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EASO operations expand to all major EU countries of first arrival



In 2021, EASO's operational support to national asylum and reception authorities will cover all five Mediterranean EU Member States which receive the most asylum applications, accounting for 50% of the Agency's budget.

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has begun operational support to the reception authorities in Spain, as was recently announced following the signature of the Operating Plan for the country. Spain is now EASO's fifth ongoing operation, building on, and adding to, the unprecedented levels of support and productivity reached in 2020 in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta.

In 2021, EASO will deploy approximately 2 000 personnel to the five Member States, including almost 1 000 in **Greece**. While deployed personnel in Greece will remain stable compared to 2020, notable increases will be registered in **Cyprus** (84 in 2020; 185 in 2021 [+120 %]) and **Malta** (65 in 2020; 149 in 2021 [+129 %]). Personnel include caseworkers, interpreters, vulnerability experts, field support staff, reception staff, research officers and administrative staff.

Over the next 12 months, the Agency will commit **over EUR 70 million** to its operations, which equates to approximately half of EASO's overall budget. Over EUR 45 million (64 %) of this will be committed to operational activities in **Greece**.

Each annual Operating Plan follows a needs assessment which is carried out together with the respective national authorities, and is therefore tailored to the Member State in question. While support to **Spain** will focus on developing a new model for reception of asylum applicants, EASO's operation in **Italy** will

continue to focus on asylum processes quality, standardisation and on second instance (appeals) procedures in light of less pressures on the country's first instance and reception infrastructure. It will also provide broader support to the reception system and respond to ad hoc disembarkation and voluntary relocation events.

EASO's Operations in **Cyprus**, **Greece** and **Malta** are comprehensive. They include interviewing applicants, drafting opinions, vulnerability support, support to the Dublin Units, and structural assistance in terms of reinforcing the asylum and reception capacities of the Member States. In this regard, EASO is also working with its partners on introducing ICT tools which can improve the efficiencies of the respective asylum systems.

In **Greece**, EASO will continue to shift its support from the islands to the mainland in light of the fact that the majority of the backlogs on the islands were cleared in 2020. EASO will also continue to facilitate the relocation of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable children to EU Member States and will support the establishment of a new Reception and Identification Centre in Lesvos.

The 2021 Operating Plans can be consulted here:

- Cyprus Operating Plan 2021;
- Greece Operating Plan 2021;
- Italy Operating Plan 2021;
- Malta Operating Plan 2021; and
- Spain Operating Plan 2021.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

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