



**EASO Consultative Forum Plenary
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Session 2: EASO's operational support

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1. Aim

- To exchange views on tools used in emergency and tailor made support provided by EASO to requesting Member States (MS).
- To exchange views on the impact that these tools had on the asylum and reception systems of those MS.
- To benefit from the knowledge of participants on the impact and lessons learned from emergency and tailor made support provided by EASO.

2. Background

EASO has for more than three years been active in providing emergency and tailor made support to requesting MS. In all operations there has been to a lesser or larger degree involvement of civil society. Apart from this direct involvement, civil society plays an important role in contributing to the continuous development of EASO emergency tools, i.e. establish contingency measures for potential emergency situations.

In order to provide emergency and tailor made support, EASO works with the expertise in the EU/EEA Member States. The deployment of experts from the MS and EASO via EASO Asylum Support Teams has been a key element in the implementation of EASO operational support, as well as the solidarity and cooperation shown by the European Commission (DG HOME), FRONTEX, UNHCR and other stakeholders.

Since its inception, EASO has been involved in the following large operations:

- Upon the request of Greek Government and in view of the particular pressure that Greece was subject to, the M.S.S. judgment and the implementation of new procedures as identified in the Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management (Greek Action Plan), EASO has provided emergency support to **Greece** since 1 April 2011, in order to support the establishment of the new Asylum Service, First Reception Service, Appeals Authority, reception of vulnerable persons, reduction of the case backlog and capacity building absorption of EU funds. Under the framework of the Operating Plan to Greece Phase I (01/04/2011 – 31/03/2013), EASO implemented 42 measures deploying 70 experts from MS and EASO via 52 Asylum Support Teams (AST). By mid-2013, all 3 new services (First Reception Service, Asylum Service and Appeals Authority) and the first reception centre in Fylakio were operational (including having established their financial administrations, management, basic structures and staffing), most by-laws for their operation had been adopted and a new asylum procedure in place.
- Following a request made by the Greek Government in early 2013 for further support, EASO agreed upon the prolongation of the emergency support to **Greece** until December 2014; in particular, for increasing the capacity of Greece to deal with the institutional set up of the asylum and reception system and implementation of new procedures, as identified in the revised Greek Action Plan on Asylum and Migration Management. Under the framework of the EASO Operating Plan for Greece Phase II (07/03/2013-31/12/2014), EASO is currently supporting Greece via the implementation of 15 measures via 56 ASTs, by deploying 73 experts. These measures provide support the first and second instance, the collection and analysis of statistical data, country of origin information (COI), new provisions of Dublin III Regulation, training in the field of reception, support and capacity building for absorption of EU Funding, sharing of best practices with other Member States.

- On 4 June 2013 EASO and **Italy** signed a Special Support Plan, which provides support to Italy until 31 December 2014. The support measures aim at assisting in enhancing Italy's implementation of the CEAS instruments. Support teams composed by Member State and EASO experts have been established with the aim to support Italy on Country of Origin Information (COI), reinforcement of the analytical capability and of the Dublin system, quality conditions in reception centres, operational procedures for the emergency capacity and further support to appeal instances. Cooperation with UNHCR, an important implementing partner in Italy, is continuously strengthened in particular on certain aspects of the asylum procedure and reception conditions in Italy. EASO and Italy are working together on development of national COI database and better monitoring of accommodation capacity, employment, safety rules, quality and strategic forecasting of the reception area, as well as professional development for the members of the Territorial Commission responsible for recognition of international protection.
- On 5 June 2014 EASO and **Cyprus** signed a Special Support Plan, which provides for EASO support to Cyprus until 1 July 2015. The support focuses on a number of prioritized areas, such as training of staff, vulnerable groups, advice on age assessment procedures, enhancing the reception conditions, as well as on data collection and analytical capacity (i.e. statistics and information technology). The implementation of the support started in July 2014 with the support measures in the field of reception and open accommodation. A needs assessment relating to the operation and management of the Reception and Accommodation Centre for asylum seekers in Kofinou has been conducted. EASO experts drafted an advice with suggestions on the structure, operation and management of the expanded Reception and Accommodation Centre. The implementation of the support measure on age assessment is ongoing.
- The implementation of the Operating Plan to **Bulgaria** (17/10/2013-30/09/2014) was achieved through the support of 15 EU Member States and Norway. It has been a true expression of EU solidarity. 17 support measures and over 50 activities were implemented with the assistance of 64 EU experts, contributing to the significant progress achieved by the Bulgarian Government in improving its asylum and reception system. The strong willingness and active involvement of the staff of the Ministry of Interior and of the State Agency for Refugees made these achievements possible. In the final evaluation of the Operating Plan, EASO and Bulgarian colleagues have jointly identified the need for continued support, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the good results achieved thus far.
- On 8 October 2014, **Bulgaria** requested for continuation of EASO support. On 5 December 2014, the EASO Special Support Plan signed. EASO will provide for 14 support measures to Bulgaria, including among others support with the implementation of the EU Asylum acquis; identification, referral and procedure safeguards for vulnerable groups; reception and social activities; capacity building in COI; training tools for interpreters and judges; training on EU funding; quality assurance and contingency planning.

3. Expected outcomes

- To discuss the modalities in offering emergency and tailor made support.
- To identify areas where immediate intervention of civil society could facilitate the implementation the CEAS instruments and best use of contingency planning.

4. Discussion points

- Which role civil society actors can play in enhancing and supporting the cooperation of Governmental actors in the asylum and reception portfolio while implementing the emergency and tailor made support provided by EASO to requesting Member States (MS)?
- What type of projects can civil society organisations support in the requesting MS, to facilitate the best practices of Governmental actors in implementation the CEAS instruments?
- If you are to assist an asylum and reception system under particular pressure, what kind of in-house assets are available by the civil society organisations and should be used for activating a contingency planning for reception of a sudden large influx of arrivals?