

Press Release

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EASO to Provide Support to Bulgaria

EASO and Bulgaria have today signed an Operating Plan which provides for EASO support to Bulgaria, until September 2014, in a number of prioritized areas, such as: identification and pre-registration of mixed migration flows; registration of asylum seekers and referral of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable persons to the appropriate asylum procedure; supporting the asylum decision process; providing Country of Origin Information; delivering core training in EASO Curriculum Modules for newly hired staff and; offering expertise on the absorption of emergency financial support to Bulgaria under EU Funds(SOLID Programme).

Due to a high increase in the influx of asylum seekers, in particular in the number of asylum seekers from Syria, Bulgaria's asylum and reception system has come under serious pressure. In this context, on 14 October 2013 Bulgaria made an official request for EASO support. Based on the actual situation in Bulgaria, the EASO Executive Director decided to render immediate support to Bulgaria via a joint expertise of EASO and Member States.

Dr Robert K. Visser, Executive Director of EASO, and Minister Yovchev, Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior, have today signed, the EASO Operating Plan for Bulgaria. The Operating Plan provides for support and deployment of EASO Asylum Support teams and the provision of technical and operational assistance to Bulgaria up until the end of September 2014.

The plan aims at helping Bulgaria cope with the increase in the influx while at the same time improving and strengthening the Bulgarian asylum and reception system, in the context of the implementation of the instruments of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

EASO measures to support Bulgaria fall under three themes, namely: operational support; institutional support; and horizontal support. Joint Asylum Support Teams made up of EASO experts, experts from Member States and Bulgarian Officials will be set-up. Their work will include: performing registration of asylum seekers; informing applicants about the procedures; and supporting referral of vulnerable cases and further identification to the appropriate national asylum procedure. EASO will also provide training for Bulgarian civil servants, capacity building in Country of Origin Information, organise thematic workshops and provide technical advice and quality standards. This includes planning a strategy to increase the capacity of reception facilities and to make better use of existing reception capacities.

Following the signature of the Operational Plan, Dr Visser gave the following comment *'I am glad that we have agreed, in a very short time, on a holistic plan which will provide for much needed support to Bulgaria, which is currently facing significant pressure on its asylum and reception system. We have assessed the needs of Bulgaria and adopted a flexible approach in providing tailor-made support to Bulgaria. We will now immediately start work on the ground to ensure the effective implementation of*

the plan. In just over 2 years since EASO has become fully operational, this is the 5th Member State to which we will be providing this type of operational support.'

EASO support complements other support measures by the European Commission to Bulgaria, such as emergency funding in the field of asylum under the envelope of the SOLID Programme.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office by contacting Mr Jean-Pierre Schembri on the following e-mail address: jean-pierre.schembri@easo.europa.eu