



European Asylum
Support Office

Evaluation of the EASO Management Board Preparatory Group

Period April 2019 – October 2020

Final Report

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Executive Summary

This document describes the evaluation of the Management Board (MB) Preparatory Group (PG) for the period April 2019 to October 2020. It triangulates information from a desk review, an anonymous survey involving Management Board members, and a 360-degree feedback exercise consisting of interviews and focus group discussions. The focus (intervention logic) of this evaluation is based on the role of the Preparatory Group (as defined by MB Decision No 44), which involves advisory non-decision-making tasks to enhance the preparation of the Management Board meetings, providing advice to the EASO Executive Director upon request, and assisting in the draft opinion of the Management Board on strategic EASO documents.

This evaluation reports an overall positive appreciation (as confirmed by multiple interviews) of the role of the PG in the preparation of Management Board meetings. The report identifies multiple **good practices**. Examples include the preparation and guidance of Management Board meetings and the stimulation of consensus building on selected complex matters. The Preparatory Group has also developed good practice working methods such as rotational Member State participation, the production of quality documents, professional Management Board secretariat support, efficient online meetings and rewarding face-to-face networking opportunities.

The work of the Preparatory Group is considered of high **relevance** as it contributes to enhanced preparation of the Management Board, which is EASO's main planning and monitoring body. This has been even more important in an online environment, where these meetings need even more detailed preparation.

In the period under consideration, the Preparatory Group has delivered upon its expectations (**effectiveness**), in particular in relation to the preparation of sensitive and complex agenda points. Examples are the governance transition and alternative deployments. With the move to virtual Preparatory Group meetings, the number of Preparatory Group deliverables decreased, and discussions were reportedly less in-depth due to time restrictions. MB Decision No 44 also provides the possibility for the Preparatory Group to help prepare MB opinions. The Preparatory Group discussed the state of play of these documents but did not provide advice on Management Board opinions because of competing timelines.

In line with previous Preparatory Group evaluations, there is a consensus that the Preparatory Group has contributed to the overall **efficiency** of Management Board meetings. Both Preparatory Group and Management Board meetings have become increasingly time-efficient in the online working environment. The Preparatory Group, however, remains vulnerable to some inefficiencies. This leads to additional information needs as well as increased workload and processes. These are compelled by competing deadlines and involve additional coordination needs.

The Preparatory Group design is most **coherent** in its mandate and role because of its composition, flexibility, and advisory nature. However, there are a number of risks, such as the duplication of Management Board work and clustered Member States representation in the Preparatory Group. These can make the coherence of the Preparatory Group a balancing act. There is also scope for better articulation with parallel processes. The PG, for example, has no clear role towards the use of written procedures for MB decisions. In addition, selected MB preparation work can be addressed in more dedicated technical fora.



The Preparatory Group provides **added value** for each of the stakeholders, albeit at times to varying degrees. A common denominator reported by all interview respondents was the Preparatory Group's contribution to confidence, mutual understanding, and transparency. This report documents multiple good practices, which can be used for future PG support.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has impacted the functioning of the Preparatory Group in different ways. The number of deliverables as well as the quality of the discussions were reportedly lower, thus affecting the **effectiveness** of the Preparatory Group. On the other hand, the Preparatory Group was considered as more **efficient** during the pandemic. This was achieved through new working approaches with shorter and more focused meetings involving less travel time. As these short meetings need careful preparation, interviewees believed the need, relevance and added value of the Preparatory Group has increased in an online meeting environment. On the other hand, the pandemic did not influence the **coherence** of the Preparatory Group but communication on its work remains important.

Overall, this evaluation supports the positive feedback of the previous 2018 and 2019 evaluation reports highlighting the perceived Preparatory Group's contribution to enhanced transparency and efficiency of the functioning of the Management Board meetings. As the Preparatory Group's outputs depend on the combined strength of its multiple contributors, it has an important potential to continue to support EASO in the future. This is particularly valid in view of the perspectives of a **growing Agency** taking on more and increasingly complex matters, which need careful Management Board preparation.

Building on good practices and lessons learned, the current evaluation proposes six clusters of **recommendations** (including multiple suggestions):

1. In view of the positive findings of this evaluation, the Preparatory Group should be continued in its current format and has the potential to achieve even more;
Continue focus on strategic questions including on core governance documents; maintain its non-decision-making role and continue avoiding holding discussions which should take place at MB;
2. At times less is more - The Preparatory Group-related reporting needs to be proportionate and adapted to the target group;
Cover notes, background information and summary reports should be brief and to the point. PG debriefing should happen shortly after each meeting.
3. Promote balanced Member State participation and rotation in the broadest way;
Examples of Member State participation incentives are networking and capacity building opportunities, welcome kits for newcomers and continuous consultation on MB agenda priorities;
4. Carefully plan the dates of the Preparatory Group and the Management Board meetings in view of the legal deadlines of core governance documents;
The role of the PG should be clarified with relation to the written MB Decision procedure; Key governance documents such as the budget and the CAAR should be put more central in the MB agenda;
5. The Preparatory Group should look beyond the preparation of the next Management Board towards a more longer-term EASO agenda building on subsequent Management Board meetings;



The PG should support the MB to better plan and monitor its own milestones on the longer run through strategic agenda setting; the current exercise of the PG is limited; an evaluation of the MB itself would be more instrumental to build on good practices and lessons learned;

6. As EASO may evolve in the future with a wider mandate, the Preparatory Group could become more relevant on condition that it continues to proactively pursue added value in a flexible way;

The success of the PG depends on the strength of its drivers; the PG has the opportunity to be even more meaningful in the context of an empowered agency. In case the nature of the PG mandate changes, this would need to be reflected in a revised MB Decision.



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1. Objectives, Methodology and Limitations

1.1. Background information and specific objectives

The EASO Management Board (MB) Preparatory Group (PG) was created in September 2017 (MB Decision No 33¹) as a pilot project for two periods of six months. In April 2019, the MB decided to extend the PG for a further three years until March 2022 (MB Decision No 44²). The group is composed of the MB Chairperson, the MB Deputy Chairperson, five members of the MB on rotation, one member from the European Commission (EC) and the EASO Executive Director (ED). The PG is supported by the MB Secretariat.

As described in MB Decision No 44, the role of the PG is purely advisory, and it has no decision-making functions. The PG is mandated by the MB to undertake the following advisory tasks:

- To assist the Chairperson and the Executive Director in preparing for and in facilitating discussions at meetings of the MB;
- To provide advice to the EASO ED on request in preparatory work relating to the Agency's strategy, including planning and budget;
- To assist in the preparation of the draft opinion of the MB on the EASO Consolidated Annual Activity Report and the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU, prior to adoption of the opinions by the MB by the legal deadlines;
- To undertake related tasks which may be requested by the Management.

In addition, the PG provides the MB with written outcomes of Group meetings.

MB Decision No 44 of 1 April 2019 stipulates that the PG shall be established for a period of three years until 31 March 2022. It explicitly mentions that *“an evaluation of the experience, effort, and costs incurred against the practical benefits gained by the Management Board shall be carried out every year starting in April 2020.”*

In view of its senior level member composition, the work of the PG is of strategic significance to EASO Governance. The current evaluation aims at providing a feedback loop to review and appreciate the PG's contribution towards three main stakeholders:

1. The PG internally: review of good practices and lessons learned on the PG internal functioning mechanisms;
2. The EASO MB: leverage of the PG as a support mechanism to the MB;
3. EASO as an Agency: gather feedback on how the PG support is perceived by EASO staff.

This evaluation aims at collecting feedback, inputs, views, and proposals of different stakeholders involved (see Annex III for deliverables and timelines). It acts as a catalyst transcribing these into a set of good practices, lessons learned and recommendations, with the aim of stimulating discussion and follow-up.

¹ Decision No 33 of the Management Board of EASO of 27 September 2017 on the Terms of Reference of the Preparatory Group of the EASO Management Board.

² Decision No 44 of the Management Board of the EASO of 1 April 2019 on the revised Terms of Reference of the Preparatory Group of the EASO Management Board.

1.2. Methodology and evaluation questions

The current ex-post evaluation assesses the work of the PG in the period April 2019 to October 2020. Building on the findings of the two previous evaluations, this report evaluates the PG in line with the minimum standard criteria established by the EC Better Regulation Guidelines³ adopted by EASO. While the main purpose of the evaluation is to appreciate the experience, effort, and costs incurred against the practical benefits of the PG, this exercise aims to answer the following evaluation questions:

| Criteria | Type of questions to be answered |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance | How significant is the work of the PG in support of the needs of the MB and EASO as an agency? |
| Effectiveness | To what extent has the PG delivered the tasks, as foreseen in Article 2 of the MB Decision no 44? What is the scope of the effects of the intervention compared to the tasks planned? Are there elements to assess the quality of the work (e.g. preparation of paperwork and strategic questions for MB) delivered? Are there elements of impact that can be identified? |
| Efficiency | How is the relationship between effort and resources used and support delivered? How efficient are the working methods? |
| Coherence | Are the activities of PG coherent with related governance support mechanisms? Do these remain within the mandate and scope of MB Decision no 44? What will be likely changes towards coherence if EASO evolves towards EUAA? |
| Added value | What is the added value resulting from PG support on Member States, the MB and EASO governance at large? What would be the likely effects if the PG were to be discontinued? |

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions.

In addition, special attention is given to the following questions:

- What are the effects of the remote versus physical meeting modalities, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Forward looking: how is the role of the PG likely to evolve in the context of the upcoming new mandate of the Agency where the Management Board plays a more intensive role?
- What are the recommendations, good practices and lessons learned?

In addition, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected the work of the PG, and as such, this evaluation aims to understand whether any good or innovative practices were developed because of the online environment. Additional elements flagged during previous evaluations -such as the perception of MB members on quality or transparency of the work- are assessed as well (while taking into account their subjective nature).

The evaluation remains “light” in nature and is undertaken by the Evaluation Team of the Quality Management and Evaluation Sector (QMES) within the EASO Executive Office, in close collaboration with the Management Board. A dedicated Quality Review Task Force supported the evaluation. It consisted of the members of the Evaluation Team, the MB, the PG, the European Commission, the EASO Executive Director, and, as relevant, selected EASO actors (see annex V).

The evaluation exercise triangulates data generated from various sources, such as:

- Desk review, including:

³ European Commission Better Regulation Guidelines (2017). Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/better-regulation-guidelines_en

- The previous evaluation reports covering the PG functioning;
- Governance documents, including MB Decision No 44;
- Summary reports of the PG and MB meetings from the period under observation;
- Agendas, presentations, and cover notes of the seven PG and six MB meetings from the period under observation (PG 7 to 13).
- A 360-degree feedback⁴ (see questionnaire in Annex I) was organised, which included:
 - Interviews with the Chair and Deputy Chair of EASO's MB, two staff members of the European Commission and ten MB members (see annex IV);
 - A focus group discussion with the EASO Executive Director and selected EASO senior management.
- An anonymous online survey answered by eleven MB members (see Annex II).

The current evaluation is limited in several ways. The nature of the PG is linked with internal processes whose end result is not always fully measurable or attributable to its inputs. The current evaluation is an internal exercise and remains light and limited in scope. The PG is part of a larger governance system and has as main purpose to contribute to the MB functioning. The evaluation of the MB falls outside the scope of this exercise and therefore some of the findings and assumptions remain approximate.

2. Findings

2.1. *Applying an Evaluation Intervention Logic to the Preparatory Group*

The PG has offered support to the MB, Member States and EASO since 2017. Beyond the terms of the MB Decision 44, there are no specific objectives or results defined for the PG. In their absence, the following intervention logic⁵ can be applied:

- Impact result: The governance of EASO is enhanced in line with its mandate.
- Outcome result: The MB is better prepared to ensure its core EASO planning and monitoring functions.
- Outputs:
 1. MB Preparation: to assist the Chairperson and the Executive Director in preparing for and in facilitating discussions at meetings of the MB;
 2. Strategic Advice to the ED: to provide advice to the EASO ED on request in preparatory work relating to the Agency's strategy, including planning and budget;
 3. Preparation of MB Opinions: to assist in the preparation of the draft opinion of the MB on strategic EASO documents prior to their adoption.

During the pilot phase of the PG in June 2018 and February 2019, two evaluation reports were drafted by PG members covering the first and second phases, respectively. These were complemented by an evaluation note of the former Chair of the MB (January 2019). The evaluation reports were favorable on the work of the PG, in particular as this would contribute to EASO's transparency and efficiency. Elements of added value were the opportunity for Member States to discuss more in detail specific agenda points and structure better the MB meetings, as well as supporting the MB decision making process with preparatory summary reports. The previous evaluations also described the background

⁴ 360-degree feedback is considered as a data collection method which gathers feedback from all possible stakeholders. In the case of the current evaluation these are the MB members, the PG members and EASO senior management.

⁵ The intervention logic is an evaluation tool which provides a description on how the intervention was expected to work. It describes the expected logic of the intervention that should lead to the intended change (adapted from: EC Better Regulation Toolkit 46).

documentation as being of high quality, with the PG meeting outcomes being rigorously documented in summary reports.

2.2. Effectiveness

As the nature of the role of the PG is continuous and not linked to a specific plan, this evaluation assesses the notion of effectiveness as the extent to which the PG has delivered on the tasks, as foreseen in Article 2 of MB Decision 44.

The scope of this evaluation is limited to the PG and does not aim at reviewing the overall governance of EASO at large (impact level result; see above) nor the quality of the planning and monitoring work of the MB (outcome result). Multiple interviewed MB members believed, however, that the PG has contributed to better prepared MB meetings and overall more efficient MB management. Many were of the view that the PG has also accompanied the MB in dealing with the recent complex and delicate governance challenges. This has indirectly contributed to the transition towards a climate of increased confidence (as reflected in media, audit reports and relationship with Member States and EU bodies). While the measurability of these perceptions is limited, these are elements of possible contribution of the PG towards the functioning of the MB and the Agency's governance at large (outcome and impact level results).

The current evaluation refers to seven PG meetings running from May 2019 to October 2020 in preparation of six MB meetings, as shown in the table below.

| | <i>Date</i> | <i>In support of Management Board:</i> |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| PG 7 | 6-7 th May 2019 | MB 32 (17-18 th June 2019) |
| PG 8 | 28-29 th August 2019 | MB 33 (24-25 th September 2019) |
| PG 9 | 23-24 th October 2019 | MB 34 (26-27 th November 2019) |
| PG 10 | 13-14 th February 2020 | MB 35 (16-17 March 2020 - <i>postponed</i>) |
| PG 11 | 27 th May 2020 | MB 35 (18 th June 2020) |
| PG 12 | 27 th August 2020 | MB 36 (17 th September 2020) |
| PG 13 | 20 th October 2020 | MB 37 (10 th November 2020) |

Table 2. Preparatory Group meetings and related MB meetings under consideration.

The PG has been very instrumental in following up on and preparing the agendas of MB meetings (output 1), and this was recognised by all stakeholders interviewed. The meetings also covered agenda items such as the follow up of the previous MB, disciplinary procedures, governance monitoring, update on audits, the EASO work programme budget related matters, the SPD and EUAA preparations.

The figure below gives an overview of the number of agenda items and follow-up actions dealt with by each PG and their related MB meetings. The agenda items and follow up actions in both meetings reduced over time and slightly re-bounced in absolute numbers for the last two PGs. This element is linked to progressive adaptation to the online environment in which these meetings took place (starting from the 11th PG meeting).

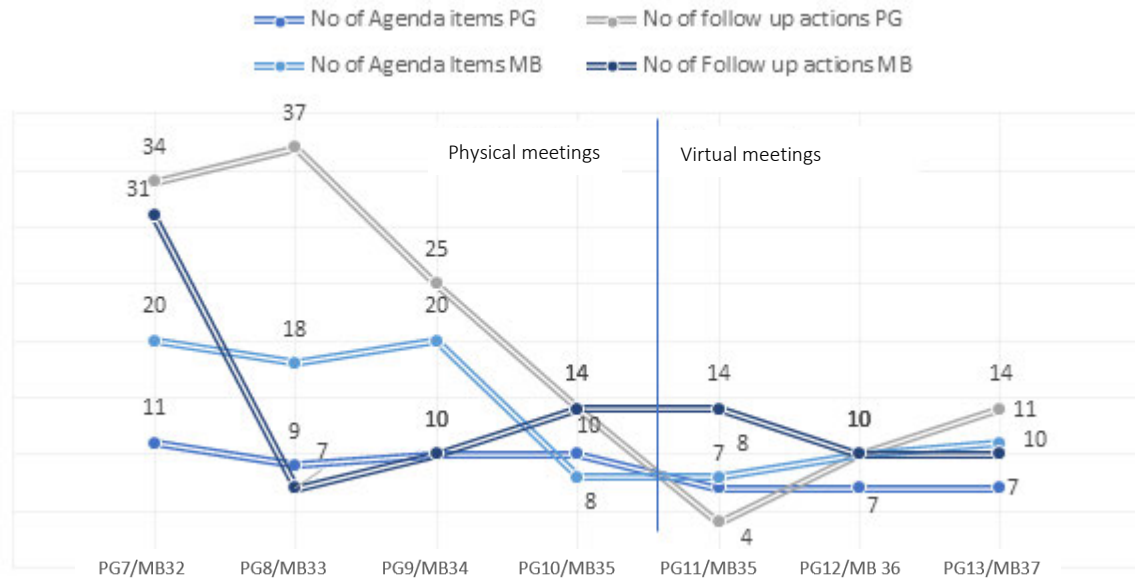


Figure 1. Number of agenda items and number of follow up actions considered in the PG and MB meetings.

During the period under consideration, the PG also provided advice on a number of specific matters upon request of the ED. Examples are the alternative deployment needs, a methodology for country guidance, updates and challenges on operations, COVID-19 related measures, and different prospective issues (output 2). All these were consequently addressed in a structured way by the MB.

MB Decision 44 also provides the possibility for the PG to prepare MB opinions (output 3) on the CAAR and the Annual Report on the Situation on Asylum in the EU prior to adoption of the opinions by the MB by the legal timelines. Due to the tight timeframes, these documents were not submitted to the PG prior to the MB meeting. The PG discussed the state of play of the documents but not the actual reports.

The quality of the background documentation, and in particular the summary notes, was appreciated by all interviewees. The PG helped direct some of the discussions providing strategic questions, but several interviewees believed that even more could be done.

Most interviewees and survey respondents stated they are aware of the role and main functions of the PG and feel sufficiently informed about the work that the group carries out⁶. A limited number of MB member interviewees and survey respondents expressed the wish to have more communication on the progress and the work of the PG.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the effectiveness of the PG in several ways. Examples include:

- MB 35 was postponed because of the pandemic and ultimately took place in a remote environment;
- From a quantitative perspective, as illustrated by Figure 1 above, the PG and MB meetings included fewer agenda points and fewer follow-up questions. The PG agenda point “follow-up of previous MB”, for example, was discontinued as of the 11th PG;

⁶ Over 81% of survey respondents fully agreed or agreed to being aware of the role and main functions of the PG; over 90% fully agreed or agreed to feeling sufficiently informed about its work.

- From a qualitative perspective, PG respondents indicated that the depth of the discussions was at times limited by the online environment and the networking dimension of face-to-face meetings was lost.

Overall, there is a broad consensus amongst the interviewed MB, PG and EASO representatives that the PG has effectively delivered upon its expectations, in particular in steering the MB meetings. Specific recommendations are included in the latter part of this evaluation.

2.3. Efficiency

This evaluation considers efficiency as the relationship between effort and resources used and support delivered by the PG, including the adequacy of working methods. This report does not look into costing dimensions of efficiency, nor does it aim at analysing the different human resources used.

This evaluation does not aim at evaluating the efficiency of the MB at large (outcome level). Multiple interviewees believed that the PG has succeeded in enhancing the efficiency of the MB by preparing the agenda, setting priorities, and ensuring the quality of the prepared documents.

In line with findings of the previous evaluations, interview respondents highlighted the timely submission of quality cover notes and background documents by the MB Secretariat -with the support of PG- as **good practices**.

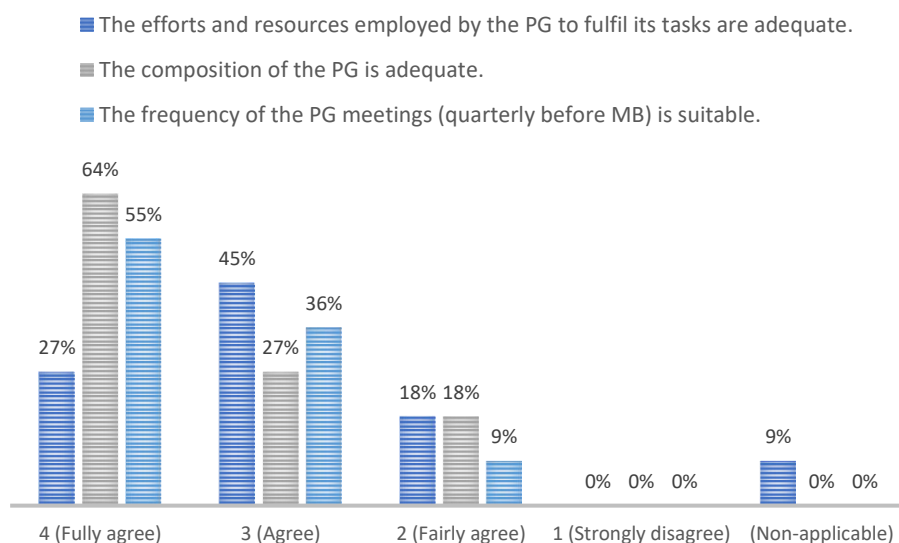


Figure 2. Anonymous replies to the online questionnaire on the efficiency of the work of the PG.

The large majority of interviewees and survey respondents were satisfied with the resources, composition, and the frequency of PG meetings, as shown in Figure 2.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also enhanced the efficiency of the PG and MB meetings in terms of time management. While the number of agenda items for both PG and MB has reduced (see Figure 1), PG interview respondents referred to shorter and to the point discussions. As indicated in the figure below, the duration of the online PG and the MB meetings (starting as of PG11/MB35) was a third shorter in comparison with their face-to-face predecessors. This element is most relevant as PG and MB members have -beyond their commitment to EASO- important responsibilities in their respective working environment.

| Duration of PG meetings | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|
| PG7 | PG8 | PG9 | PG10 | PG11 | PG12 | PG13 |
| 8.5h | 6h | 6h | 6h | 2.5h | 2.5h | 2.5h |

| Duration of MB meetings | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| MB32 | MB33 | MB34 | MB35 | MB36 | MB37 |
| 1.5d | 1.5d | 1.5d | 5h | 5h | 5h |

Figure 3. Duration of the different PG and MB meetings under review.

While each PG meeting is different, there are a number of lessons learned highlighted from interview respondents:

- From an efficiency perspective, PG meetings are an additional layer of consultation and as such need additional preparation and reporting, which translates into an additional work and time investments (including travel in case of face-to-face meetings);
- At times the PG follows the same agenda items of the MB and therefore there is a risk that it can become a “rehearsal” of the MB where similar discussions take place. It is for the PG to find the fine balance between discussing and preparing the MB without too explicitly entering into effective strategic discussions, which have their place in the MB;
- The PG does not need to have all detailed background information for all agenda points to efficiently prepare MB meetings. Interviewed PG members were of the opinion that an explanation of what will be prepared can suffice in many conditions. A good practice in this context is the agenda point on the Situation on Asylum of the EU, which generally does not need detailed discussion in the PG.

There is a natural imbalance between the resources (time, direct support...) available for EASO management and the Member State representatives (and in particular Chair and Vice-Chair) in preparing the PG and the MB. This is in particular relevant if the volume of documentation is important. The sum of pages of the PG cover notes (without background documents) ranged from 25 (PG10) to 38 (PG9). The outliers took up to 12 pages for one cover note. While EASO support to the Chair and Vice-Chair was highly appreciated, there remain obvious limitations.

There are a few inefficiencies related to the timing of the PG, which takes place a month before the MB:

- Updated information: with 40 days difference between submission of information to the PG and the meeting of the MB, the cover notes and background documents are often outdated; the updating of information is an additional workload for EASO (and inefficiency in the overall workflow process for many agenda items);
- Legal deadlines: as the table below shows, there are a number of legal/statutory deadlines for the submission of key governance documents. For the PG to be able to prepare advice to the opinion of the MB (as per MB 44 Article 2.c.), the meetings of the PG need to be aligned with these timelines.

| <i>Requirement</i> | <i>Deadline</i> | <i>Source</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Single Programming Document (SPD) | The SPD shall be approved by the MB (majority of ¾) by September 30th of each year. | EASO Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 439/2010), Art. 29(1)(f) |
| | A draft must be sent by EASO to the EC, EP and Council by January 31st of the following year. | EASO Financial Regulation (MB Decision No 54), Art. 32(1) |
| Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR) | Must be sent by the MB to the Court of Auditors, EC, EP and Council by July 1st . | EASO Financial Regulation (MB Decision No 54), Art. 48(2) |
| Annual Accounts | The ED must send the final accounts to EC, ECA, EP and Council by July 1st . | EASO Financial Regulation (MB Decision No 54), Art. 101 |
| Report on Situation of Asylum in the EU | An annual report on the situation of asylum in the Union shall be drawn up and presented to the EP. There is no legal deadline , but the MB has instructed timeline includes two rounds of MB reviews starting in April leading to the adoption by the June MB. | EASO Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 439/2010), Art. 12(1); Art. 29(1)(d); MB 35 Information Note |
| Annual General Report | The annual general report shall be adopted by the MB and sent to the EP, Council, ECA, and EC by June 15th . | EASO Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 439/2010), Art.29(1)(c) |

Table 3. Revolving timelines on MB related governance documents

2.4. Relevance

The PG was set up in September 2017 and finds its origins in the need for better communication, transparency and governance shared by the MB and EASO management. This was particularly relevant in view of the delicate governance crisis involving the previous EASO management. The PG has in the meantime evolved and further focused on the preparation of MB meetings.

Prior to the period under consideration, the PG has been instrumental in preparing MB meetings as demonstrated by the decision to extend the pilot project beyond 2019, supported by the previous stock-taking evaluations.

Responses to the Survey Question: The PG is instrumental for the support to the governance of EASO at large

■ 4 (Fully agree) ■ 3 (Agree) ■ 2 (Fairly agree) ■ 1 (Strongly disagree) ■ (Non-applicable)

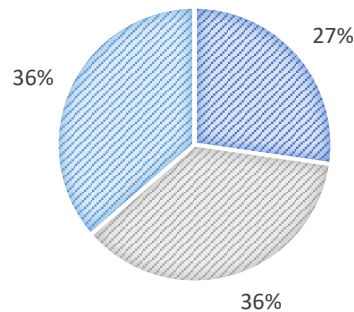


Figure 4. Anonymous replies to the online questionnaire on the efficiency of the work of the PG.

The relevance of the PG as a support mechanism to the governance of EASO at large was recognised by the majority of survey respondents (64%; see Figure 4). Interview respondents highlighted the relevance of the PG in view of the increasing complexity of the MB agenda. Interviewed Member State representatives expressed their appreciation for the summary notes in preparation of MB meetings. These are in particular useful to have a quick overview of the main issues at hand as MB members do not always have the possibility to go through all the details.

Case 1. PG guidance in the EASO governance crisis - MB Decisions 35, 46 and 60

The sequence of the above MB Decisions illustrates the relevant role the PG had to play when preparing governance agenda items of the most delicate nature leading to a transition of normality. MB Decision 35 required additional reporting obligations of the ED to the MB Chair in a number of fields such as recruitment, procurement, and reporting. Whereas Decision 46 accompanied a return to normality, Decision 60 set up a standardised way of governance monitoring. This is an illustration of the relevance of the PG which, was originally set up in a context of governance deficiencies. Interviewees indicated that the delicate preparation work of the PG was instrumental for the transition towards a stronger trusting relationship between the MB and EASO Management.

The relevance of the PG as an instrument of preparatory support to the MB depends on the strength and the will of its main drivers, in particular the ED and the Chair. In addition, there are a few lessons learned challenging its relevance:

- The participation of Member State representatives in the PG is at different levels, often affected by experience and knowledge;
- The PG becomes less relevant if it becomes a general repetition of the MB, which is not the reason why it was set up;
- The PG has not provided yet advisory input to opinions as defined in Article 2.C of MB44 (linked to competing timelines – see Table 3 above); future practices should review its relevance and feasibility.

Multiple interviewees indicated that the PG is even more important in the online working environment of the COVID-19 pandemic as the meetings are much shorter and therefore more accurate preparation is needed to carefully prepare key agenda points and strategic discussions.

Also looking towards the future, with the perspective of a EUAA with a wider mandate, which is likely to bring additional and more complex MB agendas, most interview respondents saw a possible increased need and relevance for the PG. While the current MB 44 is very flexible in its terms, some believed there could be a need for clarifications in case the nature of the tasks changes.

2.5. Coherence

The coherence evaluation criterion explores whether the activities of the PG are coherent with related governance support mechanisms and if these remain within the mandate and scope of MB Decision no 44.

The composition of the PG, including the MB Chair, MB Vice-Chair, the EASO ED, the EC and a geographically balanced rotation of five Member States enables a reasonable representation of the different EASO governance stakeholders. Interviewees indicated that a healthy rotation of Member States is very important to ensure that the different points of view (linked to different articulations of Member States with asylum challenges) are adequately represented.

All interviewees and over 90% of the survey respondents believed that the responsibilities and the mandate of the PG are appropriate, in particular as the PG does not have decision powers but is limited to an advisory function.

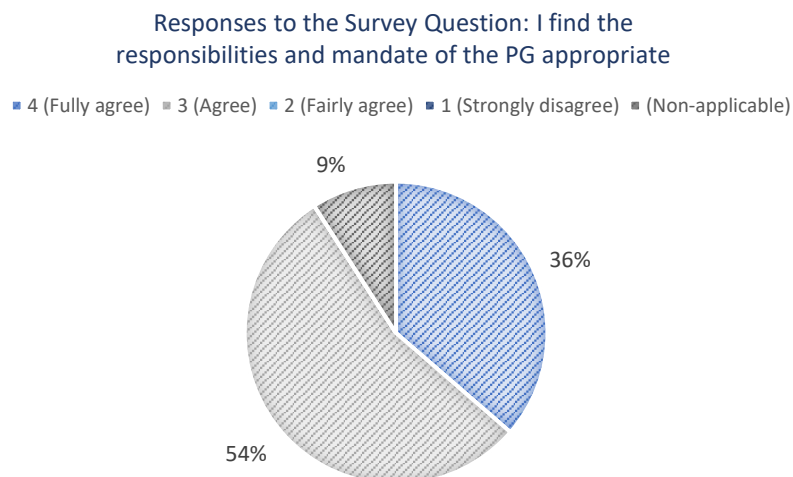


Figure 5. Anonymous replies to the online questionnaire on the coherence of the work of the PG.

During the period under review, several good practices contributed to enhanced coherence of the PG. Examples are:

- At the start of each meeting, the Chair has reminded the PG members about the advisory nature of the mandate of the PG;
- While not always easy in practice, special efforts were undertaken to have MS representation of different geographies;
- Efforts of the PG have a direct effect on the MB. The PG, for example, aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the MB by allocating detailed time slots for specific agenda items in order to ensure that due consideration is given to priorities.

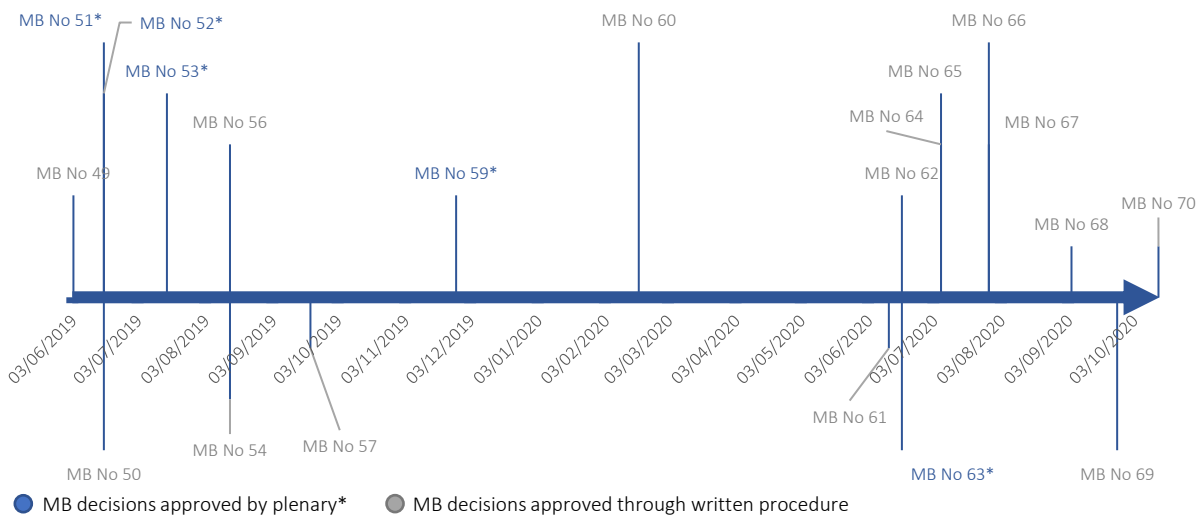


Figure 6. Management Board Decisions approved in the period under observation.

The coherence of the PG remains a balancing act as multiple risks can arise. Interview and survey respondents referred to the following possibilities:

- The PG is preparing the MB which cumulates in MB decisions. The PG is not strongly involved with the written procedure for MB decisions, which has approved a total of 19 MB decisions in the period under observation (versus five MB decisions⁷ approved during plenary sessions – see Figure 6);
- There is a risk that the PG - covering similar agenda points as the MB - becomes a “mini-MB”, undermining the mandate of the latter;
- For EASO, the existence of a preparatory meeting can generate duplication of work for certain agenda points in terms of the preparation of background documents and their updating;
- For the PG to be coherent, it needs to have a healthy dynamic rotation involving all Member States in order to avoid that a core group of revolving Member States is more strongly associated with EASO governance;
- While the PG has remained strongly advisory in nature, there is the continuous risk of eroding the answerability obligations of the ED to the MB;
- The PG is limited in its setup. Some agenda points (e.g. governance matters or inputs relating to support to a specific Member State) can require coordination beyond the PG format.

2.6. Added Value

In line with the previous evaluations, all interview respondents indicated that the PG allows the MB to be better prepared and facilitate more targeted debates. The PG is for them a way of channeling the communication between the different stakeholders of EASO. Without the PG, interviewees indicated that the MBs would last longer and achieve less deliverables. Some also highlighted the difference with past pre-PG practices where MB meetings were longer, heavier, and less effective, even if the agency was smaller and the MB had fewer complex matters to consider.

From the 360-degree interviews, the PG provides added value for each of the stakeholders in the following way:

⁷ MB Decision No 51, No 52, and No 53 were approved during MB 32 (June 2019), MB Decision No 59 was approved during MB 34 (November 2019), and MB Decision No 63 was approved during MB 35 (June 2020).

- From the *EASO management perspective*, the PG allows them to be better prepared for MB meetings and have a first idea of the nature of feedback of the different stakeholders; this was in particular useful for special agenda items;
- The work of the PG enables the *Chair and Deputy Chair* to be better prepared to manage the MB meetings, in particular to ensure that these meetings allow consensus building on strategic discussions;
- From the *EC perspective*, the PG is very helpful to support the EC preparation for MB meetings;
- The participation of *Member States in the PG* allows them to understand and contribute to the preparation of the strategic planning and monitoring of EASO;
- From a *MB member perspective*, the PG support has led to better prepared and more efficient MB meetings and documentation; the PG summaries allow them to have a quick grasp of elements to be discussed in the MB.

A common denominator for all these stakeholders has been the development of confidence, mutual understanding and transparency on MB agenda setting indirectly supporting the MB role of EASO planning and monitoring.

Responses to the Survey Question: The PG is instrumental for the support to the governance of EASO at large

■ 4 (Fully agree) ■ 3 (Agree) ■ 2 (Fairly agree) ■ 1 (Strongly disagree) ■ (Non-applicable)

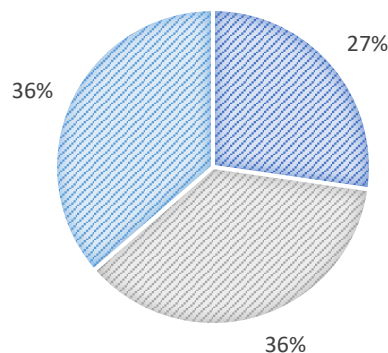


Figure 7. Anonymous replies to the online questionnaire on the added value of the PG.

The PG had in its early days a role to ensure closer monitoring of the MB on the EASO governance and has accompanied a transition towards more trust and normalcy.

Case 2. Good practice of PG providing added value: The Alternative Deployments Review

The alternative deployments review has been a good practice of PG support for MB preparation. This complex and delicate human resources matter (involving multiple legal challenges) was initially reviewed and streamlined by the PG supported by technical working groups. It also allowed Member States (e.g. Belgium) to take initiatives in piloting proposals and a workshop contributed to consensus building. Ultimately it led to better mutual understanding of the positions of the different parties involved and a more optimal mix of technical inputs combined with wide Member State and stakeholder participation.

There are a few lessons learned which can challenge the added value of the PG. These include:

- **Overload of information:** in preparation of MB meetings, there is often too much information leading to disinformation.

- There is a risk of duplication with the MB. The PG should focus on reviewing the kind of documentation that needs to be presented but not enter too deep into the content of these, which is the task of the MB;
- With the online environment and shorter MB meetings, it remains important that the PG communicates clearly with the MB members on its work and quality elements related to the deliverables of its preparations. Sharing the PG summary is not always sufficient. For the MB members, the PG summaries are shared simultaneously with the high volume of other documents and thereby disappearing in the information overload.

2.7. *Additional evaluation questions*

What are the effects of the remote versus physical meeting modalities, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic?

From an effectiveness perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic has modestly but adversely affected the deliverables of the PG both qualitatively and quantitatively. This can be illustrated by:

- The postponed MB 35 meeting and the first meetings having minor IT issues;
- Quantitatively: the reduction in agenda items and agenda follow up points (see Figure 1);
- Qualitatively: the online environment was not considered stimulating for debate, cooperation and information exchange, nor networking.

The pandemic has enhanced the efficiency of the PG, boosting new working approaches leading to shorter and more focused meetings and less travel time. These short meetings need careful preparation and therefore interviewees believed the need, relevance and added value of the PG has increased under the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic did not influence the coherence of the PG but communication on its work remains important.

Forward looking: how is the role of the PG likely to evolve in the context of the upcoming new mandate of the Agency where the Management Board plays a more intensive role?

The PG is likely to evolve with the mandate of EASO. If EASO evolves towards the EUAA and increases in terms of its mandate, the PG will most likely advise and prepare the MB accordingly⁸. In case this would involve tangible additional responsibilities (e.g. what in case of an enhanced monitoring function of the MB?), there may need to be need for an addendum to MB Decision 44.

⁸ Depending on the Chair and the EASO management driving the PG agenda.

3. Conclusions

3.1. General Findings

This evaluation has analysed the PG of the MB over the period May 2019 to October 2020. The PG was set up in 2017 to support the preparation of the MB in a wider context of need for enhanced communication, governance, and monitoring. While its reference MB 44 refers to a number of advisory tasks, the PG has focused on the preparation of MB meetings. During the period under consideration it has accompanied a number of significant evolutions such as restoring a climate of trust towards EASO governance, its operational expansion, and its internal restructuring. With these evolutions, the MB agenda of EASO has become more complex and therefore the PG has played a more instrumental role in enhancing its preparation.

The current evaluation has undertaken a triangulation referring to information from desk research, 360-degree interviews with different PG, MB and EASO stakeholders as well as an anonymous survey of MB members.

The 360-degree interviews referred to a number of PG **good practices**. The PG has contributed to the preparation, guidance and consensus building of specific complex matters. For several MB agenda items, the PG has prepared relevant strategic questions which supported the strategic discussions. The PG has contributed to restoring a climate of confidence and supported the management of transition following a governance crisis. The contribution of the PG (and MB by extension) to the alternative deployment challenges has illustrated the potential of the multi-disciplinary and stakeholder characteristics of the members of the PG.

Additional good practices on the work methods include amongst others:

- PG meetings have tight agendas with clear documents and clear purpose of discussion;
- The rotational participation of Member States in the PG was recognised as a good practice to allow as many MB members as possible to voice their views;
- The quality of the documents produced and the professionalism of the EASO MB Secretariat providing support to the PG was underlined by all respondents as a good practice;
- The virtual PG meetings are an efficient way of convening;
- A number of concept notes were developed to allow PG members to quickly grasp the main questions raised;
- The face-to-face PG meetings in different European capitals allowed the participants to engage in informal networking and learn more about their peer's context (while still being considerate with regards to time-efficiency).

Several interview respondents indicated that the MB Chair and EASO management have made very good use of the PG support, including to guide EASO through a number of extraordinary governance matters. The good practices recorded under the PG should be preserved and promoted under future EASO MB leadership.

Since February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the work of the PG. While the remote format has a few efficiency advantages, there are also shortfalls in terms of the quality of debates and the volume of deliverables.

The overall assessment of the functioning of the PG is most positive. However, the current evaluation also records **lessons learned**. Examples are:

- The scope of the PG is short term in preparation of the next MB and does not fully apply its potential to promote a longer-term vision on the role of a sequence of MB meetings;

- The level of detail of information may be good for accountability purposes, but is not conducive to discussions which need a right balance between operational and strategic matters;
- The PG is dealing with a wide range of items and these should be brought forward in a balanced way in order to not overburden its members with technical details;
- Active participation of PG members: while the participation is voluntary, not all PG members participate to the same extent;
- There is a risk of duplication and repetition with the agenda of the MB; there is need to ensure that there is a different focus of the PG and the MB;
- Information asymmetry; it is at times difficult for Member State representatives to have a profound understanding of all processes and technical language in EASO.

3.2. *Application of the evaluation criteria*

This report assesses the PG in function of five standardised evaluation criteria, in line with the EC Better Regulation Guidelines, and feedback received on these during the interviews. Overall, all 360-degree interview respondents expressed most positive feedback on the PG work and highlighted the quality of the agenda setting and preparation of MB meetings.

Taking into account the triangulation of various sources of information used during this evaluation such as the 360-degree interviews, the anonymous survey and desk review, the below table gives an overview on an approximate assessment of the different evaluation criteria. These are organised around the three main output areas, as defined in MB Decision 44 which describes the role of the PG:

1. MB Preparation: to assist the Chairperson and the Executive Director in preparing for and in facilitating discussions at meetings of the MB.
2. Strategic Advice to the ED: to provide advice to the EASO ED on request in preparatory work relating to the Agency's strategy, including planning and budget.
3. Preparation of MB Opinions: to assist in the preparation of the draft opinion of the MB on strategic EASO documents prior to their adoption.

Overall, the PG's work is considered of **high relevance** as it contributes to enhanced preparation of MB meeting, which is EASO's main planning and monitoring body. This is even more important in the COVID-19 stimulated online environment, where these meetings need even more detailed preparation in view of the reduced time and communication modalities available. While the preparation of MB meetings was most relevant, the current evaluation found scope for more optimal use of the PG when it comes to longer term guidance and advice on MB opinions.

In the period under consideration, the PG has delivered upon its expectations (**effectiveness**), in particular in relation to the preparation of sensitive and complex agenda points. Examples are the transition in governance and the alternative deployments reviewed. With the online PG meetings, the number of PG deliverables (i.e. agenda points and follow-up points) decreased and the discussions were reportedly less in-depth. MB Decision 44 also provides the possibility for the PG to prepare MB opinions (output 3) on the CAAR and the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum. Due to the tight timeframes, these documents were not submitted to the PG. The PG discussed the state of play of the documents but did not provide advice on their likely MB opinions.

In line with the previous PG evaluations, there is a consensus that the PG has contributed to the overall **efficiency** of MB meetings. Both PG and MB meetings have also become highly more time-efficient in the online working environment. The PG, however, remains vulnerable to a few inefficiencies, linked to the nature of its additional consultative process involving additional information workload and processes, matching timelines, and coordination needs.

| Outputs | Relevance | Effectiveness | Efficiency | Coherence | Added Value |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. MB Preparation | Very Good | Very Good | Good | Very good | Very good |
| 2. Advice to ED upon request | Good | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| 3. Advice on MB Opinions | Good | Fair | Fair | Good | Good |

Table 4: Application of evaluation criteria⁹.

The PG is most **coherent** in its mandate and role because of its rotating and diverse composition, its flexibility and limited advisory nature. The coherence of the PG remains a balancing act as multiple risks can arise, such as duplication of MB work or clustered Member State representativity. It also has a few limitations in terms of its articulation with parallel processes such as the written procedure for MB decisions and more complementary technical coordination needs.

The PG provides **added value** for each of the stakeholders, albeit at times at varying degrees. A common denominator for all these stakeholders has been the development of confidence, mutual understanding and transparency on MB agenda setting (indirectly supporting the MB role of EASO planning and monitoring). The multiple good practices can even be of more added value if careful consideration is given to information sharing, communication and optimizing contributions within a longer-term perspective.

Overall, this evaluation supports the findings of the previous 2018 and 2019 evaluation reports highlighting the PG's contribution to enhanced transparency and efficiency of the management and preparation of MB meetings. In addition, it supports the continued high relevance and added value of the PG, in particular when it focuses on strategic priorities. The coherence and efficiency of the PG working methods are a continuous balancing act and can be optimized in function of multiple contextual actors. In the short term, the online meeting environment linked to COVID-19 needs careful MB meetings preparation as agendas are even more tight and time-limited. The PG's outputs depend on the combined strength of its multiple contributors. Therefore, the PG has an important potential to continue to support EASO in the future, in particular with the perspectives of an evolving Agency taking on more and increasingly complex matters which need careful preparation.

⁹Based on the EC DG DEVCO and DG NEAR Results-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) methodology. More available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/news_corner/monitoring-and-evaluation/20160817-rom-handbook.pdf ; The assessment includes the following scores as explained below:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Very good: | Evaluation criterion fully achieved or even exceeded. |
| Good: | Evaluation criterion met to a satisfactory level. |
| Fair: | Evaluation criterion partially achieved, with some elements indicating room for improvement. |
| Unsatisfactory: | Evaluation criterion (mostly) not achieved. Significant room for improvement identified. |

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made stemming from the findings of this evaluation and the feedback and responses received.

1. In view of the positive findings of this evaluation, the Preparatory Group should be continued in its current format and has the potential to achieve even more

The PG can optimise its functioning based on several good practices and lessons learned, such as:

- Further identifying core priorities and strategic questions for MB discussion and decision making. Core but often administrative governance documents (including budget, work programme and reports) should be brought to life by highlighting strategic choices, goals, and interlinkages;
- Retain the advisory nature of the PG and refrain from content decision making and strategic discussions which need to take place in the MB. The PG needs to set the scene for and prompt strategic MB discussions but not engage in such discussion at its level.

2. At times less is more - The PG related reporting needs to be proportionate and adapted to the target group

In its advisory role, the PG is often a catalyst for information sharing and flows and needs to approach these in a smart and selective way. Examples are:

- When possible, PG and MB cover notes need to be shorter, and use non-technical language;
- Provide PG only with documentation that can add value, and respect a balanced volume of background information;
- While PG summary reports are appreciated, they can still be shorter and to the point – some details (such as who spoke on which subject) are not necessary;
- Prepare and share short debriefing notes (e.g. one pagers) after each PG to quickly flag MB members on the direction of the preparations well ahead of MB meetings.

3. Promote balanced Member State participation and rotation in the broadest way

The strength of the PG is its composition, which is enhanced by an active and representative Member State participation. Examples of suggestions are:

- For new MB and PG members: prepare a welcome/starters kit including the core documentation; periodically make short presentations/provide reminders on the role and work of the PG as an information point during MB meetings;
- Find a right balance of digital working methods – aim at a hybrid model of alternating face-to-face and online meetings;
- Enhance preparedness and accountability: MB members and their alternates can be periodically consulted if they would be interested in supporting specific capacity building;
- Embed smart participation incentives (e.g. networking opportunities), in particular for those Member States which have not yet participated in the PG;
- Beyond participation in the PG, continuously consult all MB members for MB agenda items proposals (to be reviewed during PG meetings).

4. Carefully plan the dates of the PG and the MB in view of the legal deadlines of core governance documents

If the PG is to deliver on its intended advisory role on core governance documents, the following recommendations should be considered:

- PG meetings should be planned to align with the legal deadlines linked to key governance documents to optimise the potential contribution of the PG to the preparation of MB opinions/positions;
- While the current article 2 is not exhaustive on the different documents which need MB opinions, the PG should reassess the feasibility of providing advice on MB opinions in view of anticipating deadline practices;
- The PG could play - in a balanced way - an advisory role on planning the optimal use of written versus plenary MB Decisions;
- Put the discussion on the EASO budget more central as an agenda point, highlighting strategic options, challenges, and opportunities.

5. The PG should look beyond the preparation of the next MB meeting towards a more longer-term EASO agenda building on subsequent MB meetings

There is scope to optimize the contribution of the PG to the MB, and the following elements should be considered:

- While preparing MB agendas, the PG should carefully balance operational and strategic matters; it should prepare the MB for longer term planning of milestones which guide the MB towards consensus on an intervention logic with SMART results and clear responsibilities;
- Stimulating the MB monitoring function, the PG should promote institutional memory and follow-up of PG and MB meetings in view of its rotation and mobility;
- Assessing the PG is related to the performance of the MB as EASO's main planning and monitoring body. The current evaluation is limited in its scope and only looks into the role of the PG in support of the MB. For the PG to enhance even more the efficiency and effectiveness of the MB, there would be need for an evaluation of the MB itself in order to better grasp its strengths and weaknesses. This may be timely in view of the possible increased responsibilities in case the agency evolved towards the EUAA.

6. As EASO may evolve in the future with a wider mandate, the PG could become more relevant on condition that it continues to proactively pursue added value in a flexible way

The current evaluation describes multiple good practices and lessons learned of the PG under the period under consideration. Looking forward, the following recommendations can be made:

- The Chair and the ED are the main drivers of the PG; they do not only need to be committed to the PG to make it work but also need carefully balanced support to fulfil their role;
- Be proactive and flexible as matters arise. The PG needs to become a measure of reflection, a hub to prepare new ideas and think outside the box. The PG support to efficient MB planning, monitoring and decision making will be even more important within an Agency with a larger mandate;
- In the case that the Agency becomes responsible for a different and wider set of tasks (e.g. What would be the role of the PG if a future EUAA MB were to have a mandate in Member State monitoring?), there would be a need for an updated MB Decision scripting these additional PG tasks.



ANNEXES



Annex I. Interview questionnaire

Evaluation of the EASO Management Board (MB) Preparatory Group April 2019-October 2020

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Interview Date: | Name of interviewee(s) and organisation: |
| Names of interviewers: | |

- 1) How **effective** has the Preparatory Group (PG) been in delivering on its planned tasks?
 - a. To what extent has the PG delivered the tasks, as foreseen in Article 2 of the MB Decision No 44?
 - b. What is the scope of the effects of the intervention compared to the tasks planned?
 - c. Are there elements of **impact** that can already be identified?
 - d. What is your view on the quality of outputs of the PG (e.g. preparation of paperwork and strategic questions for MB)?
 - e. What would be your overall judgement on the effectiveness of the PG's work?
 Very good Good Fair Unsatisfactory

- 2) How **efficient** has the PG been in achieving its objectives?
 - a. How is the relationship between effort and resources used and support delivered?
 - b. How efficient are the working methods? Were there any delays?
 - c. What are the effects of the remote versus physical meeting modalities, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - d. What would be your overall judgement on the efficiency of the PG's work?
 Very good Good Fair Unsatisfactory

- 3) How **relevant** and useful is the work of the PG as an additional structure to the MB and EASO as an agency?
 - a. Are there fields where it could play a larger role? Other elements where it should limit interference?
 - b. Forward looking: how is the role of the PG likely to evolve in the context of the upcoming new mandate of the Agency where the Management Board plays a more intensive role?
 - c. What would be your overall judgement on the relevance of the PG?
 Very good Good Fair Unsatisfactory

- 4) Are the activities of the PG **coherent** with related governance support mechanisms?
 - a. Do the activities of the PG remain within the mandate and scope of the MB Decision No 44? Do the activities of the PG remain within the mandate and scope of the MB Decision No 44?
 - b. What will be likely changes towards coherence if EASO evolves towards EUAA?
 - c. What would be your overall judgement on the coherence of the PG's activities?
 Very good Good Fair Unsatisfactory



- 5) What was the **added value** of the PG's work?
- What is the added value resulting from PG support on MS, the MB and EASO governance at large?
 - What would be the likely effects if the PG would be discontinued?
 - What would be your overall judgement on the **added value** of the PG's support?
- Very good o Good o Fair o Unsatisfactory o
- 6) Were there the main challenges or constraints faced during the implementation of the PG's activities?
- What lessons can be learned?
 - What impact did COVID-19 have on the implementation of the PG's support?
- 7) What are the good practices you would like to highlight on the work of the PG?
- 8) What would be your main recommendations to the PG?
- 9) What would be your overall judgement of the PG's work in the period April 2019-October 2020?
- Very good o Good o Fair o Unsatisfactory o
- Any other suggestions / comments?



Annex II. Survey questionnaire

Online Survey Evaluation of the Preparatory Group (PG)

The EASO PG was created in September 2017 and is mandated by the Management Board (MB) to undertake the following advisory tasks:

- To assist the Chairperson and the Executive Director in preparing for and in facilitating discussions at meetings of the MB.
- To provide advice to the EASO ED on request in preparatory work relating to the Agency's strategy, including planning and budget.
- To assist in the preparation of the draft opinion of the MB on the EASO Consolidated Annual Activity Report and the Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU, prior to adoption of the opinions by the MB by the legal deadlines.
- To undertake related tasks which may be requested by the Management.

This survey is part of the evaluation of the PG for the period April 2019-October 2020. It is anonymous and intended for internal purposes only. The answers will be used by the EXO Evaluation team as part of the ongoing evaluative exercise of the Preparatory Group (PG).

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback.

- 1) I am aware of the role of the PG.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 2) I feel sufficiently informed about the work carried out by the PG.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 3) The PG has been of important added value to the quality preparation of the Management Board Meetings.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 4) The PG is instrumental for the support to the governance of EASO at large.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 5) I find the responsibilities and mandate of the PG appropriate.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 6) The efforts and resources employed by the PG to fulfil its tasks are adequate.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 7) The composition of the PG is adequate.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 8) The frequency of the PG meetings (quarterly before MB) is suitable.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)
- 9) The remote meeting modalities have challenged the quality work of the PG in support of the MB.
0 (Non-Applicable), 1 (Fully disagree), 2 (Fairly Agree), 3 (Agree), 4 (Fully Agree)



10) Do you have any recommendations on how the PG could better support the MB?

11) Looking into the future, what do you think the role of the PG should be once EASO becomes EUAA and the MB are given additional and broadened responsibilities?

Annex III. Deliverables and timeline

This evaluation exercise provides a number of deliverables, which include:

- An inception report (max 5 pages): this document aims at fine-tuning the evaluation approach and includes more details on the methodology, the different data gathering aspects, including a list of interviewees, and the roll out of the evaluation;
- A draft report (max 15 pages): this report is submitted to the Quality Review Task Force for initial review and feedback;
- A final report (max 15 pages) and executive summary (1 page); This report is presented and discussed with the MB as a discussion point. It will encourage the MB to respond with follow-up actions under the form of a Management Response Sheet.

The timeline is as follows:

| Evaluation phases | Suggested timeframe | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Preparation phase | | |
| Presentation of the initial concept note to the Preparatory Group | 20/10/2020 | |
| Review and validation of Concept Note by the EASO Management Board | 10/11/ 2020 | |
| Inception phase | | |
| Inception Meetings with key stakeholders and setting up of quality review task force | 10-20/11/2020 | |
| Inception report validation (including draft evaluation questions) | 20/11/2020 | |
| Validation meeting Inception report with QRTF | 30/11/2020 | |
| Implementation phase | | |
| Data collection and interviews including PG members, MB members and EASO staff | 01/12/2020 31/12/2020 | - |
| Data analysis and report writing | 31/12/2020 15/01/2021 | - |
| Validation and Response phase | | |
| Submission of draft report | 20/01/2021 | |
| Written feedback and comments by quality review task force | 30/01/2021 | |
| Presentation of the draft Final report to the Preparatory Group | 16/02/2021 | |
| Presentation of the Final report to the MB and discussion (incl. on follow-up) | 18-19/03/2021 | |



Annex IV. List of persons individually interviewed

- [REDACTED] EASO Management Board
- [REDACTED] Management Board
- [REDACTED] Migration and Home Affairs
- [REDACTED] Migration and Home Affairs
- [REDACTED] EASO [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (EASO)
- [REDACTED] (Austria)
- [REDACTED]
(Belgium)
- [REDACTED] (Spain)
- [REDACTED] (Slovakia)
- [REDACTED] (France)
- [REDACTED] (Greece)
- [REDACTED] (Czechia)
- [REDACTED] (Slovenia)
- [REDACTED] (Germany)
- [REDACTED] (The Netherlands) (*via written procedure*)



Annex V. Members of Quality Review Task Force

1. [REDACTED] EASO [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED] EASO Management Board
3. [REDACTED] Ministry of Interior, Czechia
4. [REDACTED] European Commission
5. [REDACTED] Ministry of Interior, Austria
6. [REDACTED] Head of Executive Office
7. [REDACTED] MB Secretariat
8. [REDACTED] MB Secretariat
9. [REDACTED] EASO Quality Management and Evaluation Sector
10. [REDACTED] EXO Evaluation team
11. [REDACTED] EXO Evaluation team