



Roadmap for Cooperation between the EUAA and Serbia (2024 - 2027)





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The development and implementation of the Roadmap for cooperation between the EUAA and Serbia (2024-2027): strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line with the CEAS and EU standards is supported through the “Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans”, a project funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Acronyms

AC – Administrative Court;

APD – Asylum Procedures Directive;

ATP – Access to Asylum Procedure;

BIA/BID – Best Interest Assessment/Best Interest Determination;

CEAS – Common European Asylum System;

CoE – Council of Europe;

COI – Country of Origin Information;

CRM – Commissariat for Refugees and Migration;

CSO – Civil Society Organisation;

ESQF - European Sectoral Qualifications Framework;

EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum;

EU – European Union;

EU MS – European Union Member State;

EU+ – EU Member State and Associated Countries;

EWPS - Early Warning and Preparedness System;

IOM – International Organisation for Migration;

IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance;

IPSN – Identification of Persons with Special needs;

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation;

MoFWD – Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography;

Mol – Ministry of Interior;

MARRI – Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative;

MoLEVSA – Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs;

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation;

OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe;

SNVA – Special Needs and Vulnerability Assessment;

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure;

TtT – Train the trainers;

UAM – Unaccompanied minor;

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Introduction and Background

The overall objective of the “Roadmap for cooperation between the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and Serbia (2024 - 2027): strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and European Union standards” (hereinafter: EUAA – Serbia Roadmap) is to enhance the protection space for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection by strengthening the asylum and reception system in Serbia in line with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and European Union Member States’ practices.

The EUAA – Serbia Roadmap identifies priority areas where the EUAA support to Serbia authorities has an added value and, where relevant, has a direct impact on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the European Commission annual Serbia Report ¹ and in the framework of the accession negotiations related to Chapter 24: “Justice, Freedom and Security”. Furthermore, this Roadmap contributes to an increased harmonisation of asylum and reception systems at a regional level.

The EUAA – Serbia Roadmap has been developed jointly between the Ministry of Interior of Serbia, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, other relevant Serbian authorities and the EUAA. The relevant authorities have been included in the design of activities in line with their responsibilities within the asylum and reception system of Serbia. Implementation is likewise planned in cooperation with all relevant institutions, according to their responsibilities. Some activities include the possibility of having a broader scope in terms of stakeholders (such as other Ministries, national institutions, and civil society).

The implementation period of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap is 36 months from its endorsement by both sides². During the implementation phase, the EUAA and Serbian authorities agree to an open two-way communication to ensure smooth implementation of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap. The EUAA – Serbia Roadmap can be revised, if need arises, upon agreement of the EUAA and the relevant Serbian authorities. The revision shall be confirmed in writing by the EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of Serbia.

The development and implementation of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap is co-financed through the EU funded programme “Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans” and EUAA’s own budget.

The **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**, which was adopted in May 2024, is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level. Most of the legislation under the New Pact will enter into application after a two-year transitional period, a timeframe that largely overlaps with the reference period of this Roadmap. As the New Pact will considerably reform the CEAS, and as preparations for its application progress, the

¹ European Commission SWD (2023) 695 final, Serbia 2023 Report, 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_695_Serbia.pdf

² During the development and finalisation of this Roadmap, some activities which are logical continuation of mutually agreed support have been implemented before the endorsement of this Roadmap.

implementation of this Roadmap will also take these developments into account as appropriate.

Methodology

a. Needs Assessment and Rationale for the intervention

The EUAA - Serbia Roadmap, is a collaborative effort between Serbian authorities and the EUAA, building upon the evaluation of the second-generation Roadmap and discussions on priorities and needs during Senior Officials Meeting (in February 2024). The Serbian authorities and the EUAA have involved all relevant authorities in the identification of areas for cooperation, aligning with their responsibilities within the asylum and reception systems in Serbia. The Roadmap determines the anticipated outcomes and outputs to be realised during its implementation period. It also presents a set of indicative activities designed to contribute to the achievement of the agreed-upon outcomes and outputs.

The Roadmap contributes to the EU accession process and accession negotiations, aiming to develop comprehensive asylum and reception systems in accordance with international and European standards. Considerations have been made regarding the interim benchmarks and recommendations outlined in the European Commission's annual Serbia Report for Chapter 24: "Justice, Freedom, and Security." It contributes to addressing elements that require attention as the country progresses on its European integration path.

Efforts have been invested in coordinating with international stakeholders to identify synergies and prevent overlap with existing initiatives in Serbia, besides FRONTEX, also with UNHCR, IOM and the Council of Europe, as well as relevant projects financed by the European Commission services and EU Member States. Where opportunities for synergies were identified, a collaborative approach with national authorities and international stakeholders has been agreed upon to enhance the outcomes of the Roadmap.

b. Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to ensure that the implementation of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap is monitored and that the agreed outputs are reached, the EUAA and the Serbian authorities will systematically collect data and information on the implementation of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap. The Serbian authorities and the EUAA will draw-up reports on the progress of the roadmap implementation at the end of each year. This will allow the relevant Serbian authorities and the EUAA to monitor and evaluate the progress in reaching the specified outcomes.

At the conclusion or towards the end of the implementation period of the EUAA – Serbia Roadmap, an evaluation of the EUAA's implementation of the roadmap may be conducted. In that case, the Serbian authorities will be required to cooperate with the evaluators by sharing, amongst others, monitoring data and information, and participating in interviews, workshops or other means for collecting feedback. The final evaluation report will be shared with the national authorities and will be made publicly available by the EUAA. An updated needs assessment exercise will be conducted at the same time to assess revised needs, with a view to further cooperation. Regular updates and coordination meetings will facilitate the adjustment of Roadmap activities and implementation to achieve the agreed results and impact.

General Pre-conditions/Assumptions

- All relevant stakeholders from both EUAA and Serbia are committed to participating actively in the agreed activities and to implement the agreed commitments in line with the agreed timeline;
- The EUAA and Serbia are committed to adjusting the implementation to leverage the experience and knowledge gained from the activities carried out;
- The EUAA and Serbia maintain a constructive two-way communication at technical level;
- Serbia and EUAA financial and human resources are available for effective and timely implementation.

Summary

The overall objective of the “Roadmap for cooperation between the EUAA and Serbia (2024 – 2027): strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line with the CEAS and European Union standards” is to enhance the protection space for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection in the Republic of Serbia in line with the CEAS and EU standards. Based on the evaluation of the previous Roadmap, joint prioritised needs assessment and technical formulation efforts, and with commitment secured from the EUAA and the Serbian authorities, the Roadmap will pursue the following high-level outcomes (1) strengthening of asylum related legislation, institutions, and systems in line with the CEAS and EU standards, (2) establishing effective asylum procedures and (3) an effective reception system in Serbia. The intervention logic is summarised through the following diagram tree and further elaborated in Section VI with a description of indicative activities that will contribute to the achievement of the agreed outcomes and outputs.



Areas of priority and indicative Activities

Impact		
Enhanced protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in Serbia		
High-level Outcome I Contributing to the strengthening of the asylum related legislation, institutions and systems, in line with the CEAS and EU standards	High-level Outcome II Contributing to effective asylum procedures	High-level Outcome III Contributing to an effective reception system
Outcome 1: Asylum-related legislation and procedures aligned with CEAS and EU Practices	Outcome 4: Strengthened access to asylum procedures	Outcome 7: Strengthened reception system aligned with EU and EUAA standards for reception conditions
Output 1.1 Enhanced alignment of the asylum legislation with the CEAS	Output 4.1 Enhanced information provision on International Protection and rights and duties of the asylum seeker/refugee	Output 7.1 Enhanced reception conditions and case management with a focus on vulnerable groups
Output 1.2 Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Implemented	Output 4.2 Enhanced identification of persons who may wish and apply for international protection	Output 7.2 Improved strategic management and quality monitoring of asylum reception system
Output 1.3 Authorities exchange knowledge and information with the EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices	Outcome 5: Strengthened capacity of national authorities to identify, assess and respond to persons with special needs	
Outcome 2: Strengthened training system on asylum and reception	Output 5.1 Enhanced identification, vulnerability assessment and referral of person with special needs to relevant authorities	
Output 2.1 National authorities address asylum and reception staff learning needs sustainably, using EUAA curriculum and applying EU standards	Output 5.2 Enhanced right compliant age assessment procedure	
Outcome 3: Contingency planning and crisis response capacities aligned with EU standards and EUMS practices	Outcome 6: Enhanced quality of decision making	
Output 3.1 Revision of the contingency plan in Serbia	Output 6.1 Enhanced technical capacity of the Asylum authorities to manage and assess asylum claims	
	Output 6.2 Standardised COI system	
	Output 6.3 Strengthened appeal remedy to the asylum decisions	

I. Contributing to the strengthening of the asylum related legislation, institutions and systems, in line with the CEAS and EU standards

1. Asylum-related legislation and procedures aligned with CEAS and EU practices

Outputs (expected results)	<p>Output 1.1. Enhanced alignment of the asylum legislation with the CEAS³</p> <p>Output 1.2. Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Implemented</p> <p>Output 1.3. Authorities acquire knowledge and information on the EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices</p>
Responsible Authorities/Target groups	<p>Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office)</p> <p>Asylum Commission</p> <p>Administrative Court</p> <p>The Commissariat of Refugees and Migration (CRM)</p>
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The current international protection framework in Serbia is governed by the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, Official Gazette no. 24/2018, adopted in 2018 and currently under revision.</p> <p>Other relevant laws include the Law on Foreigners,⁴ the General Administrative Procedure Act (GAPA),⁵ the Administrative Disputes Act (ADA), and the Law on Migration Management.⁶</p> <p>The legal framework on international protection is largely in line with the EU acquis. The EC noted that improvements are needed to further align legislation, specifically regarding effective access to the procedure, appeal bodies, rights and obligations of applicants/persons under international protection, free legal aid, and safe third-country procedure.⁷ The legal framework is currently under review and will also take into account the new Pact on Migration and Asylum.</p>

³ In light of anticipated revisions to the legislative framework in Serbia and potential implications stemming from the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

⁴ Serbia, Law on Foreigners, Official Gazette no. 24/2018 and 31/2019

⁵ Serbia, General Administrative Procedure Act, Official Gazette no. 18/2016

⁶ Serbia, Law on Migration Management, Official Gazette no.107/2012

⁷ European Commission SWD (2023) 695 final, Serbia 2023 Report, 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement, p 68.



	<p>Additional support needs have been identified, particularly at the level of operationalising the legal framework. Under the previous Roadmaps, the EUAA supported the development and proposed methodology of a Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism for the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, in line with the Action Plan under Chapter 24. However, the piloting of this tool was not completed for endorsement and regular implementation by the relevant Serbian authorities.</p> <p>Further support in this area could be considered. Based on the outcomes and recommendations of regular monitoring of asylum legislation implementation, the EUAA could propose actions to support authorities in drafting secondary legislation and internal guidelines (SoPs) to regulate procedures and guide competent authorities as needed. This would ensure the full implementation of the asylum framework in line with current and future EU legislation.</p> <p>Additionally, national authorities will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and information on EUAA and EU+ countries' policies and practices through their continued and expanded participation in EUAA expert networks and peer-to-peer exchanges with EU+ and the EUAA.</p>
Pre-condition(s)/ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All relevant authorities and stakeholders are open and committed to developing effective communication channels and cooperation mechanisms. • Approval of the draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Action Plan of the Asylum and Temporary Protection Law by relevant Serbian authorities.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the draft amendment Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection. • Pilot Monitoring report(s) on operationalisation of the asylum related legislation drafted. • Operating procedures and workflows related to implementation of asylum legislation are developed/updated based on outcome of the monitoring exercise. • Serbian authorities informed on EU MS discussions/practices on Reception and Asylum.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 1.1. Enhanced alignment of the asylum legislation with the CEAS</p> <p><i>Activity 1.1.1. Review of the asylum legislation: EUAA support to the national Working Group/s through expert advice on the CEAS, and related review of the national legislation and</i></p>

	<p><i>legislative proposals in view of possible amendments/revision with New Pact on Migration.</i></p> <p>Output 1.2. Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Implemented</p> <p><i>Activity 1.2.1. Support authorities to pilot collection and analysis of the data related to asylum and reception and drafting of a comprehensive Monitoring Report, in line with agreed Monitoring Framework and Methodology.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 1.2.2. Expert mission/follow up meeting to support the periodic implementation of the M&E Framework based on the pilot.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 1.2.3. Organisation of field or online study visit to exchange practices on Monitoring asylum and reception processes.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 1.2.4. Supporting authorities to standardise and enhance the quality of asylum tools and procedures based on recommendations from monitoring reports, through the provision of expert support (as outlined in the completion of output 1.2).</i></p> <p>Output 1.3 Authorities exchange knowledge and information with the EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices</p> <p><i>Activity 1.3.1. Participation in specific EUAA thematic networks and other exchange opportunities</i></p>
Synergies	UNHCR may be invited to participate in the national working group/s to monitor the implementation of the asylum related legislation.



2. Strengthened training system on asylum and reception

Output (expected results)	Output 2.1 National authorities address asylum and reception staff learning needs sustainably, using EUAA curriculum and applying EU standards.
Responsible Authorities/ target group	Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office) Asylum Commission Administrative Court The Commissariat of Refugees and Migration (CRM)
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>Since 2015, the Asylum Office and the Commissariat of Refugees and Migration have undergone various training programmes related to asylum and reception. These training sessions were organized by different stakeholders, including the EUAA, UNHCR, IOM, and other service providers.</p> <p>Among the EUAA's array of training modules (such as Train the Trainer, regional and national rollouts, foundational modules, etc.), almost 200 Serbians, mainly from the Asylum Office and Commissariat staff, participated in these proposed curricula.</p> <p>The regular turnover of staff in both administrations necessitates more frequent rollouts of foundational and core modules to newly recruited staff and the continued building of a pool of trainers to address capacity needs, ensuring a long-lasting impact on the overall asylum procedure.</p> <p>Additionally, annual training needs should be addressed to ensure the professional development of staff in alignment with job profiles (tasks, responsibilities, and knowledge skills required by the position).</p> <p>The EUAA proposes to assist Serbian authorities in mapping the duties and tasks of reception officials based on the European Sectoral Qualification Framework for Asylum and Reception Officials (ESQF ARO) to align the curricula and job catalogue with that of an EU Member State.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)/ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Interior and relevant institutions of Serbia identify training needs of asylum/reception officials based on their daily tasks and duties; Working level of English to participate in the EUAA TtT which are delivered in English; MoI and CRM willing to regularly roll out and transfer the expertise gained in trainings during the EUAA Train the Trainers' session in view of maintaining a pool of trainers and ensuring the sustainability

	<p>and efficiency of the trainings delivered;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant Serbian authorities create incentives to recognise national trainers within its system and retain this qualified staff.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual assessment of training needs for asylum and reception officers completed; • Translation of 3 EUAA Modules in Serbian (as per modalities developed in the implementation plan); • Expand the pool of National trainers trained on the EUAA Modules by an additional 3 trainers; • At least 4 case officers trained on EUAA Core Modules; • At least 2 trainers for reception vulnerable module available to roll out trainings; • Catalogue of job positions in reception system.
Description of the activities and indicative timeline	<p>Output 2.1 National authorities address asylum and reception staff learning needs sustainably, using EUAA curriculum and applying EU standards.</p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.1. Annual planning of training needs (in line with EUAA training curriculum)</i></p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.2. Participation to EUAA training Modules in the relevant areas, as per identified annual needs.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.3. Mapping and comparative analysis of the duties and tasks of reception officials based on the European Sectoral Qualification Framework for Asylum and Reception Officials (ESQF ARO).</i></p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.4. Identification of job tasks, knowledge skills and responsibilities by job profiles for reception officers and support authorities in the development of a catalogue of job positions for the CRM.</i></p>
Synergies	<p>EUAA will complement these national activities at regional level with the organisation of Regional Western Balkan Train the Trainer sessions based on a regional training needs assessment to be conducted in 2024.</p>



	Synergies will be explored with UNHCR, and specific topics will be agreed in coordination with the authorities and other partners.
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3. Contingency planning and crisis response capacities aligned with EU standards and EU MS practices

Expected results (outputs)	Output 3.1: Revised contingency plan
Responsible Authorities	MoI, CRM, Relevant local and international authorities engaged in the response plan for managing mixed migration flows. (Working Group on mixed migration Flows).
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The working group on mixed migration flows, established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, drafted a response plan in case of increased influx of migrants into the territory of the Republic of Serbia, which is updated and proposed to the government on an annual basis.</p> <p>The last Serbian response plan for the management of the potential influx of migrants, refugees and asylum applicants has been adopted in July 2023, and the main actions in the plan are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing protection to persons who are potential asylum seekers 2. Providing accommodation 3. Ensuring the right to education 4. Providing health care 5. Support to local self-government units 6. Prevention and suppression of irregular migrations 7. Support for voluntary return and reintegration <p>The mentioned document also defines certain assumptions and scenario envisaging up to 5000 people to be accommodated in facilities.</p> <p>EUAA and FRONTEX have developed a joined approach and methodology on contingency planning, which was presented to all Western Balkan partners in December 2023. This initiative aims to offer support in developing, reviewing and testing respective contingency plans.</p> <p>The effective management of mixed migration flows during large influxes</p>

	<p>is one of the benchmarks outlined in the Action Plan for Chapter 24 regarding migration and asylum.</p> <p>The revision and testing of Serbia's contingency plan, using the EUAA-FRONTEX methodology will help bring the current response plan closer to EU standards.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision at relevant level of authority to engage in review, revision and testing of the contingency plan in Serbia; The cooperation of all relevant actors along the process is ensured (State institutions, local authorities providing reception conditions, NGO, international organisations, notably UNHCR and IOM).
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the contingency plan Testing of the contingency plan
Description of the activities	<p>Output 3.1: Revision of contingency plan in Serbia</p> <p><i>Activity 3.1.1. Review of the contingency plan and feedback based on the review.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 3.1.2. Organisation of series of workshops to revise the contingency plan based on the outcomes of the review and testing exercise.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 3.1.3. Testing and simulation exercise of the updated national contingency plan</i></p>
Synergies	Cooperation with FRONTEX on regional contingency planning under the “EU regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans”.



II. Contributing to effective asylum procedures.

4. Strengthened access to asylum procedure

Expected results (outputs)	<p>Output 4.1. Enhanced information provision on International Protection and access to the Asylum procedure</p> <p>Output 4.2. Improved systematic identification, registration and referral of potential applicants for international protection</p>
Responsible Authorities/ Target groups	<p>Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office, Border Police Directorate, Regional Police Administration), The Commissariat of Refugees and Migration (reception officers)</p>
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The Regional Border Centres (RBC), Border Police Stations (BPS), and Foreigners Units within Police Departments are responsible for issuing Registration Certificates to foreign nationals expressing an intention to seek asylum. Given the significant number of individuals in mixed movements entering the country, it is essential to enhance the capacities of first-contact officials in identifying and referring persons seeking international protection and those with vulnerabilities within the mixed migration flow, in order to establish an effective and protection-sensitive entry system. To fulfil their duties efficiently, the Border Police must enhance their expertise in providing information about the asylum procedure.</p> <p>In this regard, under the second-generation Roadmap, three workshops targeting 60 first-line officers have been conducted, and the EUAA-FRONTEX Access to Asylum Procedure (ATP) toolkit has been disseminated to participants. Further capacity building of first-line officers and dissemination of the Access to Asylum Procedure toolkit and the Registration Practical Guide for Border Police, Asylum, and Reception Officers are planned under this Roadmap.</p> <p>Information provision could also be improved at each step of the Asylum procedure (application, registration, and lodging). Although some Information Provision materials have been developed by the Asylum Office and UNHCR and translated into languages of the main countries of origin of asylum applicants, additional and detailed information could be provided to applicants in their own language regarding the asylum procedure in Serbia. Specific requests for more visuals and information provision targeting children were raised to the EUAA by CRM. The EUAA is prepared to support the enhancement of information provision tools, materials, and procedures using innovative approaches developed within the EUAA's 'Let's Speak Asylum' project.</p>



Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National authorities open and committed to identify, register and refer asylum applicants
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EUAA information provision methodology introduced and guidance to enhance tools provided. Further dissemination of the ATP toolkit. At least 40 first line officers (Border Police, reception officers, etc.) staffs upskilled on Access to Procedure, Registration and Information provision. EUAA practical guide on registration is disseminated.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 4.1. Enhanced information provision on International Protection and access to the Asylum procedure</p> <p><i>Activity 4.1.1. Workshop/s on communication and information provision to asylum seekers</i></p> <p><i>Activity 4.1.2. Technical guidance in reviewing communication strategy and designing information material for asylum seekers</i></p> <p>Output 4.2. Improved systematic identification, registration and referral of potential applicants for international protection</p> <p><i>Activity 4.2.1. Workshops on access to Asylum Procedure toolkit and roundtable on its adaptation to the Serbia context for first line officers. (Border Police, Asylum and Reception Officers)</i></p> <p><i>Activity 4.2.2. Peer-Peer support/technical guidance on registration/referral/lodging and Asylum flow management to relevant officers.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 4.2.3. Workshop on Registration (Making and Lodging) and dissemination of the EUAA practical guide on registration.</i></p>
Synergies	Synergies with UNHCR and its partner organization (in particular on info provision).



5. Strengthened capacity of national authorities to identify, assess and respond to persons with special needs.

Output (expected results)	<p>Output 5.1. Enhanced identification, vulnerability assessment and referral of persons with special needs</p> <p>Output 5.2. Enhanced right compliant age assessment procedure.</p>
Responsible Authorities/ target group	<p>Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office and Border Police)</p> <p>Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (case workers and guardians)</p> <p>Ministry of Health</p> <p>The Commissariat of Refugees and Migration (reception officers)</p> <p>Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography</p>
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>In line with Article 24 of the Asylum Procedures Directive and Article 17 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, special procedures are outlined for applicants with specific needs, such as minors or victims of trafficking or torture. Currently, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration utilises the offline EUAA IPSN tool to assess individual cases and refer applicants to the appropriate state body as needed. However, despite the obligatory assessment at reception centres and ongoing assessments during the stay, there is currently no formal assessment procedure in place.</p> <p>Therefore, the Commissariat is interested in implementing the Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN) tool and/or Special Needs and Vulnerability Assessment (SNVA) tool as mandatory components, aligning with the 2017 guide on national referral procedures drafted by CRM. The Commissariat aims to update this guide, establish links between the IPSN or SNVA tools and national referral procedures, and utilize printed reports as part of the personal file.</p> <p>Regarding the identification of minors, Serbia currently lacks formal age assessment procedures for unaccompanied children. Under the second-generation Roadmap, the EUAA has translated and presented practical guides on age assessment, which include key recommendations and tools for implementing the best interests of the child in age assessments from a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. Additionally, the EUAA has provided examples and comments on age assessment questionnaires.</p> <p>However, an age assessment procedure for cases with substantiated doubts regarding the stated age has yet to be developed. This could be</p>

	considered following the establishment of a dedicated working group. Moreover, the enhancement of staff skills in the asylum and reception systems, particularly regarding the Best Interests of the Child, has been identified as a priority.
Pre-conditions(s)/ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Police interested in testing the Vulnerability Pre-Identification Tool; • CRM open and committed to include IPSN/SNVA tools in case management; • Relevant authorities share existing framework for the management of vulnerable persons, particularly unaccompanied minors, in the asylum and reception systems; • Working group on age assessment in place and lead appointed.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 20 First Contact Officials upskilled on Identification of vulnerability and persons with special needs. • At least 20 Reception officers and social workers upskilled on Identification and Assessment of Vulnerability and Persons with Special Needs, and referral mechanism. • Vulnerability assessment included in CRM instructions on case management. • At least 20 of relevant officials upskilled on the Best Interest of the Child (BIC) and Guardianship. • Right compliant age assessment procedure developed.
Description of the activities and indicative timeline	<p>Output 5.1. Enhanced identification, vulnerability assessment and referral of persons with special needs</p> <p><i>Activity 5.1.1. Workshop(s) and/or on-the-job coaching on Identification of vulnerability and Persons with Special Needs for First Contact Officials.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 5.1.2. Workshop(s) on Identification and Assessment of vulnerability and Persons with Special needs, and existing national referral procedures, for reception officers and social workers.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 5.1.3. Guidance on the integration of IPSN/SNVA tools (reports) in CRM instructions for case management, with a focus on the referral mechanism.</i></p>



	<p><i>Activity 5.1.4. Technical guidance and/or peer-to-peer support on processes and tools to streamline activities targeting specific profiles, particularly unaccompanied minors (e.g. guardianship and foster schemes, and Best Interest Assessment and Determination).</i></p> <p>Output 5.2. Enhanced right compliant age assessment procedure.</p> <p><i>Activity 5.2.1. Review/development of age assessment process procedures, instruments and tools through expert support.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 5.2.2. Expert mission(s) and mentoring to support implementation EU + best practices on age assessment procedure and methods.</i></p>
Synergies	Synergies with UNHCR, UNICEF and Frontex (Identification of vulnerabilities by First Contact Officials)

6. Enhanced quality of decision making

Expected results (outputs)	<p>Output 6.1. Enhanced technical capacity of the Asylum authorities to manage and assess asylum claims effectively</p> <p>Output 6.2. Standardized COI system</p> <p>Output 6.3. Strengthened appeal remedy to the asylum decisions</p>
Responsible Authorities/Target Groups	<p>Ministry of Interior (Asylum Office, Asylum Decision Sector and COI Sector)</p> <p>The Asylum Commission</p> <p>The Administrative Court</p> <p>The judicial Academy</p>
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The Asylum Office, established on 14 January 2015 in accordance with the updated Rulebook on the internal organization and systematization of positions in the Ministry of Interior (Mol), is responsible for examining applications for international protection and rendering decisions at the first instance. As per the rulebook, there should be 28 positions within the Asylum Office.</p> <p>Asylum officers play a crucial role in facilitating the lodging of asylum applications in person, conducting asylum interviews, and making initial</p>

	<p>decisions. They are supported in the decision-making process by the Country-of-Origin Information (COI) Department, which provides relevant information on specific issues raised during asylum interviews. The Head of the Asylum Office oversees the decision-making process, ensuring quality and consistency in decisions.</p> <p>The Department for Collecting and Documenting Country of Origin Information was established in 2019⁸ and currently comprises eight employees. In 2023, the COI section produced some 50 reports on various countries based on queries received from case officers.</p> <p>In the event of a negative decision, the asylum seeker has the right to lodge an administrative appeal with the Asylum Commission for reconsideration. The Commission consists of the Chairperson and eight members appointed by the Government for a four-year term. Recommendations from the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) in 2021 suggested abolishing the Asylum Commission and introducing a judicial review by the Administrative Court at the second instance⁹.</p> <p>The Administrative Court serves as the third instance authority and does not have a specialised department for reviewing asylum cases. It rules on the lawfulness of final administrative acts in three-member judicial panels, with a total of 50 administrative judges covering Serbia.</p> <p>Under the second-generation Roadmap for cooperation, the EUAA has provided extensive training and support to enhance the technical skills and knowledge of COI officers, case officers and Administrative Court judges. Efforts will continue to strengthen decision-making processes, standardise COI systems and procedures, and enhance the technical capacity of relevant stakeholders to improve the overall quality of decisions.</p> <p>Case officers have undergone several training sessions, including those focusing on evidence assessment, as well as tailor-made workshops on the use of COI. However, specific capacity building initiatives for Asylum Commission Members have not been implemented.</p> <p>Four Administrative Court judges participated in a professional Development Workshop on COI and a judicial dialogue roundtable alongside judges from EU Member States at the European Court of Justice.</p> <p>In consultations with relevant authorities, it was suggested to further enhance the decision-making process by disseminating core EUAA practical guides to case officers, providing on-the-job coaching on key technical skills, and supporting the effectiveness of the lodging process. This includes the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs)</p>
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⁸ Competence of the Asylum Office - Section for Collecting and Documenting Country of Origin Information is regulated by Article 20 in relation with Article 32, paragraph 2 point 2 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection.

⁹ AIDA Country Report: Serbia



	<p>on examination and Quality Review, based on the outcomes of the national Monitoring Exercise (output 1.2).</p> <p>Efforts will also continue to standardise COI systems and procedures, with a focus on managing queries and communication with clients, as well as the production of high-quality reports.</p> <p>To ensure the examination of appeals is conducted effectively, the technical capacity of Asylum Commission Members and Administrative Court Judges will be strengthened, particularly on key legal concepts in the field of international protection. This will contribute to improving the overall quality of decisions.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National authorities committed to enhancing the decision-making process at first instance, and appeals (2nd and 3rd instances). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asylum Commission remains second instance body and Administrative Court, which provides judicial protection in administrative disputes and decides on the legality of final administrative acts. Knowledge transferred to the COI staff by EUAA/MS experts is integrated systematically in the daily system/work of the COI section (through systematic trainings, workflows, procedures, checklists etc...).
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination of the EUAA practical guides: Guide on personal interview, Guide on evidence assessment, Guide on Qualification for international protection, Guide on Quality Assurance in Asylum Procedures. At least 5 case officers upskilled on: interview techniques, evidence assessment, decision writing, decision assessment and use of COI, using EUAA guidance and practical tools. Guidance/SoP on Examination (TBC). At least 3 members of the Asylum Commission upskilled in the field of international protection. At least 20 Administrative Court judges upskilled in the field of international protection. Standardised COI System in place.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 6.1. Enhanced technical capacity of Asylum authorities to manage and assess asylum claims effectively</p>

	<p>Activity 6.1.1. <i>Workshop and/or on-the-job coaching on technical skills (interview, evidence and risk assessment, decision writing, decision assessment, use of COI) using EUAA guidance and practical tools.</i></p> <p>Activity 6.1.2. <i>Workshop and/or on-the-job-coaching on lodging process and managing the flow of asylum applications (organising, scheduling, registering and quality reviewing).</i></p> <p>Output 6.2. Standardised COI system with up-to-date application of COI in practice</p> <p>Activity 6.2.1. <i>Briefing/Workshop on relevant COI methodology/specific topics.</i></p> <p>Activity 6.2.2. <i>Exchanges with EUAA/EU+ countries (coaching/expert mission(s) and/or (remote) provision of expertise) on best practices in the production of COI and management of COI processes/workflows in view of the enhancement of a standardised COI system.</i></p> <p>Activity 6.2.3. <i>Participation in regional COI activities, including COI country briefings.</i></p> <p>Output 6.3. Strengthened appeal remedy to the asylum decisions</p> <p>Activity 6.3.1. <i>Conduct judicial training needs assessment for Asylum Commission Members and Administrative Court Judges.</i></p> <p>Activity 6.3.2. <i>Peer to peer national and regional workshops on international protection topics directly relevant to the members of the Asylum Commission and Administrative judges working in the field of asylum.</i></p> <p>Activity 6.3.3. <i>Participation of Members of the Asylum Commission and administrative judges working in the field of Asylum to selected EUAA judicial support activities.</i></p>
Synergies	<p>As part of its regional approach that complements the bilateral Roadmaps for Cooperation, the EUAA will develop a regional training plan and deliver regional trainings and national roll-outs of core EUAA Modules for case officers. This will be complemented by a COI regional action plan, COI briefings, and dedicated COI support activities. In addition, the mapping of second instances (appeal systems) in the Western Balkans will lead to dedicated workshops for judges on international protection at the regional level.</p> <p>EUAA will maintain close coordination with UNHCR, in provision of asylum capacity building activities towards the Asylum Office and members of Appeal Bodies, to support the quality of decision-making in Serbia.</p>



III. Contributing to an effective reception system

7. Strengthened reception system aligned with EU and EUAA standards for reception conditions

Output (Expected Result)	Output 7.1 Enhanced reception conditions and case management with a focus on vulnerable groups Output 7.2 Improved strategic management and quality monitoring of the reception system
Responsible Authorities/ target group	The Commissariat of Refugees and Migration (reception officers); Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (Center for social workers and guardians); Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography; Ministry of Interior (officials from the Asylum Office, border police officials, police stations officers and officers from Detention centres) ¹⁰ .
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (CRM) oversees the management of asylum and reception centres in Serbia. There are 7 Asylum Centres (AC) and 12 Reception Centres (RC) utilised for accommodating refugees, asylum seekers, and other individuals on the move depend on the flow. The ACs have a total capacity of 2,810 beds, while the RCs can accommodate 3,190 beds. All facilities managed by the CRM operate on an open model and provide basic services along with educational and recreational activities, psychosocial assistance, and free legal aid to refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants. Special provisions are made for vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors (UAM). In 2022, the number of UAMs accommodated in various facilities was 2,688, and in 2023, it was 2,379. Efforts are underway to enhance accommodation facilities to meet CEAS standards and indicators. The CRM has already introduced the regular utilisation of the Assessment of Reception Conditions (ARC) tool developed by the EUAA in several centres. Training on the ARC tool for

¹⁰ These activities are mainly focused on the area of reception, targeting reception officials but whenever it will be important to reinforce the referral of vulnerable categories, relevant bodies within the Ministry of Interior may be involved.

	<p>relevant staff and systematic reporting and analysis of data are identified as priorities for the next period.</p> <p>One of the primary challenges in aligning the Serbian accommodation system with the RCD (Directive 2013/33/EU) pertains to case management, especially concerning complex or multiple vulnerabilities. Unaccompanied and separated children, in particular, are identified as a highly vulnerable group. Despite legislative alignment with international standards, limited resources and implementation within the social welfare system create protection gaps.</p> <p>In 2023, 2,523 unaccompanied migrant children were identified, and 2,432 guardianship decisions were issued by the Centre for Social Work. Additionally, state-run social protection institutions accommodated 74 unaccompanied children, while 21 were placed in NGO shelters.</p> <p>Actions under this Roadmap aim to support the CRM, Ministry of Interior and relevant stakeholders in improving conditions and case management for vulnerable groups in asylum centres, particularly focusing on UAMs. Furthermore, support will be provided for monitoring reception conditions and management practices through exchanges with EU Member States and EUAA expertise.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)/ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation between the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (case workers and guardians) and the Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography is ensured.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 2 reception officers trained as EUAA trainer on Reception of Vulnerable Persons. At least 20 Reception officers trained on EUAA reception modules for Vulnerable Persons. Guidance/SoP for case management of Persons with Vulnerabilities and UAM developed/enhanced. Information Provision Material tailored to Vulnerable Groups developed. At least 10 Reception officers upskilled to Assess Reception Conditions (with ARC tool). Standardised monitoring reports used for strategic reception management. Serbian authorities informed on EU MS discussions/practices on Reception Management.



Description of the activities and indicative timeline	<p>Output 7.1: Enhanced Reception conditions and standards and case management of vulnerable groups.</p> <p><i>Activity 7.1.1. National Roll-out of the EUAA TtT modules on Reception of Vulnerable Persons and Reception Conditions for unaccompanied minors.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 7.1.2. Review and enhance existing tools and protocols used in reception conditions and case management for persons with vulnerabilities, focusing on Unaccompanied Minors.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 7.1.3. Peer-to-peer support on the assessment and referral of persons with vulnerability and special needs, particularly unaccompanied minors and allocation workflow.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 7.1.4. Support national authorities in improving quality and standardising information provision tools and material also tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.</i></p> <p>Output 7.2. Improved strategic management and quality monitoring of the reception system.</p> <p><i>Activity 7.2.1. Training and coaching on Assessment of Reception Conditions (ARC) tool for reception managers and officers in charge of monitoring.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 7.2.2. Support to standardize Reporting Processes and analysis of information to enhance monitoring efforts (link to Output 1.2) and evidence-based decision.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 7.2.3. Facilitation of peer-exchange/strategic advice from EUMS on transition to nationally financed reception system.</i></p>
Synergies	TBD

Annex I: Main National stakeholders

Organisation	Responsibilities
Ministry of Interior	The Ministry of Interior has overall responsibility for control of movement and stay in the border area and control of movement and stay of foreigners in Serbia.
Border Police Directorate (Ministry of Interior)	Border Police Directorate registers in the database "ASYLUM", issues a certificate and informs the foreigner of the address of the Asylum Center where the foreigner needs to register within 72 hours. In the case of unaccompanied minor, it determines that a foreigner is a minor and contacts the local centre for social work. Furthermore, each police directorate has both a standalone anti-trafficking unit and officers.
Asylum Office (Border Police Directorate, Ministry of Interior)	Asylum Office is responsible for RSD procedure under a Regular Procedure (from 3 months to 12 months depending on the circumstances of specific case) as well as the Accelerated Procedure (1 month); prepares and lodges the asylum applications; carries out the interviews with the asylum seekers and issues 1 st instance decisions and identity cards in a prescribed format to the asylum seekers within 3 days from the date of the application. The Asylum Office has the authority to allow the applicant to reside outside the Asylum Centre at own cost and the Asylum Centers need to inform the Asylum Office if the applicant left accommodation without authorization.
Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (CRM)	Commissariat for Refugees is state authority organized as a special organisation within the public administration system of Serbia, established to carry out professional and administrative tasks related to the care, return and integration of refugees. Specifically, the CRM is responsible for material reception conditions and has capacity to reduce or abolish material reception conditions; performs the preliminary risk assessment, including identification of vulnerable categories; refers the person to the responsible institutions, including informing the Centre for social work to appoint a guardian for unaccompanied minors; ensures access to elementary and secondary education; implements programs of voluntary return and integration of persons who have been granted asylum. Furthermore, the CRM can propose goals, priorities and measures on migration policy to the Government and carries out tasks related to collection, analysis and reporting on data and indicators on migration.
Asylum Commission	Asylum Commission is an inter-ministerial body consisting of a Chairperson and eight members appointed by the Government for the period of four years. It acts as 1 st appeal instance within the Asylum procedure and takes decision on appeals made by the Asylum Office.
Administrative court	Takes decisions on administrative disputes lodged against final decisions taken by the Asylum Commission.



Organisation	Responsibilities
Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MoLEVSA)	Highest authority (ministerial level) in charge of the definition of labour and employment policies, including the right to access to the labour market of foreigners, as well as for overall social protection policy including for the persons in vulnerable position.
Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography	The Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography has overall responsibility for the family law protection system (including children) and improvement and development of demographic policy.
Centers for Social Work (CSW)	<p>Centres for Social Work (CSW) are established by the local governments and monitored by the Ministry of the Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs. CSW is the main institution of social welfare system in Serbia and sole guardianship authority competent to make decisions on all issues relating to children, other beneficiaries and wards in need of social protection based on their best interest. It provides a guardian to the minor and all status and rights related procedures are done in the presence of the guardian.</p> <p>Guardian assess if the minor is to be accommodated in the asylum centre or relevant institution for social protection based on the assessments of his/her's best interest and propose to the CSW in order to bring official decision. CSW is responsible for coordination of all activities/ services related to protection of a particular child and ensuring individualized approach.</p>
National Employment Service (NES)	National Employment service is a government body, under supervision of MoLEVSA, that provide assistance related to employment and unemployment of asylum seekers and refugees. NES is providing job matching services for job seekers, career guidance and counselling, job creation subsidies for employers, support to self-employment, further education and training, etc. It is the main competent body for issuing work permits for foreigners.
Centre for Human Trafficking Victims Protection (CHTVP)	CHTVP is in charge of identification and coordinating protection of Victims of Trafficking and providing shelter.
Ministry of Health	Highest authority (ministerial level) in charge of the definition of health policies, organizing and financing health services for asylum seekers and those with international protection, specifically it defines and oversees the implementation of the procedure for mandatory medical checks.
Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development	Highest authority (ministerial level) in charge for education, specifically it guarantees the enforcement of the right to free primary and secondary education in accordance with relevant legislation and implement activities aimed to ensure sufficient capacities in regular education system.

