



Support is our mission

# European Asylum Support Office - Newsletter - June 2012

*1 year anniversary edition*

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the June edition of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) newsletter. This month marks the one year anniversary from when EASO was officially inaugurated on 19 June 2011. For this reason we decided to issue a special 1 year anniversary edition of the EASO newsletter featuring an article on EASO's work during the past year and pictures of the most memorable moments. As usual, our *in the news* section features the most important events which occurred in the past month and also upcoming events which could be of interest to you.

As to EASO training, this month we will introduce EASO's training strategy. The training strategy outlines the principles and procedures that will guide EASO in the implementation of its training mandate.

Jean-Pierre Schembri  
Newsletter Editor  
EASO Spokesperson

### In the news: EASO Management Board meeting, 18/19 June 2012

On 18/19 June 2012, EASO held its 7th management board meeting in Malta. The management board is composed of representatives of the EU Member States, the European Commission, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). FRONTEX also attended the 7th EASO management board meeting.

During the meeting participants discussed the asylum situation inside and outside the EU. The Annual Report on the situation of asylum in the EU and on the activities of EASO was adopted. Moreover, the EASO Executive Director presented the EASO Country of Origin Information Report on Afghanistan, EASO's Training Strategy, and the draft Work Programme for 2013. EASO's Executive Director also reported on the state of play of EASO's activities in the field of practical cooperation, unaccompanied minors, relocation and consultation with stakeholders. The 7th Management Board meeting marked the celebration of the first year since EASO's official inauguration on 19 June 2011.

### In the news: JHA Council, 7 June 2012



**JHA Council:** Dr. Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director with Ms. Maggie DE BLOCK, Belgian State Secretary for Migration and Asylum Policy and Social Integration. Photo: Council of the European Union.

On 7 June 2012, Dr Robert K. Visser, EASO Executive Director, attended the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Luxembourg. During this Council Meeting, the Executive Director presented EASO's analysis of the recent asylum trends in Europe. This work is being conducted by EASO as part of its contribution to the early warning, preparedness and crises management system.

The Executive Director presented the trends of Syrian asylum seekers and other asylum flows into the EU. With such analysis EU Member States can better prepare their asylum handling and reception systems. Following EASO's presentation, Ministers held a political discussion on the implementation of a common framework for genuine and practical solidarity towards member states facing particular pressures due to mixed migration flows. The discussion focused on the support to Greece in the areas of border, asylum and migration management.

The next Council meeting is the Informal Council in Nicosia, Cyprus, where debates on solidarity and the work of EASO are expected to continue.

### In the news: schedule for expert meetings on unaccompanied minors

In line with the framework of the Commission Action Plan on unaccompanied minors and EASO's work programme, on 14 -15 May EASO hosted the first of a series of sessions on **unaccompanied minors and age assessment**. Following on from these introductory sessions, EASO plans to organise the following expert meetings in 2012:

- Expert Meeting on EASO training and the EAC Interviewing Children Module, Malta, 25 - 26 July;
- Expert Meeting on Interviewing Children Procedures, Malta, 26 - 27 July;
- Expert Meeting on the use of x-ray and other medical evidence, Brussels, 6-7 September;
- Expert Meeting focussing on legal aspects, including the roles of the courts and judiciary as well as evidence assessment, Malta, 9 October;
- Working Party to explore the impact and connection between age assessment and other asylum procedures, Malta, 10 October;
- Expert meeting to consider the way forward and the possibilities for guidelines on unaccompanied minors and age assessment, Malta, 13 November.

In addition to EASO, the Commission, UNHCR and Member States, it may also be possible for other relevant actors involved in the field of unaccompanied minors to participate. If you require further information please contact us on the following e-mail address: [Helen-Marie.FRAHER@ext.ec.europa.eu](mailto:Helen-Marie.FRAHER@ext.ec.europa.eu)

#### Contents

- Editorial - P. 1
- In the News - P. 1
- In the News- P. 2
- Ask the Executive Director - P. 2
- EASO's Training Strategy - P. 3
- EASO One Year On - P. 4
- 1 year in pictures - P. 5



Support is our mission

### In the news: EASO Practical Cooperation Workshop on Syria 28 & 29 June 2012, Valletta, Malta.

Following a general request made during the hand-over EURASIL plenary held in March, EASO will organise a workshop on Syria, in cooperation with Landinfo (Norway), on 28/29 June in Valletta, Malta.

EURASIL (now EASO Practical Cooperation) was a network of government officials dealing with asylum policy, bringing together governmental experts from the EU Member States, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein who met regularly to discuss a variety of policy-related matters with a view to improving and maximising convergence on approaches to, and assessment of the protection needs of asylum seekers. EURASIL was handed over to EASO at a plenary session on 15/16 March 2012.

A Working Party on EASO Practical Cooperation has been devising a new methodology for EASO workshops based on feedback provided by Member States. The inaugural EASO Practical Cooperation Workshop on Syria will span over one day and a half, and, for the first time, this meeting will bring together County of Origin Information (COI) specialists and policy practitioners on Syria.

On the first day of the meeting, two speakers will be invited to explain the latest developments on the situation in Syria. In the afternoon, seven break-out sessions on policy practice and COI will be organised. On the second day, a wrap-up plenary session will take place wherein the chairpersons of the break out sessions will present their findings. Moreover, a discussion on possible future actions will follow.

## Ask the Executive Director

In this section, the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office replies to questions from our readers. Below you will find the replies to this month's questions:

### **What is EUREMA and how was it conceived?**

In October 2008, the European Council endorsed the intra-EU relocation of beneficiaries of international protection as a measure of solidarity in cases where the Member State's particular geographic or demographic situation results disproportionate pressure on that Member State. In May 2009, the then European Commission Vice President and Commissioner for Home Affairs, Jacques Barrot, expressed an intention to launch a Pilot Project for the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection from Malta, as one of the Member States most affected by migration and asylum flows. This initiative was endorsed by the European Council of 18-19 June 2009 and it was the first multilateral intra-EU relocation initiative.

EUREMA was co-financed under the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2009. Its implementation began on 1 January 2010 and came to an end in August 2011. The Pilot Project was implemented with the full involvement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Pledges for the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection from Malta within the context of the first phase of the Pilot Project were made by ten Member States, and a total of 255 relocation places were pledged. 227 beneficiaries were actually relocated.

In view of the influx of asylum-seekers from Libya and the pressure faced by Malta, Council decided in April 2011, on a proposal from Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, to extend the Pilot Project for the relocation of beneficiaries of international protection in Malta, now called EUREMA II. The European Council of 23-24 June 2011 then welcomed this extension. Taking into consideration also bilateral arrangements, over 350 places were pledged for EUREMA II. The process is currently ongoing.

### **What is the state of play on the evaluation of the Pilot Project for Intra-EU relocation from Malta (EUREMA)?**

In line with the JHA Council conclusions of March 2012, together with the European Commission, EASO is currently working on the full evaluation of the Pilot Project for intra-EU Relocation from Malta (EUREMA). The evaluation aims to ascertain the project's benefits and successes for those participating Member States and beneficiaries of international protection as well as any difficulties and challenges that may have occurred. In this context, EASO sent questionnaires to all Member States, Associate Countries, IOM and UNHCR. EASO is also conducting a number of interviews to complement the questionnaires that were sent to all Member States. EASO is currently screening the completed questionnaires and the outcomes of the interview and will present the findings to the European Commission in the coming weeks.



Photo: Dr Visser and Minister Mifsud Bonnici meeting participants in the

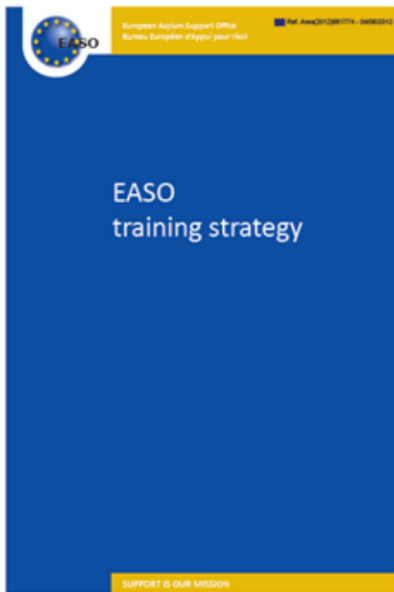
EUREMA project.



Support is our mission

# EASO Training Strategy

*1 year anniversary edition*



On 19 June 2012, the new EASO training strategy was presented to the EASO Management Board.

The training strategy outlines the principles and procedures that will guide EASO in the implementation of its training mandate. Through the implementation of this strategy, EASO will support the enhancement of quality standards and the harmonisation of asylum practices throughout the European Union. The raising of quality and harmonisation standards shall ultimately contribute to the establishment of the Common European Asylum System.

In implementing this strategy, EASO will cooperate closely with Member States' asylum and immigration authorities, the Commission, other EU Agencies, UNHCR and other relevant actors whose expertise can contribute to improve the quality of the training provided.

With this strategy, EASO consolidates good practices, making use of the tools and expertise existing within Member States administrations. In line with the EASO founding Regulation, training activities will primarily target Member States administrative and judicial authorities. To the extent possible, EASO will widen the scope of its training activities to other actors subject to the needs of Member States and availability of human and financial resources.

EASO's training support will continue to be two-fold:

- EASO will support Member States in the development and publication of training materials in compliance with the EU copyright law.
- EASO will also support Member States in the organisation of training events and delivery of training.

This policy document is structured in five steps namely:

- Step I - identification of target groups and training needs;
- Step II - Conception of training methodologies and tools;
- Step III - Selection and establishment of a training and expert pool;
- Step IV - Implementation of training tools at the national level;
- Step V - Evaluation and quality control.



Photo: EASO training session

During 2012 and 2013, EASO will review and strengthen existing training resources and take an inclusive approach in the development of new tools and selection of new training methodologies. In doing so, EASO will work to ensure consistency and compliance of the training tools with the standards set in international and European law and jurisprudence.

Training methodologies will include the elaboration of e-learning courses and organisation of face-to-face workshops, train-the-trainer courses and seminars, but also the publication of handbooks and guidelines.

Training tools will be developed in English and cover continuous training on specific subject matters, or tailored to the requirements of a particular audience. EASO does also foresee the development of training to support Member States under particular pressure. While EASO is fully committed to this training strategy, the commitment of Member States and their involvement at all levels is decisive in its successful implementation.



*Support is our mission*

## EASO - One Year On

*1 year anniversary edition*

A year has now passed from EASO's official inauguration on 19 June 2011. However, EASO was operational some time before that date. In this article we look at the main events that have shaped EASO during this period.

At the inaugural meeting of the EASO Management Board (held on 25/26 November 2010), which is composed of representatives of the EU Member States, the European Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr Stéphane Fratacci, was elected as Chairman of the Board and Dr. Robert K. Visser was designated as EASO's first Executive Director. Dr. Visser took office on 1 February 2011. Moreover, on 24 May 2011, the agreement that governs the relationship between the host Member State 'Malta' and EASO (the seat agreement) has been signed.

Against an evolving situation, both inside and outside the EU, in 2011, EASO has been very active on various fronts, in particular: on providing training and quality, Country of Origin Information (COI), setting up an Early warning and Preparedness System, providing emergency support when needed, fulfilling measures outlined in the EU Action Plan on unaccompanied minors, whilst at the same time growing from one to more than forty staff and moving from Brussels to Malta.

From the very start of its activities EASO's emergency support to Greece was one of the agency's main focuses. In this context, the first asylum support team was deployed by EASO to Greece as early as 24 May 2011 and many teams were deployed since then for missions lasting from a few weeks to several months. EASO support to Greece is expected to continue at least until 2013. The combined effects of the Greek government (with its legislative and administrative reform), EU emergency funding provided by the European Commission, UNHCR cooperation with the Greek authorities and EASO operations lead to improvements in several areas. However, much remains to be done.

During 2011 Luxembourg has faced particular asylum pressures, where the number of asylum seekers almost tripled compared to 2010. This unexpected and significant influx of asylum seekers brought Luxembourg close to its capacity limits. Luxembourg immediately hired new staff to deal with the increase in asylum cases. Following a request by the Government of Luxembourg, on 11 January 2012, the Executive Director of EASO pledged asylum support teams to Luxembourg. On 26 January 2012 the operating plan on the Deployment of Asylum Support Teams to Luxembourg was signed. EASO Asylum Support Teams were deployed to Luxembourg from 30 January to 8 February 2012. The aim of the EASO support was to train the new staff on the EU asylum acquis so asylum cases can be handled effectively, backlogs reduced and the principles of the Common European Asylum System will be guaranteed.

EASO also provided training and developed training material in support of the enhancement of quality and harmonisation in the area of asylum, ultimately contributing to the implementation of a CEAS. The cornerstone of EASO training activities is the European asylum curriculum (EAC) - which EASO took over on 1 January 2012. EAC serves as a common vocational training system designed for asylum officials throughout the EU and covers core aspects of the asylum procedure in interactive modules.

EASO has already developed a number of practical cooperation tools and methodologies, using also lessons learned from previous experiences and measures, as vehicles for such cooperation. Three key measures that have already been integrated and are of particular relevance to this year's Annual Report due to their close connection with the EASO's mandate are the European Asylum Curriculum, the EURASIL network and the COI Portal. EASO is now carrying out training sessions, organising practical cooperation workshops and administering the COI Portal.

EASO is currently developing analytical tools with a view to establishing an Early Warning and Preparedness System in accordance with Council Conclusions of 8 March 2012 on a Common Framework for genuine and practical solidarity towards Member States facing particular pressure on their asylum systems. In this context, EASO provides regional outlook, analysis of asylum trends and push-pull factors, as well as risk-scenarios.

More recently EASO has been asked by the European Commission to conduct a full evaluation of the Pilot Project for intra-EU Relocation from Malta (EUREMA).

Moreover, EASO is engaged in cooperation with a number of institutional partners and other stakeholders: the European Commission - especially DG Home Affairs - and other European institutions; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - whose representative sits at its Management Board; Frontex and other EU Agencies such as the Fundamental Rights Agency; as well as with civil society. To facilitate EASO's engagement with civil society (including NGO's, academics and the judiciary) a Consultative forum has been established. The first Consultative Forum with organisations from the non-governmental world and academia was held on 15 December 2011 in Valletta, Malta.

The foundations of EASO have been firmly anchored, and the critical role that EASO plays in the development of a Common European Asylum System is increasingly becoming clear. As an independent centre of expertise, support and solidarity, EASO is developing a toolbox that enables it to respond actively and timely to the practical needs of Member States and other stakeholders.



Support is our mission

(more than) *1 year in pictures*

*1 year anniversary edition*



25/26 November 2010: First meeting of the EASO Management Board. Photo: DOI Malta.



1 April 2011 - signing of the Greece Operation Plan: Dr Robert Visser, EASO Executive Director and Minister Papoutsis, Greek Minister of Citizen Protection



19 June 2011 - EASO Official inauguration: (from left to right) Dr Visser, Commissioner Malmström, Maltese Prime Minister, Dr Lawrence Gonzi and Minister Mifsud Bonnici. Photo: DOI Malta.



19 June 2011 - unveiling of the EASO official logo: Commissioner Malmström and Prime Minister Gonzi. Photo: DOI Malta.



19 June 2012 - EASO staff in Malta. In a year EASO grew to more than 44 staff members. Photo: Adam Kittl.



18/19 June 2012 - 7th Meeting of the EASO Management Board Photo: Adam Kittl.

Catalogue number: BZ-AA-12-006-EN-N