



European Asylum Support Office

Newsletter - July/August 2015

Presentation of the EASO Annual Report to the LIBE Committee



On 16 July 2015, EASO's Executive Director delivered a presentation on EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum 2014 at the European Parliament to the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE).

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See video on the main findings of the EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2014:

<https://easo.europa.eu/asylum-trends-analysis/annual-report/>

EASO releases the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2014



European Asylum Support Office

Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2014

July 2015

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SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION

EASO released its yearly reference report: The Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2014. The report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation of asylum in the EU+ (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) by examining requests for international protection to the EU, analysing application and decision data, and focusing on some of the most important countries of origin of applicants for international protection.

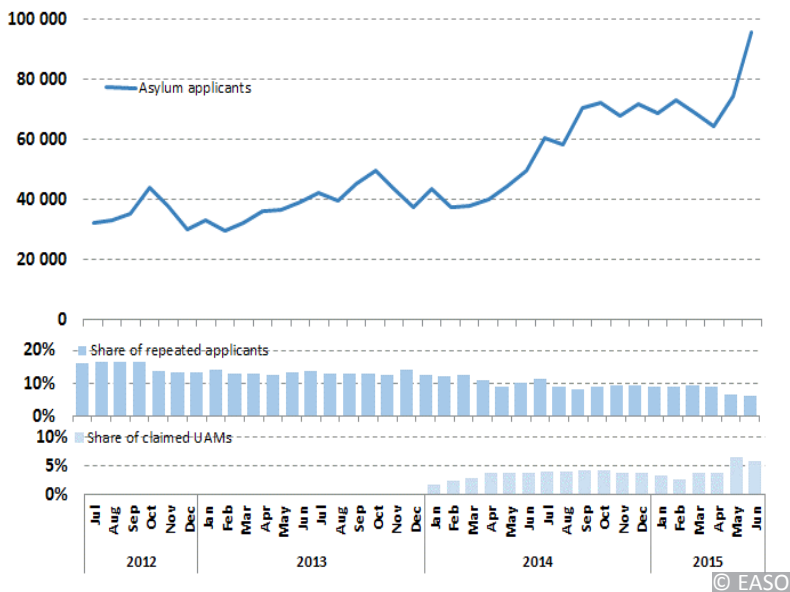
In 2014 there were more than **660 000 applications for international protection in the EU+** - the highest number since the beginning of EU-level data collection in 2008. The highest numbers of asylum applicants recorded were citizens of Syria, the Western Balkan countries combined, and Eritrea. The main receiving countries were Germany, Sweden, Italy, France and Hungary. At the end of 2014, more than **500 000 (this figure includes appeals) people were awaiting a decision on their asylum application in the EU+**; the volume of pending applications increased by 37% compared to 2013. The number of applications from citizens of Western Balkan countries reached 110 000 with a significant share from Serbia and Kosovo. The ongoing crisis in Syria posed a key challenge in the EU+ in 2014 as **the number of applications from Syrians reached more than 128 000**.

Afghanistan remained one of the main countries of origin of applicants last year; the 42 745 applications for 2014 represented a 53 % increase compared to 2013. It also had the highest share of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the EU+ (6 155). There were more than 14 000 Ukrainian applicants, which was a 13- fold increase compared to 2013. Read more on page 5.

Latest asylum trends and main countries of origin

1. Number of applicants for international protection in EU+¹

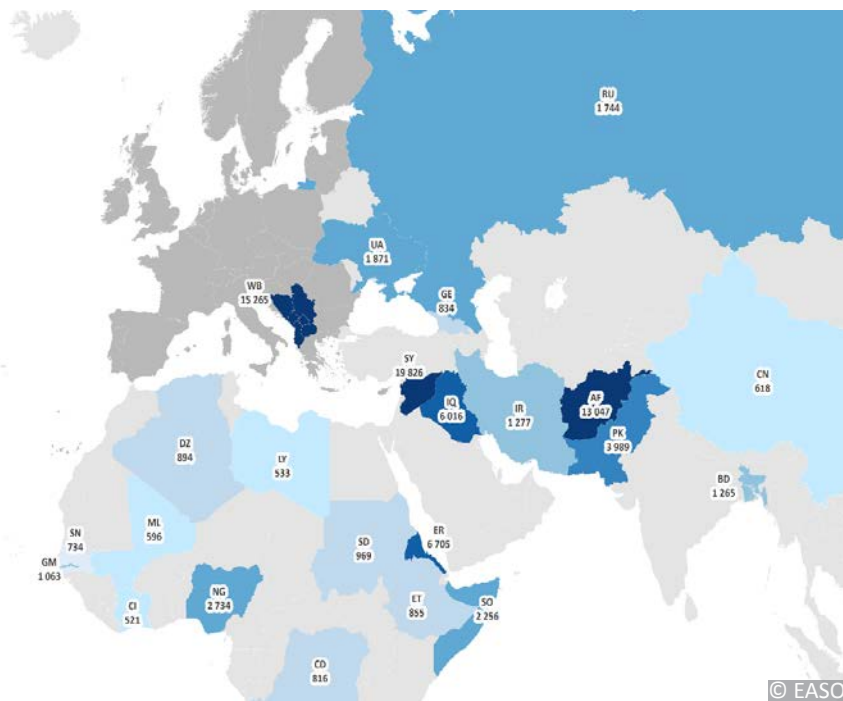
In June 2015, EU+ countries registered 95 755 asylum applicants, a rise of 29 % compared to the previous month and 92 % above the level registered in June 2014. **For the second consecutive month, the total number of applicants in EU+ countries reached a new high** since Eurostat began its data collection in 2008. **During the first six months of 2015, the number of applicants represented 67 % of the annual EU+ total for 2014 and nearly matched the total for all of 2013.**



In June, 5 745 repeated applicants were reported, 16 % more than in the previous month. The share of repeated applicants dropped considerably to 6 % of total applicants in the EU+.

The number of claimed unaccompanied minors (UAMs) rose by 18 % from 4 838 in May to 5 700 in June, while the share of UAMs remained roughly the same, at 6 % of all applicants. EASO's provisional data shows that in June almost one in two claimed UAMs was an Afghan citizen. Eritrea and Syria ranked second and third with 17 % and 9 % of all UAM applicants, respectively.

2. 2. Main countries of origin of applicants in EU+ countries in May 2015



The map displays the main country of origin groups for asylum applicants registered in June 2015. **Syria was the most common country of origin of applicants in the EU+.** Following four months of decrease, in June, the number of applicants from the Western Balkan countries (WB) rose and WB ranked second in the top citizenship groups.

The increase in WB applications was almost entirely due to a large number of Albanian applicants who lodged asylum claims mostly in Germany. The number of Albanian applicants registered already in the first half of 2015 amounted to 60 % of the total registered in the seven years between 2008 and 2014. The number of applicants from **Afghanistan, the second ranked single citizenship, rose by 41 % in June** compared to May and surpassed **13 000 applicants.**

1 The EU+ is composed of EU-28 plus Norway and Switzerland. The share of repeated applicants is the proportion of repeated applicants in the total number of applicants for international protection. The share of UAM (unaccompanied minors) represents the proportion of asylum applicants claiming to be below the age of 18 years in the total number of applicants. It is important to emphasise that this term 'unaccompanied minor' here refers to applicants claiming to be minors and for whom an age assessment has not necessarily been carried out before provision of the data.

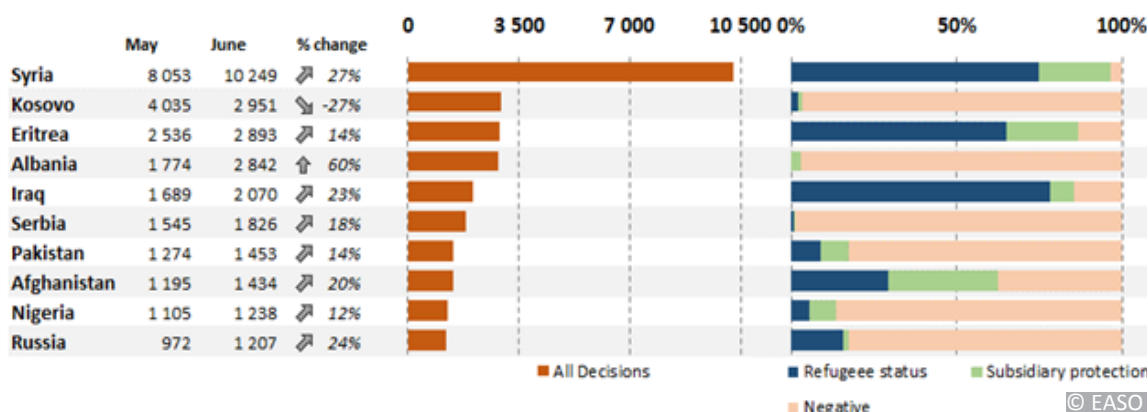
Syria – In June 2015, EU+ countries received **19 826 Syrian applicants, 50 % more than in May and a new high since the start of the crisis in Syria**. It was the fourth consecutive month of increase, with large numbers reported by mostly Germany, but also by Hungary and Austria. With regard to the distribution of applicants, in June a total of 16 EU+ countries reported Syria in their national top three main countries of origin, the same number as in May.

Western Balkan nationals (WB) – following four months of decline, in June 2015 the number of applicants from the six WB countries considered together totalled 15 265, an increase of 15 % compared to May. June was the tenth consecutive month of increase in Albanian applicants, rising 17 % from May to reach 6 809 applicants. The overwhelming majority of Albanian applicants lodged their application in Germany, followed by France and Sweden. These three EU+ countries comprised of 93 % of the total number of Albanians registered in June 2015.

Afghanistan – The number of **Afghan applicants rose by 41 %** from 9 252 in May to 13 047 in June. Hungary continued to be the main destination country for Afghans, followed by Germany and Austria. Over the past four months there has been a strong rise in the number of Afghan applicants claiming to be UAMs. In June, this group totalled 2 607, a three-fold increase compared to the level recorded in March.

Eritrea – In June, Eritreans ranked fourth in the top countries of origin of asylum applicants with 6 705 applications lodged, rising 33 % compared to the previous month. This marked the second highest level after July 2014 when more than 8 000 Eritrean asylum applicants were recorded. The increase follows shortly after large numbers of Eritrean irregular migrants arrived in Italy via the Central Mediterranean maritime route. In the EU+, the main countries of destination were **Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden**. Together, these four countries comprised 83 % of the total number of Eritrean applicants recorded in the EU+ in June 2015.

3. Number and type of decisions issued in first instance in EU+ countries



In June 2015, EU+ countries issued **44 894 first instance decisions**, an increase of 19 % compared to May. At EU+ level, the proportion of positive decisions was 46 % of all decisions, two percentage points higher than in the previous month. In June, more than three-quarters of positive decisions led to refugee status (the remainder led to subsidiary protection).

As the chart above shows, **Syrian applicants continued to receive the highest number of decisions** in first instance. In June 2015, EU+ countries issued 10 249 decisions on Syrian applications, 27 % more than in May. In terms of number of decisions issued, Syrians continued to be, by far, the largest group of applicants, followed by Kosovars, Eritreans and Albanians. **The Syrian recognition rate, at 97 %, was the highest in the EU+ for any single country of origin**; 75 % of all decisions issued in June on Syrian cases granted refugee status and 22 % granted subsidiary protection.

Despite the large (41 %) increase in the number of applicants from Afghanistan from May to June, the number of first instance decisions issued to this group increased by only 20 % (+239 decisions) in June.

As a consequence of the recent high influx of Albanian applicants, **some EU+ countries decided to prioritise decision-making on their Albanian caseload**. As a result, the number of decisions issued rose by 60 % compared to May, with 97 % of the decisions issued resulting in a negative outcome.

Additional data and reports

Quarterly reports are available here: easo.europa.eu/asylum-trends-analysis/quarterly-report

Other EASO documentation is available here: easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation

Hon. Klaas Dijkhoff, Dutch Minister for Immigration visits EASO

On 17 July 2015, Hon. Klaas Dijkhoff, Dutch Minister for Immigration, visited the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to discuss the situation of asylum in the EU, EASO's work, tools and activities vis-à-vis the development of the Common European Asylum Support System. During the visit, Hon. Minister Klaas Dijkhoff met with EASO's Executive Director, Dr. Robert K. Visser and EASO staff.



Moreover, Hon. Minister Klaas Dijkhoff and Dr. Visser discussed EASO's role in view of the actions contained in the European Agenda on Migration. In particular, those related to joint processing of asylum applications, intra-EU relocation, resettlement from third countries, reception and fighting smuggling networks.



From the left, Executive Director of EASO Dr. Robert K. Visser, Hon. Minister Klaas Dijkhoff and Director General Migration Jan-Kees Goet

Joint BUDG - LIBE Committees meeting in Catania

Members from the European Parliament's BUDG and LIBE committees travelled to Sicily from 22 to 24 July to study and discuss how to address the migratory pressures that the region is facing from a budgetary perspective. The delegation visited migrant centres and met government officials, representatives from FRONTEX and EASO as well as representatives of relevant NGOs and got a deeper understanding of the issues at stake.



MEPs in Sicily

EASO's representative explained that EASO's support to Italy dates back to June 2013. Motivated by the high number of arrivals and the implementation of the asylum package, EASO was asked to support Italy. EASO signed a new support plan in the beginning of this year, which runs until April 2016. EASO's aim is to support the Italian authorities and contribute to improving the Italian asylum and reception system. EASO provided support in a number of areas including data collection and analysis, COI, tackling of the backlog of pending cases in Dublin procedure, reception system and emergency capacity, and training of staff and of the judiciary.



The European Migration Agenda has assigned new tasks to EASO. These include hot spots, joint processing, relocation, resettlement, reception, safe countries of origin, smuggling networks etc. On Italy, EASO issued a call for experts for joint processing activities. There was a positive response by Member States and some 15 Member States responded. EASO deployed staff to the EU Regional Task Force since 13 July. Moreover, EASO is now awaiting agreement from the Italian Government on the starting date of these new activities.

EASO releases the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU

Continued from page 1:

The report also looks into **key asylum related developments in 2014** such as the Task Force Mediterranean, reception capacity in the Member States, developments in national asylum systems and EASO support. Amongst other things, **EASO continued to provide operational support to Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Cyprus and successfully piloted join-processing projects and a project with Malta and Italy on facilitation of irregular migrants. EASO has trained over 2,800 asylum and reception officials.**



Executive Director of EASO, Dr. Robert. K. Visser

Moreover, EASO held external dimension activities with a number of states including **Turkey, Serbia, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia**. Furthermore, EASO launched new statistical data collection under its **Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS)**, which sees contribution from all EU+ states on a monthly basis, adding to information available from Eurostat.

Latest figures for 2015 show that the number of applications for international protection continues to rise. In the first 5 months of this year, there was a **68 % rise in the number of applications for international protection in the EU+ compared to the same period last year**. This follows a 43 % increase in the number of applications in 2014 compared to 2013. In 2015 new trends seem to be emerging. The number of Kosovar applicants was very high until March 2015. Kosovo was the main country of origin of applicants registered in the EU+ between January

and May 2015, ahead of Syria. This is despite the fact that the volume of Syrian applicants was higher than the level recorded over the same period in 2014. There has also been a substantial increase in the numbers of Afghan applicants in recent months. Since January 2015, a significant rise in the number of applicants claiming to be unaccompanied minors has also been noted in the EU+. They primarily originated from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria and Somalia and were mainly received by Sweden, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

Quick Links

EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2014: <https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-Annual-Report-2014.pdf>

EASO Video on the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3HuY35II9g>

Key findings of EASO's Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2014

EASO's 2014 Annual Report provides a comprehensive overview of the number and nature of applications for international protection in all 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (the EU+). It examines asylum trends, including key challenges and responses during the year, major institutional and legal developments and provides an overview of the practical functioning of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Input is provided by Member States, UNHCR, civil society, information specialists and field officers.

Key points of report

- In 2014 there were more than 660 000 applications for international protection in the EU+ - the highest number since the beginning of EU-level data collection in 2008.
- The highest numbers of asylum applicants recorded were citizens of Syria, the Western Balkan countries combined, and Eritrea. The main receiving countries were Germany, Sweden, Italy, France and Hungary.
- At the end of 2014, more than 500 000 people were awaiting a decision on their asylum application in the EU+; the volume of pending applications increased by 37% compared to 2013.
- The ongoing crisis in Syria posed a key challenge in the EU+ in 2014 as the number of applications from Syrians reached more than 128 000. This triggered the establishment of

special measures in terms of resettlement and humanitarian admission.

- Afghanistan remained one of the main countries of origin of applicants last year; the 42 745 applications for 2014 represented a 53 % increase compared to 2013. It also had the highest share of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the EU+ (6 155).
- The number of applications from citizens of Western Balkan countries reached 110 000 with a significant share from Serbia and Kosovo.
- There were more than 14 000 Ukrainian applicants, which was a 13-fold increase compared to 2013.
- 2014 marked the launch of the 7-year Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) with a budget of 3.137 billion EUR to support projects in Member States.

Major developments in 2014

Mediterranean crisis

Access to asylum procedure and management of migratory flows were at the forefront of the political debate in 2014 with a significant rise in arrivals by sea, often leading to tragic loss of life in the Mediterranean. Task Force Mediterranean sought to learn more about the root cause of the problem and find solutions to address it. Much emphasis was put on the initial stage of the asylum procedure, including the application and registration process, where significant challenges remain, particularly in EU+ countries facing substantial and/or sudden increases in arrivals.

Reception facilities

An increase in asylum applications in 2014 led to accommodation shortages in many countries, highlighting the need for greater flexibility regarding reception facilities. Member States responded by creating new facilities and setting up emergency ones. In that context, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) clarified that financial allowances granted to applicants must enable them to find, if necessary, private rental accommodation. Many EU+ countries decided to widen access to the labour market so that applicants could improve their self-sustainability. Detention policies were revised in many Member States with a visible trend towards introducing alternatives to detention.

Developing national asylum systems

Reflecting increases in applications and pending cases, many EU+ countries restructured their

asylum administrations, recruited extra staff and reorganised tasks and resources.

Several measures were implemented to boost efficiency and react to emerging pressures in a flexible manner. These included: defining contingency plans, use of special procedures for swifter decision-making, revisions to national lists of safe countries of origin, prioritisation of certain classes of asylum cases, and new technological solutions.

EASO support

EASO continued to provide operational support to Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Cyprus and successfully piloted join-processing projects, that demonstrated the suitability of deploying joint processing support teams to Member States, and a project with Malta and Italy on facilitation of irregular migrants. EASO has trained over 2,800 asylum and reception officials. Moreover, EASO held external dimension activities with a number of states including Turkey, Serbia, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Furthermore, EASO launched new statistical data collection under its Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS), which sees contribution from all EU+ states on a monthly basis, adding to information available from Eurostat. Improved analysis is included in the Annual Report based on this new data.

Legal matters

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled on important aspects of subsidiary protection (most notably the concept of internal armed conflict and cases of serious medical conditions) and clarified how national authorities may assess the credibility of the declared sexual orientation of applicants for asylum. National courts and tribunals analysed a number of key concepts related to asylum, such as persecution on grounds of religion and use of various forms of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) based on individual circumstances in each case.

Vulnerable groups

More than 24 000 unaccompanied minors applied for international protection last year. EU+ countries pledged to address the plight of vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, the disabled, victims of human trafficking, violence and torture, and provide specialised asylum-procedure services to address their needs.

Improved services

In line with recent changes in EU asylum law package, many EU+ countries revised their policies on legal assistance, information and

interpretation to improve the standard of these services.

These areas presented a challenge in 2014, especially in view of increased demand and an often limited pool of specialised resources.

Comparability

Different Member States receive significantly different flows of applicants and for different reasons. The report's chapter on comparability noted that factors such as presence of diaspora, recognition rate, historical and language links, benefits provided by Member states and processing times may influence the decision of asylum-seekers to choose certain destinations over others but that none can be considered in isolation.

Strategy for the future

Building upon the debate in 2014, new directions for European asylum policy were outlined by the Commission in the communication A European Agenda On Migration (EAM) issued in May 2015. Immediate action was proposed to save lives at sea, combat criminal smuggling networks, respond to high volumes of arrivals within the EU with relocation activities and develop a common approach to resettlement. EASO will play a key role in a number of these measures including those in the area of joint processing of asylum applications, fighting smuggling networks, relocation, resettlement and reception.

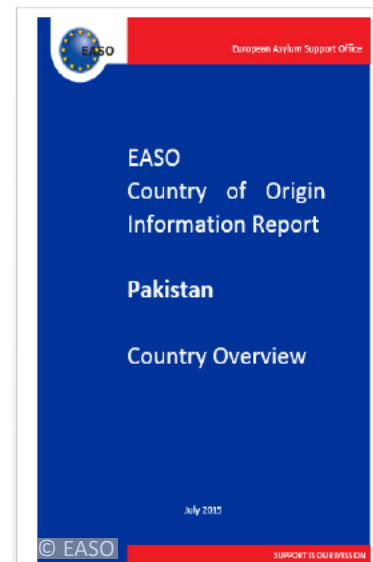
Upcoming EASO COI Reports

In August 2015, EASO will publish a new Country of Origin Information (COI) report entitled '**Pakistan Country Overview**'. This report provides both general background information and more detailed information on topics relevant for international protection status determination in regard to Pakistani asylum seekers.

Pakistan has figured in the top 10 countries of origin for many years, taking respectively the third, fifth and sixth position in the years 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014¹. The number of Pakistani applicants has been steadily increasing overtime. In 2014 22 355 Pakistani nationals applied for international protection in the EU, a 5% increase compared to 2013. In the first six months of 2015, according to provisional EASO data, close to 15 000 applicants from Pakistan have been registered in the EU, indicating a further increase.

Intended as a reference document and a tool for preparing asylum interviews and asylum decision-making, the report includes general country

information (geography, demography, short history, state structure and political landscape, education, media and telecommunication, health care, socio-economic and humanitarian situation, documents), as well as more detailed information on the general and regional security situation in Pakistan. A chapter on the human rights situation provides an overview of human rights violations and focuses on specific risk groups, ethnic minorities, religious groups and sexual and gender minorities. A last chapter is dedicated to migration, displacement and internal mobility. The report covers the period up until May 2015.



The Pakistan Country Overview was written using the EASO network approach whereby networks of national COI experts work jointly to provide common COI at EU level in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology. The Pakistan report was drafted by COI specialists from Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary and the UK, together with EASO. A quality review was undertaken by COI specialists from Ireland, Lithuania, UNHCR and EASO.

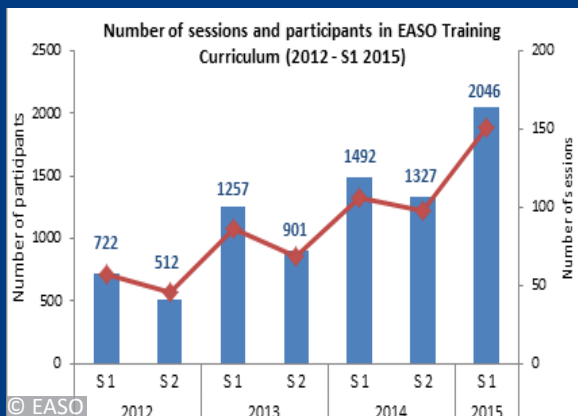
In addition to the EASO COI Reports already published in 2015 (Afghanistan Security Situation, Eritrea Country Focus) and the abovementioned Pakistan Country Overview report, a number of new EASO COI publications are scheduled for the second half of 2015. In July, the process was launched for the drafting of a topical report on **Human Trafficking in Nigeria**. Using a Finnish COI report as a starting point, a number of EU+ countries will contribute by providing complementary information and sources and reviewing the final report. In August, a preparatory meeting will be held in which the drafting team of a COI report on State Actors in the Russian Federation will discuss terms of reference and timeframes. Also in August-September, COI specialists from EU+ countries will start drafting the **update of the Afghanistan Security Situation**.

¹ Cf. EASO, Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2014, July 2015.

EASO Training Curriculum

Training activities in the first semester of 2015

A number of training activities were organised by EASO in the first half of 2015. Ten train-the-trainers' sessions were delivered at the EASO premises in Malta and an additional two train-the-trainers' sessions were held within the regional training context, in Vienna. EASO also organised one train-the-trainers' session in the module on Common European Asylum System (CEAS) within the project "Participation of Jordan in the work of EASO and participation of Tunisia and Morocco in the work of EASO and FRONTEX financed through the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument". In total 163 trainers were trained in the EASO train-the-trainers' sessions and 1886 officials were trained in EASO modules in 138 national training sessions.



EASO finalised the development of the module on Reception and started work on the upgrade of the module on Evidence Assessment and Dublin III Regulation.

Additionally EASO published Handbooks on Interview Techniques, Interviewing Vulnerable Persons and started the development of the Handbook on Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation.

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all the experts that supported the EASO training activities and thus helped us to make the first training semester a successful one.

Training plans for the second semester

The second semester will start with the train-the-trainers' sessions in the newly updated module on Country of Origin Information (COI) and the module on Interviewing Vulnerable Persons. The online part of these trainings will start on 7 September, while the face-to-face session will be held in Malta from 6 to 9 October. Should you wish to register for any of these train-the-trainers' sessions, kindly send the registration form to training@easo.europa.eu by 31 August.

In September EASO intends to organise the kick off meeting for the development of a new module on Fundamental Rights and International Protection in the EU. The module on Fundamental Rights and International Protection in the EU will replace the module on International Refugee Law and Human Rights which is already obsolete. In the second half of the year 2015 EASO will continue with the upgrade of the modules on Evidence Assessment and Dublin III Regulation and will also launch an update of the module on End of Protection and development of Handbooks on Evidence Assessment and Reception.

Upgrade of the module on Dublin III Regulation

On 23 - 25 June EASO held a kick off meeting on the upgrade of the module on Dublin III Regulation. At the kick off meeting the content group reviewed the current version of the module and agreed on the elements of the module that will need to be upgraded, taking into account the comments of the reference group. The reference group consists of different members of civil society, particularly ECRE, UNHCR and the European Commission. The role of the reference group is to review the module and provide suggestions for improvements of the module. During the upgrade process the content group will take into consideration the latest jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the EU and the European Court of Human Rights. The content group will reflect on the learning outcomes of the module, structure of the module and will enhance the didactic approach to the module. The content group consists of 3 experts from Member States and is also supported by an eu-LISA expert. The upgrade of the module is expected to be finalised by the end of February 2016.

Reception module

The development of the *Reception module* was finalised by EASO in July. The *Reception module* targets practitioners who are in direct contact with applicants for international protection in the reception context, irrespective of their employer (the State, NGOs, private contractors, municipalities, etc.). The training is in line with the provisions of the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU). During this training the trainees will study the international and European legal framework within which the current Reception Conditions Directive was adopted. They will learn about various phases in the reception process, including the identification of special needs of applicants for international protection, the work with vulnerable groups and the issue of mental health in a reception context. Additionally the trainees will be introduced to the role of the reception officer and learn on wide range of skills required for the daily work of reception officers. The online part of the first train-the-trainers' session in the *Reception module* will start on 5 October and the face-to-face session will be organised on 3-6 November in the EASO premises in Malta.

Should you wish you to register for this train-the-trainer session, kindly send the registration form to training@easo.europa.eu by 28 September.

EASO Cooperation with courts and tribunals

In accordance with the Work Programme for 2015, EASO, with the kind support of the Court of Justice of the EU, the European Court of Human Rights, the International Association of Refugee Law Judges, the Association of European Administrative Judges and the European Judicial Training Network, is pleased to announce the organisation of a thematically focussed conference for members of courts and tribunals.

This conference will take place on 5-6 November at the premises of the Court of Justice of the European Union. It will provide a forum for members of courts and tribunals who deal with questions of international protection to engage in discussion with peers from a wide range of Member States. It represents an important opportunity for an exchange of practice and experience between judges with a view to ultimately furthering the mutual understanding and harmonisation of judicial standards throughout the EU+ countries in respect of the Common European Asylum System. The topics to be discussed in the individual sessions include a look at the latest developments in relation to the qualification for protection; the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights

in international protection cases; the role of the Dublin III Regulation in the judicial context; as well as further sessions on exclusion, subsidiary protection, credibility and the use of country-of-origin information by judges. **Further details on individual topics and speakers will be available in early September.**

Quality Matrix and Contact Committee meeting on appeals procedures

On 7-8 July 2015 EASO and the European Commission organised a meeting in Brussels on the topic of right to effective remedy and appeals procedures according to the recast Asylum Procedures Directive. The meeting was a joint endeavour under the EASO Quality Matrix process and the Contact Committee and addressed issues of transposition and legal interpretation alongside issues of practical implementation.

In specific sessions on organisational and procedural aspects, free legal assistance and provision of information, suspensive effect and scope of the appeal, participants were informed about the applicable legal regime and the key findings of the mapping completed by EASO. These were complemented by presentations by UNHCR and the Council of Europe and from the Deputy President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland.



UNHCR presented its views on the provision of legal assistance and other relevant elements according to the recast Asylum Procedures Directive. An overview of relevant jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights was presented by the Council of Europe. Judge Jacek Chlebny, Deputy President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Poland, brought in the judicial perspective on the right to effective remedy in the EU+. A workshop and a number of plenary discussions allowed participants to further exchange information, to discuss common challenges and learn from each other's good practices.

This meeting fell under the 9th phase of the EASO Quality Matrix process which started in 2013 and which had to-date focused on issues of first (administrative) instance, including substantive topics such as Eligibility and Exclusion, as well as procedural aspects such as Access to Procedure, Special Procedures under the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, and Dublin Procedure. The next topic envisaged of the Quality Matrix is the topic of End and Renewal of Protection. The mapping of EU+ practices in this regard will take place in September, with a Thematic Meeting to follow up in October 2015.

EASO Practical Guide on the Implementation of Article 15(c) Qualification Directive



EASO published a report on the implementation of Article 15(c) Qualification Directive in EU Member States as part of its Practical Guide Series.

Article 15(c) of the Directive 2011/95/EU (Qualification Directive, QD) is the provision where the most diverging interpretations and practices could be identified in the EU+ (Member States, plus

Norway and Switzerland). EASO has mapped the range of different interpretations and practices across the EU and strived to provide a common understanding of this key provision when addressing eligibility to international protection.

The information presented in this report has been provided by MS in the context of the EASO Quality Matrix initiative, of EASO Practical cooperation meetings as well as through a specific information gathering exercise conducted by EASO in the last quarter of 2014.

The content of the trend analysis is structured as follows: Part I presents an analysis of trends in MS' policy and practice in applying the core elements of Article 15(c) QD. Part II provides case studies MS' application of Article 15(c) QD for four countries of origin, for which the legal provision was found to be most relevant, namely on Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Syria.

See the publication on: easo.europa.eu/asylum-documentation/easo-publication-and-documentation

EASO Support to Bulgaria – Enhancing the quality of the asylum procedure

Under the EASO Support Plan to Bulgaria, EASO organised an expert mission to Sofia from the 29th of June to the 9th of July 2015. Together with the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees (SAR), the EASO team assessed the current status of quality management within the asylum procedure. Experts from Sweden and Belgium as well as EASO staff visited the Registration and Reception Centres of Ovcha Kupel, Vrazhdebna and Harmanli to observe registration and asylum application procedure and discuss quality matters with SAR staff. They observed significant progress since the implementation of the first EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria (2013-2014), including the use of relevant templates and checklists and training of staff under the EASO Curriculum. Several areas requiring improvements were also discussed.



During an interactive workshop in Sofia on the 7th of July, SAR caseworkers and legal advisors came up with ways to reinforce their quality management system, including the work of the Quality Unit, based on examples which EASO experts presented from other European Member States.

Many valuable ideas were gathered, including regular thematic meetings among the caseworkers and legal advisors of the different Reception and Registration Centres. The use of EASO practical guides within the SAR quality management system was also explored. During a final meeting between SAR management, including the Quality Unit, and the EASO team, next steps for the implementation of proposed recommendations were agreed. SAR will continue its work on enhancing quality management in the second half of 2015 with the on-going support of EASO and Member State experts.

EASO and Cyprus sign agreement to continue EASO support to Cyprus until February 2016

EASO and Cyprus signed an amendment of the EASO Support Plan which provides for further tailor-made support to Cyprus until 29 February 2016. Besides continuing the implementation of the initial support measures, new activities on statistics, age assessment, guardianship, training and Dublin III procedures have been added.

Following a request by Cyprus to further improve and enhance the Cypriot asylum and reception system, the EASO Executive Director decided to continue the support to Cyprus by providing expertise from EASO and the EU Member States up to the end of February 2016.

The request for further support was motivated by the will to ensure sustainability of the positive results which have already been achieved within the context of the support measures implemented from July 2014 until June 2015, so as to adequately address current and future challenges. There is a need for supporting the training of staff, setting up an effective guardianship system for unaccompanied minors in need of international protection, providing expertise on developing an asylum data collection system and managing the implementation of Dublin III procedures.

EASO is coordinating special support teams in Cyprus and works closely together with the Cypriot authorities, UNHCR and other stakeholders.

Quick Links

Amendment No 1 of the EASO Special Support Plan to Cyprus (2015): https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-SPECIAL-SUPPORT-PLAN-TO-CYPRUS_July_2015-without-signatures.pdf

EASO Special Support Plan to Cyprus (2014): <https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EASO-CY-OP.pdf>

Background

On 26 May 2014, Cyprus requested EASO for support to improve the asylum and reception system in specific areas (e.g. data collection and analytical capacity, international protection, screening and identifying persons with special needs, age assessment and reception/open accommodation). Based on the situation in Cyprus, the EASO Executive Director decided on 5 June 2014 to render technical and operational support via the joint expertise of EASO and Member States until 1 July 2015. Following a request made by the Cypriot authorities, EASO agreed on 1 July 2015 to extend the implementation period of the Special Support Plan and to amend certain activities and add specific measures, accommodating the needs of the Cypriot authorities involved in the asylum procedure.

EASO carries out two activities under the ENPI Project with Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco

During the month of August 2015, two activities will be carried out within the ENPI project involving Jordanian authorities.

On 19-20 August 2015, a total of 30 participants from the Jordanian Governorates and from the Ministry of Interior will participate in a thematic seminar on International protection, EU acquis and the Geneva Convention held at the Dead Sea in Jordan. The EU Ambassador to Jordan will open the seminar, which will be delivered by two Belgian experts from the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL) and from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (CGRA).

During the week 24-28 August, an EASO certified trainer from Jordan will participate in a preparatory meeting with an EASO certified trainer from the Netherlands. The two trainers are about to start the first EASO training delivered by a Third Country National (TCN). The module they will deliver together is on *Exclusion* and it will target participants from Jordanian authorities dealing with refugee matters. The online phase will start on 1 September 2015 and the face-to-face session will be held during the last week of September 2015 in Jordan. The preparatory meeting held in Utrecht on 26-27 August 2015. A Dutch trainer will provide the Jordanian trainer with the opportunity to get acquainted with the task ahead and to get key insights on how to manage an online training phase from an experienced colleague. They will also use this opportunity to plan their work and coordinate their input during the online phase.

COI Seminar on Iran

On 16 and 17 June, EASO organised a meeting for the Members of the COI Specialist Network on Iran. It was the second meeting since the Network was established in May 2014. The meeting had two main purposes: to discuss the level of cooperation within the network, including an update on recent information needs, new and upcoming national products, as well as possible future joint activities; and to have in-depth discussions on specific topics relevant for the international protection status determination procedures. A number of presentations were delivered on different topics. These included: The political climate in Iran; Internet freedom in Iran and on how the state tries to curtail it; Gendered aspects of Iran's laws and legal framework with the emphasis on recent events and changes relevant to family law and women's rights and status in Iran. The involvement of external speakers and the active participation of Network members resulted in another fruitful seminar on COI-specific issues.

EASO Vacancies

EASO has recently published the following vacancies:

Open Calls		
Reference Number	Title	Closing Date
EASO/2015/CA/005	Communications Assistant (FG III)	4 September 2015
EASO/2015/TA/009	Senior Programme Manager (AD 7) (4 posts)	14 September 2015

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