

EASO COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2020 Update

March 2020



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(Annex II - Crisis Communication Strategy revised as of July 2024)

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First version: May 2014
Updated: March 2020
Revised: July 2024

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* Unless revised, all references to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in this Strategy will apply to the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) if/when the proposed Regulation is approved and takes effect.

1. Introduction and summary: this update

Effectively communicating clear and understandable information on the activities of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is an obligation for a publicly funded Agency.

The EASO Communication Strategy defines EASO's goals in the field of communications and how to achieve them. It identifies the main target audiences, the key messages EASO aims to disseminate, and the means by which the Agency will deliver them.

This Communication Strategy **revises and updates** EASO's [first strategy](#), which was published in May 2014. In doing so, this update does not seek to replace the original, as many of the elements thereof remain relevant today.

This update seeks to align the Communication activities of EASO with developments in the Agency, as well as those within the EU's broader policy narrative on migration and asylum over the past five years. It also adjusts for lessons learned within EASO's communications team through its activities in the past few years, as well as feedback received from various sources. The EASO Communication Strategy is implemented by the Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector, under the management of the Spokesperson and Head of Unit/Sector. The ultimate guidance and instructions as to its implementation, including through EASO's annual Communication Plans, lie with the Executive Director of the Agency.

This Communication Strategy **aims** to (i) **increase general recognition of EASO**, its value, what it does, as well as (and partly in order to accomplish the former) (ii) make the perception of the Agency **more relevant** to socio-policy discourse amongst the European 'general population' as well as policy makers.

In doing so, the two most-significant shifts between the 2014 EASO Communication Strategy and this update concern the target audience and the focal content of the Agency's communication activities. In terms of **target audience**, the primary focus of EASO's communication activities shifts away from asylum practitioners and specialised audiences, to the **broader general public** and EU/Member State **political and policy stakeholders**.

In order to make EASO more relevant to these target audiences, EASO's communications will prioritise communication content which is of a **more policy-based (less-specialised) nature**, and which is therefore of **relevance and interest to a broad audience**. This transition has, in effect, already begun being implemented since 2017, and has yielded dramatic results in terms of the reach of the Agency's communications. Notably, EASO's communication content will prioritise (See 'Communication principles, content and roles' for more details):

- **Asylum trends/data;**
- **EASO operations;**
- **Linkages between socio-policy issues and asylum.**

EASO will, however, continue to promote the Agency's specialised work, as has been the case to-date. In terms of **delivery**, EASO's communications activities are consolidated into the following pillars:

- **Press and media;**
- **Social media, notably through audio-visual content;**
- **Campaigns (delivered through different tools).**

The Communication Strategy can be amended and revised at any point. It is intended to be a live and flexible document that can be adapted, either through a revision of the document itself, but more regularly through the annual Communications Plans, which provide the framework for the Strategy's implementation.



2. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis below, which is specific to EASO's communications, is based on findings of the internal evaluation of EASO conducted by the European Commission in advance of the 2014 EASO Communication Strategy and on the Communication team's own findings. It also accounts for lessons learned in the implementation of the original Communication Strategy, feedback from EASO's Communication Multipliers meetings, as well as regular interaction with stakeholders.

- EASO's mandate is closely associated with migration, which is of high public interest;
- Reputation of the Agency has recovered and improved following the negative press on EASO's internal controls, procurement and finances;
- Agency's financial resources have increased, allowing for sufficient funding of communication activities;
- EASO's operational support has strengthened, giving the Agency a more visible presence;
- Strong appetite amongst the media and policy makers for asylum data;
- In-house expertise on Common European Asylum System (CEAS).
- Specialised content and mandate make it difficult to reach out to general public;
- Geographical position of EASO makes it challenging to easily meet with media and press;
- Despite recuperation in EASO's reputation, the Agency image continues to be vulnerable due to the legacy of past negative media attention;
- Misunderstanding of EASO's mandate;
- EASO often overshadowed by more 'politically relevant' Agencies;
- Perception amongst some NGO's that EASO is not fully transparent;



3. Objectives

EASO's overall communication objective is to efficiently and effectively communicate with its target audience, as well as other stakeholders. EASO communication efforts shall aim at the following:

- **Raising the public profile** of the Agency as playing a **valuable** role. As a publicly-funded Agency, awareness of EASO and what added value it brings is a cornerstone of any communication activity;
- **Make EASO relevant** beyond audiences that work directly within the field of asylum and/or migration. EASO, and through it the CEAS/EU's asylum policies and practices, should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as **interlinked with international developments**, such as security, environmental events and political unrest;
- **Strengthen the credibility** of the Agency by communicating in a consistent, efficient and transparent manner. EASO will aim to ensure that information that is disseminated is both accurate as well as easy to understand. **The unnecessary use of technical terminology is to be avoided**, but can be tailored according to the specific audience of an activity;
- **Reacting swiftly to questions from the media**. In the fast-paced news cycle, **EASO should be seen as a dependable partner for journalists**. All questions should be answered within 8 business hours (24 hours), with the exception of very sensitive or complicated questions;
- **Managing expectations**. The Agency's role must be fully explained. Any unjustified expectations and misconceptions must be avoided, such as that the Agency will solve all the asylum issues of the Member States or that it has an executive role;
- **Keeping EASO staff members informed**. With regard to internal communications, EASO staff members shall be well informed on the activities and mission of the Agency so that they can act as EASO ambassadors. EASO staff members shall also be kept up-to-date on developments in the areas of asylum and migration in the EU.

4. Communication principles, content and roles

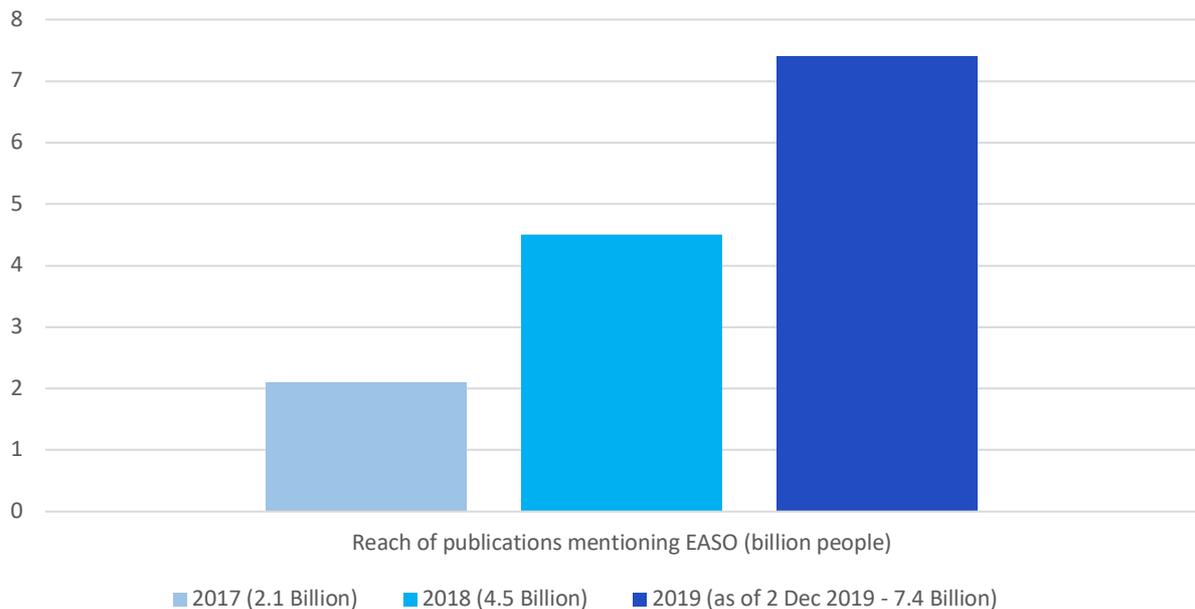
EASO's approach to its communication activities will be grounded on the following principles:

- **Transparency** – EASO will be as open as possible in all its communication, including when responding to inquiries. While some data and information that the Agency processes is restricted for a variety of reasons, given EASO's mandate this only represents a limited proportion. The *de facto* position is that full disclosure should be given. When not possible, such a refusal should be fully justified on factual grounds.
- **Speed** – In order to be a valuable partner of the press and media – which work to tight deadlines – EASO will ensure that it is timely and quick with both its proactive and reactive communication. Queries will be responded to within 24 hours (8 business hours) on workdays, with the exception of highly sensitive or complicated queries. In such cases, the requestor will be informed of potential delays.
- **Humility and trust** – The Agency will be open when mistakes are made and recognise such cases in an open and proactive manner. In all interactions directly with journalists, EASO will adopt a 'partnership' attitude, while all communication language will strive to portray the Agency as reliable and trustworthy.
- **Engagement** – EASO will engage consistently and proactively with its audiences, while balancing against overloading or diluting the receptivity of its communications. This principal applies in particular to social media outreach, where timing and regularity will be carefully considered in all activities, as well as press releases/campaigns, where too much/frequent material could easily become counterproductive. EASO will also ensure a two-way approach to communication, welcoming and reacting to comments and feedback. This is particularly the case on social media. Audio-visual material will be prioritised.
- **Clarity and simplicity** – Messages and content must be as simple and easy to understand as possible. Bearing in mind the broad target audience in this strategy, and without being inaccurate or misleading, EASO is to avoid technical terminology, unnecessary legalistic clarification and academic/legislative-styled linguistics. This *de facto* principle, however, is amendable to the specific target audience, wherefore a technical Agency such as EASO also addresses specialised audiences in its communication.
- **Relevance** – EASO communication should always ensure that the audience understands why the message is of relevance to them, as well as what the implication of the message is.

Content and roles

In order to make EASO more relevant to its target audiences, EASO's communication will prioritise communication content which is of a more political (less-specialised) nature, and which is therefore of **relevance and interest to a broad audience**. This transition has, in effect, already begun being implemented since 2017, and has yielded dramatic results in terms of the reach of the Agency's communications, both on social media engagement as well as the reach of press articles mentioning EASO. In the latter case, the trend can be seen in the table hereunder:

EASO in the Press



Notably, EASO's communication content will prioritise:

- **Asylum trends/data** – This content focus has proven particularly successful in the past two years, as it is a highly 'sellable' product of EASO and of particular interest to the press and policy makers. It has accounted for a significant portion of the increased communication reach of EASO. Continued regular and varied data communication output will continue, with a focus on tailoring to broader geo-political debates. The Communication and Public Relations Unit / Sector will work closely with the Information and Asylum Knowledge Centre (C3) in order to overcome restrictions to public dissemination posed by EPS (Early warning and Preparedness System) rules.
- **EASO Operations** – EASO's operational support is the most visible element of the Agency's support activities. It also provides a rare and varied opportunity for visuals that are a very important element in producing appealing communication products in the contemporary media environment.
- **Linkages between socio-policy issues and asylum** – In order to make EASO's work more relevant to a broader audience, EASO will strive to deploy communication products relating to major regional and/or international developments. Examples could include environmental events, political destabilisation, EU policy or legislative developments and armed conflict, all of which can be related to the work of EASO (Situational Awareness Unit, Country of Origin Information (COI), operations, third country support, etc.), the CEAS and asylum more broadly.

Despite the above three focal pillars, **EASO will continue to promote all of the Agency's specialised work**, as has been the case to-date.

All public external and internal (excluding business-related) communication in EASO is under the responsibility of the Communication and Public Relations Unit / Sector, acting under the management of the Spokesperson(s) and/or Head(s) of Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector.

EASO publications and management of its communication tools are also under the responsibility of the Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector. Any publication that is to be made publicly available outside of the Agency should be approved beforehand. This excludes restricted and regular reports that utilise standardised formats and templates (See also 'Pre-press, publications and translations').

In order to ensure a **centralised approach to communication**, and building on an existing committee focussed on social media, a committee will be established with focal points in each of EASO's Centres of business, and Units where necessary, in order to ensure coordination and planning. This includes focal points in EASO's main operational areas. The **Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector must approve all communication which is to be made externally** (not to practitioners or direct stakeholders) and should be made aware of/included in any such activities from an early stage.

5. Main messages and narrative

Main messages comprise the pertinent pieces of information the Agency conveys through its communication activities. EASO's messages are limited in number, concise, simple, easy to remember and relevant¹:

- EASO's mandate is to support Member States in **applying** the package of EU laws which governs international protection, known as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS);
- The Agency works to help Member States ensure **fast and efficient** asylum procedures;
- The ultimate aim of EASO's work is to reach a situation where the asylum practices in all EU+ Member States are **harmonised**;
- To do this, EASO has progressed from an initial emphasis on **technical support** to an equal focus on the deployment of **operational and capacity building** assistance;
- EASO is a **resource** for Member States in the field of international protection, with the ability to provide practical, legal, technical, advisory and operational assistance in many formats;
- The Agency **does not replace** national asylum authorities, which are entirely responsible for national asylum cases.

Narrative format:

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is an Agency of the EU that is mandated with supporting Member States in applying the package of EU laws that governs asylum and international protection.

This package, which is known as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), establishes the legally-binding rules and procedures that Member States must follow in order to guarantee that the rights of applicants for international protection are fully respected. It also ensures that those who do not qualify for international protection are identified and can be returned to their country of origin.

EASO therefore acts as a **resource** for Member States in the field of international protection, with the ability to provide practical, legal, technical, advisory and operational assistance in many formats. The Agency **does not replace** the national asylum authorities, which are entirely responsible for national asylum cases.

The ultimate aim of EASO's work is to reach a situation where the asylum practices in all EU+ Member States are **harmonised**, meaning that an application of an individual in any of the EU+ Member States will always receive the same result. Similarly, an applicant will always go through a similar procedure with similar conditions, no matter which Member State s/he applies in.

In order to achieve this goal, EASO assists Member States through three pillars of support: (a) **Technical**; (b) **Operational**; and (c) **Training**.

[Elaboration when needed:]

¹ The main messages and narrative will need to be updated if/when the proposal for the EUAA is adopted.

- 1) **Technical Support:** *EASO has provided an ever-expanding range of technical support measures, including publishing Country of Origin and Guidance materials; collecting, analysing and distributing asylum data; developing practical tools to achieve common standards and high-quality processes; advising on legal obligations, mapping practices in different Member States; and facilitating networks of expertise in different areas of asylum.*
- 2) **Operational Support:** *The Agency has gradually expanded its operational assistance to Member States, both in terms of the levels of assistance as well as the size of its operations. Operations now form a core part of the Agency's activities. EASO currently has over [900] personnel deployed in [88] locations in [Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta], accounting for around [40%] of the Agency's budget. EASO's operations help relieve the pressures on Member States' authorities, improve quality standards and contribute to more resilient national systems in the long-term.*

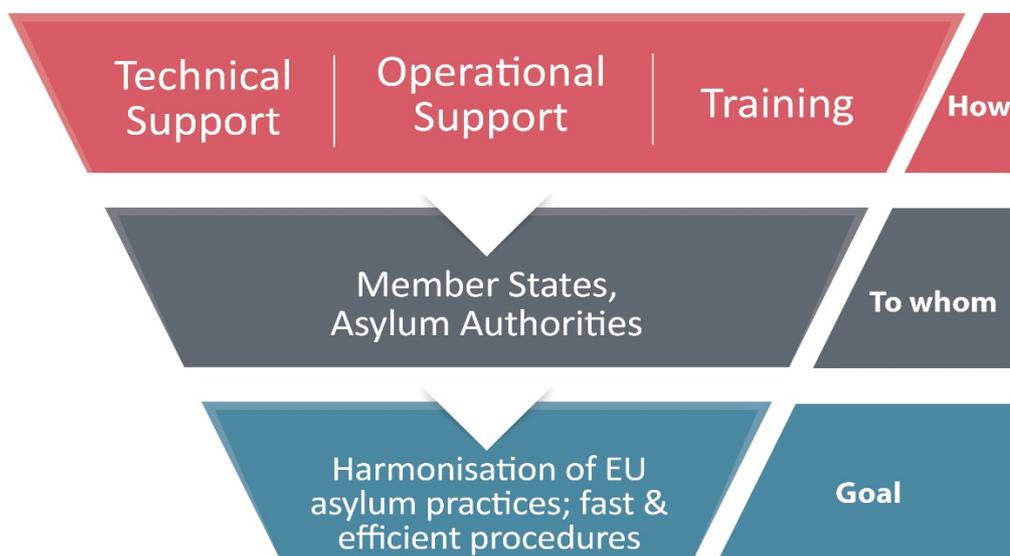
The Agency also works outside the EU by helping provide access for persons in need of international protection through Resettlement. Additionally, EASO supports non-EU countries in establishing and/or strengthening their asylum and reception systems.

- 3) **Training:** *The training of national asylum officials ensures a common high-level application of the CEAS standards. EASO both develops modules in various specific fields of EU asylum law and practices, and delivers the training to national officials as well as national instructors (train-the-trainer). EASO's training curriculum currently has [24] modules, which have been delivered to over [33,500] participants.*

EASO is awaiting the approval of a draft Regulation that would enhance the mandate of the Agency. The proposal establishes the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and mandates new roles that will give the Agency the ability to be more effective in ensuring the proper implementation of the CEAS. In particular, it would task the EUAA to monitor the national application of CEAS obligations and provide recommendations on how to make improvements when needed, while also establishing an operational Asylum Reserve Pool that could be deployed very quickly to support Member States when requested.



European Asylum
Support Office



6. Target audience

The target audience of EASO's communication is tiered into two categories as follow:

Tier 1 (Primary focus):

- EU+/Member State general public;
- 'Brussels bubble': EU policy makers and legislators working on asylum and migration.

Tier 2 (Secondary focus):

- Member State policy makers and legislators working on asylum and migration;
- Non-EU+ general public;
- Academia and Civil Society;
- Practitioners.

This revised strategy re-directs EASO's communication away from practitioners and specialised audiences, towards the public. This is not only in order to fulfil EASO's obligation as a publicly-funded Agency, but also to (a) support the European Commission's political efforts to counter erroneous information about migration and asylum; and (b) to build broader recognition of EASO itself.

To support this, the Agency will also reassign more resources to the so-called 'Brussels bubble' in order to raise awareness by EU policy makers of EASO's activities and keep them abreast of developments.

7. Annual communication planning, tools and activities

The EASO Communication Strategy shall be implemented through annual communication plans, to be adopted at the beginning of each year. The aim of this document is to summarise EASO's main communication actions for the year ahead. The communication plan, which also **reports on the activities and results of the previous year**, sets out the communication goals for the year ahead; provides the budget and human resources; and highlights the main internal and external communication actions for the year ahead. The communication plans also include targets and deliverables.

The objectives outlined in the annual plans should be **SMART**: *Specific*, to make it clear what needs to be achieved; *Measurable*, to verify that the objective is achieved; *Achievable* and *Realistic* i.e. make sure we have the necessary resources, time, etc.; and *Timely*, to set a deadline by which to achieve the objective.

Tools and activities

One of the main objectives of this Communication Strategy is to raise awareness of EASO and what it does, meaning that brand recognition is a priority. Achieving this also facilitates the achievement of the other objectives (see above).

As such, EASO will focus on high-return communications, as also identified through its target audience (general public), which has a higher probability of permeating both national audiences. The primary tools are:

- Mass media (major networks, news wires and major national publications);
- Communication campaigns;
- Social media;
- Audio-visual content;
- Events.

In order to refocus on these platforms, EASO shall **de-prioritise low-return activities** that absorb a high degree of resources with little benefit. These include the External Newsletter (downgraded from monthly to quarterly), local-level community events, academic engagement, and a transformation of the 'EASO Info Day' from targeting asylum officials to targeting media and the public in key locations.

High-return activities shall be stepped-up instead, including:

- Regular press conferences and/or briefings in Brussels;
- Press briefings (both on- and off-the-record) in EASO's primary operational areas, particularly Greece. These will be organised in cooperation with the national authorities and the European Commission;
- Press visits to EASO Operations;
- Organising appearances of the Executive Director on major TV news outlets;
- Custom made audio-visual products communicating the CEAS and EASO in a simple and positive manner. These will primarily be intended for delivery through social media, but television delivery can also be explored in the long-term, depending on costs;
- Op-Eds;
- Press interviews;
- Communication campaigns (considered to be both a tool and activity). Such campaigns can vary from a small short-term campaign relating to the publication of a press release, to a

medium-scale/term campaign promoting an event or the release of a publication, to major campaigns that are tailor made or which support EU policies.

Medium and Major Campaigns will include thorough research and planning, as well as evaluations (see also 'Campaigns').

8. Press and media relation

The press and media is an important communication channel. Good media relations shall be used to multiply the effects of EASO's messages, and increase the visibility of the Agency as a key information provider and as a voice in current affairs debates.

EASO shall adopt a proactive media approach, keep regular contact with journalists and distribute its press releases to a large number of journalists. In this context, amongst other things, EASO shall develop and maintain a core network of journalists across Europe. Where relevant, press releases shall be translated into other languages. When releasing a press release, EASO communication staff members shall follow up with selected journalists. All press releases shall be published on the EASO website and, when relevant, on social media. Press conferences shall be organised for selected reports and events.

In particular, and in order to focus on its aforementioned target audiences, EASO shall place particular emphasis on (a) the major **international news wires**; (b) major **national and European news outlets**; and (c) **major EU news outlets**.

Moreover, in reacting to requests from the media, EASO aims to reply to questions and requests from the press within one working day, unless the topic is particularly sensitive or complicated. The dedicated email address (press@easo.europa.eu) shall be actively promoted and utilised for this purpose.

EASO shall monitor its press coverage on a daily basis and shall keep record of media mentions. Key performance indicators shall include number of articles, the reach of such reporting, the relevance of media mentioning EASO, and number of questions being received from the press. A press monitoring report shall be issued at the beginning of each year and will be included within the annual communications plan.

External Communication Rules

In order to ensure a cohesive narrative, and to avoid conflicting messages, only the Executive Director and the Spokesperson(s)/Head of Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector are authorised to speak to journalists or media. Senior Management is also pre-identified to be in a position to speak to the press, such as by giving press conferences or interviews when needed, although prior approval from the Executive Director needs to be sought via the Spokesperson(s). Prior authorisation must also be obtained prior to any other EASO staff member speaking to, or communicating on, business related matters with the press, civil society, the public and academia.

In EASO's operations, the heads of the respective operations are also pre-identified to speak to journalists and civil society, or to sub-delegate when needed. Prior approval from the Executive Director, and consultation with the Spokesperson(s), is also required in such cases.

The EASO External Communication Rules can be found in **Annex I**.

9. Social media and online communications

Together with press and traditional media, social media is the second focal tool for EASO's communication. The interactive nature of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media channels provides a wide array of opportunities to connect and interact with audiences that could not have been reached with traditional media. The different targeting of EASO's three primary social media channels allows for the Agency to tailor different audiences, as follows:

- Facebook = General public;
- Twitter = Press, policy makers, politicians, EU/national officials, civil society, academia;
- LinkedIn = Practitioners, professionals, potential recruits.

Aware that frequency and dynamism are key components of a successful social media presence, EASO will ensure regularity in its updating/posting, and will also use tact in the timing of such posts in order to maximise the absorption of the messages contained within them.

New interactive tools will be explored, and the two-way dialogue on social media (notably Facebook Messenger) will be sustained when queries are received. In this regard, EASO communications staff will aim at ensuring a timely reply to queries.

EASO communications staff members shall manage EASO's presence in the social media. Updates on the EASO website can be posted on social media, thereby reinforcing the website's visibility and viewership. All relevant updates will be posted on social media, including – but not limited to – news and events, articles about EASO in the press, EASO's newsletters and publications, press releases, multimedia material such as photo reports and videos, and new EASO products. EASO communication staff members shall also act as moderators by providing and verifying content. The actual selection of material shall be based upon the profiles of the primary users of the different channels. EASO will ensure that content published on social media is always relevant to the targeted audience, consistent with the main objectives of its communication strategy and suitable to the specific features of the channel.

Social media content shall almost always (except when not possible) make use of **audio-visual content** to make the content appealing, engaging, and easy to understand. This includes videos, slides, GIFs, photos and infographics.

Citizens and stakeholders are free to subscribe, share content, comment and ask questions related to EASO. In the event of comments of a racist, pornographic, aggressive or insulting nature, comments in capitals or including offensive pictures/GIFs, or comments containing information unrelated to EASO and its activities, EASO shall remove the comments. If a person repeats comments that can be described as above, the person can be banned from EASO's social media. EASO has no obligation to communicate about the abovementioned actions, which are at the sole discretion of EASO's Communications team.

The Twitter account of the Executive Director, as the ambassador of the Agency, shall be managed by the Communications team in direct close collaboration with him/her.

If a crisis occurs on social media, the guidelines contained in the EASO Crisis Communication Strategy shall be followed (see Annex II).

Since social media provides the opportunity to connect with people and show the Agency's expertise, EASO will also encourage staff to play an active part in this process and support the Agency's presence on social media.

Social media channels change regularly as well as their popularity. To keep up with this, EASO will constantly review how its audiences are present on social media, including the channels they use as well as their expectations and needs.

Because of the dynamic nature of social media, EASO's activities on social media shall be evaluated regularly. Whereas the main objective of EASO's presence in social media is to increase EASO's presence and visibility on the internet, specific objectives and benchmarks shall be set to ensure the implementation of EASO's social media activities. These may include:

- Number of subscribers;
- Number of times content is viewed, liked and shared;
- Number of users reached with any content.

Most social media provide extensive statistics on the behaviour of the subscribers and viewers, covering the quantitative indicators. The qualitative indicators are assessed by EASO within relevant timeframes.

See **Annex III** for detailed social media rules.

Website

EASO's corporate website serves as the main information hub on EASO's activities. The website displays relevant information pertaining to the Agency. This includes EASO's operational, asylum support and training activities, news and events, publications, updates on governance, vacancy notices and procurement tenders. It also includes information about EASO's cooperation with civil society and is interlinked with all EASO's specialised portals and tools.

Jointly with ICT, the current website will be assessed and updated from its format/layout at the time of writing in order to make it easier to navigate and more modern in look. The website's management, including updating and content management, will be coordinated by the EASO Webmaster, together with EASO's ICT Unit.

The distinction of responsibilities will be as follows:

- **Communications and Public Relations Unit/Sector (Webmaster):** All content management and publications, as well as secondary infrastructure updates;
- **ICT Unit:** Permissions, maintenance and top-level infrastructure.

As the number of visitors and users on the corporate website is increasing, EASO will further explore options to introduce multilingual content in several EU and (possibly) third country languages. Finally, EASO will fully exploit the audio-visual opportunities provided at the EASO website ensuring a broader online presence.

In addition to the medium-term update, once the EUAA Regulation approved, the website will be revamped (on top of medium-term planned revamp) with a new visual identity.

10. Campaigns

Dedicated communication campaigns are a useful tool in order to deploy a broad variety of communication activities in a **coordinated manner**. Such campaigns ensure that the various communication activities are all targeted properly and improve absorption as such activities reinforce each other and ensure a cohesive approach. Campaigns, as a broad term, can vary in duration, format and implementation, based on the specific goal and context of the campaign.

Building on the experience gained over the past few years in both small and major campaigns, EASO will utilise integrated communication campaigns in various formats. Mini-campaigns will be a standard when launching press material on important developments.

All campaigns, no matter what size and duration (with the exception of very small campaigns to support press releases), must include a plan which outlines – as a minimum – the:

- Goals;
- Main messages;
- Target audiences;
- Communication tools to be utilised;
- Ownership and roles;
- Timeline;
- Evaluation.

Long-term campaigns should also include an evaluation report. When resources permit, EASO will also explore major multi-annual campaigns with specific financial commitments, dedicated human resources, in-depth planning, coordination with the European Commission and thorough evaluation.

All campaigns must be in line with this Communication Strategy.

11. Internal communication

Internal communication in EASO is a strategic management tool that ensures that staff members are duly informed about internal news and developments in a timely manner, and feel part of a common corporate endeavour. This enables the organisation to act efficiently and to live up to its values within the EU framework. Internal communication also involves cross-Centre/Department communication in a constantly growing Agency.

EASO considers internal communications as a strategic management tool that contributes to an efficient communication process, satisfactory level of transparency and EASO's good reputation, and plays an important role in staff members' motivation and engagement. Successful internal communication is dependent on both the support of Management and the efforts of all EASO staff. While partly the responsibility of Heads of Centers/Units/Sectors, the growing number of staff members necessitates a coordinated corporate approach, which is managed by the Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector.

The core objectives of EASO's internal communication are:

- Keeping and strengthening the already established corporate culture of sharing information with all staff on news, priorities, achievements, on-going projects at EASO;
- Helping staff understand how their individual work contributes to the bigger goals of the Agency.

EASO's internal communication shall be guided by the following **aims and principles**:

- **Efficiency:** staff members can be more effective and efficient if they can easily find information that is relevant for their work, and if they share information, through established communication channels, and keep on improving collaboration within the organisation.
- **Transparency:** is the key to building trust by an open two-way communication, particularly important in times of change or crisis. Internal communication supports management in delivering timely, coherent and clear communication within the Agency.
- **Reputation:** effective internal communication facilitates consistency in the organisation's messages, thus strengthening its reputation and supporting the development of the organisational culture. The way internal communication is managed, goes hand-by-hand with the objectives of the External Communication Strategy so that staff members retain a common rhetoric.
- **Motivation and engagement:** internal communication also concerns the level of staff members' motivation, belonging and commitment. Such concerns are addressed in collaboration with EASO's Management, HR Unit, and EASO Staff Committee. Internal communications can help to empower staff members and support the establishment of an effective organisational culture.

Internal communication activities shall include: internal daily press extracts; brown bag events (informal events of a more social nature); information sessions; core business briefings, implementation and management of the Intranet system; regular dissemination of online bulletins and internal newsletters; distribution of any relevant information via the appropriate communication channels; the display of pertinent information on internal screens, and also other activities aiming at

strengthening the team spirit and staff integration. All such activities shall apply equally to staff located in EASO's operations and/or liaison offices, including by ensuring that remote access is available for all relevant meetings.

Internal communication shall be coordinated by an Internal Communications Officer, supported by other EASO communications staff members with the assistance of HR Unit, ICT Unit, Logistics and Administration Department. EASO's internal communication activities shall be monitored via both quantitative and qualitative data. An **annual internal communication plan** shall be annexed to the annual communication plan.

12. Pre-press, publications and translations

EASO communication staff members coordinate all EASO publications and translations and have a role in ensuring that EASO publications are prepared on time and are of the highest quality.

While EASO strives to reduce its use of paper by focussing primarily on electronic distribution methods, professional-level print publications continue to be both useful to stakeholders, as well as an important visibility component for the Agency. Utilising its own professional-grade printing suite, the Agency strives to produce and print as much of its own publications as possible in-house in order to reduce costs and achieve a quick turnaround time. The Agency will strive to achieve as close to a 100% rate of in-house printing as possible, while also working 'on demand' in order to avoid waste and unnecessary costs.

All pre-press design work of EASO's external publications must either be carried out by the Graphic Designer within the communications team, or be approved/finalised by said individual, in order to ensure consistency with the visual identity and a professional appearance. The official **visual identity** remains the *de-facto* standard for all external publications. However, due to (a) the outdated nature of the visual identity combined with the ongoing delay in the approval of the EUAA Regulation; and (b) the *ad hoc* nature of certain EASO publications which do not necessarily conform to established templates within the visual identity, certain products may adopt 'stand-alone' designs which must, nevertheless, be inspired by the corporate identity. Certain high-level events may also – when warranted – adopt a unique corporate identity to identify and promote said event (and relevant publications and materials).

EASO shall implement a workflow system in order to organise the various stages of the pre-press and printing process, from request to delivery. This shall include specific IT software which is user-friendly for all stakeholders.

As an EU Agency, EASO requires the translation of numerous products into both official EU+ languages, as well as specific third country languages. In light of the exponential growth in such products, while the communications team shall maintain overall oversight, the management of translations shall be decentralised in order to ensure efficiency.

13. Crisis communication

A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the Agency and which may threaten the safety of EASO premises and staff members of the Agency. In order to address such situations, EASO has a Crisis Communications Strategy in place. The aim of the Crisis Communications Strategy is to outline a generic plan for crisis communication. Challenges to the Agency's reputation may come in various forms. Nevertheless, if a crisis is handled correctly, the damage can be minimised. The EASO Crisis Communication Strategy aims at achieving the following objectives:

- Ensure safety of EASO staff members;
- Minimise any potential damage to the Agency;
- Communicate in a clear, cohesive and trustful way (tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth);
- Reach out to the public;
- Streamline communication messages and processes;
- Be readily accessible to the media and reply to questions within the shortest possible time frames;
- Keep all relevant parties duly informed.

The Crisis Communication Strategy sets out the principles and the steps to be followed in order to manage communications in the event of a crisis.

In a crisis situation, only the Executive Director and/or the Spokesperson(s) are permitted to comment publicly.

The EASO Crisis Communication Strategy can be found in **Annex II**.

14. Visual identity

EASO communication efforts shall aim at effective branding and reputation management. It is pertinent to create trust and a positive reputation amongst different stakeholders. Our brand defines the way we want to be perceived by our stakeholders, the media and the general public, but also impacts internal communications.

In this context, in 2013, EASO adopted its [visual identity](#). The visual identity fosters engagement and a sense of unity among EASO staff members. Its correct adoption is crucial in order to communicate in a consistent way with external partners and strengthen EASO's public recognition.

EASO communication staff members shall act as EASO 'brand managers' and pro-actively promote and encourage the right use of the tools contained in its visual identity in all its internal and external activities. EASO communication staff members will organise internal seminars to remind EASO staff members of the correct use of the visual identity. EASO will also inform newcomers of the visual identity.

A single brand shall be utilised in all external communication. Tailored branding shall be discouraged, except when justified (such as major events).

In light of the outdated nature of EASO's current brand – and the ongoing delay with the approval of the proposed EUAA Regulation – the Agency will gradually update certain current templates in order to provide a more contemporary and modern look to its corporate identity.

Once the EUAA Regulation is approved, EASO's entire visual identity will be changed and modernised.

15. Evaluation and amendments

The implementation of the Communication Strategy, through the annual Communication Plans, will be continuously monitored and evaluated.

The aim of the evaluation is to verify that the work addresses the needs of the key target groups and relevant messages are delivered in an efficient and timely manner. The evaluation shall include both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Using this evaluation, the communication strategy shall be updated at least once every four years, as is the case with this update.

The approval of the pending proposal to transform EASO into the EUAA will most likely require an additional updating of this Strategy.

Regular evaluation activities shall include:

- Daily media monitoring (keeping account of EASO's exposure in the media);
- An annual communication plan to outline the year's main communication activities and goals;
- Continuous monitoring of analytical tools measuring the reach of EASO's communications in the press;
- Maintaining a press archive for long-term media analysis;
- Output analysis (ensuring timely replies to press questions, amount of yearly press releases issued and interviews with the press);
- User surveys (for example, for the website, meetings and newsletters);
- Quarterly and annual analyses of EASO's website and social media traffic;
- Following up on any recommendations of the Internal Audit Service;
- In the long term, a qualitative study of the image of the Agency and public knowledge about the Agency shall be conducted by external evaluators.

A report on the previous annual performance of the Agency in the press accounting for the above, will be included in the annual Communication Plan.

16. Human and financial resources

EASO has a specific budget reserved for communication activities, split into several budget lines. **Financial resources** shall be allocated on a yearly basis and are documented in the annual communication plan. These resources will serve to achieve EASO's communications goals and professionalise its communication tools.

In terms of **human resources**, the following 14 posts are identified as necessary in order to properly implement this strategy. This estimate is accurate at the time of writing and is subject to re-evaluation on a continuous basis:

- Head of Communication and Public Relations Unit (AD10) [Includes management of Events and Protocol Sector]
- Head of Communication and Public Relations Sector/Spokesperson (AD8)
- Spokesperson (Currently AD5/AD6)
- Press Officer/Deputy Spokesperson (AD5)
- Campaigns Officer (AST4)
- Communications Assistant (Events, Publications, Translations, Visits) (AST4)
- Administrative Assistant (AST3)
- Photographer and Videographer (AST2)
- 2x Graphic Designer and Printing Assistant (FGIII)
- Webmaster (FGIII)
- Internal Communication Officer (FGIII)
- Social Media Officer (FGIII)
- Press and Communications Assistant (FGIII)

The possibility of recruiting a Press Officer (AST4) to be based in Greece should also be considered.

ANNEXES

Annex I: EASO External Communication Rules

Contacts with the media

Due to the highly political environment in which EASO operates, the Agency adopted an external communication policy regarding contacts of its staff with the media.

Only the Executive Director and the Spokesperson(s)/Head of Communication and Public Relations Unit/Sector are authorised to speak to journalists or media. Senior Management is also pre-identified to be in a position to speak to the press, although prior approval from the Executive Director needs to be sought via the Spokesperson(s). Prior authorisation must also be obtained prior to any other EASO staff member speaking to, or communicating on, business related matters with the press, civil society, the public and academia.

In EASO's operations, the heads of the respective operations are also pre-identified to speak to journalists and civil society, or to sub-delegate when needed. Prior approval from the Executive Director, and consultation with the Spokesperson(s), is also required in such cases.

When media representatives request information or interviews directly to individual staff members, all such requests must be immediately forwarded to the EASO Spokesperson(s) who will advise accordingly. Interviews with the press by staff members must be authorised, and are generally discouraged. The Spokesperson(s) will stipulate the limitations – if any – of the interview and will brief the interviewee beforehand. The interviewer must agree to the rules and limitations beforehand.

Press questions that are received by email should be replied to within one business day, except where particularly sensitive or complicated.

(Non-press) Interview rules

EASO officials being interviewed should agree with the interviewer that all quotes should be authorised before they are published, unless the Spokesperson(s) authorise an exception.

Moreover, if the interview is being recorded, it should be made clear to the interviewer that the recording cannot be made public. These rules apply for all kinds of interviews (including interviews with academics).

Participation in conferences

It is important to keep in mind that many of the public events (such as conferences and workshops) that EASO employees take part in may be attended by journalists. Furthermore, conferences or meetings are often recorded by the organisers and made publicly available through electronic media; therefore, it is essential for the speakers to keep in mind that whatever they say may eventually be quoted.

As experts in the field of asylum, EASO staff are often invited to speak at public events, including academic events, including on an individual basis in light of professional contacts. As a general practice, such participation is encouraged, although approval must always be sought from the Spokesperson(s) or Executive Director in the case of high-level events.

As a general guideline, EASO staff are required to be diplomatic and to stick to their knowledge. Moreover, all statements should be consistent with EASO's main messages outlined in its Communication Strategy.

If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of statements planned to be made as part of discussions or presentations, staff members should get in touch with the Spokesperson(s) as soon as possible for advice.

If a question outside the staff member's field of expertise is asked or an inquiry of a political or controversial nature is made, no response should be given: the interlocutor should be told that the question is noted and that a prompt reply will be provided later on.

Rules on publications

EASO staff are not allowed to publish articles or books where EASO or asylum related activities are mentioned without prior approval of the Executive Director, or the Spokesperson(s) on his/her behalf. All such requests must be channelled through the Spokesperson(s).

Rules on public statements

EASO staff may be asked to write an article, talk at a meeting, give a lecture or may even wish to undertake academic work related to EASO or asylum related activities, not as part of their official duties, but as private individuals. EASO staff members are in a privileged position to perform these activities. However, even as a private individual, the provided information may have an effect on the overall image of the Agency.

EASO staff should therefore not undertake to write articles or publications, or make speeches or presentations about EASO, without prior approval by the Executive Director. Such requests should be channelled through the Spokesperson(s).

Rules on the use of social media

Social media is easily available to journalists and others and unguarded comments by staff might inadvertently be damaging in a number of ways. EASO staff can use social media to promote or communicate on EASO events or activities. To do so in accordance with the role they have as staff of an EU Agency, staff should state in their personal accounts that the information they share and the opinions they express reflect their personal view, and not those of EASO. They shall also avoid sharing confidential information, check the accuracy and sensitivity of what they post, and refer any questions from the media to the EASO press team.

Confidentiality

Confidential or sensitive information acquired during EASO activities shall not be publicly disclosed, including in social media or in other public platforms.

Data Protection

All communication activities must respect all applicable Data Protection rules. In particular, the portrayal of individuals in images and/or video, as well as quoting individuals, can only be carried out with written consent. EASO's Data Protection Officer should always be consulted in case of doubt.

Annex II: Crisis Communication Strategy

Aims and Objectives

A crisis is any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the Agency and which may threaten the safety of the building and staff of the Agency. The aim of this document is to outline a generic, basic crisis communication plan. Challenges to the Agency's reputation may come in various forms; nevertheless, if a crisis is handled correctly, the damage can be minimised. The Agency's Crisis Communication Plan aims at achieving the following objectives:

- Ensure safety of staff members and other personnel;
- Minimise any potential damage to the Agency;
- Communicate in a clear and trustful way (tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth);
- Reach out to the public;
- Streamline communications messages and processes;
- Be readily accessible to the media and reply to questions within the shortest possible time frames;
- Keep all relevant parties duly informed.

Crisis Communication Policy

The Crisis Communication Policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- Only the Executive Director and the Spokesperson(s), in collaboration with the Business Continuity Coordinator, are authorised to release information to, and interact with, the media or the public;
- The Executive Director may authorise other members of staff, on an *ad hoc* basis, to release information to, and interact with, the media;
- All questions from the press should be directed to the Spokesperson(s). The Spokesperson(s) will reply to such questions, within a reasonable timeframe, after consulting with the Executive Director and/or Business Continuity Coordinator;
- All replies shall be guided by the principle of proactive transparency;
- If the person interacting with the media is asked a question to which they do not know the answer, they must inform the inquirer that they will get back to them. If a question cannot be answered due to policy, the inquirer must be informed accordingly.

Crisis Communication Plan

The following steps aim to help manage communications in the event of a crisis:

1. **Pre-crisis preparations:** Relevant staff shall be duly trained to deal with a communication crisis situation. To this end, simulation exercises shall be conducted;
2. **Notification:** All notifications are to take place in line with the Decision of the Executive Director No. 102 of 22 June 2021 on the security notification and reporting protocols. The Spokesperson(s) should also be notified and kept informed on developments.

4. The receptionist and security guards will also be instructed on how to handle incoming calls, requests, and possible visits in a crisis scenario.
5. **Response Strategy:** The Business Continuity Board determines both the internal and external lines to take. Before doing so it shall assess the situation by looking into the following issues:
 - Determine the facts;
 - Devise communication actions which need to be taken;
 - Decide who needs to be involved in the response;
 - The level of public interest and how to interact with the public;
 - Potential ramifications;
 - Whether social media notification(s) are appropriate and which media shall be contacted, if any²;
 - Decide if a press release, or specific outreach to press/media, is needed;
 - Look into who of the staff and other personnel need to be informed and how they will be informed;
 - Identify which stakeholders should be informed and the relevant priorities;
 - Consider possible questions and answers, fact sheets, background notes, or any other materials, which might be needed to ensure effective delivery of the message.
6. **Lines to Take:** The Spokesperson(s) advises on the lines to take, to be used by the Communication and Public Relations Unit when in contact with external audiences. The lines to take shall be clear, factual, easy to understand and accurate. If required, the Spokesperson(s) drafts a press release and brings it to the attention of the Business Continuity Board.
7. **Internal Communication:** As soon as possible, the Communication and Public Relations Unit communicates information regarding the crisis to the staff and other personnel. If the crisis occurs at a time when they are not in the office and disseminating the information is either time sensitive or relates to their safety, the Agency contacts staff and other personnel using appropriate means. All-staff meetings can also be called in order to brief / de-brief, when required.
8. **External Communication:** If deemed necessary, a press release (or a number of press releases) may be issued. The press release is distributed to the media through normal channels and posted on the website in the press release / news section. The Spokesperson(s) remains available for clarification / questions from the press. If necessary, they will also make strategic contacts with members of the media to ensure that the message is delivered in a clear, efficient and timely manner.

² As a *de facto* policy, social media should be the preferred method to communicate in crises situations, followed by a more detailed press statement, where appropriate. Pro-actively contacting press/media is only to be done in specific or extreme cases.

The Spokesperson(s) is also responsible for the continuous and timely updating of the information released to the media. They also revise the message if necessary but should always keep with the original theme.

11. **Post Crisis Evaluation:** Once a crisis has been resolved, the Business Continuity Board discusses and evaluates management of the crisis, including communication lessons learned.

⁴ As an example, a crisis in an operational area will necessitate the Head of Operations, as well as the Head of the relevant operational sector to be directly involved.

Annex III: Guidelines for EASO's corporate social media presence

These guidelines govern the management of EASO's corporate social media channels.

1. EASO is present on social media to inform and engage with the public. The Agency uses social media channels to promote its work and activities (operations, asylum support, training, reports, latest asylum trends, job vacancies, press release, etc.) among its stakeholders and the general public. In line with best practices, all EASO social media content must include strong audio-visual elements (videos, infographics and photos), sharing relevant content from stakeholders, and constantly engaging with audiences. Social media provide EASO with the opportunity to connect with citizens in a direct and dynamic way, and to show the Agency's expertise.
2. EASO's social media presence must comply with the Rights and Obligations of Officials (Title II of the [Staff Regulations](#)) and the [European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour](#), with special regard to:
 - Lawfulness (e.g. respecting and crediting authorship);
 - Impartiality and independence (e.g. weighing opinions in a balanced manner without supporting individual politicians or political parties);
 - Fairness and courtesy (e.g. when responding to comments and questions).
3. EASO's social media presence must support the Agency's mission and corporate strategy in general, as well as the goals of its Communications Strategy. By engaging in social media, EASO shall aim to:
 - Raise the profile and awareness of the Agency;
 - Bring the Agency closer to the European citizens;
 - Reach new audiences.
4. EASO shall follow an open policy when communicating on social media. All communication on EASO's social media channels must be:
 - Clear and concise;
 - Short and simple;
 - Responsible;
 - Authentic and transparent.
5. To ensure clear corporate profile, communication on EASO's social media channels must:
 - Be consistent with the Agency's key messages and communication priorities;
 - Follow the [EU Interinstitutional Style Guide](#) and EASO's press rules;
 - Strengthen EASO's public profile, including through:
 - ✓ Using the Agency's branding and visual identity with due consideration to media-specific requirements;
 - ✓ Linking back to the Agency's other communication channels such as the website.
6. In order to engage with its audiences, content posted on EASO's social media channels shall be:
 - Sticky (positive, simple, concrete, affective); and
 - Contagious (shareable: credible, channel-specific, linked to other content e.g. by using hashtags on Twitter).

7. If EASO comes across a misrepresentation related to the Agency on its social media channels, its staff shall correct the mistake with respect to facts. Abusive or offensive content shall be removed.
8. Managing social media presence needs proper planning and coordination. EASO's communications staff shall lead and oversee the Agency's corporate social media channels, including tasks such as content prioritisation, targeting, planning and scheduling. An appropriate editorial workflow involving EASO staff across various work areas shall be established in order to coordinate a timely and balanced presence of EASO's activities on the different social media channels.
9. EASO's social media outreach shall be regularly monitored to evaluate the impact of its activities.

