

## 6<sup>th</sup> EASO CONSULTATIVE FORUM REPORT

### Format

The 6<sup>th</sup> EASO Consultative Forum plenary meeting took place in Athens (Greece) on 28-29 November 2016; the meeting lasted 1.5 days, was hosted in a fully participatory format which was designed and delivered with the support of the European Commission (DG Interpretation) experts in participatory leadership.

Focusing in particular on the most significant developments that have been affecting the European asylum context in 2016, such as the establishment of the European relocation programme, the hotspot approach and the different legislative proposals under discussion, the objectives of the Forum were the following:

- Make synergies among involved actors visible and discuss them in an effort to promote them further;
- Make constraints and challenges visible and seek solutions;
- Provide inputs and suggestions to EASO relevant to its mandate;
- Promote channels of information flows, from the institutional level to civil society, other way around and transversal among civil society representatives;
- Promote the use of some specific EASO tools which can be useful to address the challenges;
- Promote the use of other relevant tools developed by other actors;

The agenda of the meeting was structured with an opening high-level panel to outline what is changing in the European asylum framework under different perspectives, an appreciative enquiry exercise, three thematic workshops with world café discussions, an Open space session where participants could present and discuss their own topic and a closing debate to react to the multiple inputs put forward by the participants. Participants were guided as much as possible to focus the

discussion on inputs relevant to the mandate of EASO.



A marketplace area where organizations could display their material was made

available and a live graphic recording captured and made visible the collective intelligence of the meeting, visualizing in real time the key outputs from the conversations taking place.



Interactive Participatory format  
Authentic dialogue matters for EASO

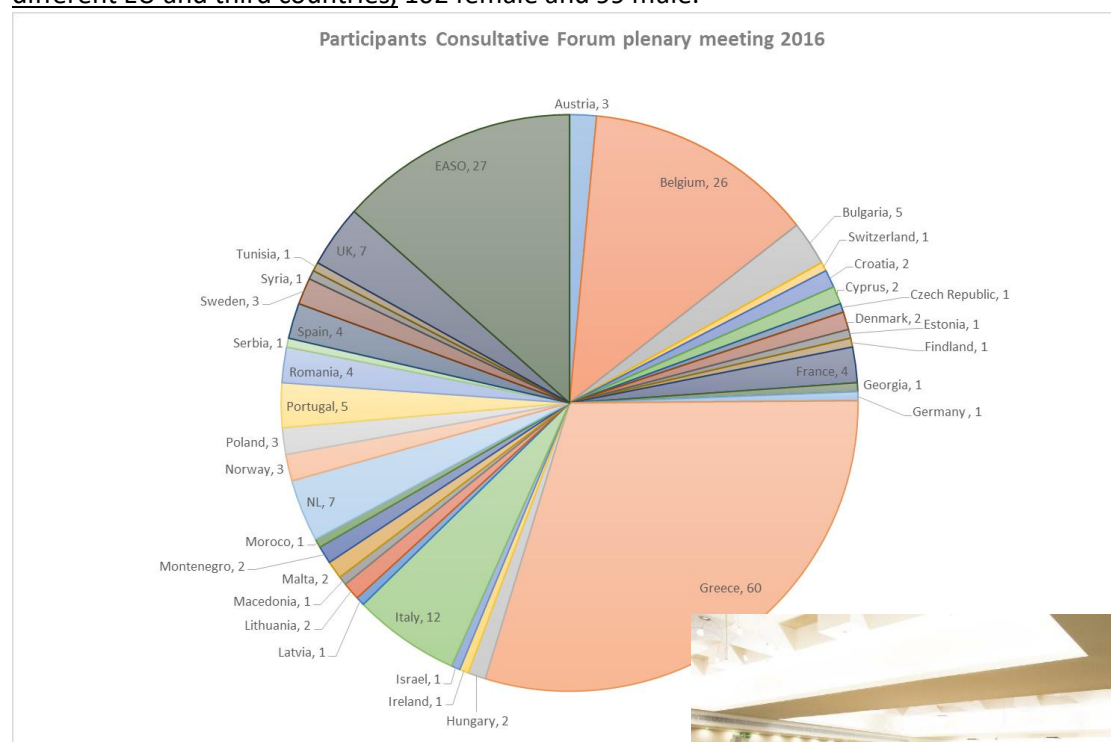


The screening of the play “The journey continues”, created by fifteen Afghan young women refugees who live in the Schisto camp and participate in ActionAid’s programmes, was presented as a side event to the meeting, followed by a debate with two refugee women of the play.

## Participation

The Forum was open to civil society organizations and individuals operating in the field of asylum; organizations and individuals operating at the different levels (locals, national, European and international) as well as representatives of refugees communities were encouraged to register. The registration opened on 11 October 2016 and the invitation was largely disseminated through EASO contact lists, webpage, newsletter and social media. A save-the-date had previously been disseminated on 6 September 2016. Postcards to promote the event were procured and distributed in the hotspots in Italy and Greece and through key stakeholders. EU Member States’ Asylum authorities, representatives of EU institutions and International Organizations were also invited to the meeting. A special call for civil society representatives from third countries involved in EASO’s external dimension strategy was launched in order to promote the participation of a limited number of third countries representatives.

In total 201 persons attended the Forum, including 27 EASO staff members, coming from 35 different EU and third countries, 102 female and 99 male.



In order to promote wider representation, each organization was invited to register only one participant. 58 participants from outside Greece who applied for financial assistance were granted financial





support from EASO in the form of a flat rate (500€) after full attendance of the meeting. In addition, eight participants from third countries received direct financial support from EASO in order to cover their travel cost.

Due to the limitation of the venue's space, and in order not to jeopardize the effectiveness of the format designed for the meeting, registration had to be closed after reaching 200 persons. A waiting list was established, and in case of withdrawal or cancellations, interested persons in the list were invited to participate.



The full list of participants, with their affiliation and contact details, was made available on the EASO web-page and provided to the participants in advance. Social media were largely used to facilitate interaction remotely during the event, including live streaming of some sessions of the Forum and the use of Twitter. The hashtag #EASOCF16 was one of the three most used hashtags in Greece on 28 November 2016.

The following background material were made available to participants in order to be consulted prior to the Forum:

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Seventh report on relocation and resettlement (9.11.2016).

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

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third country national or a stateless person (Recast)

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and Council on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted and amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast)

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a Union Resettlement System and amending Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council

#### EASO

Latest Asylum Trends September 2016





## Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2015 EASO practical tools

### OTHER SOURCES

Guild et al., Enhancing the CEAS and Alternatives to Dublin;

Guild et al., New Approaches, Alternative Avenues and Means of Access to Asylum Procedures for Persons Seeking International Protection, (European Parliament, 2014);

Moreno-Lax, Europe in Crisis (Red Cross EU Office, 2016)

EASO made efforts in the information provided prior to the meeting to highlight the participatory format of the Forum, framing participants' expectations.

In particular, the meeting offered:

- The opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations around three priority thematic areas and promote collective knowledge;
- A participatory process hosted by a team of professionals skilled in participatory leadership;
- The possibility to provide inputs and share ideas most relevant to the work of EASO;
- EASO actively listening and participating in authentic dialogue;
- A record (graphic and report) of the outcome of the meeting shared afterwards;
- A venue to meet and exchange with about 200 participants from a diversified set of civil-society organisations and institutions, refugees representatives, local authorities and third-countries representatives.
- A marketplace available to host info stands for the requesting participants.

Participants were asked to:

- actively engage by sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences for 1.5 days;
- Listen to each other carefully, listen for insights and in-depth questions;
- Link and connect ideas that matter for EASO and which can help to better address the current challenges;
- Accept that divergent opinions are ok and suspend judgments, assumption and certainties;

### Key highlights by session

#### 1. Setting the scene: what is changing in the European asylum framework?

Panellists, representing, in order, the European Commission, EASO, UNHCR, Greek Asylum Service, ECRE, were invited to provide a very short introductory statement whose key messages were the following:

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos:

- The crisis situation is far away to be over soon, but significant progress has been made since last year;



- Relocation is slowly moving forward, with 8000 persons relocated from Italy and Greece, but Member States need to comply with their commitment and make more pledges;
- Priority is to strengthen the protection of the most vulnerable people, in particular UAM;
- EASO's transformation in a fully-fledged Asylum Agency is part of the progress toward a more European approach to the crisis;
- The role of the Consultative Forum, according to the proposed new regulation, should be reinforced in order to better advise the Executive Director of EASO;
- Civil society is recognized to play an important role to support facing the current challenges;

EASO Executive Director, Jose' Carreira:

- Clear added value of strengthening dialogue and pooling expertise between institutional and non-institutional actors, all with different roles, in the field of asylum and reception;
- Renewed EASO's commitment to promote enhanced dialogue and cooperation with civil society: we are moving from a façade dialogue to a fully participatory process which can lead to meaningful conversation, it goes behind today's meeting and aims to build win-win synergies in the long term;
- The Forum is a great opportunity to create collective knowledge by connecting information among involved stakeholders, to know each other better, to build trust.
- Frame expectation: the commitment is to actively listening to you, because only through listening do you find better answers. Not all input, proposals and ideas will be transformed into immediate action or into changes: only what falls within the mandate of EASO and within the strict boundaries of our rules of procedures.
- In 2016 EASO became significantly more operational responding to new tasks and changing needs; in this context 2 workshops with civil society actors were organized in Sicily and in Portugal;

UNHCR Director Bureau for Europe, Vincent Cochetel:

- The current crisis is not a migration problem, it is first of all a political and societal problem;
- Why we manage to install internet in few days in a refugees camp in the middle of Africa, and we do not manage to have internet functioning in the hotspots in the Greek Islands?
- It is important to ask ourselves if we are ready enough to avoid that what happened in 2016 will not happen again;

Greek Asylum Service Director, Maria Stavropoulou:

- Greece in 2016 has been constantly called to implement new procedures: relocation, admissibility, pre-registration. It is not easy but progress is been made;
- The current situation in Greece called to pool forces and to develop joint procedures, which is what we are currently doing with the support of EASO;
- The quality of the asylum procedure needs to be ensured also when the pressure to act quickly is high;



ECRE Secretary General, Catherine Wollard:

- Many legislative proposals are currently on the table and they will shape the future of the functioning of the CEAS;
- ECRE provided extensive comments on the proposals, and particularly on the revised role of EASO, which goes into the right direction;
- More enforcement mechanisms are needed in order to ensure Member States comply with their obligations;
- Civil Society to be recognized as a legitimate source of information to monitor conditions in Member States and countries of origin;

## 2. Introduction to the plenary and first round of participation on what works well

This session held in the plenary format allowed to map the categories of participants in the room and to understand what brought them to the Forum. Participants included in large majority NGOs representatives, particularly working in Greece and Italy, national/international institutions and asylum authorities, journalists, researchers, lawyers, community-based associations, few refugee representatives; learning from others, understanding EASO's perspective, find ways to overcome populist/fear in Europe and frustration for the status quo were the main motivations to participate.

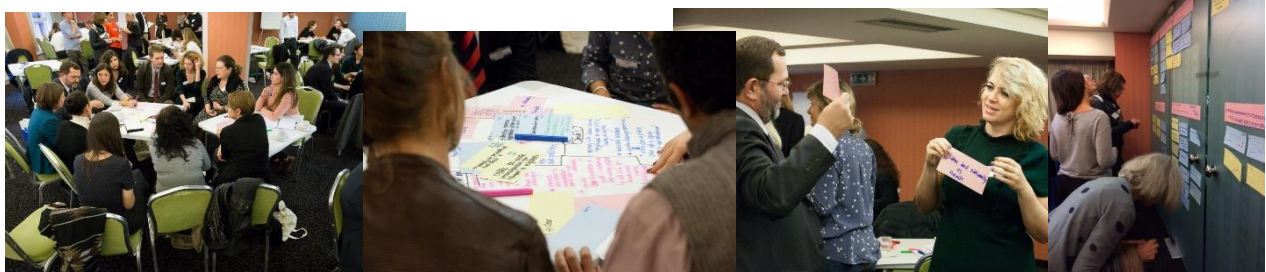


Next, an appreciative enquiry exercise was developed, by working in triads and sharing positive experiences of what is working well in the current European asylum system. The focus allowed to identify key conditions for success, including: cooperation and collaboration; flexibility; good communication; training and professionalization of involved stakeholders; funding; accountability and ownership at all levels; clear and enforceable legal instruments; goodwill and trust.

## 3. Participatory workshops: challenges and solutions. Exploring synergies with EASO.

Participants were split into three groups according to their interest and expertise to engage into thematic discussion around the themes outlined in the programme of the meeting. For each workshop an EASO expert gave a short introduction and rapporteurs from civil society had been preliminary appointed to feed back into the plenary the main outcomes of the workshops.

Two sessions of world café discussions in small groups were facilitated in each workshop, which allowed participants to first identify the challenges to overcome in relation to the thematic area; and then to cluster according to common challenges and to discuss how EASO could help to address the identified issues, and if not EASO, who else could help.





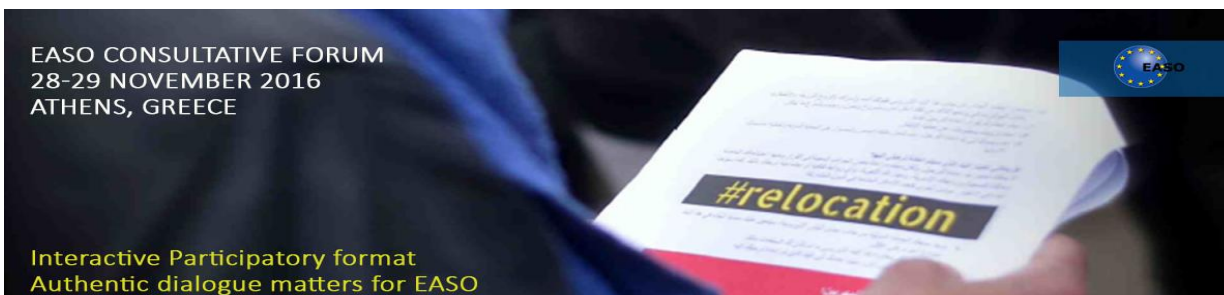
The results of the world café discussions were collected by *Challenges* and *Needs* (for EASO and for other actors) and participants were asked to prioritize the identified needs for EASO. The table below reports the three top needs for each WG.

WG	EASO expert	Facilitator	Rapporteur	Pax	Top 3 needs for EASO
<b>1. Unpacking relocation and the hotspot approach.</b>	Dimitra Pippidou, Field Officer, Operations Unit	Ian Andersen & Dimitra Gavril	IOM & Greek Forum of Refugees	75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In regards to the EU/TUR deal having consistent mechanism in place</li> <li>• Interview according to date of arrival and vulnerabilities, not nationality (75%)</li> <li>• EASO experts: longer deployment, cultural approach, training, speak language of host MS</li> </ul>
<b>2. Information, analysis and communication within a polyphonic context.</b>	Ward Lutin, Head of Info and Analysis Unit	Marina Lynch & Odysseas Valentas	Asylum Corner-Lai-momo	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep COI and policies separated</li> <li>• Engage with local diaspora to disseminate information</li> <li>• Set up a reference group with civil society to develop tailor made communication</li> </ul>
<b>3. Addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in the context of high influx: identification, referral, reception, integration.</b>	Riikka Peltonen, Quality and Vulnerable Groups Officer, Asylum Support Unit	Maria Scordialos & Anna Rosa Paolino	Save-the-Children & International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Push MS to live up with their commitments</li> <li>• Coordinate actions with MS and civil society for UAM/separated children as a central body</li> <li>• Involve civil society to develop tools in support of vulnerable groups</li> </ul>

#### 4. YOU create the agenda – Open Space

During this session participants were asked to bring forward their own concrete proposals on key topics related to the theme “Working with EASO on asylum...”. In total 20 topics were presented by different participants, including 3 topics owned by EASO staff. Each topic owner had a pre-designed poster to be filled; a template helped to gather the outcomes of the conversation on recommendations for EASO, what else is needed, who can help, next steps and unanswered questions. Participants were free to contribute to the topics of their choice, through two rounds of 45 minutes each. On the following day, the posters were displayed in a “Gallery walk” allowing showcase and discussion in a dynamic format for 1.5 hour; each topic owner stood in front of his/her poster, being available for questions and further discussion. This exercise offered also the opportunity for volunteers to sign-up and for synergies and cooperation between proposals to emerge.





On the basis of the inputs included in the matrix, particularly under the section *Recommendation for EASO*, as well as using inputs from the previous sessions, EASO will prepare an action plan.



## 5. Closing panel debate<sup>1</sup>: stocktaking of 2016 challenges, developments and ways ahead to strengthen synergies between institutional actors and civil society to address the refugees' crisis and to build a single and fair Europe of asylum

Eights panellists representing the perspectives of EASO, the European Commission, the Academia, the European Parliament, UNHCR, ECRE and Metadrasi reacted to the inputs put forward in the Forum and engaged in Q&A with the participants. Key recommendations included the depoliticization of asylum, the overcoming an emergency driven mind-set, a more solid monitoring system of the implementation of the CEAS, the need to ensure refugees' participation in the policy dialogue, the strengthening of European policies of social inclusion, the balance between speed and quality of asylum procedure, the identification of alternative to relocation for UAM and the importance that EASO ensures follow up to the plenary meeting, report on commitment of actions concerning cooperation with civil society and promote accountability on the recommendations/inputs provided by the participants of the Forum.

## 6. Final word to the participants

<sup>1</sup> Recorded video on the panel available on EASO Facebook page



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Participants were asked to describe with one word how they were leaving the room after 1.5 days of discussion. The replies were noted and a word cloud composed by the words mentioned by the participants was made. The size of each word indicates its frequency.

The feeling most mentioned by participants were:



- Challenged
- Informed
- Stressed
- Mixed
- Concerned
- Connected
- Questioned

The graphic record of the event was designed live and disseminated to participants in hard copy in December 2016.

## Evaluation of the meeting

The evaluation of the meeting included the analysis of the evaluation forms filled anonymously by the participants (see summary of results in the annexes), a debriefing with the team of facilitators who worked with EASO to design and implement the format and a focus group discussion with EASO staff members who participated to the Forum.

In general the meeting was positively assessed, the participatory format was recognized as a significant change in EASO's methodology to engage with civil society and the majority of participants found it useful and inspiring. Suggestions were provided in regards to promote greater participation of refugees representatives, to have more representative of the European Commission and from national authorities engaging in the discussion, to include a dedicated session to provide information on EASO's work and to engage with relevant stakeholders in the planning of the event.