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3.7 Cooperation with other agencies and organisations

Throughout 2019, EASO ramped up its efforts to work closely with partner organisations. To better align common projects and share information systematically, EASO has established working arrangements with several key partners, with the overarching goal of building sustainable practices in countries to protect persons in need.

EASO cooperates closely with EU institutions, since the agency's work is also framed by policy and legislation at the EU level. This includes the European Commission, particularly the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home) and the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG Near), as well as the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. EASO also cooperates with the European External Action Service (EEAS), including EU delegations in third countries by briefing them on work undertaken in the country. In 2019, EASO contributed to the work of the Migration Policy Team in the EU Delegation to Turkey by deploying a resettlement expert. EASO's Brussels Liaison Office contributes by ensuring close coordination.

To foster a holistic approach in tackling issues of migration and asylum, coordinate action and avoid duplication of efforts, EASO has concluded formal partnerships with the following:

European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) to share data, analyses and risk assessments.

European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex): In July 2019, EASO and Frontex signed a renewed Cooperation Plan for the period 2019-2021 with the aim of strengthening the management of asylum, migration and border crossings. The plan details joint work in operational cooperation, information and analysis, capacity building and horizontal cooperation. The agencies are working together to implement Migration Management Support Teams and deliver a Common Situational Picture on irregular migration. Through this collaboration, both agencies assist in the hotspots and provide information on migratory flows to allow Member States to prepare better. EASO has also deployed a Liaison Officer to Frontex to further facilitate cooperation.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA): Collaborative work ranges from networking with courts and tribunals to working on protection for vulnerable groups.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM): Signed in July 2019, the working arrangement sets the framework for collaboration in the areas of early warning, preparedness and contingency planning, reception conditions, returns to countries of origin, resettlement, voluntary relocation and special support to vulnerable groups.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Mutual cooperation aims to foster the promotion of international and EU laws and covers many aspects of asylum, including, resettlement; identification and protection of vulnerable groups; country of origin information and country guidance; sharing best practices, trends and analysis; and third country support.

In addition, EASO forms part of the EU Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) network and works regularly in close cooperation with the other eight JHA network agencies managing security, justice, fundamental rights and gender equality. The JHA network of agencies includes EASO, Frontex, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Europol, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), eu-LISA and Eurojust.

Box 3.9 EASO Consultative Forum

The EASO Consultative Forum was established to open dialogue and share information with civil society organisations working in asylum at local, national, European and international levels.

Civil society organisations attend EASO meetings, provide feedback on EASO reports and participate in EASO training, workshops and activities related to vulnerable groups. The input from NGOs, academia and research institutions provides EASO with a diverse perspective from the ground, highlighting the human aspect of policies and procedures.

In 2019, the Consultative Forum organised two meetings: a thematic meeting on gender-related persecution and the plenary meeting on initial steps in the asylum procedure. In addition, a series of workshops were organised during the year, providing a platform to contribute to EASO's work, and selected civil society organisations participated in reference groups on training and practical tools.

EASO works closely with the European Migration Network (EMN), for example, by coordinating query systems to avoid duplication of efforts, aligning and expanding the EMN Glossary and co-

hosting workshops on key themes in the area of asylum for experts from EU+ countries.

Overall, EASO provided timely resources to countries in managing their asylum systems during 2019. It worked together with partners to address new challenges in the field and to systematise protection solutions. Meanwhile EASO also underwent staff restructuring to better align work programmes to the needs in the field and implemented more rigorous internal checks to address any gaps in governance. In September 2019, the European Parliament recognised the outcomes of EASO's work for having implemented 79 % of its ambitious Governance Action Plan in just one year. EASO will continue its efforts to provide expertise on asylum and respond to the needs on the ground.

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