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Consultative forum and civil society organisations

Civil society organisations bring unique expertise and knowledge to asylum and reception-related discussions. The Agency's Consultative Forum, initially established in 2011 as part of EASO, is the main channel for dialogue and cooperation with civil society organisations working in asylum at the local, European and international levels.

The cooperation takes place through meetings, electronic consultations on key EUAA documents, and participation in EUAA activities, including training, workshops, activities related to vulnerable groups and more.

2022 was a transitional year, as a main priority was to establish and operationalise the revised Consultative Forum, as foreseen in the EUAA Regulation. Being a part of the Agency's administrative and management structure, the reinforced Consultative Forum exercises its tasks independently and advises the Executive Director and the Management Board on asylum-related matters, in accordance with the Agency's specific needs in priority areas.

For its composition, the regulation provides that FRA, Frontex, UNHCR, relevant civil society organisations and competent bodies active in the field of asylum policy are invited to become members of the Consultative Forum. Apart from the usual modalities of engagement, such as meetings and consultations, the regulation foresees the creation of thematic or geographically-focused consultation groups within the forum.

As part of its work, the Consultative Forum should be consulted on the development of the European Asylum Curriculum; the preparation, adoption and implementation of the Agency's Fundamental Rights Strategy and Code of Conduct; and the setting up of a complaints mechanism in the event of violations of fundamental rights by the Agency's Asylum Support Teams. Thus, there is an increasing focus of the forum's work on fundamental rights related to asylum and, to this end, it works closely with the Agency's Fundamental Rights Officer *(see Section 3.6)*.

To effect these changes, in June 2022, the Consultative Forum was reconstituted and a call for expressions of interest in becoming a member was launched, with more than 100 organisations becoming members in the first few months after the call. Since November 2022, the forum has been chaired by one of the member organisations, directly elected by other forum members. Additionally, two thematic consultation groups were established: one on country of origin information and one dedicated to vulnerable groups in the context of asylum.

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