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To provide evidence-based information to a range of audiences, including policymakers, the EUAA collects, processes, synthesises and analyses information on specific topics, latest developments, emerging topics and forecasting in the field of asylum.

COI and country guidance

The well-established Country of Origin (COI) Report Methodology was updated in February 2023. Based on this, the Agency produced 10 COI reports in 2023 in close collaboration with Member States. COI was produced timely, in particular to monitor the situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine. A COI guide was also developed on interviewing sources in the context of COI research.

The Agency continued to support national COI networks, facilitated information-exchanges including through 15 Country Specialist Networks, built capacity and further generated knowledge in the area of COI, while more than 1,000 responses were provided to individual requests for Medical COI (MedCOI).

To enhance convergence in EU+ decision-making practices, country guidance was produced on Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia. The Agency also provided a platform for in-depth discussions on a joint assessment of the protection needs of applicants from the Russian Federation.

Following the roadmap for convergence of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU,1146 the EUAA conducted a pilot study to analyse decision-making practices on asylum claims and the origin of differences in protection rates between Member States, in particular with regard to countries of origin for which guidance notes have been developed by the Agency. This was a comprehensive and innovative study that delved into some pivotal questions concerning CEAS.

The study found that the variations in recognition rates resulted from the complex interplay of multiple interconnected factors, such as differences in national systems and decision-making practices which are influenced by national policies, guidance and jurisprudence. The study also highlighted that the EUAA's products and activities help to reach convergence in practices and it proposed practical actions to promote further convergence.

In 2023, the EUAA also carried out an in-depth evaluation of the use and impact of its country information and guidance products. The study, which was awarded to a consortium led by Ramboll Management Consulting, specifically considered EUAA COI reports and country guidance documents which were published between 2018 and 2022. The evaluation relied on mixed methods, combining desk research, an online survey with 423 respondents from EU+ countries, fieldwork interviews in 10 countries, and horizontal interviews with members of the COI and country guidance networks, representatives from third countries, and international organisations. The findings and recommendations were validated with stakeholders during workshops in October 2023.

The study found that both the EUAA's COI and country guidance products are widely used, the former primarily by case officers and the latter mostly by policymakers. Dissemination of these products was seen to be effective by network members and increasingly diversified in their form and target audiences. The added-value of the EUAA's products compared to national sources is their authoritativeness, the consistent use of a rigorous methodology and the level of harmonisation. The study provided recommendations to further increase, monitor and evaluate the use and impact of EUAA's products over time.

Information and analysis of developments in asylum

The EUAA continued to manage and update several databases which capture national developments in asylum and reception systems in EU+ countries, in addition to court cases related to asylum. Information was included daily into the Information and Documentation System (IDS) on CEAS, which serves as a central source of information for policymakers in EU+ countries.

Throughout 2023 consultations were held with key stakeholders on the transition into a public version of IDS to cater to information needs of multiple audiences. Its jurisprudential counterpart, the publicly-available EUAA Case Law Database, covers case law related to the implementation of CEAS issued by national courts, the CJEU and the ECtHR. In 2023, there were more than 3,000 registered cases. In addition to regular quarterly publications on case law, a thematic report was published in 2023, analysing jurisprudence related to LGBTIQ applicants.

The EUAA continued updating and expanding the public platform, Who is Who in International Protection in the EU+, adding components on civil society organisations operating in the area of asylum and an overview of the role of UNHCR in EU+ countries. Through interactive visualisations, the platform presents key stakeholders and their roles in a range of areas in asylum and reception systems across EU+ countries.

Data analysis and research

In line with the European Council Conclusions of February 2023, the EUAA played a pivotal role in fostering common situational awareness on the state of asylum and reception systems in EU+ countries. Through the Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS), the EUAA continued to manage the exchange of a standardised set of indicators which quantify the asylum and reception situation in EU+ countries.

Work continued on early warning and forecasting to better understand the root causes of migration and support the planning of suitable policy and operational responses. In March 2024, the EUAA, the OECD and Gradus Research released a joint report analysing the experiences and aspirations of forcibly displaced Ukrainians. The 'Voices in Europe' report relies on 1,500 testimonies from the Survey of Arriving Migrants-Ukraine and delves beyond statistics to explore the experiences and diverse needs of individuals displaced by the war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Agency's strategic analysis products, including the latest trends, provide national authorities and relevant EU institutions a situational overview of asylum across Europe.

Advancing quality standards

To maximise the multiplying effect of expertise-sharing, the EUAA continued fostering practical cooperation and the exchange of best practices among EU+ countries on asylum processes, reception, vulnerability, courts and tribunals, and quality management. It supported the practical implementation of CEAS through the development of common practical guides and tools, guidelines and operational standards. In total, 23 practical guides and tools were developed or updated in 2023 in the areas of qualification for international protection, evidence and risk assessment, evidence and credibility assessment, cooperation with investigative and prosecution authorities in the area of exclusion, Dublin transfers, victims of torture, psychoeducation, guardianship and substance use response.

The EUAA actively engaged with experts from national authorities, international and civil society organisations throughout the year. The Agency facilitated structured interactions with the CJEU and judicial associations, for over 1,000 courts and tribunal members, who actively shared their insights across the entire spectrum of international protection law.

The Strategy on Vulnerability, adopted by the Agency in January 2024, defines the overarching framework for the EUAA to provide support to EU+ countries in the area of vulnerability and aims to equip asylum and reception practitioners with a clear understanding of how to operationalise the concept of vulnerability in all aspects of CEAS. The Agency also adopted the Strategy on Digital Innovation which offers a framework to enhance the effectiveness of CEAS by supporting EU+ countries in the digital transformation of asylum processes. In cooperation with Frontex, the Agency also launched an initiative to support contingency planning in reception, asylum and border management for Western Balkan countries.

- 1146Council of the European Union. (2023, June 23). Presidency communication, "*For a roadmap for the convergence of asylum practices in the field of asylum*", JAI 952, ASILE 77, MIGR 204.

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