

## Press Release

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### EASO to Provide Support to Cyprus

***The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Cyprus have today signed a Special Support Plan which provides for EASO support to Cyprus, until July 2015, in 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).***

Cyprus is facing pressure on its asylum system, mainly due to their geographical proximity to an area that produces a particularly high percentage of asylum applicants. In 2013, Cyprus recorded 1246 applicants for international protection at first instance, out of which 45% claimed to be Syrian nationals. From January 2014 to April 2014, Cyprus reported 535 applicants, which represents a significant increase (+37%) compared to the same period in 2013. The rise of Syrian applicants was even more pronounced (+115%). Moreover, the Cypriot asylum and reception authorities have been assessing the situation and identified the need for enhancing and reinforcing parts of their asylum and reception system. Cyprus is currently preparing a substantial expansion of its capacity in the field of reception and open accommodation. In this context, on 26 May 2014, Cyprus requested EASO for Special Support to improve and enhance the Cypriot Asylum and Reception System. Based on the actual situation in Cyprus, the EASO Executive Director decided to render technical and operational support to Cyprus via the joint expertise of EASO and Member States.

Dr Robert K. Visser, Executive Director of EASO, and Minister Sokratis Hasikos, Minister of Interior of Cyprus, have today signed, the EASO Special Support Plan to Cyprus. The Special Support Plan provides for technical and operational support and deployment of support teams to Cyprus up to the end of June 2015. The plan aims at helping Cyprus cope with the pressure on its asylum and reception system and strengthen its capacity in managing and being prepared for the implementation of the instruments of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). EASO will provide for six support measures to Cyprus, located around two themes of operational support and institutional support nature.

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 support plan to Cyprus. We have assessed the needs of Cyprus and adopted a flexible approach in providing tailor-made special support, to improve the asylum and reception system in Cyprus (in the short term) and ensure the necessary conditions for dealing with long term pressure on their asylum system are in place, in line the Common European Asylum System. We will now immediately start work on the ground to ensure the effective implementation of the plan. In just over 3 years since EASO has become fully operational, this is the 6<sup>th</sup> Member State to which we will be providing operational support.'*

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](mailto:jean-pierre.schembri@easo.europa.eu)