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EASO resuming full operational activities in Member States



The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is gradually and safely resuming elements of its operations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta which were suspended due to COVID-19.

Following the temporary suspension of certain close-contact operational activities in-line with national instructions, EASO is gradually resuming its full support activities to the asylum authorities of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, as per the respective operating plans.

Commenting on the efforts being made by national authorities to ensure the EU's asylum *acquis* is implemented despite the challenging circumstances, the Executive Director of EASO, **Nina Gregori**, stated: "*I would like to thank the asylum authorities of the four Member States in which we operate for working in excellent cooperation with EASO's teams to find practical and safe methods to resume activities. I also take the opportunity to welcome the recent decision of the Maltese authorities to establish the International Protection Agency, which I am sure will further strengthen the effectiveness of the national asylum system.*"

Following the suspension of certain activities, such as interviews and registrations, EASO re-assigned personnel to those which could continue remotely, such as casework, backlog management and file preparation. In cooperation with national authorities, the Agency adapted its operations in order to ensure the safety of asylum seekers, as well as its personnel. EASO operational premises have been modified in order to ensure physical distance rules, regular sanitisation, while adopting procedures for the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Wherever possible, activities will be conducted remotely, including with regard to interviews.

Despite suspending some activities, by quickly adjusting its resources over the past two months, EASO continued to implement all possible elements of its operations through the use of remote arrangements. This included the ongoing facilitation of the relocation of 1,600 unaccompanied minors from Greece and the relocation of *ad hoc* disembarkations in the Central Mediterranean.

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, EASO also supported the European Commission in preparing its guidance on the implementation of EU rules on asylum procedures, and also published recommendations for remote interviews for asylum applicants.

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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