



**FOURTH EASO CONSULTATIVE FORUM PLENARY MEETING**

**11 & 12 December 2014**

**Breakout session 3: EASO's quality processes: current activities and perspectives for the coming years  
- Report -**

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Facilitated by: **Wilfried Buchhorn**, UNHCR

Supported by: **Jamil Addou**, EASO

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**Summary**

Mr Buchhorn opened the session by introducing quality as being at the centre of what everyone in the asylum system does and by stating his satisfaction that quality is one of the core areas of what EASO does when supporting the implementation of the CEAS. It was recalled that EASO is a practical cooperation agency and that the implementation of the tools developed together with Member States and relevant stakeholders is of a voluntary basis. Civil Society offered their expertise and repeated their interest to be involved in the quality process. EASO stated that by nature evaluation is built in every quality process.

It was also noted that civil society could play an important role at the EU/EASO level and the national level in cooperation with national authorities in providing external feedback on the implementation of quality tools and the overall evaluation of the impact of the quality process on the asylum practice.

**Detail**

Mr Buchhorn stated that in UNHCR's experience working on quality, it is crucial that it is understood as being about looking at how the job is done and how it can be improved in the interest of all parties rather than being seen as an evaluation of performance. Working on quality requires trust and confidence.

Looking at the quality of asylum processes is not an indication that the system is weak. On the contrary, strong systems have quality mechanisms in place, allowing taking a step back and ensuring that those in need of protection receive it.

After a tour de table enabling all participants to introduce themselves and a presentation by EASO of the Quality Matrix activities as well as a full preview of the first EASO Quality Tool on the Personal Interview, the following issues were addressed during the discussion:



### **Development of Quality tools and common quality standards:**

Participants enquired about the binding value of the guidance provided by the EASO Quality Tools. It was recalled that EASO is a practical cooperation agency and that the implementation of the tools developed together with Member States and relevant stakeholders is of a voluntary basis. In order to increase ownership of the tools, all EU+ countries are consulted in the final stages before they are made public and national administrations are invited to insert references to their own legal framework in the guidance part itself.

Taking note that working groups developing the tools are composed of experts from national administration, participants asked EASO how it is ensuring that the standards promoted by the tools. EASO informed that the structured methodology of the Quality Matrix is aimed at first identifying best practices during an initial mapping phase which is a prerequisite to the development of any practical tools. Building on that, the active involvement of a Reference Group composed of the EU Commission, UNHCR, ECRE and other members of civil society is considered a strong safeguard in this sense. Mr Buchhorn reinforced this point and stressed that the whole process is guided by a spirit of promotion of Quality in asylum processes and best practices among participating Member States, which have a strong interest in developing the best possible tools. The participation in the quality process and the implementation of the suggested tool support a more coherent asylum practice based on the recently adopted common EU standards

### **Participation of Civil Society, Transparency of the EASO Quality work and channelled communications:**

Civil Society offered their expertise and repeated their interest to be involved in the quality process. In order to foster the involvement of civil society in the development of Quality Tools, EASO was invited to publicise its plans. It was recalled that such information is regularly made available in the EASO monthly newsletter but it was also agreed that calls to the Consultative Forums should be issued on a regular basis to invite interested parties to contribute to the process. However, it was also noted that such contribution requires specific practical expertise and enough resources to participate in a timely and efficient manner. It was mentioned that knowing EASO's plans in advance could enable civil society organisation to make an informed choice and to better target the tools to which they could bring added value.

In addition to the role in the tools developments process civil society has a role to play at the national level to cooperate with national authorities in providing external feedback on the implementation of quality standards.

### **Evaluation of the Quality Tools:**

Participants enquired about EASO's plans to evaluate and update the tools when available. EASO stated that by nature evaluation is built in every quality process. However, the first tools being about to be made publicly available; it is obviously premature to engage in their evaluation. Discussions have been initiated with the EASO network of Quality National Contact Points earlier in December 2014 as to the best way to proceed with evaluation and assessment of the implementation of the tools as of 2016. It was also noted that civil society could play an important role at the EU/EASO level and the national level in cooperation with national authorities in providing external feedback on the implementation of quality tools and the overall evaluation of the impact of the quality process on the asylum practice.