54 by September 2024, with an average satisfaction rate of 91 %.

## Measure 7: Support the effective implementation of the TPD

The EUAA developed three (out of three planned) information tools and guidelines<sup>13</sup> related to access to TPD in 2022. The EUAA reached all IOs (100 %) with its capacity building activities related to TP in both 2022 and 2023 (e.g., ad hoc webinar on TPD organised by the Agency's Training and Professional Development Centre and the DPS). Moreover, the EUAA supported by deploying ASTs to IOs, helpdesks and reception facilities (although under measure 6). It also facilitated coaching, workshops, thematic sessions on the TPD to Italian national authorities. As of February 2023, in agreement with the national authorities, the measure was put temporarily on hold.

Three training sessions took place in 2022-23, covering topics such as introduction to the legal framework and fundamental rights, and introduction to vulnerability. These sessions reached five learner participations, with an average satisfaction rate of 80 %.

## 4. Evaluation findings

This section presents the findings stemming from the analysis of the five evaluation criteria, including the results of the desk review and fieldwork.

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

The action was largely successful, demonstrated by its alignment with planned objectives, and its effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes across several measures. Efficient budget allocation and high-quality outputs indicated good efficiency.

Overall, the EUAA's operational support to Italy proved **effective**, yielding several intended outcomes, although with differing degrees of achievement across the measures. As set out in Section 3, measures 1, 3, and 7 were largely implemented in line with what was planned, while measures 2, 4, 5 and 6 were partially implemented. Common challenges to all measures were the difficulties related to available human resources, including recruitment and turnover of the EUAA's AST experts, and the increased workload and pressure on the Italian asylum and reception system, mostly due to the increase in arrivals, including after the invasion of Ukraine. The level of effectiveness of each measure (and respective outputs) is discussed below.

### Measure 1: Access to asylum procedures: support to the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications.

Overall, this measure demonstrated **notable achievements**, including the successful lodging of applications, effective handling of Dublin transfer-related queries, and enhanced quality coordination and knowledge through training activities. The Agency's support to the DPS significantly contributed to enhancing their capacity and the quality of their work, including by developing clear methodologies

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<sup>13</sup> One leaflet, one brochure, circulated in all IOs via circulars and published on the Ministry of Interior website, and one Vulnerability Annex for use in IOs.

and useful tools for IOs. **Challenges** in the implementation of the measure included delays in deployment, and deviations from the intended scope of cultural mediation services. There was limited logistical and administrative support by the IOs, which had a strong impact on the measure (e.g. lack of space and overcrowded rooms).

Moreover, stakeholders' requests to prioritise support to TP platform management impacted quality activities in 2023. There were challenges in relation to the absorption capacity on the side of national authorities (e.g., IOs) due to limited resource availability, which in turn increased the need for the EUAA's support. Despite this, the overall performance suggested a positive impact on timely access to asylum procedures in Italy, therefore **the effectiveness of this measure was rated good**.

The sub-sections below provide a detailed assessment of the support provided for the various components of measure 1.

#### Support to the DPS to ensure timely access to the IP procedure

The EUAA's support enhanced the capacity of the DPS and IOs to ensure timely lodging of IP applications, including in a remote setting, through the deployment of the EUAA's ASTs. The target for the number of applications lodged was exceeded, which indicates a robust performance in addressing the demand for IP. The overachievement also reflects the high increase of arrivals registered, to which the Agency effectively responded by expanding support to additional IOs.

Resource shortages in 2022 led to the redeployment of personnel from other measures, particularly after the Ukraine invasion, with the EUAA also deploying temporary cultural mediators after the contract between the DPS and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) ended. To address challenges, guidelines were created, and discussions held with relevant IOs. Limited working space and IT equipment were noted issues, with the EUAA shipping needed supplies and holding meetings in 2023. Structural problems, like inadequate privacy for applicant interviews, remained unresolved as of 2024.

#### Support for the improvement of the DPS's capacity to implement and finalise Dublin transfers

The activities related to DPS Helpdesk transfers (support to the Dublin Office) were on track, with all queries coming from IOs successfully addressed and closed, despite human resource limitations.

#### Support for centralised quality coordination and knowledge about the CEAS among DPS officials

The EUAA exceeded targets for DPS Helpdesk support, addressing queries related to information provision, accelerated procedures, and application lodging. Quality tools for harmonised lodging of IP applications were disseminated to IOs in 2023 and 2024 through the helpdesk and ad hoc support missions. The EUAA also aided the DPS in coaching and training needs, significantly enhancing CEAS knowledge through national training sessions.

## Measure 2: Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure

The EUAA supported the Dublin Unit's capacity to manage outgoing cases and transfers, while enhancing the NAC's capacity in cessation and revocation cases, COI activities, and the THB project. While there were notable achievements (see Section 3), persistent challenges impacted the overall effectiveness. Many activities foreseen under the measure as support to both the Italian Dublin Unit and the NAC were heavily affected by a resource shortage due to contractual<sup>14</sup> and recruitment issues, resignations, and unavailability of suitable profiles throughout the evaluation period<sup>15</sup>.

Changes in the NAC's management further impacted activities, particularly in quality areas in the second quarter of 2022. The consequences of the gap in deployment prevented the smooth planning and execution of the foreseen activities. The shortage of resources at both the DCLI Dublin Unit and NAC continued to pose a concern in terms of the sustainability of the EUAA's support and successful implementation of all activities through the evaluation period. Despite the challenges, the EUAA's consistent efforts contributed to the fulfilment of several planned objectives over the evaluation period. **The overall results of this measure were therefore fair, considering the setbacks.**

The sub-sections below provide a detailed assessment of the support provided to the various components of measure 2.

### Support to the DCLI Dublin Unit to manage and process outgoing Dublin requests

In 2022, the DCLI Dublin Unit partially met its target for processing outgoing requests due to contractual and recruitment challenges. However, in 2023 and 2024, targets were exceeded due to the high number of Dublin cases processed within a limited period to meet Dublin Regulation deadlines.

### Support to the NAC

The EUAA effectively managed **cessation and revocation cases**, exceeding the targets in 2022, and nearly achieving them in 2023. This was due to a reduced number of cases that could be decided without a personal interview but also due to technical issues on the national authorities' side in relation to the usage of a Ministerial platform like Vestanet. In 2024, targets were overachieved due to an increased number of cases examined by the EUAA's experts at the request of the NAC. National stakeholders highlighted the key contribution made by EUAA temporary workers from a quality point of view, however they also flagged the intermittence of this support due to contractual issues. In terms of the **support to the COI Unit**, while the feasibility study on an inter-ministerial COI Unit was developed in 2022, the follow up activities continued to be on hold in 2023 and 2024 due to shifting priorities and workload. The EUAA provided COI support through the organisation of seven COI country briefings between 2022 and 2024. Several **quality tools** were developed, in relation to the **harmonisation of the asylum procedure at first instance**, contributing to procedural consistency. There were some delays which were attributable to the workload of the NAC Quality Unit counterparts.

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<sup>14</sup> in relation to the maximum duration of service days.

<sup>15</sup> e.g., DU, COI Unit, Support to procurement.

In terms of support to the TCs, in 2024, a limited number of legal experts were deployed to support the TCs in some locations, below the target foreseen by the 2024 OP amendment. As a result, the EUAA's legal experts deployed in the TCs were able to support with a small number (and different types) of files, aimed at enhancing the capacity of the TCs to process first instance cases.

### **Measure 3: Support for the management of judicial backlog**

The measure's primary objective was notably to support the judicial authorities in the management of the backlog by providing support in terms of the quality and efficiency of judicial proceedings and by contributing to backlog reduction. The **most notable achievement was the reduction of pending cases** both in specialised sections and at CoC, with a gradual shift in focus from appeal case management to increased efficiency and quality of judicial proceedings in the specialised sections. Other key achievements included COI-related research, provision of training and professional development activities. It also included collaborative efforts, such as a memorandum of understanding with the SSM, and the ongoing implementation of a pilot project on the use of tools and workflows for the efficient scheduling of hearings, prioritisation of cases, and case tracking.

**Challenges** which had a negative impact on the measure related to overreliance on the EUAA's support for cultural mediation services, which pointed to challenges for the sustainability of the action post-EUAA support. Moreover, the number of Ufficio del Processo legal officers in the specialised sections decreased due to issues with recruitment and to a significant turnover. In addition, these officers were not fully independent by the first half of 2024 and required the EUAA experts' support, as described in more detail below.

In relation to [priority question 1](#), a sustainability strategy for 2023-24 was put in place in 2022 and included a gradual phase-out plan from this area. Although such a gradual phase-out strategy was not reflected in the first amendment of the OP, the strategy entailed support to a selected number of tribunals, support in relation to coaching and training of the MoJ personnel, and the handing over of the cultural mediation service. In line with this strategy, over the course of 2023 and 2024, the support provided by the EUAA gradually shifted its focus from appeal case management to increased efficiency and quality of judicial proceedings in the specialised sections.

This shift, which demonstrated the adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving situation, was justified by the latest developments, namely the general decrease in the backlog and the deployment of new personnel (i.e. Ufficio del Processo legal officers) by the MoJ. Coaching activities for the Ufficio del Processo legal officers, training and other professional development activities continued, with the aim of fostering sustainability. The EUAA's support to the CoC and its GPO, already downsized in 2022, was limited to the CoC, due to the decrease in backlog and following agreement with the stakeholder. Support to the GPO was interrupted in the second quarter of 2022 due to contractual developments. In 2023 and 2024, the EUAA continued the progressive handover of the management of cultural mediation services to the judicial authority.

The sub-sections below provide a detailed assessment of the support provided to the various components of measure 3.

### Support to case processing in the specialised sections of the tribunals

The EUAA's support included file preparation, COI research, legal assistance, as well as **cultural mediation and interpretation services during hearings**, significantly enhancing tribunal capacity and exceeding targets. However, **ongoing reliance on the EUAA for cultural mediation** coupled with the lack of steps taken by the national stakeholders to ensure this service's provision, posed **challenges in relation to its sustainability post-EUAA support**. A decision was taken and communicated to the tribunals about a gradual reduction of the cultural mediation service provision from 2023, as well as the planned termination of the supply of mediators by the end of 2024. As the scope of this evaluation did not cover the last quarter of 2024, it was not possible to report on the status of the EUAA's support to cultural mediation services at the end of 2024, and whether it indeed ended.

In addition, the EUAA carried out **support activities for the drafting of antitrafficking protocols** for the identification and referral of (potential) victims of THB, in several specialised sections. However, progress depended on the sections' willingness to engage, limiting consistent implementation, and impacting target achievement.

### Support to the CoC to process IP cases including the GPO

Support to the CoC and GPO in backlog management was successful, with many files processed. Challenges in achieving targets included resource reductions, telematic file transition issues, and decreased workload at the CoC and GPO (support to the GPO was suspended in June 2022). In 2024, the EUAA's experts at the CoC developed an Excel tool for prioritising vulnerable cases, which, although still evolving, had a positive impact on case and hearing management. The EUAA also provided jurisprudential research and case law reviews, fostering consistency in practices. In 2024, the collaboration project between the Office of the Massimario, CoC and EUAA provided bi-monthly and annual reviews of Supreme Court rulings on international protection, complementary protection, and the Dublin Regulation.

### Strengthening coordination and professional development of the specialised sections of the tribunals, the CoC and the GPO (magistrates, honorary judges, and resources employed in support of the judiciary)

In the realm of professional development, the EUAA provided training on European Asylum Curriculum modules as well as tailor-made training on training skills for EUAA experts. In 2022, the EUAA also organised one activity in cooperation with the MoJ, which reflected effective collaboration and tailored activities to enhance expertise in the field. A memorandum of understanding with the SSM was signed in May 2022 which demonstrated successful collaboration and recognition of the EUAA's role in enhancing judicial capabilities. In 2023, one conference and one workshop were organised in cooperation with the SSM, while in 2024 four activities were organised with both the SSM and MoJ, confirming the positive collaboration with the national stakeholders.

## **Measure 4: Support for quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system**

Building on the achievements of the previous OPs, measure 4 was **effective in further enhancing the quality and sustainability of the reception management and monitoring system** by adopting a comprehensive integrated approach across all reception levels, including first-line reception, second-line reception, and UAMs. The EUAA further extended its substantial support at local level, with a



notable increase in the number of UTGs supported, while continuing the development of monitoring and management tools to support the central and local level.

**Several challenges** had an impact on the implementation, namely high arrivals, delays in monitoring due to urgent legislative responses to the Ukraine crisis, and personnel shortages in finance, legal, and monitoring teams, worsened by a new contract mechanism in July 2022. Persistent issues, such as inadequate temporary worker agreements, led to instability and service disruptions according to interviewed national authorities. Finally, limited capacity on the *Sistema Accoglienza Integrazione* (Reception and Integration System), as well as the postponement of the SUA system launch (expected February 2025), hindered the tracking and allocation of vulnerable applicants. This prompted the EUAA to provide support through a dedicated reception expert and by streamlining workflows for better communication between disembarkation locations and Prefectures.

The measure involved implementing a threefold strategy which included the following strands:

#### Monitoring and analysis of arrivals and allocation of applicants into reception

This area of intervention included activities concerning data and information management and analysis which contributed to **enhancing cooperation and collaboration** between the **central and local level** in the **monitoring and management of all reception phases**.

**Targets were largely met**, including support for SGA management, several report and tool templates aimed at enhancing data management and monitoring capacity (e.g. tools on Ukrainians' presence in the reception system). Tools for disembarkation events and vulnerability tracking were also developed by the EUAA, though SUA delays affected some 2024 goals.

The EUAA also **strengthened capacity to process and track vulnerable applicants** in 2023 and 2024, despite earlier delays due to political changes in 2022. Workshops, tools like the vademecum on vulnerabilities, and national webinars enhanced workflows, while 2024 data analysis by the EUAA's experts helped consolidate vulnerability tracking and identify gaps in managing data at arrival and transfer points.

#### Management and control of the reception system

This area included support for legal, policy and financial monitoring activities, and contributed to ensure an effective and efficient management of the reception system, both at central and local level. Despite the achievement of targets, the EUAA faced some challenges in relation to the shortage of personnel (especially in the finance, legal and monitoring teams) due to contract related-issues and the transition to the remunerated expert mechanism, which impacted the EUAA's capacity to cover the request for support at the DCLI central level. Mitigation measures included assigning activities to other EUAA resources to ease the pressure on certain teams. The EUAA was very effective in supporting the drafting of a high number of **legal notes and analyses**, developing **workflows for humanitarian admissions** and supporting all humanitarian admissions during the evaluation period.

### Monitoring of reception conditions and services

In this area, the EUAA provided support for the setting up and implementation of a standardised monitoring system on reception conditions, by strengthening the monitoring framework of reception conditions at first and second line. According to EUAA personnel interviewed, this enhanced effective monitoring and follow up of gaps and issues, as well as sharing of best practices, both by central (DCLI and Central Service) and local authorities (UTGs and municipalities). Initially, activities to monitor reception conditions were deprioritised due to the Ukrainian crisis but resumed gradually from the latter half of 2022. In relation to the support for the national capacity of monitoring reception conditions in first-line facilities, the EUAA updated monitoring guidelines and provided coaching on methodology. Several workshops were conducted for *Nuclei Ispettivi* of selected UTGs in 2022, and various capacity building activities in 2023 and 2024, providing valuable insights into monitoring methodology and platform usage, and therefore reinforcing a 'monitoring culture' at local level.

The EUAA also contributed to ensure harmonised first reception and care for UAMs among relevant stakeholders, by supporting the development of a methodology for monitoring and assessing the impact of the vademecum on the harmonisation of UAMs' first reception and care. The revision process of the UAM vademecum was ongoing at the time of drafting.

### **Measure 5: Support for the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and to improve timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as SAR disembarkation events and voluntary relocations**

In terms of [priority question 2](#), the EUAA demonstrated effectiveness in supporting the DPS and DCLI in the management and monitoring of VR exercises. The EUAA also contributed to fostering internal coordination among national stakeholders at both central and local levels and in supporting the matching exercise<sup>16</sup>. However, despite the overall achievements (to differing degrees and with limitations across the various targets), **several challenges** had an impact on the measure and highlighted areas for improvement in the implementation of the VSM.

The Ukrainian emergency in the first half of 2022 impacted the VR process, leading to withdrawn pledges, limited reception capacity, and challenges in matching candidates to countries, particularly those bordering Ukraine. The establishment of a new solidarity mechanism coordinated by the Commission in June 2022 added complexity<sup>17</sup>, requiring coordination with different types of stakeholders. Issues like low flexibility of pledging Member States, applicant abscondence, and refusals to relocate impaired the matching exercise throughout the evaluation period.

Changes in SAR operations and legislative developments in late 2022 (i.e. Italian legislative decree LD 1/2023 to regulate NGO activities in SAR) disrupted disembarkation and transfers, making it harder to

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<sup>16</sup> The EUAA's support is foreseen in several stages of the VSM process, including the identification of relocation candidates, information provision and relocation interviews, matching eligible candidates with the most appropriate Member State, as well as sharing lists of proposed candidates with the Member States pledging to receive the applicants.

<sup>17</sup> The new solidarity mechanism specified that relocations will be carried out with the assistance of the EUAA in accordance with its mandate and upon request of the Member States concerned. However, clear updated SOPs and a revision of the current workflow were still pending right after the adoption of the mechanism.



channel applicants into VR hubs<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, there were delays in transfers causing VR hubs to be constantly full, impacting the planned organisation of transfers. Additionally, as of December 2022, Italy suspended Dublin incoming transfers due to exceptional pressure from record arrivals, causing some Member States to halt pledges and generating a negative impact on the VSM's implementation. In 2024, sporadic and irregular transfers of applicants due to the general shortage of available places in the reception system and reduced number of SAR events with disembarkation of eligible nationalities, continued to be an issue, resulting in fewer applicants being included in the VSM. Therefore, while both **2023 and 2024 saw continued efforts in relocation, challenges such as abscondence, matching difficulties, and coordination issues persisted.**

All in all, the VSM promotes solidarity among EU Member States but faced challenges, such as its voluntary nature, political disagreements, and applicant abscondence, which can limit its effectiveness and impact the EUAA's support. While the analysis of the VSM as such was outside this evaluation it highlighted the broader challenges and limitations that may impact the effectiveness of the EUAA's support efforts in Italy in this domain.

The measure involved the implementation of the following strands:

*Support to VR case management from disembarkation to the lodging of the application*

During the evaluation period, the **EUAA positively supported the IP applications of applicants eligible for VR in VR hubs**, increasing resources in response to rising arrivals and Member States' pledges. Despite challenges like the Ukrainian crisis, transfer delays, and abscondence, the EUAA reduced the backlog in some VR hubs (mostly due to delays in fingerprinting for IP in these locations), improved information provision through a new package and workflow, and achieved positive results (according to EUAA interviewees) in Bari and Crotone with successful transfers.

*Coordination mechanism between actors*

The EUAA supported the **development and implementation of a coordination mechanism between national authorities at the central and local level**, including the facilitation of operational and other coordination meetings. Targets were overachieved in 2022, achieved in 2023, and partially achieved in 2024.

Despite temporary suspensions in 2022 due to the Ukrainian emergency, feedback during interviews confirmed positive outcomes, including improved coordination with the Italian Dublin Unit and DPS. The EUAA also provided support to the concentration of VR activities in locations identified with national stakeholders and in coordination with DCLI as the responsible authority in charge of the allocation and transfer of applicants. This was done through the monitoring of activities at VR hubs, providing refreshers for ASTs deployed in the hubs, and identifying locations where applicants coming from disembarkation events had been transferred.

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<sup>18</sup> New "Distant Ports" practice: Since December 2022, Italy implemented a practice requiring NGO ships to disembark migrants at distant ports, causing tensions and criticism for potentially hindering SAR efforts. LD 1/2023 (Code of Conduct for NGOs involved in SAR) came into force in January 2023, exacerbating concerns about NGOs' work and potential impact on more deaths at sea.

### Support for the matching exercise

The EUAA supported the matching exercise by preparing matching lists of applicants to be relocated according to available pledges. All matching lists proposed by the EUAA were endorsed by the national authorities, though low flexibility among Member States and applicant abscondence impaired the smooth implementation of the matching exercises. Challenges, including reluctance of applicants to relocate to certain countries, persisted into 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the EUAA conducted regular information sessions, collaborating with Measure 6 experts to provide country-specific information to applicants.

### Implementation of the national resettlement and/or humanitarian admissions programmes.

The EUAA supported the national authorities with the fulfilment of their resettlement and humanitarian admissions commitments, coordinating arrivals and transfers for evacuees. The EUAA exceeded targets, effectively supporting humanitarian corridors, resettlements, and post-evacuation processes through resettlement experts and training sessions for EUAA and DPS staff.

### **Measure 6: Support the access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs**

In relation to [priority question 3](#), the EUAA effectively contributed to ensuring that **information provision on asylum and reception procedures and the timely identification of applicants with vulnerabilities and special needs** were implemented throughout the process of formalisation of the asylum claim. The EUAA's support was effective in improving the information provision and vulnerability identification processes within the Italian asylum and reception system. Activities in relation to capacity building were implemented in the last quarter of 2023, as the focus in 2022 and most of 2023 was on supporting the high number of disembarkation events. Coaching missions were considered very useful to inform police officers in the IOs about the need for information provision. Good progress was made in **developing tools and materials related to information provision and vulnerability assessment**: for example, a country-specific version of the 'Let's Speak Asylum' animated PowerPoint on IP was developed and translated into multiple languages, with the purpose of facilitating better communication with applicants. Nonetheless, by the third quarter of 2024, the achievements were below the annual targets, mostly due to the turnover of experts and shortage of personnel, especially during high influx.

In relation to the **deployment of vulnerability and information provision teams**, there was consistent deployment of experts in critical locations, ensuring timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants. The EUAA overachieved targets in relation to vulnerability assessments as well as the number of visits at disembarkation events to support the identification of vulnerabilities and special needs. The EUAA's efforts were recognised during interviews with national authorities, who were able to speed up procedures, despite the high number of applicants and capacity issues.

**Key challenges** to this measure were the increase of sea arrivals and disembarkation events especially in 2022, leading to overcrowded reception facilities, procedural delays, and burnout risks for ASTs, particularly in Sicily/Lampedusa and Calabria. Additionally, there was a shortage of personnel (including turnover), which had an impact on the EUAA's capacity to respond to the request for

support. Personnel shortages and high turnover were addressed through recruitment, with 27 resources being deployed by September 2024. Coordination issues arose due to the changing SAR context, local authority cooperation challenges, and contractual limits on night disembarkation support. In addition, several issues with the coordination of cultural mediator activities were also reported in terms of lack of linguistic competences and lack of awareness regarding the specific context of IP and the EUAA mandate. Finally, the absence of a feedback mechanism to gather insights from applicants on the effectiveness of information provision efforts, limited the full understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the EUAA's support in this domain.

### **Measure 7: Support the effective implementation of the TPD**

The EUAA contributed to the development of information tools and guidelines related to access to TPD, which were considered overall useful by the national stakeholders interviewed, although based on desk research it seems that the use of the vulnerability annex was limited. The EUAA also supported several capacity building activities which were able to reach all IOs. For instance, the thematic sessions were considered as a platform for sharing experiences and exchanging best practices. From June 2022, there was a significant decrease in the activity related to the implementation of the TPD across all IOs, due to decreased arrivals and TP beneficiaries choosing to return. As a result, some experts were redeployed in support of information provision to IP applicants and vulnerability activities under measure 6. From February 2023, in agreement with the national authorities, the measure was put temporarily on hold. Overall, **the effectiveness of the measure was rated as very good.**

**The measures were coherent and worked well together.** The objectives of each measure were aligned with the priorities identified in the needs assessment. As also confirmed during interviews, the measures largely aligned with and complemented one another. They were also organised around the main thematic areas of the CEAS and the different phases of the asylum process, which avoided overlaps and duplications of activities across the intervention. For example, measures 4 and 6 were complementary to each other and mutually reinforcing. The reception area, which notably included activities concerning data, information management and analysis closely interacted with the cross-cutting vulnerability and information provision activities, outlined in measure 6. Another example of synergies between measures 4, 5 and 6 was identified in relation to information and data sharing and more specifically in relation to the joint work carried out to establish a standardised workflow for data sharing on transfers and allocation for Crotone and Bari operations. Moreover, in 2023, Italy operations streamlined a local coordination mechanism, through field focal points with cross-cutting responsibility to support measure coordinators on operational challenges in their area. This coordination modality was meant to enhance further synergies across measures at field level.

**The collaboration with international organisations, such as IOM, also exemplified a commitment to a coordinated approach.** Regular inclusion of these organisations in needs assessment processes and joint initiatives indicates a shared goal of enhancing access to asylum and reception conditions. However, based on feedback from interviews (including with EUAA personnel), collaboration with the UNHCR was challenging and ongoing discussions were aimed at finding ways to enhance cooperation with this organisation. As for the **interaction with national authorities**, the collaboration was positive according to interviewees. Moreover, the EUAA played a facilitator's role in helping different stakeholders to coordinate. This was done through regular meetings, joint initiatives, and effective

communication channels. **Coordination between different EUAA centres/sectors** was rated as very positive during interviews.

Concerning **efficiency**, a total of EUR 12 340 846 was earmarked to be spent in 2022; EUR 16 764 878 in 2023; and EUR 16 133 483 in 2024. Based on interviews with EUAA personnel, **the overall budget allocated for implementing the OP was considered sufficient and, overall, financial resources were efficiently spent.** The financial resources were allocated in alignment with the priority areas, and the outputs and outcomes set out in the OP were delivered as planned without significant cost overruns or underutilisation of the budget. As discussed in detail under effectiveness, the EUAA's efficiency in achieving its targets in the evaluation period was hampered primarily by human resource issues, rather than budget constraints. There was a shortage of resources throughout the evaluation period which affected most of the measures. National stakeholders interviewed reported that the temporary contracts did not allow for continuity and efficiency in the organisation of the work. In some cases, the deployment of human resources was adapted to respond to emerging needs. Despite the constraints, the benefits brought by the intervention were highly valued by all stakeholders at EU and national level. Therefore, the evidence suggested that the relationship between inputs (i.e., costs, human resources, and time invested) and outputs was positive, as the benefits of the OP outweighed the investments made.

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

**The evaluation found that the EUAA's support through the OP 2022-2024 brought about significant EU added value.** The OP ensured continuity with and built on the results achieved in 2021, and therefore continued addressing the consequences of the disproportionate pressure on the Italian asylum and reception system, which could have not been faced by the Italian authorities alone. The EUAA significantly contributed to strengthening the national asylum and reception system, engaging at all levels of the asylum procedure, from disembarkation up to the judiciary.

**The EUAA was highly regarded by all stakeholders interviewed and its operational support to Italy was highly valued by national authorities.** They highlighted that they rely on the EUAA support not only in terms of the resources provided, but also concerning the design of high-quality methodologies, guidelines, quality assurance tools, standards, and monitoring procedures. These are indeed likely to remain in their structures in the future. The capacity of national authorities was also increased through the organisation or facilitation of training sessions, thematic sessions, coaching activities, and roundtables.

#### 4.3. Is the action relevant?

**The support provided by the EUAA was highly relevant to address the needs and respond to the challenges faced by the Italian asylum and reception system.** The intervention was relevant at the time of its adoption, and it continued to address most problems and needs arising throughout the evaluation period, responding to the need for continuity from the previous OP.

**The participatory approach of the OP design contributed to the relevance of the measures** as they responded to pre-identified needs as well as to the priorities that emerged during its implementation (such as the influx of Ukrainian applicants). During interviews, several stakeholders recognised that

this was mostly a consequence of the fact that the needs assessment that preceded the OP was carried out jointly by the EUAA with the Italian authorities. This involved identifying areas for improvement that benefited the beneficiaries while maintaining constructive engagement with Italian authorities during the OP design process. **The OP was a flexible tool to respond to emerging needs.** The needs that the intervention sought to address constantly evolved during the evaluation period and the OP was adapted to reflect these changes. This was exemplified by the amendment made in May 2022, which introduced a measure supporting the authorities to effectively implement the TPD following the invasion of Ukraine. This was also exemplified by the second amendment which, in 2024, introduced further support for the TCs following the European Commission's 10-point Action Plan for Lampedusa to help Italy deal with the spike in arrivals by sea.

The evaluation also noted the impact of the change in government formed after the national elections in September 2022. This flexibility ensured that the OP remained responsive to dynamic challenges and evolving priorities, contributing to its overall effectiveness.

Moreover, there were several benefits associated with the **move from a one to a three-year OP** in Italy which further contributed to its relevance. EUAA personnel suggested during interviews that it provided the opportunity for long-term planning. The three-year OP framework also provides a more extended and strategic outlook, enabling stakeholders to engage in comprehensive, phased, and sustained interventions, which contributed to a more stable and continuous operational environment. Moreover, experience from previous OPs suggested that some objectives cannot be achieved in one year (e.g., measure 5 of OP 2021<sup>19</sup>).

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusions

Overall, the EUAA's support to Italy proved **effective**, yielding several intended outcomes, though with differing degrees of achievement across the measures. Common challenges were the difficulties related to available human resources, including recruitment and turnover of experts and temporary workers, and the increased workload and pressure on the Italian asylum and reception system, mostly due to the surge in arrivals, including after the invasion of Ukraine.

- The effectiveness analysis of **measure 1** underscored the EUAA's pivotal role in ensuring timely and harmonised access to asylum procedures in Italy. Despite encountering challenges like deployment delays, resource shortages, and deviations from the intended scope of cultural mediation services, limited logistical and administrative support for IOs, the EUAA's support was rated as **good**.
- For **measure 2**, the EUAA's efforts to enhance the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure, supporting both the DCLI Dublin Unit and the NAC, yielded significant achievements. The EUAA's consistent support contributed to the fulfilment of several

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<sup>19</sup> Measure 5 OP 2021: Support to the coordination amongst Italian asylum authorities, including through the development of information systems

planned objectives despite resource shortages, unavailability of suitable profiles, and management changes at national level. The overall results of this measure were therefore **fair**, when considering the setbacks.

- Under **measure 3**, the EUAA's support in managing the judicial backlog in asylum cases proved highly effective, resulting in a notable reduction of pending cases and increased efficiency in judicial proceedings. Despite challenges like resource reductions and shifts in workload, the EUAA demonstrated adaptability and impactful collaborations with stakeholders. The phasing-out approach initiated in 2023 reflected foresight in addressing sustainability concerns post-EUAA support, although a more comprehensive exit strategy could be developed for sustained improvements. The overall results of this measure were therefore **good**.
- In **measure 4**, the EUAA's efforts to enhance the quality management and monitoring of Italy's reception system faced challenges due to a surge in arrivals, legislative changes, and heavy turnover and personnel shortage, yet a fair number of planned activities were effectively implemented. Despite resource strains and delays caused by the Ukrainian invasion, the EUAA further extended its substantial support at local level, while continuing the development of monitoring and management tools to support both the central and local level. The overall results of this measure were therefore **good**.
- For **measure 5**, despite challenges stemming from the Ukrainian emergency, difficulties in matching exercises, high abscondence rates, limited flexibility from Member States and the overall political context, the EUAA demonstrated effectiveness in supporting the national authorities in the management and monitoring of VR exercises. The EUAA's support was effective in fostering internal coordination among national stakeholders at both central and local levels, showcasing a commitment to fostering cooperation and solidarity among EU Member States. Overall measure 5 achieved **fair** results, considering these challenges.
- Under **measure 6**, the EUAA's support improved information provision and vulnerability identification within Italy's asylum and reception systems. Through the development of tools and materials, deployment of expert teams, and capacity-building activities, the EUAA contributed significantly to ensuring that IP applicants receive timely and relevant information while vulnerable individuals are identified and referred appropriately. Therefore, the effectiveness of the measure was rated as **good** considering challenges such as increased arrivals and turnover of experts in critical disembarkation locations.
- Lastly, **measure 7** focused on enhancing Italy's capacity to implement the TPD. The EUAA greatly contributed to the development of information tools and guidelines related to access to TPD. Challenges arose from decreased TPD activity due to declining Ukrainian arrivals, prompting the temporary redeployment of EUAA experts. From February 2023, the measure was put temporarily on hold. Overall, the effectiveness of the measure was rated as **very good**.

The different measures of the OP 2022-2024 demonstrated a **high level of coherence** and worked well together to address the identified challenges within Italy's asylum and reception systems. Each measure's objectives were aligned with the priorities identified in the needs assessment, ensuring a strategic and comprehensive approach. The measures complemented each other, organised around the main thematic areas of the CEAS and different phases of the asylum process, avoiding overlaps and duplication of activities. Additionally, the EUAA's facilitative role in coordinating stakeholders, through mechanisms like regular meetings and joint initiatives, strengthened cooperation among national authorities and contributed to the overall coherence of the intervention. The **efficiency of the intervention was considered to be good**. The overall budget allocated for implementing the Italy OP



2022-2024 was considered sufficient, and financial resources were efficiently spent to deliver the intended outputs and outcomes. Despite human resource issues, the intervention produced several benefits, and the quality of outputs remained high. Overall, the efficiency of the intervention was considered to be good. The EUAA's support through the OP 2022-2024 brought **significant EU added value**, ensuring continuity, building on previous efforts, and contributing to the strengthening of Italy's asylum and reception systems. All stakeholders recognised the added value of the EUAA's support across different measures. Overall, the support provided by the EUAA was **highly relevant** to the needs of stakeholders and responsive to the challenges faced by Italy's asylum and reception systems. The needs that the intervention sought to address constantly evolved during the evaluation period and the OP was adapted to reflect these changes. The table below presents the scores for each criterion and measure, formulated on the basis of the results presented in this report.

**Table 2. Scoring of achievements of the Italy OP 2022-2024 (during the evaluation period) based on the achievement of targets**

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Measure 6	Measure 7
<b>Relevance</b>	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good	Very good
<b>Effectiveness</b> <sup>20</sup>	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Very Good
<b>Efficiency</b>	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
<b>Coherence</b>	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
<b>EU added value</b>	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good

## 5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

The following **good practices** were highlighted during the implementation of the OP:

- The EUAA demonstrated flexibility and adaptability throughout the reporting period, particularly in response to adverse situations, such as the invasion of Ukraine. This flexibility allowed the EUAA to adjust its support activities swiftly and effectively, ensuring continued progress despite external challenges;
- The EUAA's emphasis on capacity-building activities, including training sessions, thematic sessions and coaching activities, proved instrumental in enhancing the skills and capabilities of stakeholders at both the national and local levels. These efforts contributed to the sustainability of the intervention in Italy's asylum and reception systems;

<sup>20</sup> The rating is mainly based on the degree to which activities were completed at the time of writing, coupled with judgements about the degree to which non-implementation was caused by factors outside of the control of the Agency.

- Synergies between measures 4 and 6 ensured that the two measures could be mutually reinforcing and worked well together in practice. This was facilitated by close coordination and timely information sharing between the two measures' teams;
- Measure 7 experts were able to effectively support other measures' activities (i.e., information provision on VR);
- Good working relations between the EUAA and national authorities proved productive.

The following **lessons** can be learnt from the implementation of the OP to date:

- The evaluation underscored the significant impact of external factors, such as political transitions and emergency situations like the invasion of Ukraine, on the effectiveness of the EUAA's support. Recognising the unpredictability of such events, future steps of the intervention could prioritise flexibility and preparedness to respond swiftly to changing circumstances;
- Challenges in relation to the shortage and turnover of resources were highlighted by all interviewed stakeholders, thus suggesting a strong need to ensure more stable and continuous support;
- Issues in relation to the provision of cultural mediation services had an impact on almost all measures;
- The phasing-out process in relation to measure 3 was considered appropriate although it needed to be further taken forward to ensure the sustainability of the intervention.

### Horizontal considerations

This evaluation highlighted **challenges in recruitment and retention of personnel** which were common to other OPs beyond the Italian context. Among these challenges, recruitment issues related to temporary workers contracts and the replacement of AST experts in case of resignation or termination of contracts were noteworthy. Areas for reflection for the EUAA senior management may include increasing the length of contracts, as well as the possibility to improve the wellbeing of personnel members (e.g. by transfers to other locations and rotation).

Moreover, another horizontal consideration relates to possible **feedback mechanisms** to gather insights from applicants and stakeholders on the **effectiveness of information provision** efforts. Implementing structured feedback channels (e.g. surveys and interviews) and incorporating feedback into information provision efforts could bring significant value to the EUAA's support in this area. For example, this could foster trust and engagement among stakeholders and better tailor information to meet the specific needs and preferences of applicants. This exercise may involve joint reflections between country operations, horizontal sectors and the EUAA's senior management.

## 5.3. Recommendations

This section builds on the findings and conclusions drawn during the evaluation of the Italy OP 2022-2024 and offers recommendations for future endeavours.



### **Recommendation 1. Address and mitigate the challenges in recruitment and retention of personnel**

Human resource issues (e.g., turnover, shortage of personnel) proved to be one of the most important obstacles to meeting the operational targets set for the reporting period. The EUAA could address these issues by:

- Enhancing awareness of the operational context and local challenges before personnel are brought on board, especially at disembarkation locations (e.g., Lampedusa, Crotone). Examples could include organising localised briefings that address the specific logistical and environmental challenges faced in these areas, particularly regarding high migrant arrivals, limited local infrastructure, and coordination with Italian authorities;
- Improving support to personnel to encourage retainment of knowledge and professional development. Examples could include psychological support, regular debriefing sessions, and access to counselling services to address the emotional toll of working in high-stress environments.

### **Recommendation 2. Further enhance the support to the VSM**

To strengthen the VSM in Italy, the EUAA could implement the following targeted measures tailored to the local context:

- Improving information provision and communication with applicants (e.g., manage expectations, help them understand their obligations). For example, consider enhancing the provision of clear, concise, and visually engaging informational materials in multiple languages, as well as supporting the organisation of individual counselling sessions for applicants to clarify the timelines, procedures, and their responsibilities within the VSM, helping to reduce misinformation.

### **Recommendation 3. Improve information provision, including by gathering insights from applicants**

To enhance the effectiveness of information provision, the EUAA could adopt a more structured and iterative approach to gathering and integrating feedback from applicants, ensuring continuous improvement and responsiveness to their needs. Examples could include:

- Incorporating feedback in ongoing activities;
- Building on the EUAA's experience in relation to some specific tools (e.g. under measure 4), where feedback was gathered from users to improve their use;
- Enhancing cooperation with international organisations (e.g. UNHCR) to enhance outreach efforts and provide additional layers of support.

### **Recommendation 4. Enhance the effectiveness and reliability of the cultural mediation service**

To enhance the effectiveness and reliability of cultural mediation services, the EUAA could take targeted actions tailored to Italy's specific needs and operational context:

- Introducing cultural mediators for supporting UTGs (measure 4);
- Increasing coordination meetings to monitor critical situations.

## Annex 1: Methodology and analytical models used

The evaluation took a mixed methods approach, combining the use of existing sources of evidence with primary data collection, notably through interviews.

**Desk research** included the Agency's monitoring data, the OP document itself, the needs assessment, and to a lesser degree statistics on asylum and reception which were used as contextual background information. As explained previously in Section 3, the cutoff data for this evaluation (end of the third quarter 2024), did not allow an assessment of the annual targets for 2024. Nevertheless, this had a minimal impact on the results of this evaluation, as in most cases the annual targets were already overachieved (or at least met) by the end of the third quarter of 2024.

In terms of **interviews**, the consulted stakeholders include EUAA personnel, relevant Italian authorities, EU stakeholders and international organisations.

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

The **conclusions and lessons learned**, as well as **recommendations** resulting from them, were validated with the Agency personnel after the submission of the draft report to ensure they were valid and appropriate, and workable given any contextual constraints faced by the Agency and/or other stakeholders.

## Annex 2: Intervention logic<sup>21</sup>

Needs/problems	Expected objectives
<p>Limited quality and standardisation in asylum processes, incl. SAR, disembarkation, Dublin process</p> <p>Large judicial backlog</p> <p>Limited quality and monitoring of the reception system</p> <p>Fragmented implementation of asylum procedures, limited of coordination among authorities</p> <p>Need for support with temporary protection following Ukraine crisis</p>	<p>Provide effective operational, technical and emergency support effectively through implementation of the annual Measures in the agreed OP and in line with the Agency's mandate to enable Italy to respond to particular pressure on its asylum and reception systems and to implement its obligations under the CEAS</p>
Result impact	
Implementation of CEAS obligations in the field of asylum and reception	
Result outcomes (measures)	
<p>Measure IT1: Access to asylum procedures: support to the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications</p> <p>Measure IT2: Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure</p> <p>Measure IT3: Support for the management of judicial backlog</p> <p>Measure IT4: Support for the quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system</p> <p>Measure IT5: Support for the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and to improve timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as SAR disembarkation events and VRs</p> <p>Measure IT6: Support the access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs</p> <p>Measure IT7: Support the effective implementation of the TPD</p>	

<sup>21</sup> The intervention logic here reflects the latest amendment of the OP (May 2022). Therefore, the intervention logic displayed in this table lists outcomes, outputs and activities as they are in their final form after the latest amendment, consistently with the way the implementation of the action and the evaluation findings are presented in Sections 3 and 4 of the report.



### Result outputs

#### **Measure 1 Access to asylum procedures: support to the timely and harmonised lodging of international protection applications**

Output 1.1: Enhanced capacity of the DPS to ensure timely access to the international protection procedure

Output 1.2: Improved capacity of the DPS for timely implementation of Dublin transfers

Output 1.3: Improved centralised quality coordination and knowledge about the CEAS among DPS officials

#### **Measure IT2 Support the quality and standardisation of the Dublin and asylum determination procedure**

Output 2.1: DCLI Dublin Unit

Output 2.2: NAC

#### **Measure IT3 Support for the management of judicial backlog**

Output 3.1: Enhanced capacity of the specialised sections of the tribunals to process international protection cases.

Output 3.2: Enhanced capacity of the CoC to process international protection cases.

Output 3.3: Enhanced coordination and professional development of the specialised sections of the tribunals, the CoC and the GPO (magistrates, honorary judges and staff employed in support of the judiciary)

#### **Measure IT4 Support for the quality management and monitoring of the Italian reception system**

Output 4.1: Monitoring and analysis of arrivals and allocation of applicants into reception

Output 4.2: Management and control of the reception system

Output 4.3: Monitoring of reception conditions and services

#### **Measure IT5 Support for the cooperation mechanism/solidarity among EU Member States and to improve timely coordination of the main stakeholders, including in emergency situations such as SAR disembarkation events and VRs**

Output 5.1: VR cases management from disembarkation to the lodging of the application supported

Output 5.2: Coordination mechanism between actors involved supported

Output 5.3: Matching exercise supported

Output 5.4: Implementation of the national resettlement and/or humanitarian admissions programs supported

#### **Measure IT6 Support the access to information provision for international protection applicants and the timely identification and referral of vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs**

Output 6.1: Development of tools/materials related to information provision and vulnerability

Output 6.2: Deployment of vulnerability and information provision teams

Output 6.3: Capacity building

#### **Measure IT7 Support the effective implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive**

Output 7.1: Information provision on TPD

### Activities

- Lodging of applications in border areas, entry points and other locations under particular pressure to ensure timely access to procedure, including early identification of potential Dublin cases. EUAA will provide support with: i) comprehensive information provision, ii) pre-identification of vulnerability indicators, as per EUAA tool for the Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN), and iii) referral to national authorities to apply due procedural safeguards and adequate reception conditions.
- Logistic and coordination support to manage emergency situations.
- Finalisation of relevant operational tools, such as remote registration workflows and an information workflow with Prefectures, in close collaboration with national authorities.
- Implementation of the Helpdesk (Dublin transfers) service based at DPS Dublin Office, which remotely supports transfers activities of Dublin outgoing cases.
- Development and/or update of operational tools, workflows and FAQs on Dublin transfers.
- Capacity building activities related to the implementation of Dublin transfers (within the second day of the national training sessions).
- Implementation of the helpdesk (national procedure) service based at DPS, which remotely supports the quality and harmonisation of asylum procedures.
- Development/update and/or dissemination of tools for the harmonised lodging of applications for international protection – including the finalisation and dissemination at local level of quality tools developed in 2021.
- Ad hoc missions to carry out assessments of local needs and challenges in order to develop tools and to implement tailored capacity building activities/thematic workshops.
- Support to the roll out of DPS national training sessions on EUAA modules (registration of applications for international protection - RAIP and/or identification and registration of potential Dublin cases - IPDC and other relevant topics) delivered by DPS trainers, including specific focus on information provision activities and pre-identification of vulnerabilities as per the EUAA's tool for identification of persons with special needs (IPSN). The activities will be carried out with the support of the EUAA Training and Professional Development Centre.
- Development of training materials on CEAS for the trainers of the Police School.
- Cooperation with national authorities for the incorporation of the vulnerability annex into the new IT system (SUA) to enhance the national authorities' ability to timely pre-identify vulnerability indicators upon lodging, as per the EUAA's IPSN tool
- Support to training activities for IOs' personnel on SUA, upon its finalisation, and through the deployment of dedicated resources (2023)
- Support to case management of outgoing cases and relevant coordination activities (in 2022).
- Deployment of experts to support DCLI Dublin Unit (case management of outgoing cases and appeals) in 2022, to be reassessed for 2023 following the end of the current Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund project.
- Capacity building/coaching/workshops on outgoing activities, including minors and family reunification cases (starting from 2023).



- EUAA will also strengthen the communication and cooperation workflows between DCLI Dublin Unit and Dublin Office DPS (central and local level) for the management and implementation of Dublin transfers.
- The development of an advanced monitoring tool to track timelines and data on transfers and litigation cases (2022), as well as the implementation of related capacity building activities.
- Capacity building activities/coaching on the job, administrative and technical support to case management, development of tools to facilitate the decision-making process related to revocation and cessation of international protection
- Support the quality of COI products through i) peer review workshops for the COI Unit, ii) the organisation of country briefings for TCs, and iii) technical support for the development of COI responses/reports, data collection and analysis of COI products, including through the deployment of the COI Expert.
- Carrying out a feasibility study on an Inter-ministerial COI Unit.
- Provision of administrative and content-related support to MED-COI activities.
- Organisation of a study visit from/to an EU+ country that has already developed best practices at European level (or ad hoc VC contacts/exchanges).
- Provision of support to the delivery of national trainings for NAC and TCs.
- Provision of support to i) the identification of areas of interest and related development of ad hoc guidelines and operating procedures for NAC and TCs, ii) the coordination activities for the participation of the NAC in the EUAA network events and high-profile EU, international and national events related to asylum
- Support to the development of a quality enhancement mechanism related to revocation and cessation of international protection.
- Support to the development of virtual depositary for high-quality decisions on the recognition of protection and on the cessation/revocation of protection (TCs and judicial).
- Support to the organisation of quality coordination workshops for the development/dissemination of a harmonised methodology, tools and related capacity building activities.
- Support to the development and implementation of a Quality Helpdesk at NAC in support of TCs, also via a pilot project in selected TCs to provide support on quality-related matters at central and local level. The expansion of the project will be assessed at the end of 2022.
- The implementation of the financial management system and projects, both for internal and external funding (e.g. Em.As.Com Project/Sindaca).
- The organisation of capacity building activities/ coaching on the job to improve the internal financial and procurement systems of NAC.
- Continuation of the ongoing project to profile, monitor and report on vulnerable applicants in Trapani with further expansion of the activities to the TC of Agrigento.
- Support to TC of Trapani for the coordination of the Regional Observatory on THB.
- Assess the possible extension of the THB project at regional level as well as foster the participation in the Regional Observatory activities of other TCs in Sicily.



- Support to file preparation of pending cases, including dedicated support on COI and jurisprudential research, as well as through case specific legal analysis.
- Implementation of a pilot project on the use of tools and workflows for the scheduling of the hearings, the prioritisation of cases, and the case tracking. Based on the results of the pilot, the scheduling and tracking tool developed may be extended to all the specialised sections of the tribunals.
- Support interviews at hearings through the provision of cultural mediators, according to needs.
- Support identified specialised sections of the tribunals in the drafting, endorsement and implementation of protocols for the identification and referral of potential victims and victims of THB.
- Support to the preliminary screening and study of the cases to handle files characterised by homogeneous subjects and topics, and procedural issues in a systematic and standardised way.
- Support the development of a scheduling and tracking tool to prioritize vulnerable applicants' cases.
- Promoting and supporting the organisation of professional development activities addressed to magistrates and honorary judges of the specialised sections of the tribunals, the CoC, and its GPO as to strengthen their expertise and specialisation in the field of international protection (including Dublin procedures and vulnerable applicants). This action will be conducted in close coordination with EUAA's Courts and Tribunals Sector and the Training and Professional Development Centre within the framework of the future cooperation between EUAA and SSM.
- Support in the management of SGA, also in light of the transition to SUA, both at central and local level.
- Set-up of a dedicated data analysis team at central level for the improvement of data exchange, analysis and planning related to the reception system (first, second line and UAMs), as well as to meet internal and external reporting needs.
- Support to the collection, compiling and reporting of statistical information to the Head of Department.
- Support in the operational data management and processing of arrivals, transfers and allocation to the reception system of adults and UAMs, both at central and local level.
- Support efficient information and data sharing on transfers and allocation in reception system between central level (DCLI), local level (Prefectures) and Central Service.
- Support in the organization of workshops involving local authorities to promote the adoption of workflows and tools for data and information sharing to be developed in close collaboration to the DCLI.
- Improvement of the tracking system of persons with special needs, from arrival to allocation phase, within the data management and information systems in use at central (DCLI) and local level (Prefectures).
- Support Prefectures in the coordination of all relevant actors at disembarkation points and mapping of local services complementary to the reception system for a correct take in charge and allocation of identified vulnerable cases, in close collaboration with resources deployed under measure IT6.





- Provide technical legal advice and support on reception related matters as well as on the management of supranational, European and national judicial processes in the field of reception (for adults and UAMs).
- Support the Head of Department on international litigations and on the liaison with the legislative office. o Provide capacity building activities on legal and technical processes to progressively start the handover of the developed tools and workflows.
- Support in the management of financial procedures for the efficient functioning of first- and second-line reception facilities.
- Support in the management of contractual financial and legal requirements for the effective functioning and monitoring of quarantine Measures (vessels, facilities and agreements with other involved actors).
- Support in the design, set-up and implementation of ad-hoc operational procedures and workflows for humanitarian admissions.
- Support the coordination and administrative activities related to the arrival and transfer phase of evacuees.
- Support in the analysis of recommendations and drafting reports on reception related matters elaborated by national and supranational actors.
- Support DCLI Monitoring Office to update the monitoring guidelines, methodology and related tools in line with EUAA guidance on reception conditions, for their integration in the monitoring platform to be developed and finalised by DCLI (Gestione Centrale Controllo Accoglienza - GCCA) and to be used by Nuclei Ispettivi of Prefectures.
- Capacity building support and coaching on the job to Nuclei Ispettivi on the use of the monitoring tool and methodology. This action follows the pilot phase initiated in the third quarter of 2021 with a temporary platform.
- Technical support to the DCLI Monitoring Office and liaison with Prefectures throughout the pilot and implementation phases initiated in 2021 as well as regular consolidation of data, analysis and reporting to DCLI of monitoring visits results done by Nuclei Ispettivi at national level.
- Support to the monitoring of the tender procedures of Prefectures to provide regular updates on the harmonisation of national reception standards.
- Support to the development and implementation of tools to collect, analyse and report data on reception conditions and services in second line projects.
- Support to the promotion of a progressive harmonisation of first- and second-line reception system monitoring tools and methodology, also using standards and indicators included in the EUAA Guidance on reception conditions.
- Support Prefectures to participate to monitoring visits to second line reception projects together with Central Service.
- Support in the organization of regional and national workshops to discuss the first reception and care for UAMs across all relevant institutional actors.
- Support in the development and implementation of a methodology to monitor and assess the impact of the Vademecum on the harmonisation of UAMs' first reception and care (2024).





- Direct support to information provision of applicants eligible for VR upon disembarkation and throughout the procedure (upon lodging, in preparation of Member States delegations' interviews, in preparation for request for consent to transfer).
- Capacity building activities for local stakeholders to enhance their ability to ensure information provision to applicants throughout the procedure.
- Direct support to lodging of applications of applicants eligible for VR with deployment of dedicated EUAA asylum support teams (ASTs) operating as per the agreed SOPs. A clear focus will be ensured on the delivery of comprehensive information provision and on the identification of vulnerability indicators as per EUAA IPSN tool and referral to national authorities to apply due procedural safeguards and adequate reception conditions.
- Support to case management, including support to logistic and administrative and monitoring activities (DPS and DCLI), from SGA activities to finalisation of transfers (DPS, DCLI and DCLI Dublin Unit).
- Support to the development and implementation of a continuous coordination mechanism between stakeholders at the central and local level, including the facilitation of operational and other coordination meetings.
- Support to the concentration of VR activities in locations identified with national stakeholders and in coordination with DCLI as responsible authority in charge of the allocation and transfer of applicants.
- Preparation of matching lists of applicants to be relocated according to available pledges to be proposed to the European Commission.
- Support to Member States delegations' interviews for VR (including preparatory information provision to concerned applicants, logistic support, provision of linguistic support).
- Support the national authorities, if applicable, with the fulfilment of their resettlement and/or humanitarian admissions commitments.
- Support the coordination and administrative activities related to the arrival and transfer phase of evacuees.
- Promote the participation of the national authorities in the activities of the EUAA Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Network and its dedicated Working Groups.
- Deployment of Resettlement Experts to support the authorities to review the existing resettlement and/or humanitarian admissions programs, including used methods of delivery as well as the supporting tools.
- Development and/or update of information provision materials on Dublin Regulation and VR, such as guidance and key messages for oral information provision for ASTs and multilingual user-friendly leaflets for applicant, upon endorsement by the relevant national authorities.
- Development/update and dissemination of tools and materials related to the timely identification of applicants with special procedural and or reception needs (e.g. Vulnerability toolkit).
- Support IOs and Prefectures in the pre-identification of vulnerability indicators in main disembarkation points, hotspots and land borders under particular pressure, also including disembarkation from quarantine vessels.



- Support relevant authorities (reception managing entities, Prefectures, and other actors) in the pre-identification of applicants with vulnerabilities and persons with special needs within reception facilities, including quarantine centres.
- Provision of information to newly arrived migrants in Italy at main landing points and hotspots on: access to international protection procedures (including duties and rights of applicants), Dublin Regulation (including the family unity criteria under Dublin Regulation) and VR when applicable, together with information on quarantine procedures if applicable. Information will be provided with the support of a cultural mediator in a language that the person concerned understands or is reasonably supposed to understand.
- Support dedicated information provision for UAMs and potential THB survivors at main disembarkation points and reception facilities upon requests by local Prefectures, in case child protection and anti-trafficking organisations are not present.
- Provision of information to international protection applicants within the reception system (including main quarantine facilities particularly under pressure) and related to international protection procedures and Dublin Regulation, provided with the help of cultural mediators and in a language that the person concerned understands or is reasonably supposed to understand.
- Provision of operational support for emergency situations like evacuations, humanitarian corridors etc., when required by the national authorities.
- Provision of information to newly arrived migrants in Italy at main landing points and hotspots on: access to international protection procedures (including duties and rights of applicants), Dublin Regulation (including the family unity criteria under Dublin Regulation) and VR when applicable, together with information on quarantine procedures if applicable. Information will be provided with the support of a cultural mediator in a language that the person concerned understands or is reasonably supposed to understand.
- Support dedicated information provision for UAMs and potential THB survivors at main disembarkation points and reception facilities upon requests by local Prefectures, in case child protection and anti-trafficking organisations are not present.
- Provision of information to international protection applicants within the reception system (including main quarantine facilities particularly under pressure) and related to international protection procedures and Dublin Regulation, provided with the help of cultural mediators and in a language that the person concerned understands or is reasonably supposed to understand.
- Provision of operational support for emergency situations like evacuations, humanitarian corridors etc., when required by the national authorities.
- Carry out Train the Trainers activities<sup>22</sup> on vulnerability topics for relevant reception authorities (e.g. Prefectures' social workers and personnel, Ministerial officers) and organisations, in view of the potential roll out of national training sessions. This action will be carried out in close coordination with EUAA Training and Professional Development Centre.
- EUAA will identify and address training needs of reception facilities' managing entities related to the identification and referral of persons with vulnerabilities/special needs including thematic

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<sup>22</sup> As per 2024 training plan, Train the Trainers activities have been replaced with training.



workshops. To this end, the EUAA's ASTs will carry out coaching on the job missions in selected first line reception facilities.

- Support the managing entities of first line reception facilities through ad hoc capacity building activities to enhance their capacity to ensure information provision to applicants with the use of developed and/or updated information materials.
- Development, adaptation and dissemination of information tools and guidelines, including leaflets, posters and/or digital content.
- Deployment of ASTs, including cultural mediators, to IOs, helpdesks and reception facilities.
- Conducting on-the-job coaching, workshops and/or thematic sessions on the TPD for Italian national authorities.
- Deployment of ASTs to support IOs under disproportionate pressure in the registration procedures of persons falling under the scope of the TPD.
- Support national authorities in timely identifying and referring persons with special needs and UAMs at dedicated hubs, IOs, reception facilities and other relevant locations.
- Additional support for the implementation of TPD activities.

### Inputs

Human resources – various, including assistant coordinators, quality officers, Dublin procedure officers, registration support officers, MSEs, cultural mediators, field support officers, assistant coordinators, business analysts, COI researcher, legal officers, senior experts, budget officer, project officers and assistants, research officers, interpreters, monitoring and information system assistants, reception and information system officers, training officers and assistants.

Material resources – e.g. equipment, services, communication/promotional materials, infrastructure items, IT equipment, office supplies and printing.

Financial resources invested from the EUAA's budget.

### Specific inputs:

- Up to 13 asylum registration experts assigned to DPS and/or local IOs
- Up to 15 (full time equivalent) cultural mediators to support ASTs
- Up to 2 Dublin Regulation experts
- 1 asylum and/or reception operations expert at DPS
- Up to 4 asylum quality assurance experts at DPS
- Up to 2 legal experts – asylum and/or reception at DPS
- Up to 10 national training sessions in EUAA modules delivered by EUAA and DPS trainers
- Up to 2 asylum and/or reception operations experts
- 1 asylum quality assurance expert
- 1 Dublin Regulation expert
- 1 asylum and reception programme and project management expert
- 1 reception information system (business analysis) expert



- 1 reception information system (business analysis) expert
- 1 expert to support the development of the feasibility study
- Up to 2 COI experts (COI and MedCOI)
- 1 asylum training expert
- 1 asylum and/or reception operations expert
- 1 study visit (via VC) or up to 3 country briefings (via VC)
- Up to 2 asylum quality assurance experts
- Up to 4 asylum quality assurance experts in the TCs
- Up to 4 quality coordination workshops
- 1 asylum and reception financial management expert
- 1 legal expert - asylum and/or reception - procurement
- 1 asylum and reception programme and project management expert
- Up to 2 legal experts - asylum and/or reception
- 1 asylum quality assurance expert
- Up to 55 asylum second instance support experts deployed to the specialised sections of the tribunals
- Up to 15 FTE cultural mediators deployed to the specialised sections of the tribunals
- Up to 6 asylum second instance support experts deployed to the CoC
- Up to 3 asylum second instance support experts deployed to the GPO
- 1 asylum and/or reception operations expert/asylum training expert deployed to the MoJ
- Up to 2 professional development activities organised for magistrates and honorary judges of the specialised sections of the tribunals, the CoC, and the GPO or up to 2 roundtables involving magistrates and honorary judges of the specialised sections of the tribunals, the CoC and the GPO to share best practices and issues identified at local level
- Up to 3 professional development activities organised in cooperation with the MoJ for staff employed in support of the judiciary
- Up to 3 asylum and/or reception operations experts
- 1 asylum quality assurance expert
- Up to 6 asylum registration experts
- Up to 5 FTE cultural mediators to support ASTs and Member States delegations
- Up to 2 asylum and/or reception operations experts
- 1 asylum and reception programme and project management expert at DPS
- Up to 5 capacity building activities for local stakeholders
- Up to 10 operational meetings with relevant stakeholders at the central and/or local level on implementation, monitoring and finalisation of VR exercises
- 1 asylum and/or reception operations expert at DCLI Dublin Unit
- Up to 5 resettlement experts at the DPS



- Up to 3 capacity building activities, including participation of relevant Italian authorities' officials in EUAA networks and meetings.
- Up to 7 asylum information provision experts
- Up to 5 FTE cultural mediators for EUAA ASTs
- 1 asylum and/or reception operations expert
- Up to 10 capacity building activities to managing entities of first line reception facilities
- Up to 9 vulnerability experts/social workers assigned to key locations
- Up to 5 FTE cultural mediators for EUAA ASTs
- 1 train the trainers session on vulnerability topics for relevant reception authorities
- Up to 10 capacity development activities for managing entities of first line reception facilities

#### **External factors**

Specific circumstances on the ground; national and international rules/laws; availability of financial and human resources; other actions by authorities, IOM, the UNHCR, other international organisations, civil society organisations; humanitarian crises

## Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
<b>Effectiveness:</b> To what extent have the expected outcomes of the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 been achieved? Where expectations have not been met, what factors have hindered their achievement?	<p>To what extent was the intervention implemented as envisaged? Which activities were and were not implemented and why?</p> <p>Were there any problems related to the implementation and application of the Italian OP? If so, which ones and why?</p> <p><b>Priority question 1:</b> To what extent was the support provided by the EUAA to Italian authorities on the capacity to manage the judicial backlog regarding asylum cases effective? What needs to be put in place to prepare for the EUAA phasing out its support in this area?</p> <p><b>Priority question 2:</b> How effective was the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism? What were the key achievements of this mechanism? Were there any challenges or limitations that hindered the achievement of the objectives?</p> <p><b>Priority question 3:</b> How effective was the EUAA's support in enhancing the capacity of the Italian asylum and reception system to provide information to international protection applicants and to identify and refer vulnerable applicants and persons with special needs?</p> <p>To what extent were the expected <u>outputs</u> achieved? If there were shortcomings, what (internal and external) factors caused these?</p> <p>To what extent were the expected <u>outcomes</u> achieved? If there were shortcomings, what (internal and external) factors caused these?</p> <p>Can any (unintended) social or environmental impacts be observed that are linked to the EUAA's intervention?</p>	✓	✓
<b>Efficiency:</b> Have the outcomes of the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 been achieved at the best	<p>What inputs (costs, FTEs, time investments) were associated with the implementation of the OP? How did these inputs compare to what was planned?</p>	✓	✓



Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
relationship between resource inputs (costs, human resources, time) and outputs?	<p>Were these inputs sufficient to achieve the intended outputs/outcomes? Why or why not?</p> <p>To what extent has the governance structure of the Agency supported its ability to perform its tasks, having regard to its size, composition, organisation and work processes?</p> <p>Have there been any challenges to the efficient implementation of the intervention? If so, which (internal or external) factors affected its efficient implementation and how did the EUAA mitigate them?</p> <p>Have any inefficiencies been identified? If so, how could these be addressed to increase the efficiency of the intervention/of future interventions?</p> <p>How timely and efficient was the intervention's administrative process (e.g., for reporting and monitoring)? Were there any inefficiencies associated with these processes?</p>		
<b>Coherence:</b> To what extent was the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 coherent with the EUAA's actions more generally and with other interventions which have similar objectives? To what extent has the OP proved complementary to others in the field?	<p>What other interventions, implemented by the EU, national authorities, international organisations, or civil society organisations existed in Italy that had similar objectives to the OP?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>EU interventions</u> that had similar intended results? Were synergies actively sought to promote the 'Team Europe' approach and were possible overlaps avoided?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>national interventions</u> that had similar intended results? Were synergies actively sought and possible overlaps avoided? Why or why not?</p> <p>To what extent was the intervention coherent with other <u>interventions implemented by international organisations or civil society organisations</u> that had similar intended</p>	✓	✓





Evaluation criterion	Operationalised questions	Interviews	Desk research
	results? Were synergies actively sought and possible overlaps avoided? Why or why not?		
<b>Relevance:</b> To what extent was the EUAA-Italy OP 2022-2024 significant to the needs of the Italian authorities?	<p>To what extent was the intervention in Italy relevant to meet the needs of authorities? How well has the EUAA been able to respond to their organisations' needs?</p> <p>To what extent did the scope and intended results of the intervention in Italy remain relevant over the implementation period? If the needs changed over time, was the intervention adapted accordingly?</p> <p>To what extent do the needs/problems addressed by the intervention in Italy continue to require action by the EUAA? Will the intervention continue to be relevant in the foreseeable future?</p>	✓	✓
<b>EU added value:</b> What is the additional EU added value resulting from the EUAA activities in Italy, compared to what could be achieved by the authorities alone?	<p>What has been the EU added value of the EUAA's intervention compared to those of other actors?</p> <p>Could the intended results of the intervention have been achieved sufficiently by Italian authorities acting alone?</p> <p>It is still valid to assume that the intended results of the intervention can best be met by action by the EUAA? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping or withdrawing the EUAA's intervention?</p>	✓	✓