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Operational and technical assistance

A key area of work for the EUAA is to provide operational and technical assistance to Member States with the implementation of their obligations under CEAS. This can be done at the request of a Member State or on the Agency's own initiative with the agreement of the Member State when asylum or reception systems are subject to disproportionate pressure. Following a request by a Member State, the EUAA in consultation with authorities of the Member State and other relevant stakeholders undertakes a needs assessment to define the assistance measures that will be implemented. These measures and the means to implement them are detailed in an operational plan, which is binding on the Agency, the Member State requesting the assistance and all participating Member States. Assistance typically comprises the provision of equipment and support personnel and the implementation of activities to enhance asylum and reception capacity.

The EUAA Asylum and Reception Operational Response Catalogue provides a non-binding framework that aims to increase awareness among Member States on the different types of operational support offered by the EUAA. First introduced in 2022, the catalogue played a key role throughout 2023 in enhancing the preparedness of the Agency to meet the needs of Member States.

Overall, the EUAA provided operational support to 13 EU Member States in 2023. It successfully amended or extended six operational plans (with Austria, Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Romania) and established two new operational plans (with Bulgaria and Lithuania). Throughout 2023, the Agency assisted Member States in a range of areas, depending on the specific measures in each plan, which may include:

- the provision of hardware and equipment to national asylum and reception authorities;
- increasing the capacity and quality of processing applications for international protection;
- increasing capacity and quality of services in national reception systems;
- supporting the functioning of the Dublin procedure;
- supporting the processing of applications at second instance, including through research and analysis;
- improving information management;
- supporting vulnerability assessments and enhancing protection for unaccompanied minors;
- providing information to applicants in the context of asylum and reception; and

- assisting with voluntary relocations.

The Agency was also instrumental in implementing the 10-point plan launched by the European Commission in September 2023 to provide immediate assistance to Italy in the context of increased arrivals in Lampedusa.

Across most countries receiving operational support, a key pillar of assistance has focused on capacity-building through EUAA training modules, focused on existing needs in each country.

The deployment of experts was coordinated by the Agency through a dedicated operational deployment system, also used to deploy experts from the newly established asylum reserve pool. To enhance quality and optimise procedures across operations, the Agency established a platform to facilitate the exchange of good practices and experiences in operations and worked on the development or revision of more than 40 operational tools, including standard operating procedures, working instructions, templates, methodological guidance, reports and leaflets.

In 2023, the EUAA continued to lead the Resettlement and Humanitarian Admissions Network, which brings together national authorities of resettling EU+ countries to facilitate operational cooperation and coordination. The Agency also supported resettlement efforts from Türkiye through its Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) based in Istanbul. In 2023, the RSF offered assistance to Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia in the implementation of their resettlement missions. The devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February 2023 had a significant impact on the work of key stakeholders, including UNHCR and the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, thus reducing capacity to organise resettlement missions.

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