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# 3.4. Cooperation with third countries

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Cooperation with third countries

As the European centre of expertise on asylum, the EUAA plays an important role in strengthening CEAS by working with third countries. The overarching rationale of this work is that a stable and functioning CEAS is contingent not only on improving legislation and procedures within Europe, but also on enhancing capacity in asylum and reception systems of third countries.

In view of the Agency's new mandate and geopolitical developments in the field of asylum, in March 2023, the Management Board of the EUAA adopted a revised external cooperation strategy. The strategy sets the overall direction for the Agency's future work in the external dimension of CEAS, recalibrating the vision, principles and strategic objectives of its external actions and outlining a renewed approach to third-country support, as well as to resettlement and humanitarian admissions. In developing and implementing activities with third countries, the EUAA cooperates with a range of stakeholders, including EU+ countries, the European Commission, the EEAS and JHA agencies.

The EUAA's support to third countries takes place through bilateral roadmaps for cooperation and EU-funded regional programmes, such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. Roadmaps for bilateral cooperation in 2022 were implemented with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

In 2022, the Agency further developed practical cooperation among EU+ countries on external dimension activities, including by organising meetings of the Third Country Cooperation Network and working group meetings on cooperation with the Western Balkans, Türkiye and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The EUAA continued to develop specific knowledge management tools, such as the third-country support platform, which is a virtual space that facilitates cooperation and information-exchange among members of the Third Country Cooperation Network.

With the adoption of the 2022-2023 roadmap for cooperation, the EUAA entered into its fourth consecutive partnership with the Presidency for Migration Management (PMM), the Turkish competent authority on asylum and reception. Throughout 2022, in the framework of the roadmap, a number of participating EU+ countries worked closely with the EUAA to build the PMM's institutional capacity, and by extension, to promote positive outcomes for refugees in

Türkiye. The focus was on persons with special needs and on interventions to ensure that the PMM is better placed to manage fluctuating migration movements.

Partnerships with MENA countries were further calibrated to increase knowledge and enhance capacities in the areas of asylum and reception. The Agency also continued the implementation of the EUAA-Egypt Roadmap.

At the regional level, the EUAA successfully delivered activities involving all North African countries and Niger, thereby laying the basis for the creation of a practitioners' network, including relevant stakeholders, such as UNHCR and the IOM. Activities focused on issues involving vulnerable groups and offered the opportunity to participating countries to share knowledge on the functioning of their respective asylum systems and to identify needs and interests for the joint design of future regional activities.

The Agency worked closer with authorities in the Western Balkans to improve knowledge and capacities to manage fluctuating migration movements and to develop their asylum and reception systems in a protection-sensitive manner, including for persons with special needs. Regional training on interviewing techniques and interviewing vulnerable persons were coupled with on-the-job coaching on core asylum procedures in Albania, Kosovo,[vii]North Macedonia and Montenegro.

The EUAA provided train-the-trainer modules, supported the revision of asylum legislation in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and assisted with reinforcing the COI unit in Serbia. The Agency responded to the needs generated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine through structured information exchanges on temporary protection and supported contingency plans in Montenegro.

- [vii]This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 on the situation relating to Kosovo and the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

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