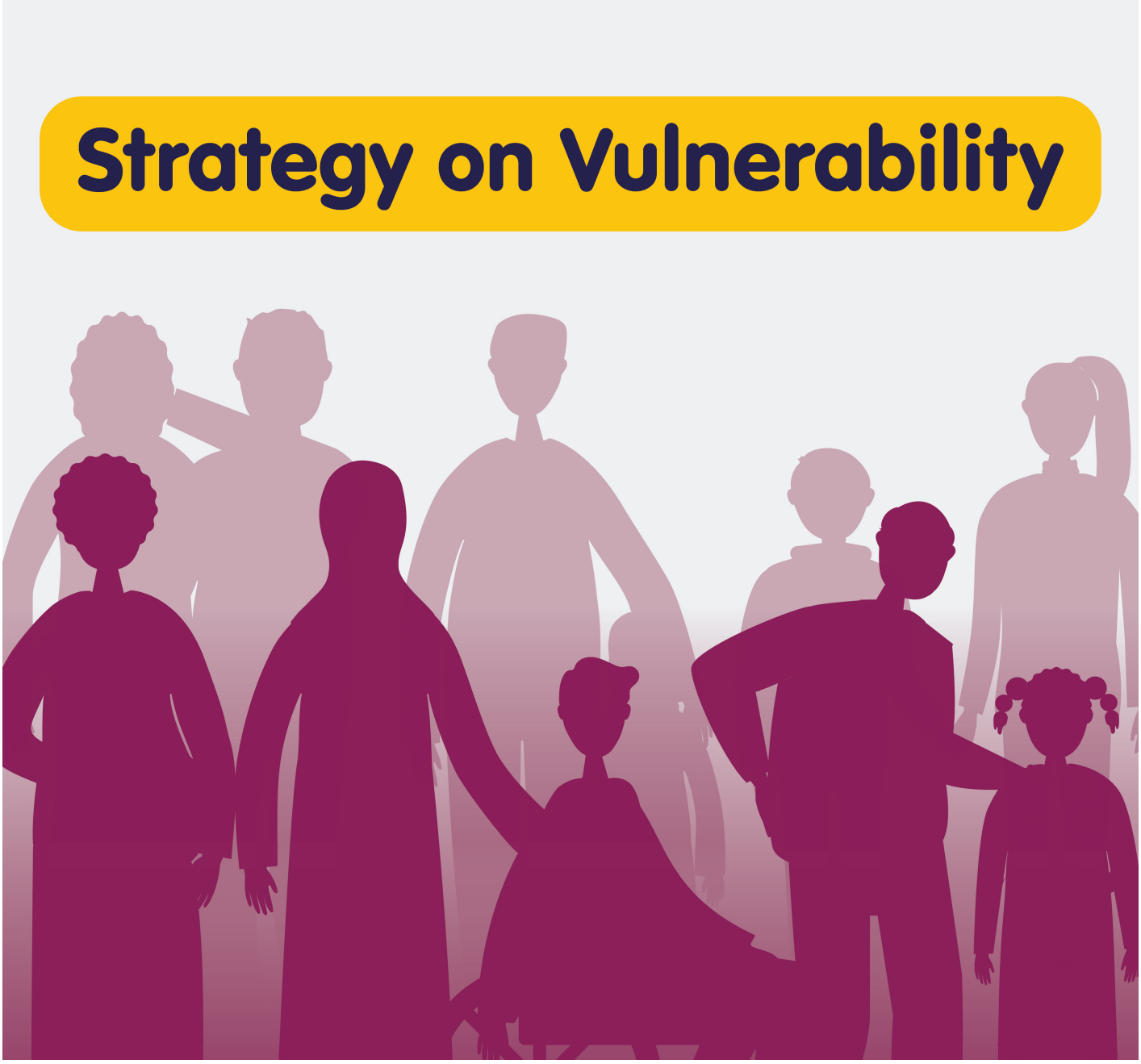
News Published: 16 January 2024

A newly harmonised approach to vulnerability in the EU's protection systems



The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has adopted a new Strategy on Vulnerability. With vulnerability assessments becoming an important part of the Agency's operational and technical support to EU+ countries; the Strategy provides an overarching framework for our work in this field, and aims to equip asylum and reception practitioners with a clear understanding of how to operationalise the concept of vulnerability – in all aspects of the Common European Asylum System.

With increasing numbers of people seeking international protection in the EU+, and as the Agency continues to provide operational support to 12 Member States with their asylum, reception, and temporary protection systems; the EUAA has been requested to provide additional guidance on handling vulnerability-related issues during the asylum process. As a result, the need for a common approach in the support provided by the Agency to ensure convergence and the respect for the EU standards on identifying, assessing, and responding to the special needs of asylum applicants[1]1 has become apparent.

The recently adopted EUAA Strategy on Vulnerability sets out the Agency's mission to **mainstream the approach to vulnerability** throughout its different areas of work; so that staff, deployed personnel, and EU+ national authorities can successfully address the needs and challenges related to this area. This will, in turn, enable the vision of **efficient, equitable asylum and reception systems** – for all asylum applicants, including those in **particularly vulnerable situations**.

The new strategy establishes four goals that will help ensure this vision becomes a reality:

- **Harmonisation of practices** in responding to the special needs of applicants in a vulnerable situation, through cooperation and exchange of information among EU+ countries;
- **Identification and needs assessment**, on an ongoing basis, and of all applicants in a vulnerable situation, with adequate and timely support being provided throughout the entire asylum and reception pathways.
- **Dissemination of necessary knowledge and skills** so that asylum and reception practitioners can take responsibility for, and have the autonomy to deal with applicants in a vulnerable situation;
- **Active participation** of all applicants in a vulnerable situation, throughout their asylum and reception pathway.

Background

This EUAA Strategy on Vulnerability presents a holistic approach to operationalising vulnerability in all aspects of our work, including Operational Support, Training, and Asylum Expertise. It was developed by consulting the EUAA Fundamental Rights Officer and Member States, the European Commission, the UNHCR and Civil Society; prior to its adoption by the Management Board on 28 November 2023

Download the EUAA Strategy on Vulnerability.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Union Agency for Asylum's Press Office at the following email addresses:

- Press Office: press@euaa.europa.eu
- Andrew McKinlay, Press Officer: andrew.mckinlay@euaa.europa.eu
- Anis Cassar, Spokesperson: anis.cassar@euaa.europa.eu

[1]

Directive 2013/32/EU (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2013/32) and **Directive 2013/33/EU** (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2013/33) provide that Member States must conduct an individual assessment of whether an asylum applicant has special reception needs and/or requires special procedural guarantees.

© European Union Agency for Asylum 2026 | Email: info@euaa.europa.eu