



EASO External Cooperation Strategy



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A photograph showing the backs of several people wearing red jackets. The person in the foreground has a dark blue vest over their jacket with the white text 'Support is our Mission' printed on it. The background is blurred, showing a crowd of people in various colors.

1. EASO'S ROLE IN THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF THE COMMON EUROPEAN ASYLUM SYSTEM

The successful implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) primarily depends on European Member States and on their asylum and reception systems, which the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) continuously supports (the internal dimension).

This strategy defines the general framework within which EASO will develop its work related to the external dimension of the CEAS. The EASO regulation ⁽¹⁾ gives the agency the mandate to coordinate the exchange of information and other actions relating to the external dimension of the CEAS, including resettlement, in agreement with the European

Commission. Furthermore, EASO may seek cooperation with competent authorities of third countries in technical matters, in particular with a view to promoting and assisting capacity building in the third countries own asylum and reception systems and other actions relevant to durable solutions.

The ongoing reform of the CEAS includes, among others, legislative proposals aimed at establishing a fully-fledged European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) ⁽²⁾, and at creating a permanent Union Resettlement Framework ⁽³⁾, which will impact the future

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office, Articles 7 and 49.

⁽²⁾ COM (2016) 271: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 and Commission proposal for an amended Regulation on the EUAA of 12 September 2018.

⁽³⁾ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Union Resettlement Framework and amending Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council [COM (2016) 468 final].

of the agency's external action. In particular, it is foreseen that the agency may:

- support Member States in the implementation of the Union Resettlement Framework as well as national resettlement schemes, upon the request of the Member States concerned;

- deploy liaison officers in third countries ⁽⁴⁾.

This strategy foresees the possibility of revision (see section 7), including in view of the future adoption of the relevant legislative proposal aimed at establishing a fully-fledged EUAA.

2. VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

EASO's external action forms part of a comprehensive effort to enhance the effectiveness of the CEAS, in line with the European Union (EU) external policy. It complements EU+ countries' ⁽⁵⁾ efforts in the external dimension as well as EASO support to the implementation of the CEAS in its internal dimension.

EASO, in line with its role as a centre of expertise on asylum and reception, shall implement external action in view of increased solidarity and sense of responsibility among EU+ countries as well as between the EU+ countries and third countries, in the spirit of partnership and mutual exchanges of expertise and experience.

To this end, EASO's external action strategic objectives are:

Contributing to establishing and/or strengthening asylum and reception systems as well as protection sensitive migration management in third countries in order to better protect asylum seekers and refugees.

Facilitating EU+ countries' efforts in providing access to the EU for persons in need of international protection with focus on resettlement and other legal pathways to international protection.

Facilitating the exchange of information and experiences related to the external dimension of the CEAS between EU+ countries.

⁽⁴⁾ Liaison officers shall only be deployed to third countries in which migration and asylum management practices comply with non-derogable human rights standards. Priority shall be given to those third countries which constitute a country of origin or transit regarding asylum-related migration.

⁽⁵⁾ EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In line with its regulation, EASO's external action will be governed by the following principles:

Protection-sensitive approach

EASO's external action shall take a protection-sensitive approach, in line with the EASO regulation.

Coherence with European legislation and policies

EASO's external action shall be in line with the EU external relations policies and priorities, taking into account policy coherence for development. Through its action, EASO supports the overall impact of the European Union's projected results in the external dimension. EASO's external action will be based on a comprehensive assessment of the European legal and policy framework, and will be implemented in agreement with the Commission and in accordance with EASO's institutional set-up. EASO shall promote, in all its external action, the legal and operational standards of the CEAS.

Sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of support

EASO is committed to ensuring the sustainability of its impact through the provision of effective and efficient external action, following a project-cycle management methodology. EASO's external action shall be planned based on needs or feasibility assessments and on a clear results framework to measure and monitor its impact. It will follow results-based and theory-of-change management approaches ⁽⁶⁾ as outlined in the EASO Operations Manual ⁽⁷⁾ and applied, as appropriate, to EASO's external action.

Partnership, cooperation and mutual interest

EASO's external action shall be developed and implemented in consultation and close cooperation with EU+ countries, the Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Union Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies and their network and, where relevant, in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other relevant actors when collaboration can improve the outcome of activities planned or carried out.

EASO's external action shall provide added value and shall not duplicate efforts carried out by other partners and stakeholders. Appropriate information sharing and communication channels will be used to ensure complementarity and to capitalise on already developed methodologies, including by EU+ countries, the Commission and other stakeholders. EASO's external action will be developed in a spirit of mutual interest with the EU+ countries and the third countries concerned to tackle common challenges, while ensuring compatibility with European external policies.

⁽⁶⁾ The results-based management approach is used for planning of strategic frameworks, programmes and projects. A number of tools are used in the planning phase, such as the results matrix, monitoring and evaluation plan, scenario planning and risk mitigation strategy. The theory of change is a method that explains how a given intervention is expected to lead to specific development change, drawing on a causal pathway based on available evidence and assumptions. EASO intends to use, as appropriate, the theory of change to validate the design of intervention occurred through the results-based management approach.

⁽⁷⁾ The Operations Manual (under development) intends to provide guidance for EASO operational staff to perform their functions effectively and efficiently. It documents the approved standard procedures with regard to operations.



4. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK OF EASO'S EXTERNAL ACTION

EASO's current regulation provides the legal framework for EASO's external action. This strategy also takes into account the relevant legislative proposals currently under negotiation aimed at establishing a fully-fledged EUAA, and at creating a permanent Union Resettlement Framework, as outlined in section 1. The policy framework of EASO's external action is set by European policies and approaches ⁽⁸⁾ including:

- The **Migration Partnership Framework (MPF)**, introduced in June 2016, which fully embedded the topic of migration in European foreign

policy ⁽⁹⁾. It follows the objectives set forth by the European Agenda for Migration and is a powerful tool for engaging strategic third countries of transit and origin in a dialogue about migration. It seeks to strengthen the external borders, increase the number of returns of irregular migrants, address the root causes of migration, and create legal avenues of protection for those in need, including resettlement. The Partnership Framework takes the form of tailored EU **compacts** ⁽¹⁰⁾, that are relevant to EASO's external action insofar as dealing with asylum and refugees in

⁽⁸⁾ The list is non-exhaustive and reflects the state of play at the time of writing (February 2019). The policy framework will be updated as appropriate in the context of the strategy revision (see section 7).

⁽⁹⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council and the European Investment Bank on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration [COM (2016)385 final]; Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, Fourth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration [COM(2017) 350 final].

⁽¹⁰⁾ Compacts are the 'political framework for continued and operational cooperation, pulling together the different work strands in order to develop a comprehensive partnership with third countries, combining the instruments, tools and leverages available to the EU and Member States to deliver clear targets and joint commitments'. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council First Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration [COM(2016) 700 final].

the relevant geographical areas (section 5.3). The MPF builds on the Mobility Partnership put forward by the **Global Approach on Migration and Mobility (GAMM)** ⁽¹¹⁾ defining the conduct of dialogue and cooperation with third countries. In particular, its third pillar refers to the promotion of international protection and enhancement of the external dimension of asylum policy, which EASO has been mandated to support.

- The **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)**, which in its 2015 revision, relates to the relationship between the European and their closest neighbouring countries. The ENP can also be used for building capacity in relation to asylum in the partner countries ⁽¹²⁾. Strongly linked to it, the **European Enlargement Policy** ⁽¹³⁾ provides a framework for enhanced EU engagement with the candidate and potential candidate countries. The adoption of a **Western Balkan Strategy** in 2018 ⁽¹⁴⁾ confirms the need for joint reinforced cooperation in key areas.
- The **European Agenda on Migration** ⁽¹⁵⁾, adopted in 2015, which proposes solutions for better management of migratory influxes to the EU, articulated around four pillars. EASO's action on the external dimension of the CEAS falls within the third pillar of the European Agenda on Migration.

- The **Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP)** ⁽¹⁶⁾ adopted by the European and African heads of State and government in November 2015 at the Valletta Summit on Migration. Following the recommendations of the Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process, the joint conclusions of the JVAP reiterate the commitment of all stakeholders involved to mutually address the challenges and opportunities of migration. Within the third priority 'protection and asylum' of the action plan, EASO has a role to play in supporting capacity building in third countries in relation to asylum and reception systems.
- The **European Commission Roadmap on Migration**, which was presented in preparation to the European Council meeting of December 2017 ⁽¹⁷⁾. The Commission acknowledged that the external dimension of migration policy should be consolidated and reinforced, notably via the full implementation of the EU–Turkey Statement, to which EASO actively contributes by supporting EU+ countries resettlement efforts, and the engagement with third country partners and UN agencies.

At global level, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) ⁽¹⁸⁾ is of particular relevance for EASO's external action, including the call for an expansion of resettlement and other forms of legal admission.

⁽¹¹⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European Agenda on Migration [COM (2015) 240 final]; Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility [COM (2011) 743 final].

⁽¹²⁾ Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy [JOIN (2015) 50 final].

⁽¹³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/eu-enlargement_en

⁽¹⁴⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans, Strasbourg, [COM(2018) 65 final]

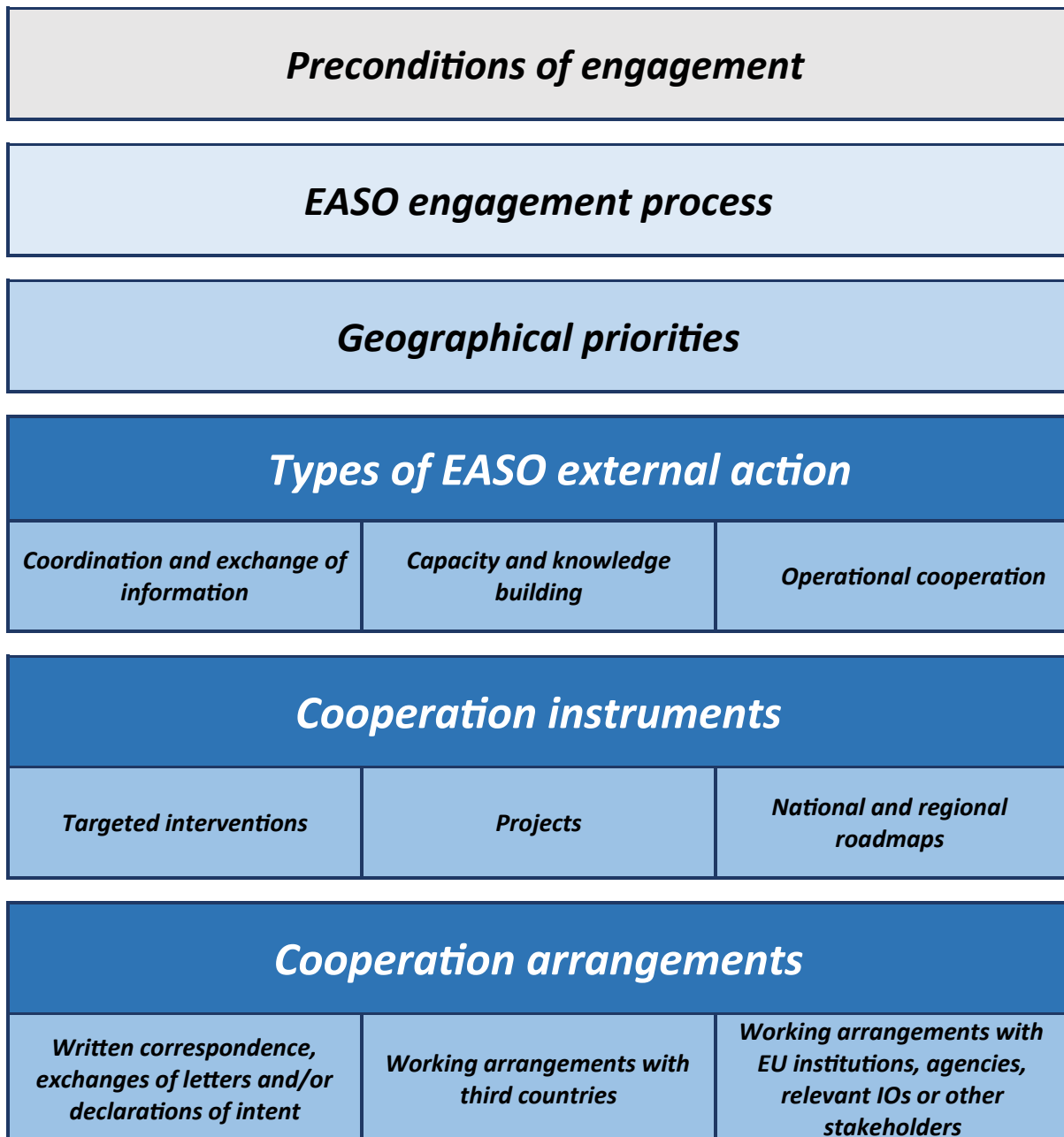
⁽¹⁵⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Agenda On Migration [COM(2015) 240 final].

⁽¹⁶⁾ Valletta Summit on Migration, 11-12 November 2015, Action Plan, available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/12/valletta-final-docs>

⁽¹⁷⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, Commission contribution to the EU Leaders' thematic debate on a way forward on the external and the internal dimension of migration policy [COM (2017) 820 final].

⁽¹⁸⁾ Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 17 December 2018.

5. SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK



5.1. *Preconditions of engagement*

In line with the guiding principles, the following preconditions of engagement for EASO's external action have to be met:

- EASO's external action is compatible with the EASO mandate as stipulated in the EASO regulation;
- EASO's external action provides a clear added value to the EU external policies;
- Consultation, cooperation and coordination with relevant stakeholders, including EU+ countries, third countries and COM, is central to EASO's external action and has been explored and capitalised on;
- Depending on the foreseen level of support, entry, exit and sustainability strategies for EASO's external action are in place and based on specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-bound plans (SMART);
- The third country or EU+ country receiving EASO support commits to cooperate in a fair and open manner.

5.2. *EASO engagement process*

EASO engages in third country and resettlement support activities with a view to reach its multiannual objectives⁽¹⁹⁾, endorsed by the Management Board, in line with the geographical scope and priorities (section 5.3) and based on the support implementation framework outlined in this strategy.

EASO's external action can be triggered by ad hoc requests from the Commission, from EU+ countries via the EASO Management Board or by third countries.

EASO engagement is defined:

- Informing, in consultation with or through endorsement by the EASO Management Board, as appropriate;
- In consultation with the EASO External Dimension Network;
- In consultation with the Commission, in line with the strategic and operational framework for external actions defined in the working arrangements between the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Migration and Home Affairs) and EASO⁽²⁰⁾;
- In consultation with other relevant stakeholders, through regular meetings and exchanges of information.

In line with the guiding principles, EASO will carry out needs and/or feasibility assessments, in cooperation with the Commission, EU+ countries, third countries and other key stakeholders. Such assessments will be based on three complementary approaches: normative, needs based and demand driven. They can be carried out through desk review, mission(s) to the relevant third countries and consultations and meetings with relevant international and national stakeholders. Relevant EASO data and reports available will be taken into account before engagement. Relevant reports by EU+ countries, third countries, EU institutions and agencies, international organisations (IOs) and civil society organisations could also be used to pre-assess the need and appropriateness of an EASO external action.

The EASO external action will then be planned, implemented and recorded through the cooperation instrument(s) at its disposal (see section 5.5), depending on the level and type of support to be provided with the appropriate level of monitoring and evaluation built in. EASO foresees the possibility to combine the types

⁽¹⁹⁾ As defined in EASO single programming documents (SPD) and relevant annual work programmes (AWP).

⁽²⁰⁾ Working arrangements for cooperation on External Action between DG Migration and Home Affairs and EASO, signed in January 2018.

of support as appropriate. EASO will also keep the Management Board continuously informed about EASO's external action ⁽²¹⁾.

5.3. Geographical priorities

Engagement and cooperation priorities



In compliance with its mandate, EASO's external action supports the external dimension of the CEAS and contributes to the external relations policy framework set at EU level (see section 4). To this end, EASO aims at maintaining and reinforcing its engagement and cooperation with key priority third countries, namely the Western Balkan countries, Turkey and Middle East and North African (MENA) countries.

Since 2016, cooperation has intensified between EASO and the **Western Balkan countries** including through the implementation of an IPA II-funded regional project ⁽²²⁾. The support provided and the continuation of it under the second phase of the project (2019-2021) will directly target the strengthening of the asylum and reception systems, the harmonisation of asylum practices and exchange of expertise at

regional level, including through the support to regional practitioners' networks and support to the Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI) and further harmonisation with the EU *acquis*, European standards and their implementation. In addition, two national roadmaps are currently in place with North Macedonia and Serbia and will be revised in 2019. New national roadmaps are planned to be developed in the framework of the second phase of the project.

Turkey is heavily impacted by accommodating refugees from the region and is globally seen as the country which is hosting most refugees. This has, and will have, an impact on the Turkish asylum and migration management system. As of 2017 EASO has strengthened its cooperation with Turkey via capacity-building activities developed in cooperation with, and delivered to, the Directorate-General for Migration Management. Under the structure of a national roadmap approach this cooperation has been successfully established. EASO foresees to further support the quality development of asylum and migration management systems given the geographical position of Turkey. The EU sharing of knowledge and expertise with Turkey, from a more sustainable approach, potentially leads to an effective and embedded positive impact.

In the **MENA** region, EASO implemented a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) funded project from 2014 to 2016. The purpose was to familiarise third country officials from Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia with the mandate, tools and instruments of EASO and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and cooperation models developed with EU+ countries, while assessing the technical needs of the third countries making use of EASO and Frontex's tools to respond to capacity-building needs. Lessons learnt and more targeted interventions

⁽²¹⁾ More detailed discussions will take place in the framework of the External Dimension Network and in line with the Working Arrangements on External Dimension in place between EASO and DG Migration and Home Affairs.

⁽²²⁾ Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans being implemented from September 2016 to June 2019, with UNHCR, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and IOM as partners.

have been provided in the MENA region since the end of the project.

Definition of new priorities

Should EASO's external action be triggered by a request as mentioned under section 5.2, and provided it is compatible with the EU external relations policy framework (section 3), priorities for engaging and/or disengaging in external actions will be based on:

- current and emerging EU priorities;
- EU+ countries' and/or third countries' needs;
- the coherence vis-à-vis EASO expertise;
- EASO capacity to deliver impact and add value, in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Priorities for engaging and/or disengaging will be assessed by applying the EASO project cycle management methodology, adapted to the

level and type of support to be provided and in line with the guiding principles, preconditions and the described EASO engagement process.

5.4. Types of EASO external action

In line with the EASO regulation and with the guiding principles (section 3), EASO external action may take one or more of the below-mentioned forms. It reflects the different nature and type of engagement, depending on the needs assessed, the interests expressed by the Management Board, EU+ countries and third countries, and on EASO's capacity and expertise. Multiple types of action can be combined to form a comprehensive support strategy for EU+ countries and/or third countries.

Furthermore, EASO will keep supporting the implementation of European, international and regional initiatives and frameworks on migration and asylum by contributing to multilateral fora and dialogue, within the scope of its resources.



<p>Coordination and exchange of information</p>	<p>EASO will facilitate the exchange of information on actions on resettlement and other legal pathways to international protection among EU+ countries through its coordination role with a view to supporting EU+ countries in implementing their commitments to international solidarity and to contributing to the creation of durable solutions. EASO will also encourage and facilitate the exchange of information on EU+ countries' actions in third countries, including by collecting such information, with a view to facilitating technical cooperation on matters related to asylum and refugee. This will be done including by providing expertise based on its methodology for information management.</p>
<p>Capacity and knowledge building</p>	<p>EASO will support the establishment, development and/or reinforcement of asylum and reception systems of third countries by delivering capacity and knowledge-building support. The support will be based on EU+ countries and EASO expertise, defined through a peer-to-peer approach and taking into account the national and/or regional context (scenario-based support ⁽²³⁾). In third countries, EASO will engage through the appropriate cooperation instruments (section 5.5) and corresponding cooperation arrangements (section 5.6).</p> <p>The main types of activities performed will be training (both as per the EASO training curriculum and as per tailor-made operational training), conferences, study visits, workshops, on-the-job coaching, technical assistance, provision of policy-related input and advice, knowledge sharing on practices and lessons learnt.</p> <p>Technical assistance in the area of asylum reinforces and facilitates EASO capacity-building action. EASO will provide technical expertise, through the cooperation instruments at its disposal and provided that the preconditions of engagement are met. Technical assistance may include building on existing EASO tools adapted to the context in the given third country, translating and/or adapting relevant EASO products, facilitating the participation to thematic meetings to third countries observers, when relevant and appropriate.</p>
<p>Operational cooperation</p>	<p>EASO will consider facilitating operational cooperation between EU+ countries and third countries by delivering targeted operational support, as appropriate, through the cooperation instruments at its disposal and provided that the preconditions for engagement are met, in line with EU external policy and subject to EASO Management Board approval.</p> <p>Possible operational cooperation may be considered in cases when established capacity-building support, coordination and exchange of information between EASO and EU+ countries, third countries and other stakeholders has deepened the relationships with the third country, leading to the identification of added value to address new needs. Operational support will be assessed and tested in support of resettlement where it will potentially contribute to EU+ countries' efforts and add value to the national or EU resettlement schemes.</p> <p>To this end, a targeted EASO presence in key third countries ⁽²⁴⁾ can reinforce EASO's external action, including to facilitate technical cooperation, the implementation of support activities and/or projects through coordination with key authorities and partners in the field. EASO presence in a third country shall have clear objectives that complement and add value to the work conducted at EASO Headquarters.</p>

⁽²³⁾ Scenario-based support approach foresees that the type of support is implemented through the appropriate cooperation instruments and is fitted to the national and/or regional context, including the institutional and legislative frameworks in place.

⁽²⁴⁾ EASO currently supports the work of the European Migration Policy Team at the European Union Delegation (EUD) in Ankara, Turkey through the deployment of a Resettlement expert. The recruitment of an Operations Officer for the management of the Pilot Project for a Resettlement Support Facility in Turkey (Malta based with frequent missions to Turkey) is ongoing. In addition, Phase II of the IPA project (2019-2021) foresees the presence of one field officer in the Western Balkans. Liaison Officers are envisaged by the draft EUAA regulation and their presence will only be foreseen once the EUAA regulation is in place.

5.5. Cooperation instruments

To meet its external action objectives, EASO will strive to make the best use of the instruments at its disposal. EASO cooperation instruments entail different degrees of involvement and support. EASO will use the most appropriate instrument to tailor and deliver the most relevant type of EASO support, as determined by the geographical priorities (scenario-based support).

All instruments form part of a wider project cycle management (PCM) approach in EASO which sets out programmes (3 years +) and projects (shorter term). Projects include operating plans, special support plans, third country national roadmaps, etc. in line with the EASO Operations Manual ⁽²⁵⁾.

Cooperation instruments include:

- **Targeted interventions:** Ad hoc and targeted interventions will be used to initiate cooperation and/or address very specific third countries' needs in line with the EU external relations policy framework and upon specific agreement with the Commission. Based on the review of results of targeted interventions, the activities implemented could evolve into more formalised cooperation (e.g. through the setting up of a project or national roadmaps).
- **Projects:** In order to reach specific goals, pilot activities and/or test new approaches, EASO will develop targeted and time-bound projects on key areas along the whole asylum and reception process, resettlement and other legal pathways to international protection, according to assessed needs and in line with specific contexts. EASO will aim to involve the key partners to reach the necessary results and will put in place enhanced

communication channels to ensure good cooperation, in the framework of the wider EASO communication activities. EASO will also have the possibility to implement externally funded projects (see section 5.6 on funding).

- **National and regional roadmaps,** cooperation tools based on identified priorities of the EU's external policies and upon consultation with the EASO Management Board, identified needs and subsequent priorities, detailing the type of support that the intervention will provide. They allow planning for support activities on key areas for cooperation along the whole asylum and reception process, resettlement and other legal pathways, according to specific needs and in line with specific contexts. They are jointly developed by EASO and third country national authorities through a participatory approach, in cooperation and coordination with all relevant stakeholders including EU+ countries, EU institutions and agencies, IOs including UNHCR and IOM. The possibility of setting up regional or thematic roadmaps with several EU+ countries, third countries or regional initiatives is also retained.

In addition, EASO has set up a **network** for communication with EU+ countries, the Commission, EEAS, relevant EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies' network, and where relevant, IOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) concerning matters related to EASO's external action. The role of the network will follow the terms of reference to be defined. EASO will also encourage the dialogue between other EASO networks and third country officials, when relevant and appropriate, by providing occasions for learning, exchange of experiences and good practices.

⁽²⁵⁾ See footnote 7.

5.6. Cooperation arrangements

The arrangements between EASO, EU+ countries, third countries' authorities or other relevant stakeholders express the commitment to cooperate and define the modalities of such cooperation, providing EASO with the framework to carry out its support actions and formalise the cooperation instruments. They include:

- **Written correspondence, exchanges of letters and/or declarations of intents**, which are formal commitments at an appropriate level aimed at officially endorsing cooperation between EASO and the relevant stakeholder(s).
- **Working arrangements with third countries**, providing a high-level commitment and a framework for cooperation with the authorities of a given third country, competent in the areas relevant to EASO's mandate. In line with the EASO regulation, working arrangements with third countries may be established by EASO to facilitate the implementation of its external action, upon agreement of the Commission and following a decision by the EASO Management Board defining the nature, extent and manner in which the cooperation between the agency and the country in question is to be implemented, including cooperation on technical aspects as covered by the EASO regulation.

Working arrangements may be used in cases of well-established and long-term cooperation with key third countries, provided that they will add value to the implementation of support.

- **Working arrangements with EU institutions, agencies, relevant IOs or other stakeholders**, providing a framework for cooperation and communication that may include or focus on the EU external dimension.

5.7. Funding

EASO's external action is mainly funded by the **EASO budget** (amount allocated to external dimension decided by EASO in its annual work programme) ⁽²⁶⁾.

In addition to this main source of funding, EASO's external action can also be funded by **EU external aid instruments**. In its external action, EASO will thus consider the EU's financial instruments, such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), and the relevant regional development and protection programmes (RDPP), in partnership with COM and other EU bodies. Projects and partnerships will be developed in line with the guiding principles.

Finally, EU+ countries may **voluntarily contribute** to the EASO budget for specific projects.

⁽²⁶⁾ Resulting from EU contribution to EASO budget, MS's voluntary contribution to EASO and contribution to EASO by Associate Countries.

6. COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

As EASO external cooperation aims to provide added value, measures will be put in place to avoid duplication of efforts conducted by individual EU+ countries, the Commission, EEAS, including EU Delegations, other EU JHA agencies and relevant stakeholders. Where deemed relevant, and when synergies can be achieved, EASO could consider partnering with individual EU+ countries, the Commission, EEAS, EU JHA agencies and/or IOs to provide support to specific third countries.

6.1. *EU+ countries*

EU+ countries, in line with their national external priorities, within the framework of the CEAS, have ongoing bilateral cooperation with third countries in the field of asylum and migration. EU+ countries' activities are complementary to that of EASO and may take various forms such as bilateral agreements, twinning programmes, and technical assistance to third countries.

The EU+ countries' commitment to EASO's External Cooperation Strategy is imperative for the success of related EASO external actions.

6.2. *Third countries*

Third countries are key partners for EASO in the implementation of the External Dimension of the CEAS. The areas of cooperation with third countries will be identified all along the asylum process, according to requests and interests of national authorities. EASO targeted interventions, national roadmaps and/or

operational cooperation will be jointly developed through the use of a participatory approach and an open two-way communication. This will allow enhanced partnership and adaptability to needs and resources on both sides.

6.3. *European institutions and agencies*

European Commission

DG Migration and Home Affairs is a key partner for EASO in its work to implement the external dimension of the CEAS. The working arrangement for external action between the directorate-general and EASO establishes the strategic and operational framework for cooperation and communication on external action by focusing on priority setting, programming of external action and cooperation with third countries.

Due to its geographical remit, DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations is another key partner for EASO. Cooperation is established, notably in the framework of the IPA Project, and will be reinforced in line with the geographical priorities.

In consultation with DG Migration and Home Affairs, DG International Cooperation and Development and DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) might be engaged as appropriate in the implementation of EASO's external action through information sharing on EASO cooperation instruments that might impact their work.



European External Action Service (EEAS)

EEAS will be engaged as appropriate in the definition ⁽²⁷⁾ and implementation of EASO's external action. EASO currently contributes to the work of the Migration Policy Team at the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey through the deployment of a resettlement expert. Similarly, EASO shall strive to cooperate closely with the EU Delegations in relevant third countries where EASO's external action takes place.

EU Delegations will be regularly kept informed about the EASO support activities carried out in third countries and briefings and debriefings with EASO staff and deployed experts may be organised. When relevant and upon EASO request, EU Delegations may provide EASO with logistical support and up-to-date information on the third country concerned.

Justice and Home Affairs agencies and their network

JHA agencies are individually and collectively playing a significant role in supporting the implementation of the EU's external action. Like EASO, some of the other EU JHA agencies, possess not only the external cooperation legal mandate, but also have the appropriate expertise in some of the relevant fields since they are permanently pooling from EU+ countries and international practices, standards and knowledge. EASO has therefore established a working relationship with Frontex, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), and Europol and work together within the JHA agencies' network and also cooperate on an operational level, for instance in the Western Balkans. EASO has also signed working arrangements with Frontex and FRA and is discussion similarly with Europol.

Within the JHA agencies' network, EASO exchanges views and experience with other agencies on their respective work in the area of cooperation with third countries within the existing mandates of the agencies, and enhances the coordination of their work in close cooperation with COM and EEAS, who also participate in the network.

6.4. International organisations and other key stakeholders

International organisations

UNHCR is a key partner for EASO in its work of supporting EU+ countries in fulfilling their asylum and refugee obligations under EU and international law. According to Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the European Union's CEAS will include 'partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing inflows of people applying for asylum or subsidiary or temporary protection', which must be in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951 and the Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the status of refugees, and other relevant treaties. The working arrangement between EASO and UNHCR establishes the framework for cooperation between the two organisations, Articles 13 and 14 focusing specifically on third country support and resettlement, setting out the frame for exchange of information and best practices in these fields and exploring possibilities for further cooperation ⁽²⁸⁾.

IOM is another key stakeholder in the field of migration, in particular on resettlement. EASO and IOM are currently discussing how to enhance their cooperation ⁽²⁹⁾.

⁽²⁷⁾ EEAS was consulted on the draft EASO External Cooperation Strategy on 31 January 2019 (bilaterally) and on 1 February 2019 (multilaterally).

⁽²⁸⁾ Working arrangement between EASO and UNHCR, available at: https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-UNHCR-Working-Arrangement_0.pdf. UNHCR was consulted on the definition of EASO External Cooperation Strategy bilaterally on 31 January as well as during the meeting of 1 February 2019.

⁽²⁹⁾ A Working Arrangement between IOM and EASO is being discussed at the time of writing. IOM was also consulted bilaterally on 31 January.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) and other regional and thematic initiatives

EASO may also, where relevant, engage with specialised NGOs, CSOs and other regional and/or thematic initiatives in specific areas.

Many NGOs and CSOs working in the field of asylum have specific experience and operational expertise that is not available to EU+ countries and EU institutions. Where relevant, EASO endeavours to cooperate with them on specific external action with third countries or on

resettlement. EASO will continue to consult NGOs and CSOs where relevant and according to their thematic or geographical expertise during field missions to third countries and/or on resettlement.

Other regional and thematic initiatives include partnerships between different actors (NGOs, CSOs, states, academia, private sector), which can complement or enhance the impact of the EASO external action. Such initiatives include the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), MARRI and the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE).

7. PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

7.1. *Timeframe*

The present EASO External Cooperation Strategy is in line with the EASO mandate and therefore has no set duration. It will be operationalised following the EASO internal planning cycle through EASO single programming documents (SPD) and annual work programmes (AWP).

The following circumstances will trigger a revision of this strategy:

- New legislative and policy instruments impacting the work of EASO are adopted, including the proposed legislative proposals aimed at establishing a fully-fledged EUAA;
- Significant changes in the international migration and asylum context impact Member States' and European Union external priorities;
- Significant changes in the situation of third countries impact the current EASO external action.

7.2. *Planning methodology*

The EASO External Cooperation Strategy will provide strategic direction including for the development of results frameworks, which will be based on the combination of two complementary approaches: the results-based management approach and the theory of change approach. It will provide the basis for a multi-annual approach, including appropriate revision and evaluation.

7.3. *Monitoring and evaluation*

EASO's engagement with EU+ countries, and third countries will be supported by EASO's fidelity monitoring and adapted evaluation initiatives. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be included in the relevant cooperation instruments, as appropriate and taking into account the scenario-based approach. Dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff will support the implementation of these functions.

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