



**FOURTH EASO CONSULTATIVE FORUM PLENARY MEETING
11 & 12 December 2014**

**Round table 1: Early warning and preparedness in view of the Ukrainian and other crises –
Planning and cooperation to strengthen EU and MS responses**

- Report –

Moderated by: **Laurent Muschel**, Director Asylum and Migration, DG Home

Supported by: **David Dowey**, Centre for Information, Documentation and Analysis, EASO

Speakers:

Elizabeth Collett, Director of MPI Europe

Tomasz Dzięcioł, Chief Specialist, Office for Foreigners, Poland

Christer Zettergren, Swedish Migration Board

Summary

The lead-off presentation provided the background for discussion by using the example of data on Ukrainian applicants at EU level. This is being collected in a more timely and complete manner within the framework of EASO's Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS).

Elizabeth Collett from MPI Europe provided strong arguments for the more effective use of indicators to capture upstream information on countries of origin and the movement of asylum seekers. She highlighted the challenges to government institutions to respond more quickly. One challenge is the unclear distinction between contingency planning and capacity-building during a move to a 'new normal' in asylum inflows.

Tomasz Dzięcioł described the operational aspects of the contingency plan in Poland, stressing the multiplicity in channels and the need for cooperation between other institutional partners such as the Police and the State Fire services. Contingency plans should include as key elements the definition of what should trigger action and who should be responsible for specific responses.

Christer Zettergren provided an overview of the changes that have been made at the Swedish Migration Board to make actions less reactive and more proactive. To be proactive, it is essential to include more extensive knowledge in the decision-making process and to organise more strategically. Member States need to create a bridge between their own thinking and that of other EU countries.

Detail

The example of Ukraine shows that early warning is essential because of the scale of unprecedented flows – since March 2014 the number of applicants from Ukraine in the EU+ went from monthly levels of about 100 applicants to more than 2,000 in recent months. While much of the influx has



been concentrated in several Member States, since May 2014, Ukrainian applicants have been registered throughout almost all EU+ countries. The EASO EPS data collection has allowed more timely information to monitor the evolution. While Member States regularly observe large swings in the influx of applicants of specific citizenships from year to year, crises generally mean large and sustained positive changes in arrivals across all EU+ countries that have impacts throughout the asylum system and require contingency planning of all aspects, from reception to integration.

The lead-off presentation highlighted several areas for discussion with regard to contingency planning: Member State responses will depend crucially on how applicants are applying and on applicant profiles which may vary across receiving States. Information gaps persist and often the impact of crises is not constrained only to the asylum authorities within Member States, but also requires wider responses at national level and implies roles for other institutional stakeholders and civil society.

Building on the presentation of indicators, the first speaker, Elizabeth Collett, focused on how and why indicators are used – in particular the need for indicators that are specific to the countries/regions of origin and incorporate upstream information to improve the response to crises. It is essential to make more effective use of knowledge both at EU level but also within the country of origin, for example with more in-depth inquiries into the propensity to migrate and the individual considerations of asylum seekers before they move to the EU. To this effect, the early warning component of contingency planning should make use of information sources on displacement, both inside and outside the country of origin, and should examine links between transition and the level of protection offered and/or instability in specific regions (e.g. Africa).

One particular challenge, which may be addressed by EASO, is how to incorporate information on policy changes in specific Member States to better gauge potential ripple effects in other Member States. Policy impacts must also be considered with regard to channels other than asylum (e.g. family reunification, temporary resident permits, etc.) that may also be avenues used during crises for migrants to avoid returning to instable countries of origin.

As for the role of civil society, crises move quickly and, typically, government institutions move slowly. Aid agencies can respond quickly and can help translate national contingency plans into corrective responsive action. Also, in many cases it is not clear at what point the planning of resources for contingencies should shift to (longer-term) capacity-building when there is a transition to a 'new normal' with a higher applicant inflow. In contrast, national contingency plans should also foresee how to deal with negative changes – what happens when resources go unused following a stabilisation of crisis situations in countries of origin.

Tomasz Dzięcioł from the Polish Office for Foreigners described the operational aspects of the contingency plan in Poland. One key aspect he stressed was the multiplicity in channels. Contingency plans must prepare for those not only applying for asylum but should also cover other channels. Plans should envisage cooperation with other institutional partners such as the Police and the State Fire services and specify what measures should be taken by each in response to massive flows. To give an indication of scale, so far this year there has been 4 000 applications from Ukrainians but more than 38 000 Ukrainians hold resident cards in Poland.



From the Polish experience, contingency plans should include as key elements the definition of what should trigger action and should enable decision-makers to take very fast decisions. For example, the Polish plan focuses on reception issues and monitors the number of free places in reception with thresholds of 90% occupancy triggering action. The timeframe of measurement is important. For example, in monitoring whether occupancy numbers grow quickly, a five-day reference period is used. Another important indicator of pressure during crises comes from monitoring the outflows from the reception system.

The current monitoring mechanisms in Sweden with regard to contingency planning were presented by Christer Zettergren. The big change in Sweden has been a move from 'reactive' to 'proactive' initiatives, where responses have gone from being mostly ad-hoc to better organised along strategic lines. Intelligence on migration has been put to better use in the prediction process and predictive accuracy has improved to more than 95% in recent years. More extensive knowledge on routes and on upstream events has been incorporated into reports and the Migration Board uses a PESTLE framework to incorporate macro level trends into their analysis. On the reporting side, the focus has evolved from early warning and early alert to early preparedness: five times a year prognosis reports are provided to government; the operations management team meets every week for an update that starts with a presentation of the latest statistical information; and regular newsletters provide the most up-to-date information.

For Mr Zettergren, a mix of qualitative and quantitative information is essential. Simulation models are used to project the impact of change and emerging crises on staffing, budget and resources. Through the CEAS, policy changes in one Member State impact the flows to other Member States. The simulation models can be used to project the impacts on the Swedish system of changes in the policy environment, for example, when a Member States changes their designated safe countries or when EU funding flows change. Mr Zettergren believes it is important to create a bridge between a Member State's own thinking and that of other EU countries.

One of the questions from the audience concerned push-pull factors and the role of civil society. To incorporate information from the field in its prognosis, Sweden meets regularly with civil society. This has evolved from being related to specific case to being a more general discussion and open cooperation. In Poland, the Office for Foreigners consults with UNHCR and the Red Cross on practical solutions, such as the construction of a temporary camp. The Asylum Service also meets regularly with other NGOs on contingency planning.

On the question of dealing with massive inflows of large numbers of applicants, Mr Zettergren noted that in Sweden, the Migration Board had no options but to provide beds - operationally this translates into weekly situational updates and the setting of targets (such as 400 free beds for the Christmas period).

In response to a question on the relationship between early warning and preparedness and the Dublin System, Mr Muschel provided examples of potential intra-EU cooperation. In times of varying flows, Member States need to think beyond borders. For example, Belgium is closing reception sites but France is looking to open them. Belgium and the Netherlands have already shared prison capacity within their criminal detention systems. There is no reason that similar arrangements could not be made for the sharing of reception capacity in the asylum systems.