



EUAA Regional Pilot Project for North Africa and Niger

Ex post evaluation report

Prepared by the EUAA's Quality Management and Evaluation Sector

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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Definition
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG MENA	Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	EU Member States and the Schengen associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland)
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
IARMJ	International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
RDPP NA	Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa
RPP	Regional Pilot Project (for North Africa and Niger)
TCCN	Third Country Cooperation Network
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (also known as the UN Refugee Agency)

Executive summary

This report presents the evaluation conducted by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) of its Regional Pilot Project (RPP) for North Africa and Niger. The RPP aimed to establish a regional capacity-building platform to enhance North-South and South-South knowledge exchange and cooperation on asylum and reception. Co-funded by the Czech Republic, Denmark, and the EUAA, the project was implemented from November 2020 to May 2025, with a budget of EUR 2.2 million.

In terms of relevance, the project was found to be largely aligned with stakeholders' needs and the Agency's objectives. Its intervention logic incorporated the key priorities identified by partner countries, including developing national asylum systems, improving access to asylum procedures, supporting persons with special needs, and establishing efficient appeal mechanisms. It also included knowledge development on reception systems.

The project's effectiveness was positive with an estimated 80 % of its internal targets achieved. The project delivered activities such as regional workshops, study visits, translation, and training, exceeding planned activities. However, it was less effective in relation to training of trainers on EUAA modules, knowledge development, and regional training on international protection.

In terms of efficiency, the project's implementation was affected by various challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, staff turnover, and linguistic diversity, which required additional translation and interpretation efforts. Despite these challenges, the project remained reasonably cost-efficient, spending 77 % of the overall budget and utilising 92 % of the planned human resources.

Internally, the project demonstrated sound coherence, with the Agency's centres collaborating effectively to deliver activities. Externally, the project was coherent with European Union (EU) policies and regional initiatives. Considering the large number of partner arrangements, the RPP excelled in external collaboration, though some areas could still benefit from proactive coordination.

Finally, the evaluation assessed the project's EU added value, i.e. the unique benefits and advantages that the project brought to partner countries and the EU. The project mobilised expertise on the Common European Asylum System for the benefit of partner countries, and promoted EU standards and best practices in the areas of asylum and reception. However, the evaluation noted that it is difficult to assess the practical EU added value of the project in the context of different national asylum and reception mechanisms in third countries.

As a pilot initiative, the RPP delivered many good practices and lessons learnt, allowing the Agency to better grasp its evolving mandate on cooperation with non-candidate partner third countries. Recommendations have been identified for future projects of a similar nature, including:

1. Develop a longer-term rolling workplan based on a strategic direction and clear objectives;
2. Improve project management, in particular project monitoring and adapt it to the nature of the project;
3. Improve the continuous and specialised financial and contract management of the project;
4. Balance carefully the regional language diversity with efficiency considerations.

1. Introduction: purpose and scope

The European Union Agency for Asylum's (EUAA) Regional Pilot Project (RPP) for North Africa and Niger ('pilot project' or 'project') aimed to establish a pilot practical cooperation and a practitioners' network, targeting policymakers and asylum practitioners from different countries in the region and EU Member States and the Schengen associated countries (EU+ countries). Co-funded by the Czech Republic ('Czechia'), Denmark, and the EUAA, the project ran from November 2020 to May 2025.

The main objective of this evaluation was to assess the results of the RPP against five criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and European Union (EU) added value (refer to Annex 1). This exercise aimed to contribute to internal Agency learning, knowledge management, transparency, and accountability.

The scope of the evaluation was limited to the Agency's performance as defined by the project, focusing mainly on results achieved at output and activity levels. It built on selected interviews and a feedback exercise involving the project's main stakeholders during its closing workshop in May 2025 in Malta. Special attention was paid to good practices and lessons learnt that could inform the follow-up project, the Regional Protection Project for the Southern Neighbourhood.

2. Intended results of the action

This chapter describes the project's intended results and the situation prior to its launch in 2020 for comparison purposes.

2.1. Description of the action and its intended results

The project aimed to support international protection in North Africa and Niger through the establishment of a regional capacity-building platform to enhance North-South and South-South knowledge exchange and cooperation on asylum and reception. It partnered with national authorities from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia, in response to their capacity needs due to migration challenges. The project identified three expected outcomes:

- **Result outcome 1. Asylum-related institutional capacity, legislation, and systems are strengthened in North Africa and Niger.**

Under this result area, the RPP intended to foster the development of asylum legislation and systems through regional exchanges (output 1.1), as well as to enhance access for partner countries to asylum-related knowledge and products (output 1.2). Planned activities included regional thematic seminars and/or conferences, study visits, training delivery, production of overviews, standard operating procedures, workshops and written guidance, and translations.

- **Result outcome 2. Knowledge of effective asylum/international protection procedures and workflows is heightened in North Africa and Niger.**

Under this activity area, the RPP intended to exchange good practices on access to the asylum procedure, with a focus on vulnerable groups (output 2.1), as well as to increase the capacity of members of courts and tribunals on asylum legislation and processes (output 2.2). Planned activities included regional workshops and/or conferences, and the development of products and tools.

- **Result outcome 3. Knowledge of the reception systems (software and hardware) is enriched in North Africa and Niger.**

Under this activity area, the RPP planned to involve reception officials in capacity-building programmes on reception models and practices, through training delivery and workshops (output 3.1).

The revised intervention logic¹ of the project is presented in Annex 3 to this report.

2.2. Points of comparison

The European Commission Communication of 2005 introduced Regional Protection Programmes² as a new EU approach to international protection. These programmes were set up with the intention of enhancing the protection capacity of the regions involved and better protecting the refugee population there by providing durable solutions. Following the 2015 Valletta Summit on migration and its action plan, the Regional Protection Programmes evolved into Regional Development and Protection Programmes. Funded through the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa (RDPP NA) was set up in 2015, with the first projects starting in 2016 with Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The RDPP NA was managed by the Italian Ministry of Interior and supported by Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden³.

The Agency had already gained experience in bilateral and regional capacity-building projects with third countries, including in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). Since 2015, the Agency has organised several conferences on asylum and international protection law with the participation of Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia. Other examples include the Agency's cooperation with Egypt within the framework of the EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue and the Agency's Third Country Cooperation Network, which brings together Member States' representatives.

Building on both the RDPP NA and this earlier experience, the EUAA launched the RPP in 2020 as an opportunity to contribute as a centre of expertise on asylum and reception in the MENA region. While the project was co-financed by the EUAA, Czechia, and Denmark, it was developed within the framework of the EU-supported RDPP NA and aligned with its objectives. It was guided by the Agency's

¹ The original wording of the project's results was slightly modified without altering their content.

² Source: [EUR-Lex - 52005DC0388 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

³ Source: [Regional Development and Protection Programme for North Africa](#)



External Cooperation Strategy, which set out the overall direction and objectives of the EUAA for engagement with third countries. Through a needs assessment, the Agency identified interest from MENA countries to participate in exchanges at technical level under a regional project. The project design also considered lessons learnt, including:

- the need to ensure national authorities' ownership of projects through full engagement in development, implementation, project monitoring, and evaluation;
- the importance of providing an adequate response to needs and ensuring targeted support;
- the value of a flexible approach to adapt to changing needs, particularly in light of fast-paced political changes that would impact refugee protection in third countries;
- good practices, inputs and guidance from EU Delegations, the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), the former Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)⁴, UNHCR, IOM, and EU external policies such as Migration Dialogues and the RDPP NA.

3. Implementation of the action: current state of play

Asylum and migration-related EU-North Africa partnerships and mechanisms during the period 2020-2025

During the period 2020-2025, the EU maintained multiple collaborative partnerships with North African countries, guided by its policies on migration and asylum, neighbourhood, international cooperation, and those of its European External Action Service. Examples include:

- The EU-Africa Partnership on Migration and Mobility: The 'Cadiz Political Declaration and Action Plan 2023-2027'⁵ provides a non-binding cooperation structure for the Rabat Process, which focuses on migration and development;
- North Africa Window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (2020-2023)⁶: This instrument supported migration-related projects in North African countries, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt;
- Bilateral partnerships on migration between the EU and North African countries, e.g. with Morocco and Tunisia in 2023, and with Egypt in 2024.

The RDPP NA supported the region from 2016 to 2025 through seven consecutive phases⁷ with evolving budgets and implementing partners. During its first six phases, the project implemented EUR 92.6 million across 73 projects in support of Egypt, Niger, Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Chad⁸. The UNHCR and IOM were the largest implementing partners, along with organisations

⁴ This Directorate-General was operational until 1 February 2025. The Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf (DG MENA) and the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood have taken over its responsibilities.

⁵ <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/about/cadiz-action-plan>

⁶ https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/where-we-work/regions-countries/north-africa/regional_en

⁷ Source: [Phase 1 - RDPP North Africa](#)

⁸ In descending order of budget expenditure. Source: <https://rdppna.interno.gov.it/> accessed on 16 May 2025.

such as Save the Children, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Saint Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS), and the Italian Ministry of Interior. The RDPP NA's main activities included registration, refugee status determination and resettlement, capacity building, and direct assistance. It also provided support for child protection, assisted voluntary return and reintegration, awareness raising, infrastructural development, and protection of victims of trafficking⁹. In addition, the RDPP NA had a regional programme implemented by the UNHCR and the IOM involving capacity-building initiatives in the field of mixed migration, trafficking in human beings, international protection standards, and child protection. At the time of this evaluation, the seventh phase of the RDPP NA (2025-2028) was underway, implementing an additional portfolio with a budget of EUR 46 million.

From February 2021 to January 2024, Egypt and the EUAA implemented a bilateral roadmap for cooperation on international protection matters. This roadmap, co-funded by Denmark, included a wide range of capacity-building initiatives, complementary to the regional project. In October 2024, the two parties endorsed a second roadmap for cooperation, covering a two-year period until October 2026.

Progress on the EUAA Regional Pilot Project implementation

The RPP was designed to run from November 2020 to November 2023 but ultimately, lasted until May 2025, following a no-cost extension agreement with Czechia and Denmark. The project set up a results framework with detailed targets for project deliverables and delivered on many of its intended result outputs, as described below.

Exchanges at regional level foster the development of asylum legislation and systems in North Africa & Niger (output 1.1).

The Agency organised three events to enhance the knowledge and skills of participants from partner countries on asylum procedures and reception systems, with the support of Member State expertise:

1. **Regional conference, Cairo, Egypt October 2021:** With 80 participants from EU Member States, partner countries, and international organisations, the conference considered international protection and persons with specific protection needs. Participants appreciated its practical focus and depth of discussion, reflected by a satisfaction rate of 80 %.
2. **Study visit, Brussels, Belgium, September 2022:** Dealing with access to the asylum procedure of unaccompanied minors in Belgium, the study visit provided participants with an overview of the main characteristics of the Belgian asylum system and the decentralised nature of the asylum procedure. The event was attended by 21 participants from six partner countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia, and two EU Member States, namely Italy and Czechia. The satisfaction rate reached 85 %.
3. **Study visit, Vienna, Austria, October 2024:** Focusing on the asylum system of Austria, the study visit provided participants with practical insights into the different phases of the asylum procedures and the authorities and stakeholders involved. The event was attended by 27 participants from four partner countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco, and three EU

⁹ Source: <https://rdppna.interno.gov.it/> accessed on 16 May 2025.

Member States, namely Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The study visit received a satisfaction rate of 90 %, with participants reporting a positive experience with the event's organisation and content.

In addition, one participant from Libya participated in the **training of trainers** module on interviewing children (2022). Two participants from Egypt were trained as trainers on identifying victims of trafficking in human beings within the asylum context (2022). Presentations on protection in mixed movements were delivered at two workshops organised by the UNHCR in San Remo in May 2024 and April 2025.

Under this output, internal monitoring suggested that the RPP partially achieved its planned deliverables. It delivered one of the two planned regional thematic conferences (50 % achievement) and conducted two study visits to EU Member States (100 % achievement). The RPP did not organise the two foreseen EUAA regional training activities (0 % achievement). Moreover, three of six planned North African officials were trained as trainers in EUAA modules (50 % achievement).

Partner countries have access to asylum-related knowledge and products (output 1.2).

The Agency delivered two activities under this output:

1. **Workshop on transitioning to a national asylum system, Vienna, Austria, October 2024:** The event was attended by 30 representatives from EU+ countries, partner countries, and international organisations. Participants gained insight into the organisational aspects of establishing a national asylum system, while EU+ countries shared practical examples of transitions from UNHCR-led systems. The satisfaction rate was 90 %, with participants appreciating the high-quality content, networking opportunities, and practical examples. They also valued the opportunity to participate in back-to-back activities and support provided by the EUAA team.
2. **Translation of EUAA training modules:** 'Interviewing children' and 'Trafficking in human beings' into Arabic, 'Introduction to Vulnerability' into French, and 'Interviewing vulnerable persons' into both Arabic and French.

When comparing internal targets under this output, the RPP organised the planned regional seminar on information sharing with EU Member States (100 % achievement). While the intervention logic (Annex 3) foresaw the production of overviews, the design of a methodology/standard operating procedure (SOP) for regional exchanges on asylum, and translations, internal targets referred to the development of four knowledge products. In practice, three existing EUAA products were translated (38 % achievement¹⁰).

Exchange of good practices on access to the asylum procedure, with a focus on vulnerable groups is encouraged (output 2.1).

The EUAA organised several events to enhance knowledge and skills on asylum procedures and reception systems:

¹⁰ Translations increase the accessibility of existing EUAA tools. However, as translation services require less effort, this evaluation – when scoring achievements – considers a translation as equivalent to half a knowledge development product.

1. **Regional seminar on unaccompanied minors, Milan, Italy, June 2022:** The initiative provided an overview of best practices regarding the identification, access to the asylum procedure, and the referral of unaccompanied minors. The event was attended by 40 participants from eight EU Member States, including Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, and five partner countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Niger. The seminar received a satisfaction rate of 88 %, with participants noting the usefulness of the practical examples and the diverse backgrounds of attendees.
2. **Training sessions on vulnerabilities, Brussels, Belgium, September 2022:** These sessions focused mainly on children and on trafficking in human beings. They brought together 21 participants from partner countries including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia, and from two EU Member States, Czechia, and Italy. The trafficking session received a satisfaction rate of 87 %.
3. **Senior officials' regional conference, The Hague, Netherlands, June 2024:** With 53 participants from partner countries, EU Member States, and international organisations, the conference focused on international protection for vulnerable persons and received a satisfaction rate of 86 %.
4. **Regional training on children in asylum, Malta, May 2025:** Attended by 15 participants from Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Egypt, Libya, the Netherlands, and Sweden, the training introduced the main principles related to children in the asylum process in line with international and EU frameworks. Activities focused on indicators of potential vulnerability of children and possible safeguards to cater for these special needs and overall, received a satisfaction rate of 88 %.

Under this result output, the RPP organised the two planned regional workshops, seminars, and/or conferences on the needs of applicants with special needs (100 % achievement). It also implemented two regional training activities to identify, assess, and refer applicants with special needs (67 % achievement). The intervention logic also referred to indicative activities such as the development and roll-out of products on the identification of persons with special needs but these were not implemented.

Capacity of members of courts and tribunals on asylum legislation and processes is increased (output 2.2).

The EUAA organised or supported participation in several events to strengthen the professional development of judges in North Africa and Niger:

1. **Online workshop on qualification for international protection, May 2021:** Three judges from Morocco participated in this professional development workshop.
2. **International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges (IARMJ) Africa Chapter Biennial Pre-Conference and Conference, Arusha, Tanzania, November 2022:** The EUAA supported the participation of 12 judges from Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia. The conference had a satisfaction rate of 82 %, with participants appreciating the opportunity to connect with judges from across Africa and discuss judicial issues related to asylum and reception.
3. **IARMJ 13th World Conference, Netherlands, May 2023:** The EUAA supported the participation of nine judges from partner countries and three from the IARMJ attending. The conference had a satisfaction rate of 67 %, with feedback suggesting more time to cover a wide range of topics and interpretation into Arabic.

4. **Regional seminar on international protection, Malta, November 2023:** 41 participants from 12 partner countries, EU Member States, and international organisations attended. The seminar had a satisfaction rate of 86 %, with participants appreciating the topics covered and the opportunities for interaction.
5. **IARMJ – Africa Chapter Conference, October 2024:** The EUAA supported the participation of 13 judges from Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. The EUAA project team organised a side-meeting with the judges on future judicial activities.

Overall, under this output, the RPP organised the planned regional workshop on asylum legislation for members of courts and tribunals (100 % achievement). In addition, it facilitated North African participation in three related capacity-building activities organised by the IARMJ and supported 15 participants from North Africa and Niger to attend EUAA judicial activities. Moreover, three professional development series on judicial analysis were translated into French and Arabic, exceeding the initial target of two (150 % achievement).

Reception officials participate in capacity building programmes on reception models and practices (output 3.1).

The EUAA organised two events to support the development of reception officials:

1. **Regional thematic training activity on reception, Malta, December 2024:** 18 participants from three partner countries, namely Egypt, Libya, and Morocco, three EU Member States, namely Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and two international organisations attended. The initiative provided an overview of the reception process in line with current EU legislation, covering both procedural and practical aspects. It also focused on the actors involved and the institutional support provided by various stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations working in reception. The training received a satisfaction rate of 90 %, with participants valuing the topics, quality of presentations, and the opportunity to exchange information.
2. **Regional workshop on reception, Malta, December 2024:** 25 participants from five partner countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Türkiye, four EU Member States, namely Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden, and two international organisations attended. The workshop provided a platform for exchanging information on national reception procedures and applicable provisions under EU legislation. It also allowed practitioners from partner countries and EU Member States to share their experiences and best practices on reception models. The workshop received a satisfaction rate of 92 %, with participants highlighting the value of the discussions and exchanges.

Under this output, the RPP delivered the planned regional workshop on the EU reception framework (100 % achievement). It also supported 18 participants from North Africa and EU Member States in a EUAA training activity on reception models and practices (100 % achievement).

4. Evaluation findings

Building on the above, this chapter provides an analysis of the evaluation questions. It triangulates evidence from different data sources such as desk research, interviews, and focus group discussions.

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

The pilot nature of the RPP allowed the Agency to explore collaborative opportunities with national authorities in North Africa and Niger.

The project's effectiveness, as measured by its monitoring mechanism, was largely positive, meeting most of its internal targets. However, in practice, results were mixed, with some outputs showing significant achievements, while others facing challenges. Additionally, frequent ad hoc requests disrupted coherent activity planning, complicating the assessment of overall effectiveness.

- Output 1.1, concerning the development of asylum legislation and systems, achieved 50 % of its targets, with study visits to EU Member States being a notable achievement (100 %). However, EUAA regional training activities, and training of trainers were less effective, at 0 % and 50 % respectively.
- Output 1.2, concerning access to asylum-related knowledge and products, achieved 69 % of its targets. No new knowledge products for the project were developed, given the complexity of adapting EUAA tools to third country realities. Instead, three EUAA training modules were translated, enhancing accessibility for French- and Arabic-speaking audiences.
- Output 2.1, focusing on exchanging good practices on access to the asylum procedure, achieved 84 % of its targets. Delivery included one seminar and a regional conference as well as training activities to identify, assess, and refer applicants with special needs.
- Output 2.2, aimed at enhancing the capacity of court and tribunal members, exceeded 100 % on average.
- Output 3.1, concerning capacity building for reception officials, achieved 100 % of its targets.

The overall satisfaction rate across activities, based on participant feedback, was very good (84 %). An outlier was the participation of nine North African judges in the IARMJ 13th World Conference, where satisfaction rate dropped to 67 %. This was an external activity where the project funded participation costs but did not have an active role in the event. Critical feedback focused mainly on the heavy programme and absence of interpretation in Arabic by the conference organisers.

Concerning the effectiveness of the project's activities, regional workshops, study visits, training support, and translation of key documents proved particularly successful. In contrast, EUAA regional training activities on international protection under output 1.1 (0 % achievement), the development of knowledge tools (replaced by translations), and training of trainers in EUAA modules (50 % achievement) fell short of planned targets. Overall, however, the project still achieved about 80 %¹¹ of

¹¹ This figure represents the average of the different output progress percentages, with each output capped at 100 %. If the overachievement of outputs was included, the average would be 112 %. This cap was applied as some of the targets were very low and would skew the overall picture.

its targets, demonstrating substantial effectiveness. These fluctuations in achievement rates reflect the unpredictable nature of the project, which required a high level of flexibility.

The project's geographical coverage included Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia. However, as of July 2023, following the *coup d'état*, cooperation with Niger was suspended in line with the relevant EU policy. While the project was originally designed to take place over three years, it was ultimately implemented over four years and seven months. This delay was linked with a number of challenges, at times affecting the project's efficiency.

- The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project's start, by restricting staff mobility and limiting in-person engagement with partner countries;
- The geopolitical situation and wider EU relations with the envisaged countries affected implementation (e.g. suspension of cooperation with Niger);
- High staff turnover within both the EUAA and partner countries limited adequate planning and coordination. In addition, the Agency's staff recruitment process was time-consuming and took up to one year during which no reserve lists were available;
- Linguistic diversity required additional translation and interpretation efforts in Arabic, English, and French;
- EUAA's limited control over participant nominations from partner organisations led to delays and posed organisational and logistical challenges, including venue selection, travel, and accommodation arrangements. Additional mismatches in the proposed participant profiles further reduced the overall effectiveness of activities;
- Limited participation from partner countries in the regular EUAA training modules was noted, largely because these were primarily offered in English, whereas French and Arabic are the main languages spoken in the region;
- Constraints in certain procurement contracts, such as event service limitations, generated practical challenges affecting timely implementation.

The overall budget of the project was EUR 2.2 million, of which EUR 1.7 million (77 %) had been spent by early June 2025. The project foresaw the recruitment of five personnel over a 36-month period (180 person-months), under the coordination of the Agency's statutory staff. In practice, the project was implemented by a team of up to three project staff over 55 months (165 person-months), recruited at various stages between 2020 and 2025. With 77 % of the overall budget spent and 92 % of the planned human resources used, the lower result implementation rate (80 %) is justifiable from a cost-efficiency perspective.

The project was coherent with EU and Member State objectives, including the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which places a renewed emphasis on EU's partnerships with third countries and aims to develop closer migration partnerships with North African countries. It was associated with the RDPP NA and coordinated closely with DG HOME, DG NEAR, and the relevant EU delegations. Within the EUAA, it engaged EU+ countries through the regular meetings of the Third Country Cooperation Network as well as the dedicated MENA network. The project was not only co-funded by voluntary contributions of Czechia and Denmark, but also mobilised expert support from Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. As some of the activities were similar in nature, there was also coordination with key partners such as the UNHCR, the IOM, and the

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). At times, there were opportunities to involve key EU+ stakeholders more proactively.

Internally, the project maintained close collaboration with the Training and Professional Development Centre and the Asylum Knowledge Centre. However, internal competing priorities (e.g. implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum) limited the availability of internal technical expertise needed to deliver the planned activities. While the project achieved synergies and collaborations with the EUAA bilateral roadmap with Egypt, there remained a need to define the complementarity more clearly between the different actions of the Agency. Within the project itself, enhanced coordination across the various activities could have achieved stronger outcomes.

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

As a pilot initiative, the project was innovative in many ways. It allowed the Agency, for the first time, to engage through a regional project with North African authorities on Common European Asylum System (CEAS)-related matters, in close cooperation with EU Member States. It was originally anticipated that the project's added value would lie in the Agency's ability to mobilise EU Member State expertise, thereby giving third countries access to a wide pool of EU know-how in a flexible and tailor-made manner. In practice, the project has established a network by involving 400 asylum and reception experts from North Africa and Niger and EU+ countries in various capacity-building activities since 2020. This included 132 participants from 13 EU+ countries and 187 participants from six partner third countries participating in workshops, seminars, exchanges, and training. Despite these achievements in relation to the intended added value, the project remained at a pilot and exploratory stage; with more coherent planning and integration across its various activities, it could have generated even greater added value and synergies.

Assessing the EU added value of the project is challenging in the context of different national asylum and reception systems in third countries. Nonetheless, the Agency's expertise provided information and good practices on international protection and reception to the participating countries. According to most interviewees, this increased interest and awareness regarding EU asylum processes, thus promoting CEAS standards. Feedback also highlighted that practical training approaches (e.g. study visits) were of greater added value compared to more theoretical activities (e.g. conferences).

Overall, the project served as a pilot contribution – linked to the RDPP NA – to forthcoming EU engagement and dialogue with North African partner countries under the external dimension of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

4.3. Is the action relevant?

North African countries and Niger, due to their geographic location, have over time received significant contingents of asylum seekers and refugees and responded with a wide array of national and international response mechanisms. These countries are also of particular relevance for the EU in terms of migratory flows, given their role as key countries of origin, transit, or destination along important migration routes to Europe. This underlines the importance of EU engagement in the region in the context of EU's external dimension of migration.

As part of its initial phase, the project carried out a needs assessment between November 2020 and June 2021, engaging approximately 40 stakeholders across the region through targeted consultations. Four key needs were identified:

- developing national asylum systems;
- improving access to asylum procedures;
- supporting persons with special needs;
- establishing efficient appeal systems.

An online consultation with third-country representatives in April 2024 confirmed that these needs remain valid. The project's intervention logic incorporated them and added reception capacity-building programmes. Over time, however, the partner countries' priorities shifted, favouring results 2 and 3. In response, the project's focus was adapted to prioritise these, leading to lower implementation of result 1. While the project's flexibility in adapting to changing stakeholder needs is a positive aspect, it also highlights a misalignment between initial design and actual needs.

The project's activities on EU experience with asylum appeal mechanisms had limited practical relevance due to the nature and availability of such systems in partner countries, limiting the direct applicability of EU expertise to the local context.

The Agency applied a variety of capacity-building approaches, including conferences, seminars, training, study visits, and workshops. The complementarity of these approaches was considered a key strength of the project. However, challenges in participant selection – particularly deviations from the intended profiles – sometimes undermined the relevance and effectiveness of capacity-building efforts.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The RPP project was a pilot initiative undertaken by the EUAA in cooperation with national authorities in North Africa and Niger to improve national asylum and reception systems. It engaged 400 asylum and reception experts from this region and EU+ countries in various capacity-building activities, which helped to promote cooperation and knowledge-sharing. With budget expenditure of EUR 1.7 million, the project focused on exchanging best practices, training officials, and developing knowledge products to enhance migration and asylum management in the partner countries. In May 2025, a stakeholder meeting was organised, enabling 28 external stakeholders to contribute to the evaluation findings.

Through a needs assessment, the Agency identified four key areas for improvement: developing national asylum systems, improving access to procedures, supporting persons with special needs, and establishing efficient appeal systems. The project adapted to changing priorities, focusing on access and special needs, but this led to lower implementation in other areas, such as result 1. The flexibility applied throughout the project can be seen as a strength but it also highlights a misalignment between



initial design and actual needs. Limited applicability of EU practical expertise to different national contexts and mismatches in participant profiles further affected the project's overall relevance.

In terms of effectiveness, the project achieved a reasonable level of progress, meeting an estimated 80 % of its internal targets, although there was some room for improvement. The Agency delivered on activities such as regional workshops, study visits, translation, and training, exceeding expectations in areas such as access to asylum procedures and support to persons with special needs. It was less effective in the areas of training of trainers on EUAA modules, knowledge development, and regional training on international protection. Results 2 and 3 were, however, implemented as planned.

The project's implementation faced various challenges that affected its overall efficiency. Examples were the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical developments, procurement constraints, linguistic diversity, limited control over participant nominations, communication difficulties, and staff turnover. While the project experienced a delay of one year and seven months, it remained within the planned budget (77 % utilised) and the allocated staffing levels (92 %). Considering the above, the project was reasonably cost-efficient.

Internally, the project demonstrated sound coherence and was largely supported by the Agency's centres, although, at times, mobilising internal expertise was challenging due to competing priorities. Externally, the project coordinated with key stakeholders, including national focal points, the European Commission, the UNHCR, and EU+ countries, although there were instances where proactive communication and collaboration could have been stronger.

In terms of EU added value, the project mobilised CEAS expertise for partner countries. With 132 participants from 13 EU+ countries and 187 participants from six partner third countries, the project aimed to build capacity and promote EU standards. However, it is difficult to assess whether the project's contribution was of significant EU added value particularly as asylum mechanisms in third countries differ substantially from those available in the EU.

Table 1 provides an overview of the assessment of the evaluation criteria by result, based on the evaluation team's analysis and triangulation of available data sources.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria by result¹²

	Output 1.1 Asylum systems	Output 1.2 Asylum knowledge	Output 2.1 Asylum (vulnerable groups)	Output 2.2 Courts and tribunals	Output 3.1 Reception
Relevance	Fair/Good	Good	Very good	Good	Good
Effectiveness	Fair	Fair/Good	Very good	Very good	Very good
Efficiency	Fair/Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Coherence	Good	Good	Very good	Good	Good
EU added value	Fair/Good	Good	Very good	Fair/good	Good

5.2. Good practices and lessons learnt

This evaluation identified several good practices, which merit continuation or replication:

- use of focal points from partner third countries allowing for smooth communication;
- active engagement of EU+ countries, United Nations agencies, and DG HOME in different modalities and fora;
- effective internal communication and coordination with the Agency's centres;
- study visits allowing for peer-to-peer exchanges, hands-on training, and practical experience, while accounting for partner country perspectives to enhance applicability, learning, and relevance for participants;
- support from EU delegations to obtain feedback from ministries and ensure timely nominations of participants;
- networking and relationship-building among participants.

Participants in the final evaluation meeting in Malta made different suggestions to enhance the project's networking, coordination, and communication. These contributed to the following practical **lessons learnt**:

- Involve stakeholders in project planning and implementation by:
 - increasing the role of national contact points and participatory approach in designing new activities;
 - proactively engaging key internal, national, EU, and United Nations stakeholders to build synergies;
 - further developing and expanding strategic implementation partnerships with regional organisations in the North African countries;
 - involving EU Member States and partner third countries in discussions at the strategic level;

¹² The five evaluation criteria were rated using a four-point scale (insufficient, fair, good, very good). These ratings are judgements based on the triangulation of different information sources, such as interviews and internal data.

- in view of the high mobility of focal points among participating stakeholders, proactively preparing onboarding briefs with key information.
- Optimise the participation of project partners by:
 - increasing the quota for third countries to participate in capacity-building initiatives;
 - providing more train-the-trainer sessions to allow the design of follow-up initiatives;
 - ensuring continuity of participants across different activities to enable follow-up and synergies;
 - defining clear activity objectives and setting profiles and selection processes for participants;
 - sharing activity summaries with the entire network, even with non-participants, to ensure transparency.
- Adapt activities to generate maximum benefit for participants by:
 - organising more activities to encourage cross-regional South-South cooperation;
 - considering tripartite collaborations to link a leading EU+ country with a specific third country within the EUAA regional project framework;
 - ensuring regularity of events throughout the duration of the project;
 - collecting data to better understand national processes and needs ahead of capacity-building events.

In addition to lessons learnt, the evaluation identified some **horizontal considerations**, which are beyond the scope of the RPP. These should be taken on board in future projects and evaluations.

- There is a need to ensure **preparedness for projects with partner third countries** in terms of human resources and contracting by:
 - maintaining reserve lists to allow for swift replacements in light of the high mobility of project staff partly due to short contract durations;
 - ensuring that activities proposed in the project documents are backed by an adequate contractual framework.
- The project, as a pilot initiative, revealed that there is still a lack of **clarity regarding the interpretation of the EUAA's mandate when it comes to supporting non-candidate third countries**. Article 35(1) of the EUAA Regulation¹³ states that '[...] the Agency shall facilitate and encourage operational cooperation between Member States and third countries, within the framework of the Union's external policy [...]'. The Agency can assist third countries with expertise and capacity building, and implement regional development and protection programmes. Article 35(5) further states that '[...] The Agency may launch and finance technical assistance projects in third countries [...]'. While there is a clear interest from EU+ countries, and external cooperation is one of EUAA's strategic goals¹⁴, the Agency's approach towards non-candidate partner third countries in the MENA region is not fully streamlined and remains relatively ad hoc in practice. The

¹³ Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010, (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021, p. 1).

¹⁴ [EUAA Strategy 2024 - 2029 | European Union Agency for Asylum](#)

EUAA External Cooperation Strategy offers general strategic direction, while allowing a degree of flexibility in the nature and scope of capacity-building support for third countries. However, given that **non-candidate** third countries are not bound by the CEAS, there is a need to better define the extent to which the EUAA can provide tailored training packages and knowledge tools when cooperating with MENA countries. The Agency does not engage in drafting or revising national laws and by-laws, as this falls outside its mandate. Nonetheless, there is a need for further reflection concerning the nature and modalities when providing technical assistance and hands-on support. Clarifying this will be essential for defining the long-term vision and objectives of EUAA engagement in the MENA region, beyond the timeframe of the current project.

- EUAA regional cooperation with North Africa takes place within a wider EU cooperation context. The current pilot project has shown the importance of **closely liaising with the European Commission** (particularly DG HOME and DG MENA) to ensure alignment with evolving EU policies; however, this requires even more proactive consultation and collaboration mechanisms. The same principle applies to key international partners such as the UNHCR, ICMPD, and the IOM.
- Project management requires different **competencies** (e.g. finance, procurement, human resources, planning, monitoring, CEAS-related content, and communication) which may not be fully available within small and highly mobile project teams. The Agency should ensure adequate horizontal support and backup to enable such projects to meet the required standards and deliver effectively.
- In-country presence (e.g. in Egypt, linked to its national roadmap) allows better coordination and more meaningful follow-up. While initial pilots have shown that in practice, this is not easy to implement, the Agency needs to develop a clear vision to ensure a more effective and structured **presence on the ground to support third country cooperation**. This is particularly relevant as the new EUAA regulation foresees the deployment of liaison officers in these countries.

5.3. Recommendations

This evaluation proposes the following recommendations based on the triangulation of findings:

1. Develop a **longer-term rolling workplan** based on a strategic direction and clear objectives. Examples include:
 - Define tailored activities (within a thematic cluster) to optimise possible synergies between the different project components;
 - Define clear complementarity with relevant national EUAA roadmaps (e.g. Egypt).
2. Improve **project management**, in particular project monitoring, and adapt it to the nature of the project. Examples include:
 - Develop and implement a project monitoring and evaluation plan;
 - Simplify the intervention logic to focus mainly on activity monitoring around key outputs and identify milestones;



- Explore training monitoring approaches such as those following the Kirkpatrick model and focus on priority areas.
3. Improve the continuous and specialised **financial and contract management** of the project. Examples include:
- Ensure backup and support mechanisms by statutory staff;
 - Anticipate the contractual space for reliable and effective events service providers;
 - Pilot the pooling of human resources amongst the different sector teams.
4. Balance carefully the regional **language diversity** with efficiency considerations. Examples include:
- Promote the development of a collection of tools translated into Arabic;
 - Find ways to make translations more affordable and of higher quality;
 - Recruit Arabic-speaking project team members.

Annex 1: Methodology and analytical models used

The aim of this exercise was to answer the following evaluation questions, covering the European Commission's Better Regulation standard criteria.

Criteria	Questions
Relevance¹⁵	To what extent was the pilot project in line with the stakeholders' needs and the Agency's objectives?
Effectiveness	Did the project achieve what was planned? Were there other (unexpected) factors that influenced the results? What were good indicators to measure progress?
Efficiency	To what extent were the costs (including inputs and human resources) of the project justified given the results?
Coherence¹⁶	To what extent was the project coherent internally and externally? Was the project in line with EU MENA-related policies?
EU added value¹⁷	What was the added value resulting from the pilot project?

To answer the above questions, the evaluation team used a mixed-method approach covering the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data sources. These included desk review and analysis, as well as individual and group interviews, with twelve persons interviewed by the evaluation team. In addition, 28 stakeholder representatives from Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Egypt, Germany, Libya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Sweden, as well as from the ICMPD and UNHCR participated in dedicated evaluation focus group discussions organised during the RPP closing event in May 2025 in Malta.

Given the nature of the programme, a significant limitation was the difficulty to measure tangible achievements in a quantifiable manner. Although the project was guided by an intervention logic, it was followed up by a slightly different results framework which had many limitations, impeding a coherent assessment of effectiveness. The measurement of achievements at activity and output levels provided only an overview of delivery and did not explore longer-term effects. Environmental and social impacts were not addressed in this report.

¹⁵ The relevance of the project was assessed from the perspective of third-country partners, as well as EU institutions and Member States.

¹⁶ The external coherence of the project was determined on the basis of EU external policy and political priorities.

¹⁷ Added value was assessed mainly at activity level. Examples included elements of the project that participants valued most.

Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators/ descriptors	Norms/judgement criteria	Sources of evidence
Relevance: How relevant was the Agency's project? Were the capacity-building activities adapted to the context and needs of the partner countries?			
Optional prompt: What activities were most beneficial and why?	Priority areas identified in activity planning documents	Comparison of priority areas with implemented areas	Activity documents, monitoring and reporting tools, interviews, focus groups
Effectiveness: To what extent were the planned activities of the project implemented?			
Optional prompts: Were activities delivered as expected? If not, what are solutions/alternatives to achieve better results? What were good indicators to measure progress?	Activity progress indicators, satisfaction rates	Comparison of planned targets vs achieved	Monitoring and reporting tools, interviews, focus groups
Efficiency: To what extent was the project implemented efficiently?			
Optional prompts: To what extent were you satisfied with the organisation of the different activities? Was communication and organisation efficient? Were there any delays? Was the allocation of resources justified?	Output and input indicator values, elements of (in)efficiency	Relationship between achieved outputs vs inputs, qualitative challenges (processes and related indicators)	Qualitative and quantitative monitoring data, financial records, nature of underlying processes needed to achieve the planned results, interviews, focus groups
Coherence: To what extent was the pilot project coherent internally and externally?			
How well did activities align with related initiatives at national or regional level? How did the project collaborate internally with other EUAA actors? Was the project in line with EU MENA-related policies?	Nature of activities and coordination processes	Level of coordination and synergies with regional, national, or internal Agency actors	Monitoring data, planning documents, interviews, focus groups
EU added value: What was the added value resulting from the EUAA's project implementation?			
What is the added value of the regional project compared to a project implemented at the national level or by an EU+ country alone?	Existence of elements of EUAA added value	Number and level of added value elements	Monitoring data, planning documents, focus groups, interviews

Annex 3: Intervention logic



1.1.2. Study visit to an EU Member State with recent establishment of asylum process (e.g. Cyprus);

1.1.3. Training on the EU legal framework on international protection.

Support under output 1.2:

1.2.1. Production of overviews on EU+ countries practices and North Africa and Niger;

1.2.2. Methodology/standard operating procedure for regional information exchange on asylum;

1.2.3. Workshops/written guidance on how EU Member States transitioned to a national asylum system, based on EUAA Query;

1.2.4. Translations of asylum-related documents.

Support under output 2.1:

2.1.1. Regional workshops and/or conferences or seminars on addressing the needs of applicants with special needs;

2.1.2. Development of products on the identification of persons with special needs;

2.1.3. Roll-out of tools to identify, assess, and refer applicants with special needs (IPSN, SNVA, and Referral Tools);

2.1.4. Training on asylum-related matters.

Support under output 2.2:

2.2.1. Regional workshops for members of courts and tribunals on asylum legislation;

2.2.2. Translation of Professional Development Series in French and Arabic;

2.2.3. Participation of North Africa and Niger in the EUAA regional workshop for members of courts and tribunals in Paris.

Support under output 3.1:

3.1.1. Workshop on reception to explain the EU framework;

3.1.2. Training on introduction to reception.

Inputs

Financial resources: The overall budget of the project amounted to EUR 2.2 million, including an EUAA contribution of EUR 1 129 709. The remaining half was co-funded by Czechia and Denmark, with voluntary contributions in equal shares (approximately EUR 550 000 each).

Human resources: The project intended to deploy five personnel over a 36-month period (180 person-months), under the coordination of the Agency's statutory staff.

External factors

Migratory pressure; national and international laws, policies, and practices; availability of financial and human resources; actions by national counterparts, international and non-governmental organisations.