

Update on the cooperation with the Western Balkan partners at regional level and national level

The Western Balkan partner countries regularly cooperate and exchange practices regionally and with EU+ countries on specific asylum and reception related areas.

Within this context, in October 2020, EASO, in cooperation with UNICEF, Sweden, Germany, UNHCR and IOM, organised a **regional workshop on age assessment**.

To develop Western Balkan partners' capacities in the area of asylum, EASO and EU+ trainers are providing support in order to roll out a series of **Regional train the trainers' sessions**. Following the **Interview Techniques** training module delivered in September 2020, in November, a virtual face-to-face session on **Interviewing Vulnerable Persons** (including children) was organised.

What is the importance of these training modules?

They foster the development of skills, knowledge and competencies needed for the early identification and subsequent interviewing of vulnerable persons.

Regional train the trainers' sessions of the Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module

To further develop Western Balkan partners' capacities to identify and address the requirements of asylum applicants with special needs, EASO is equipping national authorities with a series of **EASO practical tools and guides**, translated into the relevant languages needed.

EASO and the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) are working together on developing regional training sessions.

In this regard, on 8 November, a **workshop on training methodology for the MARRI Regional centre** was organised.

EASO and MARRI intend to pilot joint cooperation, which would bring forward additional opportunities for regionally organised training and would enable a more effective use of the trainers in the region who have successfully completed the EASO Train-the-Trainers sessions.

EASO aims to provide tailored support that addresses the specific needs at national level, through the development and implementation of EASO Roadmaps. The overall objective of the

Roadmaps is to enhance the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in line with the Common European Asylum System and EU Member States' practices.

Following the successful implementation of first-generation Roadmaps, EASO has now concluded the technical design of **second-generation Roadmaps** with several countries in the region. Upon the request from both Montenegro and Kosovo, EASO is also exploring options for the development of advanced cooperation frameworks.

The Roadmaps identify priority areas where EASO support to the national authorities has an added value and, and where possible, contributes towards the **accession process** with a direct impact on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the European Commissions' Progress Reports, in particular those aimed at meeting the criteria under Chapter 24: Justice, Freedom and Security.

The EASO Western Balkan team is also engaged in future programming efforts and discussing national and regional priorities for future cooperation with the Western Balkan authorities, European Commission services, EU Delegations as well as external partners.

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