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Conclusions

The 2018 edition of the EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union reflects an effort to offer, as in previous years, a concise, yet comprehensive overview of qualitative and quantitative information on key developments and trends in the area of international protection and the functioning of the Common European Asylum System. The Report also indicates key activities and initiatives undertaken by EASO in the course of the year, promoting the consistent implementation of the CEAS in EU+ countries.

Reflecting the advances in EASO's work on collecting and analysing information, the Report integrates insights from a wide range of sources, allowing for an in-depth presentation and analysis of major developments related to international protection in the EU+ and the context within which these occur. To this end, an effort was made to reflect the diversity of perspectives, expressed by a variety of actors in regards to pressing asylum-related issues, which at times may be of a constructively critical nature.

In a year that saw a further decrease in the overall number of applications for international protection in the EU+ by 10 %, a look into the national level reveals a remarkable variation among EU+ countries in regards to the number of applications received, with some reporting an increase while others a decrease. This prompted EU+ countries to adjust and reorganise their reception systems accordingly, in response to the particular trends they experienced at national level. With the stock of pending cases recording only a moderate decrease of 6 % in EU+ countries, the number of cases pending at first instance was almost equal to the number of cases pending at second instance. Accordingly, pressure on national asylum systems in the course of 2018 was equally distributed between asylum authorities and judicial bodies, with the latter having more opportunities to deliver clarifying decisions and, thus, having an increasing impact on the workings of national asylum systems.

Overall, in 2018, EU+ countries continued their efforts toward enhancing registration and processing of applications both in terms of quality and in terms of timing. In an effort to reach a clearer understanding of protection needs –or lack thereof– and identify possible procedural needs of individual applicants at the earliest possible time, a number of EU+ countries introduced changes in the first steps of the asylum procedure with the aim of eliciting as much information from applicants as possible. This information is used to inform decisions concerning subsequent steps in the asylum procedure or facilitate the return of individuals not in need of protection.

At the EU level, with the negotiations on the CEAS reform package recording only moderate progress, the key principles of solidarity and shared responsibility kept informing the discussion on how to move from ad hoc responses to durable solutions and how to operationalise effective assistance to Member States under pressure –the proposal for temporary arrangements disembarkation, first reception, registration and relocation, has been a step to this end.

The above, coupled with insights offered throughout the Report, indicate that possible developments in the near future in the area of international protection will include:



An emphasis on swiftly registering and processing applications at the earliest possible time –with the use of new technologies- in order to delineate between individuals in need of protection and those that will be directed toward return.



Adaptability of national reception systems in response to application trends, and an increase in the provision of specialised, tailor-made services to accommodate different needs.



An increased role of courts and tribunal in shaping asylum policy, in light of the large volume of decisions issued in second or higher instance



In the absence of major progress in the CEAS reform package, emphasis may be still placed in the expression of solidarity at an operational level through temporary, but systematic, solutions. In this context, a central place may be reserved for EU Agencies to play an increased operational role.

EASO will continue its work, within its mandate, to delivering on its core tasks, including: operational support, capacity building and training, facilitating practical cooperation among EU+ countries, collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative information, including information on countries of origin, and contributing to the implementation of the external dimension of the EU migration policy.

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