

The European Asylum Support Office



The European Commission Proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

Asylum in Europe
Now, it's up to you.



In 2009, the Commission proposed the establishment of a European Asylum Support Office. This proposal followed the call of the Member States in the 2005 Hague Programme for the creation of a support office. The general objective is to further develop cooperation among Member States in the field of asylum in view of the creation of a Common European Asylum System. The proposed Office will focus on three main tasks:

- support practical cooperation among Member States on asylum by facilitating exchange of information on countries of origin, by providing Member States with support for translation and interpretation, training of asylum officials, and assisting in the relocation of recognised refugees;
- support Member States which receive large numbers of asylum claims (so-called “particular pressures”), including through the establishment of an early warning system, organising teams of experts to make initial assessment of asylum requests, assisting Member States in rapidly putting in place appropriate reception facilities;
- contribute to the implementation of the Common European Asylum System by gathering and exchanging information on best practices, drafting an annual report on the asylum situation in the EU and monitoring the implementation of EU legislation in the field of asylum.

The EASO will also coordinate exchanges of information and other action taken on the resettlement of refugees from third countries within the European Union, including through the coordination of joint selection missions, pre- departure orientation programmes and medical screening, and coordinate cooperation on the reception and integration of resettled persons.

UNHCR and ECRE welcome the creation of a European Asylum Support Office which could help the European Commission to gather information on Member States’ practices and assist Member States to fulfil their European and international obligations in the field of asylum. However, this is only possible if the EASO is well resourced and strongly founded on principles of democratic accountability and transparency.

What matters

- **The EASO should strengthen practical cooperation among Member States in view of further harmonisation**
The EASO can improve cooperation among Member States in terms of information-sharing on countries of origin of asylum seekers, and training of asylum officials. Better working relations at operational level will allow Member States to share their experiences and become acquainted with other national asylum systems. This should help to close the gap in asylum recognition rates across Europe through increased harmonization based on best practices and lead to higher standards of protection. The EASO should be an expert body which ensures consistency but also high quality asylum decision-making throughout the Union.
- **The EASO can benefit from UNHCR and NGOs’ expertise**
UNHCR and NGOs can provide the EASO with expert knowledge and field experience to help it meet its objectives. Through its proposed status as a non-voting member on the EASO Management Board, UNHCR can offer specific expertise according to its mandated role as recognised by the Declaration 17 to the Amsterdam Treaty, as it already provides to Member States in their national asylum procedures. Further quality input to the EASO can be provided through cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders. Specialised NGOs have specific expertise on issues such as country of origin information, and have practical field experience that could usefully be shared with Member States through joint training. This type of cooperation should be formalised in the structures of EASO beyond cooperation offered within the Consultative Forum.
- **EASO plans and activities should be transparent**
The EASO must meet the high standards of transparency the EU has set for itself. The EASO should operate openly and provide appropriate access to documents and guidelines. The Director could usefully make the EASO’s work public by presenting results to the European Parliament on a regular basis.
- **Cooperation with third countries should focus on protection**
The EASO should cooperate with third countries to help them build their asylum systems in order to provide appropriate protection to persons fleeing persecution and to give advice on how to meet international protection standards.

