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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 in the implementation of its obligations under CEAS, at the request of a Member State -or on its own initiative with the agreement of the Member State- where its asylum or reception system is 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, which informs the joint definition of assistance measures to 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.

Over the past years, the number of countries seeking the Agency's operational support has increased significantly. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the mass inflow of persons seeking protection in Europe created new needs for the Agency's support, especially in the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive. In such a volatile and unpredictable landscape, the ability to quickly mobilise resources and expertise was of utmost importance. To this end, in 2022, the Agency created a unit to coordinate first response and preparedness plans for the provision of predictable, effective, efficient and streamlined support. The Agency also produced an EUAA Asylum and Reception Operational Response Catalogue, which presents the different types of operational support provided by the EUAA. The catalogue serves, together with needs assessments, as a foundation for the design of operational plans.

Additionally, actions were taken to improve the coordination and deployment of experts supporting operational plans, as well as toward the implementation of the asylum reserve pool, as foreseen in the EUAA Regulation. This enables the Agency to have a reserve of experts ready for deployment in emergency situations.

In 2022, the EUAA provided operational support to a record number of 14 EU Member States (see Box 2), with new operating plans signed with Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, the Netherlands and Slovenia. Following the implementation of these plans in 2022, amendments for the continuation and expansion of activities in 2023 were signed with Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. An extension of the existing operational plan was signed with Czechia, while a

new operational plan for Romania was agreed for 2023. In addition, following requests by the European Commission, support has been provided in Moldova with information provision in the context of the Voluntary Transfer Programme, which aims to facilitate the transfer of persons displaced from Ukraine from Moldova to pledging Member States.

Upon signing an operational plan, Asylum Support Teams – comprised of EUAA personnel, Member State experts and other experts not employed by the Agency – are deployed on the ground to provide direct support. Throughout 2022, the Agency assisted Member States in a range of areas, depending on the specific measures included in each plan. This may include the provision of hardware/equipment to national asylum and reception authorities; increasing the capacity and quality of processing applications for international protection; increasing the capacity and quality of services in national reception systems; supporting the functioning of the Dublin procedure; supporting the processing of applications at second instance; 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. On this last point, following the solidarity declaration in June 2022, the EUAA started supporting the Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism by facilitating relocation activities.

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

The EUAA continued to manage the Resettlement and Humanitarian Admissions Network by organising steering group and thematic meetings and meetings of the Expert Platform on Safe Pathways to Afghans. The Resettlement Support Facility in Istanbul continued to support resettlement operations by EU countries and served as a platform to exchange knowledge and expertise. The Agency also delivered training and released operational tools on resettlement.

Box 2. List of operating plans between the EUAA and Members States, 2022		
Austria flag	Austria	Operational Plan 2022-2023 agreed by the EUAA and Austria
Belgium	Belgium	Operating Plan 2022, agreed by EUAA and Belgium
flag of bulgaria	Bulgaria	Operational Plan 2022 agreed by the EUAA and Bulgaria
Cyprus	Cyprus	Operational Plan 2022-2024 agreed by the EUAA and Cyprus
czechia flag	Czechia	Operational Plan 2022 agreed by the EUAA and Czechia
Greece	Greece	Operating Plan 2022-2024 agreed by the EUAA and Greece
Italy	Italy	Operating Plan 2022-2024 agreed by EASO and Italy
Latvia	Latvia	Operating Plan 2022, agreed by EASO and Latvia
Lithuania	Lithuania	Operating Plan 2022 agreed by EASO and Lithuania
Malta	Malta	Operational Plan 2022-2024 agreed by the EUAA and Malta

Box 2. List of operating plans between the EUAA and Members States, 2022		
flag of the Netherlands	The Netherlands	Operational Plan 2022-2023 agreed by the EUAA and the Netherlands
Romania	Romania	Operational Plan 2023 agreed by the EUAA and Romania
small slovenia flag	Slovenia	Operational Plan 2022 agreed by the EUAA and the Republic of Slovenia
Spain	Spain	Operational Plan 2022-2023 agreed by the EUAA and Spain

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