Welcome to the second Issue of the EASO Newsletter

We are delighted to welcome you to the second issue of the EASO Newsletter for this year.

Take a tour and navigate through our pages in order to read our latest news and developments, as well as to find out how EASO has continued to deliver on its mandate despite the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how we have quickly adapted to a ‘new normal’.

Meet Dr. David Costello, Chair of the EASO Management Board, Maria and Maya, EASO Field Support Officers in Greece, and get updated on EASO’s work in third countries.

Specific to the challenges faced by national asylum authorities due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we recently issued practical recommendations on remote personal interviews and on lodging remote registration. Read about how these recommendations have provided Member states with concrete support in extraordinary circumstances, so as to facilitate the return to normal asylum procedures.

Most recently, on 25 June, we published the EASO Asylum Report 2020; the flagship annual report which serves as a main reference for developments in asylum in EU+ countries.

Last but not least, have a look at the latest developments in EASO’s Training activities and check out our latest Publications.

We wish you an enjoyable reading!
Meet Dr. David Costello, Chair of EASO’s Management Board

I would like to again point out how impressed I have been by the hard work, commitment and dedication of EASO staff both in Malta and in its field of operations.

You have been part of EASO’s “family” almost since the establishment of the agency serving as Vice Chair and now as Chair of the Management Board. How is this experience for you? Is there any particular moment or memory that stands out for you?

It has been a great honour to have been a member of the EASO Management Board since its inception. Indeed, I am the only member of the Board who has been able to attend every one of its 35 meetings! The Chair of the Management Board carries great responsibility at the top of the governance framework of the Agency. I particularly enjoy chairing meetings of the Board and the associated preparatory work in framing agendas and preparing strategic papers for Board meetings ably assisted Agency staff. A key responsibility is to ensure that Board meetings are always managed on the basis of consensus and that members’ can at all times make contributions to the work of the Board on issues of concern to them.

For me the moment I recall with great pride is my election as Chair of the Board in February 2019. Prior to this I had been Deputy Chair since 2015.

All in all, I have served in senior governance positions in the EASO for many years and it has been a particular pleasure for me to watch the Agency grow and to recruit so many fine staff who have shown great commitment and dedication to their work and to supporting the international protection process in the EU.
As EASO celebrates its 10-year anniversary in 2020, we are reminded of the agency's growing importance in providing operational and technical assistance in asylum matters to EU+ countries. How do you see EASO’s support to the EU on asylum in the following 10 years?

For the future, a key mission of the Agency will be to ensure that it can undertake its role efficiently and effectively as the European Union Asylum Agency when the necessary legislation is adopted by legislators. The proposed EUAA has greater powers than the EASO and these include, in particular, the role of monitoring the implementation of the Common EU Asylum System in States which will include monitoring missions. In addition to its key tasks of providing operational and technical support, it is critical that the Agency is ready to undertake its broader remit and I am happy that the necessary preparations are being made for this purpose. In this regard, the continued engagement of the Agency with civil society groups, the UNHCR and with other key stakeholders will also be critically important.

What are your expectations from the EU’s new migration and asylum pact, which the European Commission is expected to present in the Autumn?

The Pact will, amongst other things, set out a new roadmap and priorities for co-operation in the area of international protection in the EU in the years ahead. New legislative instruments are expected to be tabled in the context of the Common EU Asylum Policy in areas such as asylum procedures and solidarity in the allocation of responsibility for processing asylum claims and these will underpin the operational and technical support work of the Agency for the years ahead. All of this will present a challenging work agenda for the Agency and Member States and is to be welcomed as enhanced common approaches and standards set a level playing pitch for Member States to adhere to and reduce secondary movements.

What three words would you use to describe your role as Chair of the EASO Management Board?

Strategic, leadership focussed and collegiate!

Do you remember the first time you came to EASO in Malta? Can you share with us your memories?

Malta is a wonderful country which, like Ireland, values its ancient history enormously. The people of Malta are welcoming at all times! As an avid historian of church history, I have been fascinated since my first visit, with the many beautiful churches on the island. In particular, my first tour of St. John’s Co-Cathedral always stands out and seeing the famous Caravaggio paintings! I always try to return there on each occasion I am on the island. And, of course, there is also the brilliant weather and many fine restaurants!

The Management Board Meeting, which usually takes place at EASO Headquarters, due to the Covid pandemic, this June took place online. How was this experience?

Because the EASO staff put so much excellent preparatory work into the event, the meeting of the Management Board by video conference was in my view a great success. We endeavoured to ensure that all the papers were issued in good time (as always!) and that the presentation slides were also circulated in advance of the meeting. This enabled members of the Board to strategically intervene on key issues and enabled the timetable to be adhered to by everyone! All business on the agenda was concluded satisfactorily and all key decisions were made as proposed.

What advice would you give to our readers who would like to apply for a job at EASO?

I would recommend that job applicants acquire a good knowledge of the work objectives of the Agency, which are very much international protection focussed, before applying. In this regard, the EASO website is an excellent place to start with a lot of good information for first time visitors. I would also say to anyone thinking of applying to work in EASO – be willing to work as a team player! Most of what EASO does depends on staff working together collegially and this is why, in my view, it has been so successful in undertaking its important mission to date.
The EASO Asylum Report 2020: The trusted source of information on asylum in Europe

With a record number of attendees, EASO successfully launched its flagship annual Asylum Report 2020 on 25 June 2020 through an online event which was livestreamed on Facebook.

The Report finds that there was an 11 % increase in the number of applications for international protection in EU+ countries in 2019. However, applications were not spread across Europe evenly, straining some asylum systems more than others. For example, countries such as Cyprus, France, Greece, Malta and Spain received more asylum applicants in 2019 than during the so-called ‘migration crisis’ of 2015.

Governments responded to changing asylum flows in various ways throughout the year, as detailed in the Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of developments in policies, practices and legislation. Efforts were made at the national level to reduce the backlog of pending cases, provide protection to unaccompanied minors, accelerate registrations, fact-track the return of rejected applicants, foster integration and expand accommodation place

Any improvements or persisting deficiencies in national asylum procedures were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

As such, countries which had invested in modernising and automatting asylum procedures in 2019 were able to restart operations quickly by processing applications online and conducting interviews through videoconferencing.

Nina Gregori
EASO Executive Director

In the introductory address to the event, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, stated that EASO is a world class centre of knowledge and analysis on asylum, and that the Report provides the facts needed to find solutions and design policies. “EASO’s Asylum Report should be on every policy-maker’s desk”, she affirmed.

The Report serves as “a lens to measure challenges and successes in the Common European Asylum System”, the Chair of the EASO Management Board, David Costello, stated. He noted that EASO is working at the limit of its mandate and welcomed the upcoming transformation of the Agency into the new EU Asylum Agency to build on the momentum of current activities.
Using over 700 reliable sources, the Report includes diverse perspectives from various stakeholders working in the field of asylum, including international organisations, civil society organisations, academia and researchers. Information is also drawn from the EASO Case Law Database and the EASO Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS). The report features selected case law which interpreted how to apply European and national laws in the context of the EU asylum acquis.

The EASO Asylum Report 2020 is accompanied by various, user-friendly tools to provide a clear overview of asylum in 2019, including a new database which presents the main legislative, institutional and policy changes by country and theme. For further information, consult the following tools:

- **Executive Summary**

- **Database on EU+ developments**
  https://easo.europa.eu/eu-developments

- **Extensive bibliography** of the sources used in the Asylum Report

- **Data visualisations on asylum trends in 2019**

- **Press release**

- **EASO Case Law Database**
  https://caselaw.easo.europa.eu/Pages/default.aspx

*Icons @Freepik*
Record low number of asylum applications lodged in Europe

EASO has released a special report, which shows that the COVID-19 related travel restrictions and national health measures which were imposed during the past few months led to a dramatic cut in asylum applications in Europe.

According to this report, only 8,730 asylum applications were registered in the EU+ in April, the lowest since at least 2008, and a massive 87% decrease from pre-COVID-19 levels in January and February.

Despite the emergency measures, there were still almost 10 times as many applications for asylum as detected illegal border crossings (900) into the EU+ in April.

The disparity indicates that despite the temporary suspension of certain asylum activities in many EU+ countries, some countries did continue lodging applications.

In its report, EASO also warns that two diametrically opposed forces seem to be at work at a global level: on the one hand interrelated effects of the pandemic, such as contracting economies, food insecurity and social unrest, could result in displacements, including persons with international protection needs.

On the other hand, migration patterns will likely remain highly disrupted due to restrictions on mobility, possibly coupled with increased digital surveillance.

You can find more information in the Report, which is available on EASO’s Website here.
Over 35,000 EU asylum officials trained by EASO - New Approach in Training Design and Delivery during COVID-19;

While all areas of our daily lives have been impacted by the precautionary measures following the outbreak of COVID-19, EASO reacted quickly to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and external partners. In light of these measures, meetings and face-to-face training activities were suspended as of mid-March. The EASO Training and Professional Development Centre swiftly established a set of actions to ensure the continuation of training activities.

What’s the big difference? Face-to-face training sessions are being replaced by interactive webinars ensuring attendees reach the defined learning outcomes.

**EASO train-the-trainer sessions**

To enhance the virtual learning environment, as of mid-March the Questions, Answers and General Discussions Forum has been introduced in all online studies, with the aim of providing trainees with an additional opportunity to address any questions they might have to the trainers. In addition, practice exercises were added to the online studies in order to enhance the learning experience in the absence of the immediate face-to-face session.

**Meeting with the Training National Contact Points**

While the design of new training material has been less affected, with experts’ groups meeting and working jointly online rather than traveling to Malta, continuing to deliver interactive, engaging training posed a challenge. Due to the development of the pandemic, the high number of various ongoing training activities as well as the need for business continuity, EASO has therefore reflected on the way forward for the training delivery and discussed options with the Training National Contact Points during a meeting organised on 11 May.
In order to deal with the continuous training needs both in the national and operational context, to support the comprehensive delivery of training and the replacement of face-to-face sessions for as long as the current restrictions are in place, EASO is gradually adapting the existing Trainer’s Manuals for all EASO modules in order to support and facilitate the virtual delivery of both the online studies as well as the face-to-face sessions. The amended Manuals guide trainers on how to adapt the exercises in order to deliver them in the context of webinars and are made available to all EASO trainers.

Training during COVID-19 in numbers

As a reaction to the changed working conditions of reception and asylum officials around Europe, EASO has noted a significant raise in the enrolment for EASO training. The total number of enrolments from March to May 2020, the months when the COVID-19 preventive measures were in place, was 77% higher compared to the same period in 2019.

Webinar on staff wellbeing

EASO has introduced a set of measures to cater for the needs of staff working under the temporary exceptional working conditions. Following a staff survey on wellbeing the EASO Training and Professional Development Centre designed a webinar on Supporting Staff Wellbeing during COVID-19, tailored to address the emotions and concerns addressed by EASO staff identified with the survey.

Relevant learning outcomes were identified and addressed in an informative exchange inviting participants to

- Describe most common physical, mental and emotional conditions faced by EASO employees during COVID-19
- Identify signs of poor wellbeing and stress caused by COVID situation
- Recognize main challenges of teleworking -harming factors during COVID
- Outline some prevention/mitigation measures to deal with stress management and poor wellbeing during COVID-19 crisis
EASO’s support to the Specialised Sections of Tribunals in Italy

In 2019, the Ministry of Justice and the Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura (CSM) requested EASO’s support in addressing the backlog of pending cases in the Tribunals’ Specialised sections for international protection by providing administrative and research support in view of the judges’ processing of international protection related appeals.

In June 2019, the backlog of cases in second instance reached the significant number of 73,504 pending cases, posing challenges for the Specialised Sections.

EASO, the Ministry of Justice and each Tribunal defined general working instructions for EASO Research Officers and Cultural Mediators, and additional arrangements described in the Italy Operating Plan 2020.

EASO’s support intends to provide technical, organizational, content-related, and language interpretation support to the reduction of backlog by Tribunals, and, hence, to improve the timeframe in which decisions are taken by the competent judicial authorities.

The intervention also intends to improve the quality of file preparation through a dedicated intervention on Country of Origin Information (COI) research.

The activity started in January 2020, when the so-called Pilot Project was launched. EASO started supporting six Specialised Sections of the Italian Tribunals in processing international protection related cases, through the deployment of 15 Research Officers.

In March 2020, Phase II of the implementation of the Measure took place, involving 12 Tribunals in the project. 22 new Research Officers were thus recruited and trained before starting supporting the respective Specialised Sections.

Finally, in May 2020, the remaining 17 personnel were selected and trained, reaching the overall number of 54 Research Officers. Starting from June 2020, they will begin supporting the remaining Tribunals, reaching the total number of 26 Specialised Sections involved in the project.

The preventive measures related to the COVID-19 spread did not stop the activities, with the sole exception for hearings that have suffered a temporary suspension as per national legislation.

At the end of May 2020, around 2,500 files had been prepared, together with 1,700 COI researches, 770 Jurisprudence researches and 100 Doctrinal researches.

In light of the positive feedback received from the national authorities, a discussion on the possible extension of EASO’s support to higher judicial authorities is already ongoing.
EASO in Italy: an overview of the activities and results achieved in 2019

The Italy Operating Plan 2019 provided technical and operational support to the country, with a special focus on international protection applications’ backlog reduction, processing of applications and enhancement of quality in asylum procedures and practices.

Several trainings and capacity building activities took place over the year, covering, among others, registration procedures, the Dublin Regulation and the reception of adult asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors.

EASO also supported the development of sustainable asylum and reception workflows and methodologies, supporting the capacity of the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration and of the National Asylum Commission - in particular the Italian COI Unit - and harmonizing the reception monitoring activities headed by DCLI.

Here is an overview of the most important results achieved by EASO operations in Italy in 2019, also collected in the dedicated Activity report.

Staff and locations

In 2019, 295 personnel contributed to achieving EASO’s results in Italy. Furthermore, 360 cultural mediators supported EASO teams with the registration and processing of asylum applications and ad hoc disembarkation / voluntary relocation exercises.

In addition to the EASO Rome Office, EASO staff supported 5 national institutions (Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration, Department of Public Security, National Asylum Commission, Dublin Unit, Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents (Autorità garante per l’infanzia e l’adolescenza - AGIA), 25 local Police Immigration Offices (Questure), 35 Territorial Commissions and two hotspots.

Support to asylum procedures in Territorial Commissions, local Police Immigration Offices and Dublin Unit

Over the course of 2019, EASO Asylum Support Teams assisted in the registration of 19,722 applicants for international protection in local Police Immigration Offices.

The Territorial Commissions were supported with 5,287 Country of Origin researches, 2,531 jurisprudential researches, 65,694 files prepared and processed in support of decision-making and 65,207 processed files in support to litigation procedure. At the end of the year, a reduction of some 30,000 cases was achieved also thanks to the support of EASO, corresponding to a reduction of more than one-third of the 2018 backlog.

Quality support was provided with the development and introduction of new tools to improve the quality of the asylum procedure, the provision of expert guidance and support to quality assurance mechanisms within operations.
Support to voluntary relocation

In 2019, EASO assisted Italy and pledging Member States with applicants’ registrations for 17 ad hoc disembarkation / voluntary relocation events, working closely with the Italian authorities and national Dublin Units, and under the coordination of the European Commission. Two further operations began at the end of December and were completed in January. A total number of 1,745 people were disembarked. During these events, EASO carried about 1,300 interviews for the registration of applications for international protection, always adapting to a rapidly changing environment.

Capacity building and stakeholders coordination

EASO, together with UNHCR, organized 12 training activities on the registration phase of the asylum procedure, as well as on the identification and processing of Dublin cases, training 351 Italian public officials. Furthermore, 44 public officials attended 11 train-the-trainer sessions on information provision, trafficking in human beings, and status determination, amongst other thematic areas.

EASO also supported the Struttura di Missione in the organisation of six training sessions for the harmonisation of reception procedures and quality of reception services for Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) throughout the national territory. A total of 217 participants attended these sessions.

Furthermore, EASO supported AGIA in the organisation of three training sessions for UAM voluntary guardians, attended by 78 candidates, and an e-learning platform was developed to standardise this training.

A total of ten coaching missions were organized in support to caseworkers deployed in local Police Immigration Offices and Territorial Commissions.
How COVID-19 has affected operations and the way forward to the “new normal”

In the last few months, EASO has been guiding Member States on how they can continue asylum procedures within the context of Covid-19 measures. In this regard, EASO has issued practical recommendations on how Member States can carry out remote interviews for asylum applicants and also prepare for a possible “second wave”.

The gradual resumption of EASO Operations in Greece, Italy, Malta and Cyprus has been achieved thanks to innovative working methods, including using remote interview technologies and applying social distancing and other related health and safety protocols.

Despite the unforeseen circumstances caused by the pandemic, EASO continued to support ad hoc disembarkations and voluntary relocations during the lockdowns, particularly in Greece and Italy.

Since March, in view of the COVID-19 outbreak, all activities and established workflows across the country have been adjusted to fully align with national health and safety protocols. Restrictions in place until end of May applied in all operational and reception areas.

All EASO staff were put on teleworking and all deployments in the country were temporarily suspended in order to ensure the safety of EASO teams. While activities requiring face-to-face interaction were suspended, EASO teams continued providing support on quality checks, back-office work and backlog management.

Increased productivity

Between March and May, while COVID-19 restrictions applied, overall outputs on asylum continued increasing, following the highest productivity level which was reached at the end of February (concerning close to 20,000 individuals). This is mainly thanks to constantly increased available resources, the streamlining of vulnerability procedures as well as the revised workflows during the COVID-19 outbreak that enhanced the productivity for both EASO and Greek Asylum Service caseworkers. In April, a new Relocation Scheme for Unaccompanied Minors kicked-off with the first children being relocated from the Greek islands to Luxembourg and Germany.

Malta: As the country makes its way through the transition period and COVID-19 measures are gradually lifted, EASO personnel are now working on different shifts to ensure safe work practices in line with the guidance from the Maltese Public Health authorities.

As of the 18 May the Refugee Commissioners office has been officially re-opened and EASO has resumed its on-location support carrying out registrations. From 25 May the Agency has also started personal interviews in Safi Centre..
In **Italy** activities such as disembarkation and registration were processed digitally throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, with a minimal requirement of in-person interactions.

EASO staff in Italy have now begun preparing to resume suspended activities in Questure (local Police offices) once the latter will open again for registrations. An amendment to the Operating Plan signed with Italy, entailing additional second instance support activities, as well as the development of case scheduling tools for registrations, is foreseen in the near future.

EASO in **Cyprus** is also resuming its operations in Kofinou.

Furthermore, the resumption of registrations is being planned, initially in Larnaca and later at all six locations, while continuing to operate remote interviews.

In parallel, EASO is supporting the Cypriot Asylum Service and the European Commission in respect of the relocation of vulnerable asylum seekers from Cyprus.

---

**Keeping EASO Resettlement Operations active**

The precautionary measures taken in view of the COVID-19 situation have triggered the suspension of international resettlement of refugees from non-EU countries to Europe.

In this context, as the face-to-face interviews/information provision to refugees used for selection missions or pre-departure orientation training cannot be implemented for the time being, two virtual meetings were organised by EASO on the 7 and 13 May to explore alternatives to keep resettlement operations active.

The discussions presented the opportunity to share ideas on how both dossier submissions and remote interviews can become a more permanent feature of resettlement programmes in the future, as both seem to be effective in assisting countries reach their resettlement goals.
The EASO Resettlement & Humanitarian Admission Network, in cooperation with the IOM and UNHCR, organized an online workshop on resuming resettlement operations despite the COVID-19 outbreak.

The worldwide suspension of resettlement operations has also had the immediate implication of halting all EASO-facilitated resettlement missions from the Resettlement Support Facility in Turkey.

EASO has prioritised work assessing how the remote processing of cases could be undertaken. Such innovations were already of interest to various countries prior to the COVID-19 situation. Compounded by the current circumstances, several Member States have recently indicated a pressing interest for this measure.

As a result, EASO has developed and discussed a Concept Note outlining the different options available for running remote missions. This includes holding remote interviews with refugees from the Resettlement Support Facility itself or from other decentralized locations.

EASO expects to pilot one of these options at the earliest opportunity with one or several Member States, to assist them in achieving their resettlement objectives despite the challenging times.

**EASO’s cooperation with Egyptian Authorities**

**What’s new**

Under the current pilot cooperation with Egypt, EASO has implemented a series of three seminars on topics related to asylum policies and practices in EU Member States (MS) as well as on topics related to trafficking in human beings (THB) and international protection. Due to the challenging restrictions originated from COVID-19, a planned work visit for Egyptian authorities to an EU Member State had to be postponed.
In order to offer the opportunity to continue exchanging on a peer-to-peer level on asylum related matters, EASO is currently setting up a virtual work visit expected to take place towards the end of July. Thanks to the positive reaction and cooperation of Member States, EASO is planning an interactive experience to give Egyptian participants the chance to see practical examples of how European countries organise different phases of their asylum systems.

EASO and Egypt are also currently working to establish a new cooperation framework, based on the positive outcomes of the pilot phase during 2019-2020. EASO and Egypt exchanged views during a meeting in June on the draft Roadmap document outlining the content of future cooperation, which is being jointly prepared.

EASO-Turkey - a cooperation focusing on matters related to asylum

As part of its ongoing partnership with the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), EASO together with selected EU+ countries exchanged information on practices in specific fields related to the organisation of their asylum systems.

‘EASO’s external action aims to reinforce the direct engagement between EU+ countries and priority third countries and partners, such as Turkey, on matters related to international protection’. said Malin Larsson-Grave, Head of the Horizontal Operations and External Dimension Unit at EASO.

‘EASO is pleased to have facilitated these exchanges at technical level between the DGMM, Germany and the Netherlands on the overview of asylum caseload management systems used in EU+ countries’.

The overview, compiled by EASO’s Information and Analysis sector, focused on prioritised and accelerated procedures. It examined, in particular, the Dutch ‘tracks policy’, in which applications are channelled through five different tracks according to the profile of the asylum applicant. The presentation also described the German ‘cluster processing’, which divided asylum applications into two clusters based on the country of origin and the expected complexity of the case.

“This exchange has been very effective and beneficial to all”, said a senior official at the DGMM participating to the exchange. “It is always useful to compare respective asylum systems and processes and learn from each other’s good practices”. The productive collaboration sparked a second round of exchanges focusing on the appeals system. These activities take place under the second EASO-DGMM Roadmap, a cooperation framework focusing on matters related to asylum.
EASO practical recommendations on remote personal interviews

EASO has issued new recommendation providing practical guidance on the conduct of remote interviews for international protection within the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. These include the flexibility for interviews to be “conducted with specific arrangements, such as remotely”.

The new EASO Practical Recommendations on conducting the personal interview remotely aims to support European countries in the context of the current health emergency. As a result of the pandemic, preventive measures and social distancing have had consequences for the conduct of personal interviews with applicants for international protection. EASO’s recommendations provide means to remedy this through advice on conducting the personal interview remotely.

The guidance covers various aspects relevant for conducting remote interviews such as practical and technical arrangements, security and confidentiality.

The guidance also covers legal, quality-related, and vulnerability-related considerations. The overall goal is to ensure that remote personal interviews are conducted to high quality standards in the best interest of applicants.
Maria and Maya, EASO Field Support Officers in Greece, are sharing their experience of working with EASO operations

Maria works as an EASO Field Support officer in Lesvos and joined EASO’s operations in February 2017 as a locally recruited Case Worker deployed in the island of Lesvos. Since then she has undertaken several different roles according to the needs of the Agency’s operations in Greece, such as info-provider/flow-manager as well as Team leader. Currently working as a Field Support Officer, she is part of the EASO Coordination Team in Lesvos and supports the Field Coordinator in the overall management of the operations in the island, including staff coordination, liaising with the Greek Authorities and any other relevant stakeholder.

Maya joined EASO operations in Greece three years ago, first as a Member State expert deployed by France, undertaking the role of vulnerability expert, and after a year as a locally recruited Field Support Officer (FSO). Her main role today is to support the field coordinator in the overall management of the EASO operation in the field, including staff coordination, reporting and liaising with other stakeholders in Kos and Lesvos.

You are currently supporting EASO with the implementation of the relocation project. How is this experience for you?

Maria: For me this is a new and very interesting experience. Many different actors at central and field level work together as one team for the same purpose. Of course, this requires a very good organization of the work needed to be done as well as of the role and the responsibilities of each one of the different stakeholders, in order to reach timely and efficiently the best possible outcome of this exercise. Nonetheless the whole project is really fulfilling when you realize that all these unaccompanied children will have the chance for better living conditions and probably a better future. In addition, when you think that European countries are trying to support each other as well as the applicants by sharing responsibility, the significance and importance of this project becomes even more prominent.

Maya: The implementation of the relocation project has been a very interesting and fulfilling experience in my opinion. First of all, it is a concrete application of the idea of a European solidarity, as it is a direct support to Greece by other Member states in order to share the responsibility of the asylum seekers and in particular of unaccompanied minors. In addition, both at central and field level this project has been planned in cooperation with several actors and organisations, leading to a single project implemented in combination of diverse approaches. Finally, having in mind that this project concerns unaccompanied minors, the idea of playing a small part in providing more adequate living conditions and care is motivating and rewarding on a daily basis.
**What is the most challenging part of your work?**

**Maria:** The most challenging but also the most interesting part of our work at the same time is that we have to deal with many different types of people on daily basis. People coming from totally different cultures, with totally different backgrounds, beliefs, ideas, personalities. Thus, you need to adjust every time depending on whom you are talking to and on what you would like to communicate to them or to make them understand. This is a big challenge but for me it is also the best part of our work. I think I have become a lot more open-minded and I have completely understood that nothing is self-evident, and nothing should be taken for granted.

**Maya:** Working in the field is, per se, challenging due to the context, the security issues, the place of work. However, in my opinion the most challenging part is to continuously witness the distress and situation of the applicants living in the Hotspot, and the feeling that after three years, the situation is remaining the same. In such a situation, it sometimes becomes challenging to continue being motivated and to keep in mind the purpose of the operations.

Sometimes in the hotspots, the people you speak to are nervous, distressed from their journey, recounting very difficult memories. How do you react/support them, so that they feel more secure?

**Maria:** I try to talk to the people and mainly listen to them and what they have to say. Depending on the background, the age and the personality of each person, I try to build an environment of familiarity and trust to make them understand that now they are in a safe European country where rights are respected. Although in my current role there is not so much direct interaction with third-country nationals coming to Greece in order to seek for international protection, it is often the case when I have to talk to them mostly regarding administrative procedures related to their cases.

Would you like to pass on a message to all those interesting to work with EASO willing to support the Greek operations?

**Maria:** No one will disagree that working in the field is challenging and demanding. However, the experiences you obtain and the sense of fulfilment by supporting people in need as well as the Greek authorities to deal with the biggest crisis of the last years is incomparable.

**Maya:** As for any field work, working in the Greek Hotspots is undoubtedly challenging. Nonetheless, from a personal point of view, being in the heart of the so-called migration crisis is definitely an enriching and exciting experience.
New EASO animation on Unaccompanied Minors

Over the past few years, the number of children arriving in Europe to seek protection has increased dramatically. Many of them are unaccompanied – on their own.

Amara and Malik, the fictional protagonists of EASO’s new animation, remind us that some children may go missing or become separated from their families during their journey to Europe, and that they might have faced particular risks and suffered abuse and violence.

EASO’s new animation on unaccompanied minors shows that identification and response to the special needs of unaccompanied children is further mainstreamed in all EASO activities through particular guidance, training and quality support.

EASO is here to support, to ensure that any child needing protection receives it and that, regardless of their asylum status, citizenship or background, all unaccompanied minors are treated as children first and foremost.

Where can you find the animation?

The animation is published on EASO’s YouTube Channel, on EASO’s Website, as well as on EASO’s Social Media channels. You can find it here:

Facebook
Twitter
Instagram
LinkedIn
Website
Youtube
Happy Birthday EASO!
A decade since the adoption of the founding Regulation

10 years of EASO. A milestone...

10 years ago, in May 2010, the European Asylum Support Office was established, a new EU Agency founded in the values of Europe.

In the first quarter of 2010, the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the creation of EASO. The EASO Regulation came into force on 19 June 2010, while on 24 May 2011, the Seat Agreement between the Government of Malta and EASO was signed. The Agreement governs the relationship between the host Member State and EASO. On 1 February 2011, EASO became fully operational as an EU Agency.

Since then, EASO’s one and only aim has remained to act as a resource and centre of expertise for EU Member States in order to support the implementation of EU asylum laws and help harmonise their practices.

Over the past 10 years the Agency has shown real value in helping Member States implementing the Common European Asylum System. EASO has grown into a modern European Agency whose portfolio continues to expand. Now working at the limit of its mandate, EASO is looking forward to the proposal of the European Commission for an enhanced mandate which will further contribute to a truly Common European Asylum System.

“Now we need you more than ever”

mentioned Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johannsson, in her video message to all EASO Staff, inviting them to get ready for the next 10 years of support in delivering on EASO’s important mission in the years to come.

In her message to all EASO staff, Nina Gregori, EASO’s Executive Director, thanked all for the dedication and hard work they have been investing in providing high quality support to all stakeholders.

EASO would like to thank all partners and stakeholders in Europe and beyond for their cooperation, trust, transparent and friendly attitude.
EASO’s Latest Publications

Available on EASO website and on EASO’s COI Portal

Click on the publication in order to download it!
EASO in the Press

ec.europa.eu: How do EU member states treat cases of missing unaccompanied minors? - Given the importance of the topic, and in order to obtain a global picture of the phenomenon, the EMN has closely collaborated for the elaboration of this Inform with international organisations (IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF), EU Agencies (EASO, FRA and Frontex) and EU (Missing Children Europe) and international (Save the Children) NGOs to draw on their practical expertise in this area.

Euronews.com: A happy ending to the "odyssey" of a 10-year-old unaccompanied - 12 refugee children leave for Luxembourg - This was followed by the determination of the process of assessing and determining the best interests of children by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Asylum Support Service (EASO).

DW.com: The first unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe - In the process of child resettlement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Asylum Support Unit (EASO) affiliated with the European Union will support these countries.

DW.com: "Pandemic recommendations" to EU countries in the asylum procedure - The guide, prepared with the support of the European Asylum Support Unit (EASO) and the European Border Protection Agency (Frontex) and in collaboration with local authorities, advises member countries on their application acceptance process, interviews and application deadlines.

Lemonde.fr: In Europe, asylum pending, migratory flows stopped - the European Commission has published, in conjunction with Frontex and the European Asylum Office (EASO).

Euobserver.com: EU agencies tested monitoring data on refugees - It reached out to EU agencies including Frontex, the border enforcement agency, and EASO.

Lemonde.fr: The state ordered to restore the registration of asylum requests - According to data from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), fewer than 35,000 asylum applications were registered in March, a drop of 43% compared to February.

Agenceeuropa.eu: 43% drop in asylum requests in the EU in March 2020 as a result of Covid-19 - The number of asylum requests decreased by 43% in March 2020 compared to the previous month, according to new data from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).
**Spiegel.de:** The number of asylum applications in the corona crisis fell significantly - According to the European asylum authority Easo, 43 percent fewer applications were registered in March than in February.

**Lemonde.fr:** As migrants arrive at their lowest level, accusations of illegal refoulement are mounting - And if the Covid-19 seemed to freeze the movements of migrant populations, the consequences of the epidemic could lead to an increase in requests for international protection in the medium term in Europe, according to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

**Agenceeurope.eu:** European Asylum Support Office fully resumes its activities in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta - The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) announced on Wednesday 27 May that it would resume full operations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, which were suspended due to Covid-19.

**Reuters.com:** Applications for asylum in EU plummet during pandemic - The number of asylum applications declined to 8,730 during April, an 86% drop from 61,421 in February, according to figures obtained by Reuters from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

**Nytimes.com:** Applications for Asylum in EU Plummet During Pandemic - "It is clear the access that potential asylum applicants had was severely restricted over the past few months, especially initially," EASO executive director Nina Gregori told Reuters.

**Aljazeera.com:** Applications for asylum in EU plummet during pandemic - The number of asylum applications declined to 8,730 during April, an 86 percent drop from 61,421 in February, according to figures obtained by Reuters from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

**BBC.com:** EU asylum applications fall to lowest level in over a decade - EASO figures also recorded a 44% drop in asylum applications from February to March when countries started to impose lockdowns.

**Afp.com.es:** Brussels recommends opening internal borders of the EU while the pandemic martyrs Latin America - In April alone, the number of asylum claims in Europe plunged 87%, according to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the lowest level since 2008.

**tv5monde.com:** Asylum applications in Europe fall by 87% in April, the lowest since 2008 - The number of asylum applications registered in Europe fell by 87% in April, compared to the beginning of the year, under the effect of traffic restrictions linked to the coronavirus health crisis, announced on Thursday the European Bureau of asylum support (EASO).

**Elpais.com:** The pandemic strains the seams of the asylum system - The study of the cases has continued electronically, but during the confinement Spain did not guarantee the entry of new asylum applications. ‘Despite the fact that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) offered instructions for conducting online interviews, this option has not been considered in Spain.

**Euobserver.com:** EU asylum applications rise for first time since 2015 wave - Asylum applications to the EU increased for the first time last year since the migration crisis of 2015, according to the latest report from the European Asylum Support Office (Easo) on Thursday (25 June).
EASO on Social Media

Top 5 tweets from @EASO:

• In 2019, most #asylum applicants in the EU were Syrians (80 205; 11%), Afghans (60 700; 8.2%) and Venezuelans (45 645; 6.2%). Read the #EASOAsgylumReport2020 here https://europa.eu/1xk86vC #EASO View tweet

• #EASO cautions that #COVID19 could result in increased #asylum-related #migration. Read our Special Report on Asylum Trends and COVID-19 here https://europa.eu/1wT97MM. See press release https://europa.eu/1Hq63rC #EASOAsgylumTrends View tweet

• Happy Birthday #EASO! Today we mark a decade since the adoption of our Founding Regulation. Next year EASO celebrates its 10th Anniversary since becoming fully operational. Watch now a video message from @NinaGregoriEASO, EASO’s Executive Director. #EASO10Years View tweet

• #EASO will facilitate the relocation of 1 600 #unaccompaniedminors from #Greece to other EU+ Member States. @NinaGregoriEASO & @GKoumoutsakos have signed an amendment to the 2020 Greek Operating Plan that will make it possible. See press release: https://europa.eu/1kr34yH. View tweet

• The online launch of the #EASOAsgylumReport2020 has just started – watch it LIVE on our Facebook page! https://facebook.com/easo.eu #EASO #asylum View tweet

Top mentions:

• @YlvaJohanssson: A recap of my intervention at @Europarl_EN @EP_Justice committee on the financial support to #Greece by #EU on #migrant and #asylum: 350m euros + 350m euros. You can read my full speech here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/johansson/announcements/intervention-video-conference-european-parliament-libe-committee-situation-unions-external-borders_en #CoronaVirusUpdates @EASO @Frontex @EEAthina @EU_Commission View tweet

• @YlvaJohanssson: “Everyone who needs it has the right to apply for #asylum. It’s central to our values. And central to our democracies” My speech at the launch of the @easo Asylum Report 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2019-2024/johansson/announcements/opening-speech-commissioner-johansson-online-launch-easo-asylum-report-2020_en #EASOAsgylumReport2020 View tweet
Would you like to join our team?
Apply Now!

Senior ICT Officer - AD 7 – [Apply here]
Closing date 05 August 2020

HQ Security Officer - FG IV – [Apply here]
Closing date 05 August 2020

Social Media Assistant - FG III – [Apply here]
Closing date 03 August 2020

Head of Training Curriculum Design Sector - AD 8 – [Apply here]
Closing date 03 August 2020

Head of Facility Management Sector - AD 8 – [Apply here]
Closing date 31 July 2020

Is there anything that you miss from our newsletter that would be of an interest to you?

Feel free to contact us and share your suggestions at:
[mailto:easo.press@easo.europa.eu]