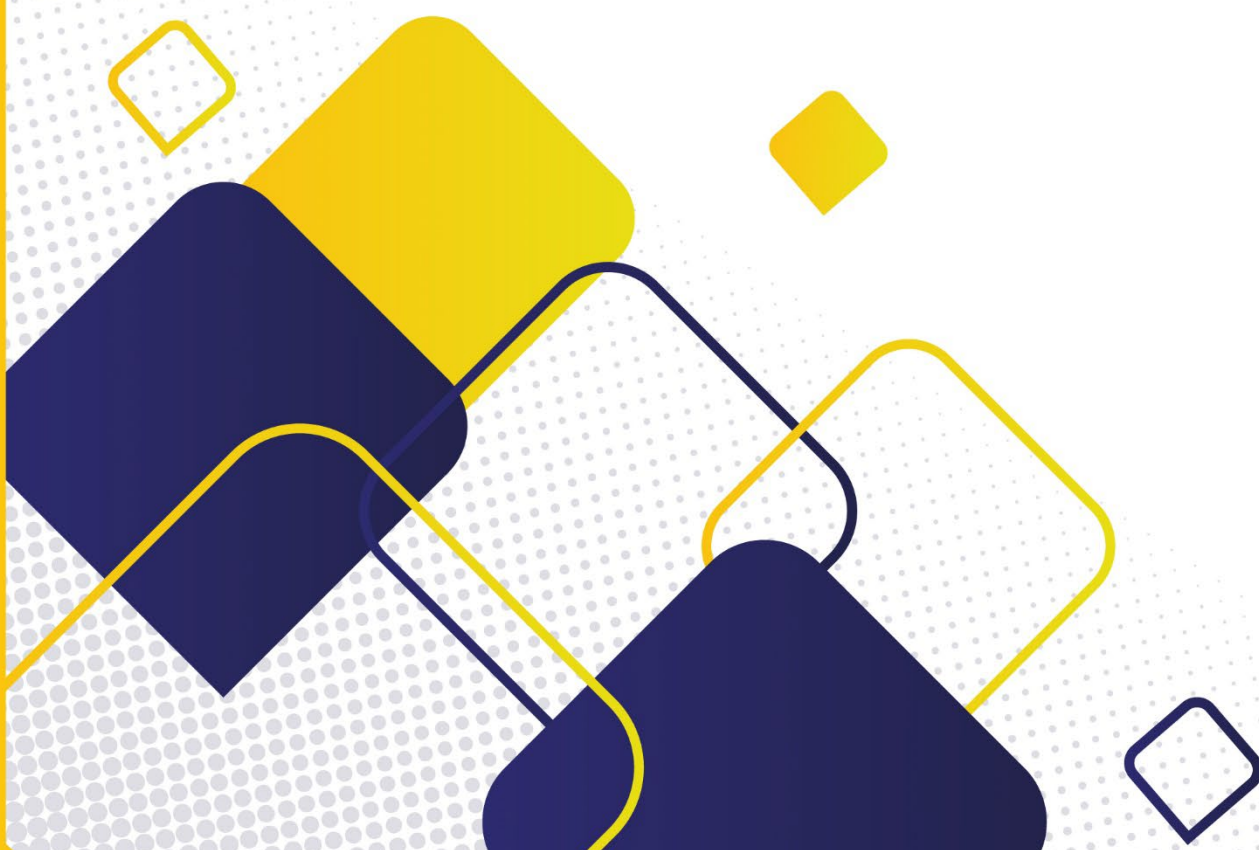


Fourth EUAA Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting

15 October 2025, Malta

Meeting Report



Fourth EUAA Consultative Forum Plenary Meeting Report

Introduction (Welcome remarks by Consultative Forum Chair and Opening Speech of the Executive Director)

Ms Ana Ciuban, Chair of the EUAA Consultative Forum (CF), welcomed the participants to the meeting and congratulated them on their engagement and continued commitment to the annual CF Plenary Meeting. The Chair highlighted the importance of having a platform such as the EUAA Consultative Forum to connect with the Agency and other civil society organisations, in order to discuss challenges and share good practices in the field of asylum. Ms Ciuban thanked the participants for their attention and introduced the EUAA Executive Director, Ms Nina Gregori, to deliver her opening speech.

Ms Nina Gregori, EUAA Executive Director, opened her speech by thanking the Consultative Forum members for attending the Plenary Meeting. Ms Gregori provided an overview of the agenda, underlining the importance of the election of the CF Chair. She outlined key figures and recent trends in the EU landscape, explained relevant policy developments - including progress in the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum - and highlighted the Agency's key achievements in 2025. The Executive Director concluded by stressing the importance of collaboration with civil society and encouraged continued engagement in thematic discussions throughout the day.

Update and exchange on the situation of asylum in the EU and the Agency's activities

Presentation from the Operational Support Centre

The Head of Operational Quality Procedures and Tool Sector, Ms Ilaria Siggia, explained the work of the Operational Support Centre in providing technical and operational assistance to Member States. At the time of the meeting, the Agency was providing support to 12 Member States and 2 operational projects (Resettlement Support Facility & Voluntary Solidarity Mechanism), with a total budget of approximately €89 million for 2025. To this purpose, around 1,300 personnel were deployed across 160 locations in the EU and Türkiye. Operational support was provided in three key areas:

1. **Frontline/Rapid Response Support** – Rapid deployment of personnel and resources in crisis situations.
2. **Structural Support** – Long-term assistance to improve asylum and reception frameworks.
3. **Relocation & Resettlement** – Facilitating voluntary relocation of asylum seekers and resettling refugees from third countries, such as Türkiye.

Ms Siggia explained that, in the delivery of technical and operational support, the EUAA collaborates with civil society organisations (CSOs) across multiple countries to enhance asylum services and provided some examples of such cooperation in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain. The Code of Conduct for asylum support team experts was revised to align with fundamental rights standards, following consultation with the Consultative Forum. Additionally, Ms Siggia also explained the Escalation Mechanism, an internal mechanism to report, assess, escalate, and record violations of fundamental rights committed by authorities of the host Member State or others acting on their behalf and that occur in the context of EUAA operational support.

Presentation from the Training and Professional Development Centre

Ms Rachelle Cortis, Head of Training and Professional Development Centre provided an update on the European Asylum Curriculum and the accreditation of the EUAA Academy as a higher education provider. This new status allows asylum and reception officials to earn internationally recognised qualifications, enhancing training credibility across EU Member States. The EUAA Academy offers 50 specialised training modules for various roles, covering topics such as vulnerability, resettlement, and asylum procedures. With the Pact on Migration and Asylum, training requirements have expanded significantly, including mandatory training for caseworkers, guardians, interpreters, and officials handling vulnerable applicants. The new legislative requirements necessitate the development of additional training modules, covering topics such as relocation, family tracing, vulnerability assessments, and screening procedures. It was highlighted that the EUAA consults the Consultative Forum during curriculum development, incorporating feedback from its members when relevant. Since 2022, a total of 30 training modules were consulted with the CF, involving 34 CF members through a total of 99 expressions of interest. Ms Cortis concluded by recalling that the Agency plans further consultations in 2026, relating to the revision of training modules to align with legislative updates in line with the goal to continue enhancing training quality and professionalisation in the asylum and reception sector.

Presentation from the Asylum Knowledge Centre

Mr Geert Knockaert, Head of the Asylum and Reception Cooperation and Guidance Unit, explained the different areas of work of the Centre related to situational awareness, Country of Origin Information (COI), as well as reception and vulnerability.

Regarding situational awareness, Mr Knockaert highlighted the Agency's role in gathering and analysing qualitative and quantitative information on the asylum situation in the EU. Particular emphasis was placed on publicly available databases and platforms, such as the [Caselaw database](#), the "[Who is Who in Asylum](#)" platform, and the [DIP](#) (Public [IDS](#)). The Consultative Forum was also consulted on the latter database (Public IDS). The Agency also outlined its quantitative data collection through the EUAA data exchange system with EU+ countries and its regular publication of [Latest Asylum Trends](#), contributing to informed public discourse and supporting the Commission-led work linked to the Annual Asylum and Migration Report.

On COI, Mr Knockaert explained that the work is structured around three main areas of activity: COI production, COI Networks, and COI operational support. Regarding COI production, the Agency produced six COI reports by mid-October 2025. Reports on Syria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan were still planned to be finalised by the end of Q4 2025. On COI Networks, a total of 13 Specialist Network meetings were implemented (covering countries such as Afghanistan,

Iran, Ukraine, and Somalia). On COI operational support, around 30 query responses and 15 COI methodology workshops were organised. Reference was also made to the useful exchange on COI between the Agency and the members of the CF thematic group on Country of Origin Information.

Finally, on asylum and reception cooperation and guidance, Mr Knockaert mentioned some of the main topics the Agency had worked on in 2025, for example a Guidance on Family Tracing, a Practical Guide on Age Assessment, and a Practical Guide on Free legal Counselling amongst others. Work would continue in 2026, such as on a Guidance on the Best Interest of the Child, a Tool for Best Interest Assessment, a Toolbox for Guardians, as well as a Guide on the Asylum Border Procedure and a Practical Guide on Solidarity amongst others. In addition, Mr Knockaert also explained the Screening Toolbox that the Agency is working on together with Frontex and Europol, to support the practical implementation of screening by national authorities. Amongst others, the Screening Toolbox includes a preliminary vulnerability check on which the CF group on Persons in a Vulnerable situation had also been consulted. At the time, the toolbox was being tested in Italy and Romania before its finalisation in the course of 2026.

Presentation from the Institutional and Horizontal Affairs Centre

Ms Alison Gatt, Head of European and International Cooperation Unit, presented three key areas of the Centre's work: the EUAA Pact Programme, the deployment of Liaison Officers to the Member States, and the Agency's activities in the external dimension. Ms Gatt outlined progress under the EUAA Pact Programme, noting that at the time 32 products were completed to support Member States in implementing the Pact, with further details presented during the dedicated afternoon session on the Pact (see below). Regarding the Liaison Officers role, CF members were informed that 8 Liaison Officers to the Member States, each covering a cluster of up to four countries, had begun their induction and would be deployed to their respective Member States from January 2026, acting as a liaison between the Agency and national authorities. Ms Gatt added that, once deployed, the Liaison Officers would also be available to engage with the CF members, where relevant. Finally, Ms Gatt explained the External Cooperation Strategy structured around two main pillars: 1) Asylum Capacity development in partner countries and 2) Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Support. The Agency's third country support covers four geographic areas of engagement, including the Western Balkan region, Türkiye, Northern Africa, and select Eastern Partnership countries. Key achievements were highlighted across regions. By way of example, Ms Gatt highlighted that, in the Western Balkans, the Agency was implementing a regional project and six bilateral roadmaps. In the last two years, the Agency delivered more than 80 capacity-development actions. Ms Gatt further noted the adoption of a fifth roadmap with Türkiye (2025–2027), the initiation of a new Regional Project for the Southern Neighbourhood (2024–2029) building on the successful implementation of the Regional Pilot Project for Northern Africa, and the endorsement of a second roadmap with Egypt (2024–2026) to ensure continued capacity-development support.

Q&A Session

Consultative Forum members raised questions on statelessness, access to EUAA training, legal counselling, EUAA operational support on reception, and external activities in Africa amongst others. Members also asked about the Escalation Mechanism and the impact of reduced US funding on UNHCR and cooperation with the EUAA.

The Agency confirmed that statelessness is a priority and is streamlined across addressed through dedicated and cross-cutting training modules and relevant practical tools. Regarding CSO's access to EUAA trainings, the Agency clarified that EUAA training modules are developed for Member State officials, although some CSOs also have access to the trainings where national authorities request such access for selected CSOs with whom they work in partnership. On legal counselling, the Agency informed that it developed a [Guide on Free Legal Counselling](#) as part of the EUAA Pact Programme which is publicly available on its website. CF members would be invited to an information session on this Guide by the end of 2025.

Regarding reception, the Agency highlighted increased operational support to MSs in the area of reception. The support provided to MSs is agreed upon in Operational Plans which are published on the Agency's website. EUAA clarified that support is provided upon a MS' request and may in the future also be a consequence from findings of monitoring. The Escalation Mechanism was further explained as an internal mechanism initiated by members of the Asylum Support Teams (i.e. CSOs cannot use the mechanism to report violations of fundamental rights to the Agency).

On external activities, the Agency reiterated that its mandate in third countries is limited to capacity building. In Africa, EUAA's support focuses on Northern African countries, in line with its External Cooperation Strategy (the Agency does not have the capacity nor the resources to provide support to all African countries). Support in the external dimension is always implemented in complementarity with partners such as UNHCR and ICMPD. Funding cuts have affected UNHCR, but cooperation with EUAA continues within the regulatory framework.

The Executive Director concluded by underlining ongoing evaluation commissioner by the European Commission on the Agency's mandate, referring to certain limitations of its current mandate in particular with regard to the external dimension. Ms Gregori also stressed the importance of continued collaboration with the CF.

Exchange with the Fundamental Rights Officer

Mr Francois Deleu, EUAA Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO), recalled that the EUAA Fundamental Rights Strategy 2024-2028 was adopted by the Management Board on 25 September 2024. He outlined three overarching goals of the strategy: 1) Ensuring compliance with fundamental rights in all activities; 2) Guaranteeing dignified and fair treatment for all individuals seeking international protection; and 3) Promoting fundamental rights across the Agency's operational framework. To achieve these goals, the strategy was structured around seven strategic objectives, focusing on the integration of fundamental rights into operational and technical assistance, monitoring, training, stakeholder engagement, and internal processes such as human resources and procurement. The Strategy's implementation is supported by annual action plans developed by the Agency and monitored by the FRO. As of 30 June 2025, 21 measures were implemented (55%), and 15 measures were ongoing (40%). Mr Deleu also reported on FRO activities related to operational and technical assistance, including consultations on draft Operational Plans, contributions to evaluations and on-site visits. He further reported on the first year of implementation of the complaints mechanism with some 17 complaints submitted overall, out of which 82% were assessed as inadmissible and highlighted outreach efforts and the close cooperation with CF members, including consultations during operational visits and on informative materials and standard complaint forms.

Q&A Session

Participants raised questions on the complaints mechanism and enquired whether CSOs could lodge complaints against Member States, specifically in relation to the Italy-Libya memorandum and alleged human rights violations in Libya. The FRO clarified that the complaints mechanism cannot be used to challenge national legal or policy frameworks and applies only to individuals who were directly affected by the actions of EUAA experts. As such, the mechanism allows individuals to report potential fundamental right violations committed by EUAA experts.

Participants asked if the FRO could provide concrete examples of his observations following visits to EUAA operational activities. The FRO explained that all his observations and proposed mitigating measures are included in the [Fundamental Rights Officer's Annual Report](#), which was first published in July 2025. He noted that observations most frequently relate to access to the asylum procedure, reception conditions and safeguards for applicants in vulnerable situations.

One of the participants raised specific concerns about the temporary suspension by Greece of asylum processing for certain nationalities arriving by sea from North Africa. The FRO stated that the Agency is not involved and that the issue raised is also not within the scope of the forthcoming EUAA monitoring mechanism. The Executive Director further clarified that EUAA is not present in the affected areas. Ms Gregori explained the scope of the monitoring mechanism (which focuses on the operational and technical application of the CEAS) and recalled that monitoring under the EUAA Regulation will take place every five years per Member State, with the annual cycle starting in June 2026, and that the Agency will issue recommendations addressing system malfunctions.

Further questions were also raised regarding cooperation with national fundamental rights monitoring bodies as well as the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The FRO confirmed that cooperation with FRA is ongoing, including the exchange of monitoring tools and good practices, as well as engagement with national ombudspersons and other national monitoring bodies. Mr Deleu added that the Office has also established good working relations with the FRO of Frontex.

The role of the FRO in the Escalation Mechanism was raised, as well as cooperation with international organisations such as the Council of Europe. The FRO explained that the Escalation Mechanism allows EUAA staff to report potential fundamental rights violations committed by national authorities or implementing partners, with the FRO involved in the mechanism through consultation and access to incident reports. The importance of synergies with civil society and the Council of Europe was acknowledged, and bilateral discussions were reported as ongoing.

Participants raised concerns about the suspension of Syrian asylum applications in Germany and other Member States. The FRO, supplemented by the Executive Director, explained that it is common practice for Member States to suspend the processing of applications pending further assessment and clarification of the evolving situation in Syria following the fall of the Assad regime. The Executive Director explained that many Member States were in fact resuming the processing of asylum applications and that the Agency was closely following developments.

Finally, a case was raised concerning a recognised refugee who experienced homelessness and sexual violence due to a lack of follow-up by national authorities. The FRO clarified that responsibility for such individual cases lies with the national authorities. The FRO recalled the role's mandate which is to ensure the Agency's compliance with fundamental rights in all its activities and to promote respect for fundamental rights within the Agency.

Election of the CF Chair and Deputy Chair

A representative from Visuality, the external contractor engaged to assist with the moderation of this session, introduced the candidates. Three candidates had expressed an interest to become the Chair of the Consultative Forum, namely:

- Ms Ana Ciuban from Associazione Multietnica dei Mediatori Interculturali A.M.M.I. ETS,
- Mr Vladimir Milev from the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants, and
- Mr Najib Obaid Babakerkhail from the French Refugee Council.

In an informal setting, the candidates had the opportunity to introduce themselves and explain how they would bring added value to the Consultative Forum, if elected as Chair.

Following these presentations, Consultative Forum members were asked to vote using a secure voting tool by selecting the name of their preferred candidate. After the lunch break, the results were announced, whereby Ms Ana Ciuban received the highest number of votes and was re-elected as Consultative Forum Chair for the next two-year term (November 2026-November 2028).

The candidate who received the second highest number of votes was Mr Najib Obaid Babakerkhail, which in line with the CF working methods was elected as Deputy Chair of the EUAA Consultative Forum.

The EUAA Executive Director congratulated the Chair and Deputy Chair for their (re-)appointment and thanked Mr Vladimir Milev for his engagement and candidature.

Thematic Discussions on the EUAA Pact Programme and Monitoring Mechanism

Ms Alison Gatt, Head of European and International Cooperation Unit, provided an update on the EUAA Pact Programme outlining progress, key deliverables, and next steps in supporting the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Ms recalled the four pillars of the EUAA Pact Programme, including:

1. Revision and development of EUAA products (such as tools, guidance, and training modules) to align with the Pact, and development of new products and tools as required by the Pact legislation,
2. Support to the European Commission with the development and implementation of the Common Implementation Plan,
3. Support to Member States with development National Implementation Plans, and
4. Support to Member States in the execution of National Implementation Plans, upon request.

Under Pillar 1 (EUAA products and activities), at the time 32 products were completed, representing approximately 73% of the overall workload for 2025, with 27% still under development. Completed outputs include a wide range of guides, tools, training modules, data

products, information materials, and judicial publications. Notable examples include guidances on contingency planning, remote interviews, mental health of applicants, alternatives to detention, family tracing, free legal counselling, vulnerability screening, as well as the development of several training modules.

Ms Gatt emphasised that the development of several products was directly linked to new legal obligations under the Asylum Procedure Regulation (APR) and the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR), in particular the Practical Guide on Free Legal Counselling and the development of a Practical Guide on Family Tracing, as directly mandated by Article 22 of the AMMR. The latter guide aims to support early identification and prioritisation of family cases, improve reunification procedures, and assist practitioners across policy, case management, child protection, and legal counselling roles. It consists of a revised Part I (building on earlier guidance) and a newly developed Part II aligned with AMMR requirements, accompanied by standardised tracing templates.

Participants were also informed of extensive work on information provision materials directly tasked to EUAA under the Pact. These include common information materials, leaflets, and templates tailored to different legal instruments (AMMR, APR and the Reception Conditions Directive) and target groups, including adults, children, unaccompanied minors, and vulnerable applicants. Complementary formats such as picture stories for accompanied and unaccompanied children, , posters, flashcards, manuals, and potential audio and visual tools were presented as measures to enhance accessibility and understanding.

Finally, the presentation outlined upcoming deliverables, including additional practical guides (such as on age assessment, registration and lodging of applications, reception centre management, and audio recording of interviews) and further training modules, reinforcing EUAA's operational and technical support to Member States with the implementation of the Pact.

Ms Alessia Chiochetti, Head of Monitoring Unit, explained that the Agency has established a Monitoring Mechanism, in close cooperation with the European Commission, to oversee the operational and technical application of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Grounded in Article 14(1) of the EUAA Regulation, the mechanism aims to identify potential shortcomings in MSs' asylum and reception systems, assess their preparedness to manage disproportionate migratory pressure, and enhance overall system efficiency. It was further stated that the Monitoring Mechanism relies on a broad range of information sources, including data and input from MSs, EUAA analytical products, EU institutions and agencies, international organisations such as UNHCR, and selected civil society actors, National Human Rights Institutions, and Ombudspersons. This multi-source approach ensures comprehensive and evidence-based assessments.

Furthermore, the presentation focussed on the pilot monitoring exercises in Estonia and the Netherlands launched by the Agency in January 2025. These pilots involved questionnaires, case sampling, information collection from key stakeholders, and extensive preparatory analysis. On-site visits were carried out in June 2025 by trained expert teams, allowing for in-depth thematic assessments of national asylum and reception systems. Following the visits, findings were shared with the concerned Member States for comments, and the final reports were completed between September and October 2025. The pilot phase concluded with a structured lessons-learned process. The experience gained, together with developments under the Pact on Migration and Asylum, is informing a revision of the monitoring methodology and tools planned to be completed by June 2026 when the Monitoring Mechanism will start to apply in full.

In conclusion, it was stated that the Monitoring Mechanism will be rolled out through the first multiannual programme covering the period 2026-2030. Country monitoring exercises are planned across all Member States in a phased manner, complemented by at least one thematic monitoring exercise in the same period. Through this systematic approach, the EUAA Monitoring Mechanism is expected to play a central role in strengthening the consistent implementation of the CEAS and supporting MSs' capacity and preparedness across the European Union.

Q&A Session

Several questions were raised by Consultative Forum members mainly in relation to the Monitoring Mechanism. One participant asked how the pilot countries were selected, how future MSs to be monitored will be prioritised, and whether the results or recommendations of the monitoring reports would be made public. EUAA replied that the pilot countries volunteered to participate and that the sequencing of MSs follows the order of the Council Presidency. The pilot reports will not be made public, but once full monitoring begins, a summary of key findings will be shared with MSs.

Another question related to the scope of the monitoring exercise and whether all legislative instruments are covered. EUAA confirmed that all relevant instruments of the CEAS are covered. Regarding the findings and the follow-up to monitoring exercises, the Agency clarified that following a monitoring exercise, the Executive Director shares the findings with the MSs concerned for comments. Following the full entry into application of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, recommendations on possible measures to be taken by the MS concerned may be proposed by the EUAA Executive Director and adopted by the Management Board. The recommendations aim to address the shortcomings or issues of capacity and preparedness identified in the monitoring exercise.

Another question related to possible disagreements by MSs regarding various sources of information the Agency uses (including from CSOs) and how such disagreements would be handled. EUAA explained that MSs may object to findings, but where EUAA maintains its assessment, the MS' response would be annexed to the report and shared with the Management Board.

EUAA further clarified that the monitoring exercise is a qualitative tool intended to identify both gaps but also good practices that may be replicated.

CF Internal Discussions and Closing

Ms Ana Ciuban, Consultative Forum Chair, provided an update on the work of the Consultative Forum in 2025. She stated that the Consultative Forum continued to play an active role in supporting the work of the Agency through various meetings and consultations. At the time of the meeting, the CF had implemented a total of 24 activities with seven activities pending implementation before the end of the year.

Activities included five electronic consultations, twelve training modules, four Consultative Forum meetings, and three calls for expressions of interest to be consulted in the context of the FRO's operational visits.

In line with the CF Work Plan, the activities were linked to different areas of the Agency's work including Information and analysis, cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Officer, the EUAA

Pact Programme, vulnerability, planning of Agency activities, training, Country of Origin Information and monitoring.

The remaining activities scheduled for implementation by the end of 2025, included two Consultation Group meetings (planned for the following day) and a possible information session to present the Practical Guide on free legal counselling. In addition, the CF Chair stated that a survey would be launched with CF members as well as EUAA staff aimed at assessing satisfaction with, and the effectiveness of, information exchange between the Agency and the CF. Further actions included the presentation by the Chair of the CF's feedback on the Annual Report to the EUAA's Management Board at the end of November 2025.

Updates of the Rapporteurs

Ms Fatima Ali, COI Thematic Group Rapporteur, provided an update on the activities that members have undertaken as a result of ongoing communication between COI members and EUAA colleagues. As a priority, the group is focusing on gaining a better understanding of the use of AI in COI. It was explained that ACCORD is leading on this topic and is also part of the ACUTE project, which brings together members from different organisations to discuss and establish standards for AI research, as well as to prevent any negative impact on current standards.

The thematic rapporteurs for the CF Group on Persons in a vulnerable situation recalled the two priority topics the group was working on, namely on detention and the impact of the Screening Regulation on persons in a vulnerable situation. The next day, the CF group would focus their discussions on these two topics and would also discuss what the group would focus on in 2026.

The newly re-elected CF Chair thanked the participants for their engagement and invited everyone on stage for a group photo.

Annexes

Power Point presentations