



**Consultative Forum Thematic Meeting: Gender-related persecution
11th July, 2019, Brussels
Meeting Report**

1. Background to the EASO Consultative Forum and objectives of the CF meeting

The EASO Consultative Forum (CF) constitutes a platform for the exchange of information and pooling of knowledge, created to ensure that a close dialogue is established between the Agency and civil society. Several activities are implemented throughout the year, including CF meetings, electronic consultations on key EASO documents, and direct participation by select civil society organizations (CSOs) in various areas of EASO's work.

This thematic CF meeting focused on gender-related persecution. The theme was identified by civil society organisations as priority topic to be discussed in the context of a CF thematic meeting through a survey launched in the beginning of 2019.

Overall, the meeting aimed to explore how CSOs support persons who experienced gender-based persecution, identify the main challenges and good practices, and discuss if and how EASO could integrate civil society's expertise in possible future work on the topic. As main outcome to the meeting, participants formulated recommendations that aim to improve the treatment of gender related persecution and gender-based violence (GBV) survivors in the EU asylum procedures and reception systems. These recommendations were presented to EASO's Vulnerability Expert Network for further discussion and, where feasible, follow-up action.

2. Format and structure

The meeting consisted of mixed participatory methods including an opening plenary session, two slots of inter-active parallel workshops and a closing plenary session. The opening plenary session aimed at setting the scene and provided an overview of the different topics of gender-related persecution. During the inter-active parallel workshops, participants discussed four topics in detail:

- Women and girls in the EU asylum systems
- Mitigating the risks of gender-based violence in reception facilities
- Harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum
- Reception conditions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) applicants

For each of these topics, participants identified challenges, good practices and formulated recommendations.

During the closing plenary session, the various recommendations were reviewed, complemented and prioritised. The resulting key recommendations are presented in Annex 1, whilst the below summary (section 4) presents an overview of all main issues and recommendations discussed per agenda item.

3. Participants

A total of 51 participants attended the CF thematic meeting on gender-related persecution. The large majority of participants included representatives from NGOs (70%), followed by EASO staff (18%), other EU Agencies (4%), UN bodies (4%), and independent experts (4%). Participants came from 19 EU+ Member States and they contributed with different types of expertise, including: specific expertise on LGBTI; specific expertise on women/girl issues including traditional harmful practices. Some participants also contributed broad expertise on asylum, including specific knowledge/experience of gender-related persecution due to the central role that some of the organisations fulfil in their respective Member States' asylum and reception systems.

4. Summary of the meeting

The following sections of the report provide an account of the key topics presented and discussed during the meeting.

Opening Statements

EASO opened the meeting, recalling the importance of gender-related persecution, which had been identified by CSOs themselves as key priority topic to be discussed in the context of a CF thematic meeting. Some CSOs had also contributed their expertise and provided advice on the development of the meeting's agenda. The topic of vulnerable groups, and gender-related persecution in particular, was emphasised as important area through which civil society could contribute to EASO's work. EASO was eager to listen and learn from CSO's experiences, as so far, within EASO, the topic of gender-related persecution had been less explored. The meeting represented an initial exchange that aimed to explore challenges and good practices and aimed at formulating recommendations to improve the situation of GBV survivors in Member States' asylum and reception systems. These recommendations would be taken up by the EASO Vulnerability Expert Network for further discussions and, where possible, future (EASO) action.

A short **Tour de Table** followed, during which participants had the opportunity to introduce themselves and explain their expectations for the meeting. In line with the meeting's aims, the following main expectations were mentioned:

- Exchanging experiences on GBV cases and learning from other stakeholders
- Identifying challenges and in particular good practices as regards GBV applicants
- Channelling CSO experiences on GBV into EASO's work

EASO provided an overview of its activities on persons with special needs – see PPT. First, the mandate of the Agency was recalled and it was emphasised that issues related to vulnerability were integrated throughout all EASO activities (ranging from e.g. training, practical tools, guidance, country of origin (COI), information and analysis to operational support). EASO's work on persons with special needs consists of six main focus areas: children; trafficking; sexual orientation/gender identity; torture/serious forms of violence; gender-based violence, as well as; disabilities and medical issues. One of the things the Agency was currently working on included a tool for the individual assessment of special needs¹. Subsequently, an overview of activities on vulnerability was provided. Many activities had to date been implemented on children and trafficking in human beings, whereas fewer activities were so far implemented in other areas such as sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and persons subjected to torture. EASO also runs a practical cooperation network; the Vulnerability Experts Network (VEN), which is composed of an Advisory Group of 32 CSOs and a Steering Group including Member States. Finally, attention was drawn to relevant EASO practical tools and guidance, including the [IPSN tool](#), [practical guide on age assessment](#), [guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied minors \(UAMs\)](#), [guide on the best interests of the child in asylum procedures](#) and the [practical guide on family tracing](#). Relevant EASO [training](#) modules included: interviewing children, interviewing vulnerable persons, gender identity and sexual orientation, trafficking in human beings and reception for vulnerable persons.

UNHCR provided an overview of the broader policy framework on gender-related persecution. UNHCR had, in 1993, recognised sexual violence for the first time when the ExCom reached Conclusion No. 73

¹ Note that a tool for the identification of persons with special needs already exists and is available here: <https://ipsn.easo.europa.eu/>

on “Refugee protection and Sexual Violence”. At the time, emphasis was placed on sexual violence and the special needs of - in particular - women and girls. Since then, UNHCR evolved its way of thinking and has recognised the broader scope of GBV as reflected in its guidelines on international protection of 2002² which cover other types of gender-related persecution, such as FGM, violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, trafficking etc. In 2011, UNHCR produced a separate guideline on GBV³, with six priority areas: protecting children against GBV; survival sex; engaging men and boys; safe environments and safe access to domestic energy and natural resources; protecting LGBTI persons from GBV, as well as; protecting persons with disabilities against GBV. The UNHCR Age Gender and Diversity Policy was recently updated in 2018 and stipulates updated commitments for women and girls⁴. In addition to these specific guidelines for the asylum procedure, other guidelines exist that address programmatic aspects stipulating how GBV can best be prevented, mitigated and responded to when implementing projects. As global organisation, it was regarded an everyday challenge to engage national services in adequately supporting GBV survivors in asylum systems and procedures in the EU.

ORAM presented the specific challenges that LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees experience, focusing in particular on persecution they might experience in origin and transit countries. Nowadays there are still 68 UN Member States where consensual same-sex acts constitute a crime, for which the death penalty can be imposed in six states. Moreover, in many states where same sex acts are legal, social stigmatization remains high and LGBTI individuals are not necessarily safe. LGBTI individuals may experience different sorts of persecution in their country of origin, consisting of discrimination and marginalisation committed by state and non-state actors. They experience high rates of violence, physical, sexual, and verbal abuse, alienation and discrimination, at home, school, work, at public places, etc. After fleeing their country of origin, persecution often continues in neighbouring/transit countries where culture is largely similar. Difficulties may even exacerbate, as in addition to experiencing persecution on account of being LGBTI, they often face obstacles owing to their migrant situation in terms of accessing housing, employment, language barriers, discrimination, etc.

During **Q&A**, clarifications were provided on EASO’s training modules and the impact and status of the UNHCR Guidelines. Participants were informed that an overview of available EASO training modules can be found on the EASO website⁵. The training modules are designed mainly for case officers and other asylum officials throughout the EU. The training system is a train-the-trainer one, with participants being trained to become national trainers. Although trainings are mostly meant for Member State officials, other interested organizations can also express interest and, if positions are available, they may participate. Similarly, at national level, national trainings may also be open to interested CSOs, depending on Member States’ policy. Concerning the UNHCR Guidelines, though not legally binding, Member States often have recourse to them when developing their own

² UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection #1 on gender-related persecution within the context of Article 1A of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol:

<https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d58ddef4/guidelines-international-protection-1-gender-related-persecution-context.html> and UNHCR Guidelines on International Protection #9: claims to Refugee Status based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/50ae466f9/guidelines-international-protection-9-claims-refugee-status-based-sexual.html>

³ Action against sexual and gender-based violence: an updated strategy, UNHCR, June 2011:

<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4e01ffeb2.pdf>

⁴ UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html>

⁵ <https://www.easo.europa.eu/training>

strategies/guidelines and they are also frequently cited in court judgments/legal decisions both at national as well as European level (in particular the European Court of Human Rights).

Interactive workshops on specific aspects of gender-related persecution

Four workshops (divided in two slots of two parallel workshops) were held on specific aspects of gender-related persecution. During each of the workshops, participants worked in smaller groups to discuss and identify challenges, good practices and recommendations. Below is a summary of the main discussions of each of the workshops.

Workshop 1: women and girls in the EU asylum systems

This workshop aimed to understand the specific factors of gender persecution that drive forced displacement and looked at challenges that women and girls experience throughout the asylum procedure, i.e. when applying for international protection, whilst the application is pending and after status is granted. Participants identified good practices to support asylum seeking women and girls in the EU+ Member States and formulated recommendations to improve their situation.

The workshop was opened with two short presentations by Sarah Martin (the facilitator) and by a representative from UNICEF, after which the group was split in two. Using the “ambassadors technique” two participants interviewed the two groups separately and collected information on: gender related reasons for women/girls to seek asylum in the EU; availability of services for women/girls, challenges faced during asylum procedures that are specific to women/girls as well as promising practices to attend to the special needs of women/girls during the asylum procedures in EU+ Member States.

Gender-specific forms of persecution causing women and girls to flee their home country included, amongst others, sexual violence, forced marriage, denial of access to contraception, marriage-related harm including intimate partner violence, forced abortion and sterilization, sex trafficking and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Some women also flee to escape persecution because of their involvement in politics and/or the important role they play as e.g. political leader, membership of political groups, or on account of their activities as journalists, human rights defenders or activists, etc.

Asylum seeking girls are at danger of exposure to GBV not only before and during flight but also after flight, upon arrival in the EU. They may face challenges in the EU asylum and reception systems like risk of trafficking, limited availability of tailored response and prevention services as well as being forced through medical age assessment procedures without taking the principle of benefit of the doubt into consideration.

Some promising practices were however as well identified, such as early provision of information on women/girls’ rights; referrals to organisations that are specialised in providing care to women/girls; separate interviews for women and girls; safe spaces; separate accommodation places and appropriate foster care arrangements. Specific country-examples of promising practices were also mentioned: Ireland has a policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by humanitarian actors or service providers⁶, as well as a policy on prevention of sexual harassment and abuse. Belgium has an identification tool to identify vulnerable applicants and provides training

⁶ This policy focuses on accountability and introduces mechanisms and pathways for making complaints by ‘beneficiaries’ (with a focus on women and children) against humanitarian workers who engage in exploitive/abusive behaviour.

to its staff to facilitate effective identification of vulnerable women/girls; Italy has mapped GBV referral services, and; Austria offers same sex interpreters.

The following main **recommendations** were made to improve the situation of women and girls in EU asylum and reception systems⁷:

Table 1: Recommendations workshop 1

Recommendation	Area	Who?
<i>Provide capacity building and specialised trainings on GBV issues and on psychological first aid to all relevant actors (Member States' asylum and reception officials, interpreters, cultural mediators, NGO's) to create a safe environment for those who disclose GBV</i>	Training	EASO/MS
<i>Elaborate special training on GBV issues mandatory for interpreters/cultural mediators</i>		
<i>Develop mandatory policies regarding child marriage and guardianship in the asylum procedures</i>	Guidance	EASO/MS
EASO to issue guidelines on addressing gender based violence issues and more data on the actual number of women/children who experienced GBV per MS	Guidance	EASO
More funding for response and prevention services for GBV to be provided by state authorities	Funding	MS
States to improve coordination and service mapping on GBV services to enable applicants to find the appropriate services	Coordination	MS
Increase advocacy efforts specifically on the special needs of women and girls	Advocacy	CSOs

Workshop 2: Mitigating the risks of gender based violence in reception facilities

This workshop aimed to discuss GBV risk mitigation in reception facilities. Participants reviewed the risks that displaced populations face within reception facilities in the EU+ and identified what specific actions could be taken to mitigate these risks.

The workshop was opened by UNHCR who provided an overview of GBV risk mitigation in reception facilities. Subsequently, the group was split in two. Each group discussed the key challenges, good practices as well as recommendations that could be made in order to mitigate the risks of GBV in reception facilities.

There was consensus amongst participants that applicants for international protection face an increased risk of GBV. In general, the risk of GBV is exacerbated in displacement contexts due to e.g. the breakdown of community and social protection mechanisms, separation from family, lack of access to basic needs and services, etc. Applicants for international protection accommodated in EU reception facilities are confronted with **several additional and specific contributing risk factors of GBV**. These included factors related to:

⁷ Recommendations that were prioritised by participants are displayed in **bold**.

- The physical infrastructure of accommodation centres; e.g. ‘larger’ centres where all applicants are placed together or when no distinction is made between women/men/children, overcrowded centres, detention facilities, etc.
- The attitude of staff and co-residents, which can be both due to a lack of awareness but may also be fuelled by deep-rooted discrimination and sexism convictions
- Non-identification of special/individual needs: At-risk groups and/or special needs of individuals not being identified or when identified, information on special needs being lost as they are not correctly transferred on to the authorities due to a lack of coordination/referral mechanisms
- Lack of (timely) access to information on rights and services
- Lack of reporting mechanisms for instances of GBV in reception facilities
- Inability to attend to the special needs of applicants due to insufficient resources and capacities and/or the general absence of specialised service providers in reception facilities
- Situation of increased vulnerability and dependence due to the length of the asylum procedure, lack of occupation/employment, poverty, etc. which may lead applicants to turn to negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex

The **groups** considered **most at risk of GBV** in reception facilities included women (especially single mothers), LGBTI people, children (in particular UAMs and teenage girls/young women and young men), individuals with specific health needs including those with disabilities, low levels of literacy, etc.

Participants identified some **good practices of risk mitigation of GBV in reception**, as implemented in different EU+ Member States. For example, in the Netherlands, NGOs have good access to reception facilities and the authorities regularly seek the advice of NGOs and consult them on reception guidelines. In Italy, a mapping was conducted of available services for GBV survivors accompanied with awareness raising for women asylum seekers on the phenomenon of GBV and provision of resilience and self-help groups that were established in some reception facilities. In Austria, one of the NGOs created posters that read: “Whoever you are and whoever you love you are welcome here”. This encouraged LGBTI individuals to come out, and staff and residents were also encouraged to openly discuss LGBTI. In Sweden, a network was created for LGBTI newcomers that aims to empower LGBTI individuals and to facilitate the sharing of information. The need to reduce applicants’ position of dependency was also raised; participants pleaded for allocating more financial support, providing and facilitating access to employment, facilitating access to integration programmes, as well as providing childcare services in reception facilities.

Several measures were **recommended to address the risks of GBV** in reception facilities. These included⁸:

Table 2: Recommendations workshop 2

Recommendation	Area	Who?
<i>Provide training on GBV to all staff working in reception centres as well as to residents living in the reception centres, with a specific focus on men and boys</i>	Training	EASO/MS
<i>Provide tailored accommodation: smaller accommodation units; separate facilities for men, women and families; and ensure proximity to cities to avoid isolation</i>	Reception	MS

⁸ Recommendations that were prioritised by participants are displayed in **bold**.

Monitor reception facilities by an independent body to make sure that minimum quality standards are met	Reception / monitoring	MS
Ensure the availability of a reporting mechanism for complaints and/or establish a focal point (i.e. a trusted person within the reception facility that applicants can speak to) that is accessible 24/7	Reception / monitoring	MS
<i>Provide timely information to all residents, in different formats and at regular intervals, taking into account language barriers, age, gender, culture and diversity, focusing on their rights and services, including on how to make and register complaints</i>	Information provision	MS
<i>Ensure that family members are interviewed separately, in particular giving the opportunity to women to be interviewed separately from their husbands</i>	Interview	MS
Ensure that effective individual assessments are made of applicants' special and individual needs and put in place effective referral mechanisms	Individual assessments	MS/EASO
Develop guidelines on the basis of the IASC Guidelines ⁹ on risk mitigation of GBV in reception facilities, including on how to handle disclosure of GBV incidents	Guidance	MS/EASO
Reduce the length and duration of the asylum procedure	Asylum procedures	MS

Workshop 3: Harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum

This workshop aimed to discuss harmful traditional practices (HTP) as ground for asylum. The workshop reviewed the different aspects of harmful traditional practices and examined, in particular, three main issues impacting on HTP-related claims, namely country of origin information, credibility and vulnerability assessment, as well as procedural rights and guarantees.

The workshop was opened with a presentation by END FGM, after which participants were divided in three smaller groups. Participants discussed the aforementioned three main issues, reviewed challenges and good practices and formulated recommendations.

Many challenges were identified for country of origin information related to the availability, accuracy and quality of COI. Participants emphasised that COI reports often do not provide specific information on harmful traditional practices, or when provided, stressed that information may be inaccurate, incomplete or only presents selective information. Another issue of key concern was the lack of gender, age and cultural analysis of COI. Crucially, COI reports produced by Member States were not available in different languages with Member States continuing to make use of different COI reports in their national contexts.

Challenges related to the performance of the credibility and vulnerability assessment were also numerous, such as age assessment, setting of a proper medical diagnosis, interviewing techniques and

⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies, September 2005, available at: <https://gbvguidelines.org>

the role of the interpreter, lack of a cultural/gender sensitive approach, timeframes for the procedure being either too short or too long; applicants who are insufficiently informed on HTP; difficulties for applicants to provide evidence proving their sexual orientation; late disclosure that negatively impacts on credibility assessments, lack of legal support, etc.

Finally, various challenges were also identified as regards procedural rights and guarantees, related to for example guardianship, training of personnel, lack of information, women who are not interviewed separately, obstacles to access health care and psychological support, as well as challenges related to the availability and quality of interpreters.

On the other hand, participants also identified **good practices**. For example, in relation to COI it was considered good practice to conduct field missions, translate COI reports in different languages and making sure that there is a freely accessible COI database in place. As regards the credibility and vulnerability assessment, good practices were identified: in France the establishment of an internal working group; and in Ireland the use of medical and legal reports to document the harmful practice.

Several measures were **recommended to improve asylum procedures and the assessment of HTP-related claims**.

Table 3: Recommendations workshop 3

Recommendation	Area	Who?
<i>Develop common EU standards for decision-makers on how to assess claims involving harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum and include guidance for addressing ethical issues</i>	Guidance & common standards	EASO
Develop training for asylum case officers on GBV, harmful traditional practices and LGBTI including references to relevant case law	Training	EASO
Provide translation of EASO COI reports in different national languages	Translation	EASO
Ensure better cooperation between MS and CSOs on COI	Coordination	EASO
<i>Improve the accuracy of COI reports, also through gender, age, and cultural analysis and ensure COI reports are kept up to date</i>	COI	EASO/MS
<i>Ensure late disclosure of harmful traditional practices, including LGBTI, to not affect the credibility assessment in an asylum claim</i>	Credibility assessment	MS
Ensure applicants receive adequate information on harmful traditional practices and GBV in general to facilitate access of those who disclose GBV incidents to the support they are entitled to	Provision of information	MS
Increase involvement and cooperation with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions to improve the quality and specificity of COI reports and the reliability of COI sources	Involvement of CSOs in COI	MS

Ensure effective access to psychosocial support and make sure that vulnerable applicants are referred on to the appropriate authorities and/or service providers	Access to services and referral	MS
Granting the same status to all members of the family	Status determination	MS
Vulnerability assessment to be all-encompassing, covering all vulnerabilities	Vulnerability assessment	EASO/MS
Provide more assistance and support to vulnerable applicants, which requires more funding to be made available by state authorities	Funding	CSOs/MS
Exchange expertise and knowledge on harmful traditional practices with EASO and Member States	Exchange of information	CSOs

Workshop 4: Reception conditions for LGBTI applicants

This workshop aimed to discuss reception conditions for LGBTI applicants. According to Article 18 (3) of the Reception Conditions Directive, Member States must take into consideration gender concerns and the situation of vulnerable persons within the premises and accommodation centres. Additionally, Member States are also required to take appropriate measures to prevent assault and gender-based violence, including sexual assault and harassment. Unfortunately, this is not always followed in practice.

There was consensus amongst participants that LGBTI applicants face many forms of discrimination in EU reception facilities, including verbal, physical and sexual abuse and violence. This may be committed by staff or co-residents due to a lack of awareness or homo and transphobia convictions and taboos.

Participants emphasised that LGBTI asylum seekers, being part of the LGBTI community, are potentially vulnerable and may have specific needs. Consequently, they stressed the importance of attending to their special reception needs, consisting of psychological help and counselling, specialised medical treatment, etc. Unfortunately, these special needs are often not identified and/or met in practice.

The **main challenges** that LGBTI applicants experience in EU reception facilities can be summarised as follows:

- lack of special accommodation facilities for LGBTI persons; transgender women are often placed in centres with men and/or are required to share a room with a fellow asylum seekers rather than being provided a single room
- Instances of violence or harassment which are often not reported or recorded due to the lack of effective reporting mechanisms
- The special needs of LGBTI applicants are often not identified due to gaps in the vulnerability assessment, interviewing techniques, or challenges related to interpretation
- If identified, special needs are not always attended to due to a lack of resources or availability of services
- Insufficient guidelines on the provision of special care and treatment for LGBTI applicants

Several **good practices** were identified, for example, availability of a single room provision or separate accommodation where protection concerns for the individual can be identified. Locating reception facilities for LGBTI applicants close to the city centre to foster integration and avoid isolation was also identified as good practice. In addition, the role of social and multicultural networks in improving the feeling of safety in reception facilities was highlighted. In Hungary, transgender applicants can be accommodated as preferred. In Sweden there is training on LGBTI issues targeting border police and first line officials. ORAM developed a toolkit translated in five languages aimed at providing appropriate terminology for people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

The following **recommendations** were made:

Table 4: Recommendations workshop 4

Recommendation	Area	Who?
<i>Provide specialised training on LGBTI to all relevant actors: first-line officials, staff in reception and detention centres (including police) and in particular to interpreters</i>	Training	MS/EASO
Ensure that the diversity of LGBTI is taken into account in trainings and that all relevant actors are informed about intersectionality (e.g. lesbian women affected by FGM)		
Provide cultural sensitizing training to all residents in reception facilities who are hosted with LGBTI applicants		
<i>Provide appropriate accommodation to LGBTI applicants, in small reception centres and/or private housing/single rooms where a (protection) need arises</i>	Accommodation	MS
Allocate LGBTI applicants to reception facilities in proximity of larger cities where specialised services for LGBTI asylum seekers are more easily available		
Where relevant to protection needs, allow LGBTI applicants, on a case-by-case basis, to choose their preferred accommodation (i.e. separate from other applicants or not)		
<i>Ensure individualized assessment and the principle of free choice with the aim of ensuring safeguards and guarantees</i>	Vulnerability assessment	MS
Facilitate the access of LGBTI applicants to specialised services including to service providers outside of reception facilities	Access to services	MS
Provide barrier-free access to specialised healthcare services for LGBTI persons (e.g. mental health, hormone treatment, HIV, etc.)		
Provide specialised and tailored information to and about LGBTI applicants	Provision of information	MS
<i>Ensure that transgender applicants are able to register their application under wished name and gender</i>	Free choice	MS
Collect data on the number of LGBTI applicants	Data and monitoring	



Ensure effective reporting mechanisms to record instances of violence and harassment in reception facilities		
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Closing Plenary session: reporting on the workshops and prioritization of recommendations

During the closing plenary session, all workshop leads reported back on the main issues and recommendations that had been identified during the respective workshops. Participants were then provided the opportunity to complement the reporting templates with any additional information, issues, or recommendations. Subsequently, all participants were provided the opportunity to prioritize five recommendations across the four workshops. The results of this prioritization exercise are presented in the key recommendations as prioritised by participants in Annex 1. These recommendations will be presented to EASO's Vulnerability Expert Network for further discussion and, where feasible, follow-up action.

Final remarks by EASO

In its closing remarks, EASO summarised a number of recurrent issues that had cross-cut discussions:

- **Training:** the need for training of all different types of national authorities (e.g. first-contact officials, registration officers, reception officers, case workers, interpreters, etc) had been emphasised across all discussions throughout the day. EASO expressed commitment to explore further development of training on GBV and stated that CSOs would continue to be involved in the development/upgrade/update of its training modules.
- **Information provision to applicants:** provision of information was discussed from different angles, including what information to provide, to whom, by whom, when, in what format, accompanied by which material, etc. The need to provide information as early as possible in the asylum procedure in a clear and simple way and at regular intervals was emphasised. EASO stated that they had started working on a project on the provision of information regarding registration, asylum processes, vulnerability, etc. As output of this project, EASO plans to produce posters and other visuals. The input provided by participants during the meeting would be channelled into this project.
- **Registration:** participants had emphasised the need for applicants to be able to register themselves under wished gender and name. EASO stated that it would explore with member States whether this could be taken into account
- **COI:** the need to have more specific information available in COI reports on the different topics of GBV was noted, including the need to have more regular updates of COI reports. This and other findings and recommendations would be communicated internally to EASO COI colleagues
- **Reception:** many recommendations were made concerning reception. These could be taken into account when the EASO guides on reception would be updated (see e.g. EASO guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators; EASO guidance on contingency planning in the context of reception; EASO guidance on reception conditions for unaccompanied children: operational standards and indicators). The recommendations made could also be integrated into the quality assessment tool on reception that the Agency was currently developing. This constitutes a tool whereby Member States can assess the quality of reception conditions themselves.
- **Vulnerability assessments:** the need for effective and individualised vulnerability assessments including effective referrals was also underlined as key issue throughout discussions. Participants



expressed the need for EASO to produce guidelines on GBV. EASO was working on the development of two tools; one tool that aims to support Member States in conducting individualised assessments, and another tool that aims to support Member States in the effective referral of vulnerable persons. The meeting and the input provided by CSOs had therefore been very timely, with input provided to be integrated into the tools under development.

- **Data collection, reporting, and research:** participants underlined the need for more systematic gender-disaggregated data collection, monitoring and research in order to have more evidence-based work underpinning initiatives concerning gender related persecution. EASO would explore the possibility to collect more data on GBV and stated to stand ready to support Member States in fine tuning this data with a view of better analysing trends and increasing the data quality.

Annex 1: Key recommendations**Consultative Forum thematic meeting on gender-related persecution****11th July 2019, Brussels**

On 11th July, a thematic Consultative Forum meeting was held on gender-related persecution. 42 civil society organisations discussed four topics in detail during participatory workshops. Key recommendations emerging from the workshops, as prioritised by participants, are presented below. These recommendations will be presented to the EASO Vulnerability Expert Network for further discussion, and where feasible, action. A complete overview of all recommendations and issues discussed is available on the EASO website (*hyperlink tbc*).

Recommendations prioritised by participants**Workshop 1: women and girls in the EU asylum systems**

- Provide capacity building and specialised trainings on GBV issues and on psychological first aid to *all* relevant actors (Member States' asylum and reception officials, interpreters, cultural mediators, NGO's) to create a safe environment for those who disclose GBV
- Elaborate special training on GBV issues mandatory for interpreters/cultural mediators
- Develop mandatory policies regarding child marriage and guardianship in the asylum procedures

Workshop 2: mitigating the risks of gender-based violence in reception facilities

- Provide tailored accommodation: smaller accommodation units; separate facilities for men, women and families; and ensure proximity to cities to avoid isolation
- Provide training on GBV to all staff working in reception centres as well as to residents living in the reception centres, including men and boys
- Provide timely information to all residents, in different formats and at regular intervals, taking into account language barriers, age, gender, culture and diversity, focusing on their rights and services, including on how to make and register complaints
- Ensure that family members are interviewed separately, in particular giving the opportunity to women to be interviewed separately from their husbands

Workshop 3: harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum

- Ensure late disclosure of harmful traditional practices, including for LGBTI, to not affect the credibility assessment in an asylum claim
- Improve the accuracy of COI reports, also through gender, age, and cultural analysis and ensure COI reports are kept up-to-date
- Develop common EU standards for decision-makers on how to assess claims involving harmful traditional practices as ground for asylum and include guidance for addressing ethical issues

Workshop 4 on reception conditions for LGBTI applicants

- Provide specialised training on LGBTI to all relevant actors: first-line officials, staff in reception and detention centres (including police) and in particular to interpreters
- Provide appropriate accommodation to LGBTI applicants, in small reception centres and/or private housing/single rooms
- Ensure that transgender applicants are able to register their application under wished name and gender
- Ensure individualized assessment and the principle of free choice with the aim of ensuring safeguards and guarantees.