

EASO/COS/2014/975

EASO SPECIAL SUPPORT PLAN  
TO BULGARIA

Brussels, 5 December 2014



**Hereby the Executive Director of EASO and the Minister of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria agree on the EASO Special Support Plan for the provision of technical and operational assistance to Bulgaria.**

**Brussels, 5 December 2014**

**The Executive Director  
of the European Asylum  
Support Office**

**Dr. Robert K. Visser**

**The  
Minister of Interior  
of the Republic of Bulgaria**

**Assoc. Prof., L.D. Veselin Vuchkov**



## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Specific needs of Bulgaria**

On 8 October 2014 Bulgaria requested EASO for support to further improve and enhance the Bulgarian asylum and reception system.

As a result of the support provided by EASO under the Operating Plan, Bulgaria managed to cope with the initial challenges and address its urgent needs related to the sudden increase of the pressure caused by mixed migration flows. The Bulgarian institutions managed to significantly increase their capacity in terms of reception and registration of asylum seekers, as well as their preparedness and reaction capabilities. Despite the achieved significant progress, Bulgaria, as an EU external border on the Eastern Mediterranean migration route, continues to be under serious migratory and refugee pressure.

The request for further special support by EASO was inspired by the will to ensure sustainability of the good results achieved by the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria so that the current and future challenges can be adequately addressed. In addition, the results of the evaluation of the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria (September 2014) suggested complementary and/or follow up actions, which include for example improvements in the provision of specialized attention to vulnerable groups, including children and unaccompanied minors (UAMs), throughout the registration, asylum, reception and integration process; a national training plan for sustainable staff development; and additional measures for quality assurance.

In the light of these facts, EASO examined the request and the situation in Bulgaria and came to the conclusion that there is a need for tailor-made support. The Executive Director of EASO therefore decided on 27 November 2014 to render Special Support to Bulgaria by providing expertise from EASO and the Member States up to the end of June 2016.

This Special Support Plan lays down the conditions and objectives of EASO's specific technical and operational support to Bulgaria and sets out the conditions for participation in these specific EASO activities.

Regulation 439/2010, of 19 May 2010, establishing EASO (hereinafter referred to as the "EASO Regulation"), in particular, Article 2 (1), (3), (4) and (5) thereof, foresees EASO's duty to provide special support to Member States with specific needs, in order to improve their implementation of the instruments of the CEAS.

### **1.2. Flexibility Clause**

Given the nature of EASO's special support measures, which have to be timely, active and flexible, and taking into consideration the availability of resources and experts and changing circumstances of the asylum and reception system in the Member States, the foreseen calendar of the activities is just a forecast and may change. Any change will be subject to discussion of EASO and the Host Member State.

The Executive Director of EASO is authorised to make changes that may be accommodated within the objectives of a measure without requiring an amendment of the Special Support Plan, provided that they do not affect the overall budget and that Bulgaria is timely informed in writing.

### **1.3. Lawfulness and Respect of Fundamental Rights**

Support related to the participation in EASO activities under the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria must be carried out in a way that fully respects human dignity. All persons involved in support activities



shall maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, respect and promotion of fundamental rights and international protection. This particularly applies vis-à-vis persons who are in need of international protection. They are expected to meet obligations imposed upon them by the provisions of the EASO Special Support to Bulgaria and shall comply with the rules of their mandates. Whilst taking part in the EASO support activities, personnel shall respect the applicable International law, European Union law and the national law of the Host Member State. They shall maintain the highest standards of integrity and conduct. They are to act responsibly and proportionally to current objectives. Whilst carrying out supporting and functions, personnel must not discriminate persons on grounds of sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, age or sexual orientation. Personnel are expected to treat every person with courtesy, respect and due consideration for the nature of any legitimate activity in which they are engaged. To perform their duties properly, they shall serve the public interest and refrain from any activities which could undermine or compromise their independence and the appropriate performance of their duties.

During the implementation of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria, all participants must apply a “zero tolerance” attitude with respect to the infringement of fundamental human rights. All participants in EASO activities shall act in accordance with the Code of Conduct (Annex F).

#### **1.4. Confidentiality and data protection**

Without prejudice to the public right of access to documents as laid down in Regulation (EC) 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001, regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents and the EASO implementing rules on access to documents<sup>1</sup>, all versions of this document shall be made available to the authorities referred to in each EU Member State, including and where participating Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. This document shall be made available to interested parties on a need to know basis, in accordance with national rules for the dissemination of levels of information. This will be done on a case-by-case basis.

Upon signing the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria, it shall be made publicly available.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EC) 45/2001 of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

## **2 MISSION**

### **2.1 Stakeholders**

EASO and Bulgaria will jointly establish a Working Arrangement and will each appoint a Plan Manager, Plan Coordinator and Measure Coordinators in view of the implementation of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria. This will occur through an exchange of letters before the end of January 2015.

---

<sup>1</sup> Decision No. 6 of the Management Board of EASO of 20 September 2011 laying down practical arrangements regarding public access to the documents of EASO.



The Bulgarian national authorities involved in the process and their respective roles are the following:

Stakeholders	Role
State Agency for Refugees (SAR)	<p>The State Agency for Refugees is the authority responsible for registering, examining, and making decisions on applications for international protection. It organises the admission and temporary accommodation of foreign nationals who have applied for status determination or who have been granted protection within the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria and issues documents for certification purposes. In cooperation with the central government bodies of the executive power, the Bulgarian Red Cross and other non-governmental organisations, it organises the activities relating to the provision of social, medical and psychological assistance to asylum seekers and assists in the integration of persons who have been granted protection. The State Agency for Refugees is responsible for managing the European Refugee Fund.</p>
Ministry of Interior, Chief Directorate Border Police including Migration Directorate	<p>The Chief Directorate Border Police (CDBP) at the Ministry of the Interior is a specialized police service responsible for border control and surveillance. It operates within the 30km border area, the area of the border checkpoints, the international airports and seaports, the internal seawaters, territorial sea, adjacent zone, continental shelf, the Bulgarian part of the Danube River and the other border rivers and water basins. CDBP is one of the main beneficiaries of the assistance under the External Borders Fund.</p> <p>The Migration Directorate within the Chief Directorate Border Police of the Ministry of the Interior is a specialized department on national level responsible for the administrative control of the residence of foreign nationals in the Republic of Bulgaria. The Migration Directorate is also in charge for the issuance, rejection/denial and deprivation of long term residence permits of foreign citizens. It is responsible for the coordination in the area of migration policy and interacts with other state authorities, NGOs and international organisations. The Migration Directorate is in charge of the management, maintenance and security of specialised facilities for temporary accommodation of third country nationals who are subject to return. The Migration Directorate is one of the main beneficiaries of the</p>



	assistance under the Return Fund.
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	<p>The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is envisaged to be put in charge of the coordination of integration of internationally protected persons and the administration of the National Migration and Integration Council after the adoption of the relevant legislative acts.</p> <p>This shift of responsibilities will be in accordance with the National Strategy on Integration of Internationally Protected Persons in the Republic of Bulgaria (2014-2020) adopted with decision 474 of 4 July 2014 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.</p>
National Institute of Justice	The National Institute of Justice is to provide professional training for magistrates.

If necessary, additional Bulgarian stakeholders could be invited and involved in the implementation of some of the activities under this Plan. EASO and Bulgaria will agree in advance, on a case by case basis, on the role and the conditions of their participation.

## 2.2 Ongoing activities

### Asylum System:

In view of the continuing and new challenges in the field of migration and international protection, an inter-institutional working group has been tasked with developing a National Plan on the implementation of additional measures for action in a situation of increased migratory pressure in 2015. This plan will be a continuation to the current Action Plan on enhanced preparedness for reaction in cases of increased mixed migration flows, which was adopted at the end of 2013.

Over the last twelve months, the Bulgarian asylum system has undergone a number of important developments. At the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014, the number of employees at the State Agency for Refugees increased from 133 to 293. Presently, 77 staff members, including caseworkers, registration officers, legal advisers and COI experts, are employed in the asylum procedure. During the implementation of the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria (October 2013 – September 2014), the staff was trained through the EASO Training Curriculum, which allowed them to acquire knowledge and skills laying the basis for further professional development and enhanced quality of the asylum procedure.

Telecommunication links, including access to the 'Automated Information System Refugees' and the Eurodac system, have been built allowing for registration to be conducted in the Distribution Centre in Elhovo, the newly established Centres of the State Agency for Refugees as well as the Special Homes for the Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners managed by the Migration Directorate. Videoconference connection has been built with the Centres in Harmanli and Elhovo, which facilitates the use of interpretation services in the procedure.

Statistical information about the migratory inflow to the country is prepared by the State Agency for Refugees as well as the General Directorate Border Police and Migration Directorate and is summarized and provided to EASO on a daily basis.



In October 2013, the Distribution Centre in Elhovo with a capacity of 240 places was established. The Distribution Centre is a place for the initial reception of all third-country nationals who have entered illegally on the Bulgarian territory, separation of asylum seekers from the other foreign nationals, and initial registration of asylum seekers. The asylum seekers are then moved to the registration and reception centres of the State Agency for Refugees, while persons not seeking international protection are moved to the Special Centers for the Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners which are run by the Migration Directorate under the Ministry of the Interior. The system for the identification and referral of mixed migratory flows in a situation of increased migratory pressure needs to be further developed.

### **Reception System:**

Since the escalation of the refugee crisis in Bulgaria at the end of 2013, the number of reception and accommodation centres of SAR increased from 3 to 7. A new Registration and Reception Centre (RRC) has been opened in Harmanli, which has the capacity to accommodate 3300 persons. The accommodation capacity of the RRC in Sofia expanded with three additional buildings in Voenna Rampa (700 places), Vrazhdebna (300) and Kovachevtsi (350). Ten cottages were additionally built and equipped at the RRC Banya in order to accommodate 80 persons, mainly unaccompanied minors. As a result of ongoing efforts to strengthen the reception system, the current total accommodation capacity amounts to 6000 places.

Living conditions in the centres were significantly improved. Twenty thousand square meters of buildings underwent overall renovation. Facilities were ensured for the emergency accommodation of up to 800 persons in field conditions, including vans, tents, electric generators, chemical toilets, bathrooms, an ambulance and a mobile medical station.

In all centres of SAR, asylum seekers are provided with two meals per day. From February until April 2014, this was done in field kitchen stations and kitchens managed by the Ministry of Defence. Since May 2014, the preparation of food in all reception and accommodation centres has been entirely taken care of by the State Agency for Refugees, including the appointment of kitchen staff. In addition, UNHCR has organized the renovation and equipment of three modern kitchen stations with canteens in Harmanli, Vrazhdebna and Voenna Rampa.

Laundry rooms were renovated and equipped in the new centres of SAR in Harmanli, Vrazhdebna and Voenna Rampa with the financial support of the Dutch Red Cross and with the assistance of the Bulgarian Red Cross.

The three centres were also equipped with medical cabinets by the international organization Médecins Sans Frontières. There is medical staff working in all centres. In accordance with a ministerial decree, funds have been allocated for the appointment of four medical teams, each consisting of a doctor, a psychologist, nurses, and a dentist, in the new centres. Efforts in this direction are ongoing.

## **3 MEASURES**

Chapter 3 of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria describes the various measures to support the Bulgarian authorities in the field of the asylum procedure and reception system.

Bulgaria and EASO will provide the Member States experts with information on the general state of play with regard to the asylum procedure and reception system in Bulgaria and specific information about the state of play of the deliverables as described in the specific measures. The responsible Bulgarian



authority shall provide a working place to the expert(s) participating in the activities to implement the Special Support Plan. EASO will reimburse costs incurred by persons participating in the activities, according to the EASO rules specific for Special Support Plans.

EASO will provide technical support to experts participating in the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria with the aim of ensuring that the products developed make good use of the expertise and information already available to EASO. All intellectual property rights of the work of the experts performed in the context of the Special Support Plan vest in EASO. Selected products developed under the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria may be published.

By October 2015, EASO will conduct in cooperation with the Bulgarian authorities a mid-term review to assess the state of play of the Special Support Plan to inform the continued implementation of the Plan.

The final evaluation will aim to assess EASO's performance, identify key lessons learned and good practices of the Special Support Plan to Bulgaria.

EASO will maintain close cooperation and communication with the relevant stakeholders.





<b>EASO Measure BG 1: Support in complying with the EU Asylum Acquis</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees Ministry of Interior Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
Current situation	Bulgaria (BG) is currently in the process of transposing the new EU Asylum Acquis into the national legislation.
Objective(s)	EU Asylum Acquis is fully transposed in BG national legislation.
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will make relevant national legislation available in English.</li> </ul>
EASO support	3 activities/ 6 experts/ 5 calendar days each, 1 travel day each Preparatory meetings in Malta: participation of BG delegates as category A.
Implementation	2015: Q2-Q4
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capacity building delivered on the methodology, terminology and structure of the new Directives and Regulations of the EU Asylum Acquis including the practical interpretation and commitment of the different articles.</li> <li>2. Hands-on support delivered in applying the EU Asylum Acquis from a legal and practical point of view.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 2: Support with the identification and referral of vulnerable groups at entry points and with the asylum registration process</b>	
Responsible Authorities	State Agency for Refugees Ministry of Interior, Chief Directorate Border Police
Current situation	<p>Screening of persons with special needs (vulnerable categories and unaccompanied minors in particular) is carried out in a fragmented and non-systematic way and lacks timely intra institutional exchange of information, identification and referral according to the Asylum Procedures Directive.</p> <p>UNHCR's project called "Response to vulnerability in asylum" (RVA) has developed checklists and a methodology to support the identification of person with specific needs applying for international protection.</p> <p>Within the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, implemented from 01/11/2013 – 30/09/2014, a first data collection on existing referral procedures was undertaken. In addition, a registration manual as well as a manual on the identification of vulnerable groups was developed.</p>
Objective(s)	Improved capacity to identify and refer vulnerable asylum applicants and respond to their special procedural and reception needs.



	Improved exchange of relevant information between the different institutions, ensuring the necessary and timely identification, registration and referral to the asylum procedure, securing the access to the procedure in line with the Asylum Procedures Directive.
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appointment of staff responsible for subject-related topics.</li> <li>– Appointment of a coordination group of the stakeholders involved.</li> <li>– The identification and referral mechanism shall build on the EASO Quality Tool on the Identification of Persons with Special Needs to be translated into Bulgarian.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>8 activities /16 experts /128 calendar days, 1 travel day each</p> <p>Translation of EASO Quality Tool on the Identification of Persons with Special Needs to be translated into Bulgarian</p>
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q4
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A national identification and referral mechanism for vulnerable groups developed and implemented, in cooperation with responsible Bulgarian authorities. Supporting activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>A detailed technical report and assessment of the current identification and referral processes performed by different stakeholders, resulting in a detailed technical report.</i></li> <li>– <i>A preparatory meeting with all national stakeholders to prepare and agree on the Terms of Reference for the identification and referral mechanism of vulnerable persons.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Implementing guidelines for the staff of different stakeholders drafted, which describe the procedure on the identification of persons with special needs.</li> <li>3. Training provided on the use of the implementing guidelines for the identification and referral mechanism.</li> </ol> <p>EASO will provide support in the further enhancement of the asylum registration process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Registration manual updated according to the Asylum Procedures Directive.</li> <li>5. Workshop to promote dialogue and exchange of ideas for the improved coordination amongst relevant actors in the registration process.</li> </ol>



<b>EASO Measure BG 3: Support in the field of reception and social activities</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees
Current situation	<p>Significant improvements in reception capacity and conditions have been made since the end of 2013. The reception and accommodation centres of SAR have increased from 3 to 7. Currently, there is sufficient reception capacity to manage current flows, as well as some emergency capacity. Basic reception conditions have improved drastically. Further development of strategic planning and policy development for SAR would be important for maintaining and improving quality standards, including tools such as Standard Operating Procedures, coordination between the various units of SAR HQ as well as the registration and reception centres, complaint mechanisms. Further improvements in access to social workers and education are still necessary as well.</p> <p>The 'National Strategy for the Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in the Republic of Bulgaria' (2014 - 2020) was adopted in July 2014, however there is no approved action plan nor financial framework for implementing the Strategy yet.</p>
Objective(s)	Enhanced capacity of the State Agency for Refugees in managing and developing improved reception facilities in order to fulfil national and international obligations in the field of reception of asylum seekers and integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgaria.
Pre-condition(s)	– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.
EASO support	4 activities/ 8 experts/ 110 calendar days, 1 travel day each
Implementation	2015: Q2-Q4
Deliverable (s)	<p>Hands-on support as well as practical and strategic advice on managing and developing improved reception facilities. The expected deliverables include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposal(s) regarding the development and the implementation of tools for the enhancement of reception conditions and management of the reception system.</li> <li>2. Relevant stakeholders are provided with training as well as on-the-job coaching in the use and application of the proposals in practice.</li> </ol> <p>Furthermore, EASO will provide support in the preparation of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the asylum and reception process.</p> <p>Expected deliverables include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Support delivered for the efficient referral of beneficiaries of international protection to the integration system (as regards language courses, social services, education system, etc.).</li> <li>4. Support provided in enhancing coordination and cooperation with external stakeholders involved in the integration process.</li> </ol>



<b>EASO Measure BG 4: Support in the provision of procedural safeguards and improved reception conditions for children and unaccompanied minors</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees
Current situation	<p>The Registration and Reception Centre Banya has been selected to serve as a specialised for UAMs. 10 new small houses are built and have to be furnished and equipped. New staff members are expected to be appointed for social work with children.</p> <p>Challenges exist with regard to the appointment of guardians and foster families as well as in guaranteeing procedural safeguards for children and responding to their particular needs. The Law on Asylum and Refugees is pending revision in this regard. A special module for training of foster families was developed by the Social Support Agency, SAR, UNHCR, etc.</p>
Objective(s)	State Agency for Refugees has enhanced capacity to provide procedural safeguards and improved reception conditions for minors/unaccompanied minors.
Pre-condition(s)	– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.
EASO support	5 activities/ 10 experts/92 calendar days
Implementation	2015: Q2-Q4 2016: Q1
Deliverable (s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Best practice exchange and training delivered in the field of guardianship, Best Interest Determination and reception conditions for children.</li> <li>2. Tools developed and implemented for the enhancement of the situation of children and UAMs in reception centres.</li> <li>3. Educational, recreational and psychosocial activities developed and implemented in the Registration and Reception Centre Banya.</li> <li>4. Specialised training delivered on referral and social support of children and UAMs (SARs staff, social services, NGOs).</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 5: Support with the development, implementation of relevant methodology and training in the field of age assessment</b>	
Responsible authorities	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior, Chief Directorate Border Police including Migration Directorate</p>
Current situation	<p>There are currently only limited procedures in place to assess the age of asylum applicants, and there is a lack of clarity of the responsibilities of different stakeholders in developing a protocol. In general, there is little awareness of the age assessment methods adopted in other Member States.</p> <p>Within the framework of the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, the report “EASO</p>

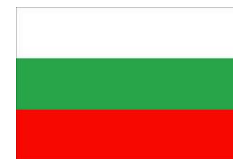


	age assessment practice in Europe” was translated into Bulgarian.
Objective(s)	Enhanced capacity of the relevant stakeholders to use a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach in age assessment and in referring unaccompanied minors to suitable facilities.
Pre-conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– Appointment of a coordination group of the stakeholders involved.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>4 activities / 7 experts / 56 days , 1 travel day each</p> <p>Preparatory meetings in Malta: participation of BG delegates as category A in EASO age assessment-related activities.</p>
Implementation	2015: Q4, 2016: Q1
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Age assessment methodology developed, in line with the “EASO age assessment practice in Europe” report. Supporting activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Mapping to gain an understanding of the end-to-end process and relevant stakeholders involved at each stage of the process, their roles and responsibilities as well as methods employed,</i></li> <li>– <i>Internal review using SWOT analysis,</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Plan drafted for implementation of the age assessment methodology, including specific instructions/guidelines for stakeholders implementing the age assessment methodology.</li> <li>3. Workshops delivered to introduce the age assessment system to the relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>4. Specialized training delivered to social and medical services according to the Asylum Procedures Directive article 25 (5) and the Qualification Directive article 31 (6).</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 6: Support with capacity building in COI</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for the Refugees
Current situation	<p>The Bulgarian COI Unit was established in the end of February 2014 and consists of six persons including the Head of Unit. Tasks of the COI Unit include answering COI queries from caseworkers and Administrative Courts, drafting fact sheets and analytical reports as well as translating information into Bulgarian.</p> <p>Within the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, factsheets on the top countries of origin (Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq and Syria) have been drafted in cooperation with EASO experts and introduced as official COI sources.</p> <p>An inhouse COI database is available with a simple search function. The database stores only answers to COI queries in Bulgarian which are uploaded after an internal</p>



	approval and quality check.
Objective(s)	Enhanced knowledge of COI quality standards and capacity to apply these standards when conducting COI research, answering queries and drawing up COI products.
Pre-condition(s)	– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.
EASO support	4 activities / 8 experts/ 4 calendar days each, 1 travel day each 2 activities / 4 experts/ 5 calendar days each, 1 travel day each Preparatory meetings in Malta: participation of BG delegates as category A in EASO COI-related activities.
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q4, 2016:Q1
Deliverable (s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. COI Unit mission statement drafted, including a clarification of tasks and services provided (e.g. query responses, factsheets, analytical reports and translations).</li> <li>2. Support delivered for the development of a system for timely and efficient provision of information on countries of origin, fulfilling the needs of both caseworkers and Administrative Courts. Such a system may include an analysis of workflows, the creation of standard timeframes and templates for COI queries and the possible development of standard operating procedures (SOPs).</li> <li>3. Capacity development delivered for the regular updating of COI factsheets and the drafting of new ones based on emerging needs.</li> <li>4. Support delivered for the implementation of practical COI research tasks, such as answering requests or drafting COI products, while fully applying the EU quality standards and engaging in high-quality source assessment. (<i>Such support may include e.g. specialised training on research techniques found in the EASO practical guide “Tips and tricks for Online Research”</i>).</li> <li>5. Technical assistance delivered for the enhancement of the in-house COI database. Supporting activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Needs assessment (including an analysis of the existing system and possible alternatives, also taking into account functionalities offered by the EU Common Portal) for the further development of the inhouse COI database (in terms of search functionality, storage options, user friendliness). Based on the result of the needs assessment, a blueprint for further technical improvements is drafted.</i></li> <li>– <i>In cooperation with the BG COI Unit, finalisation of the blueprint and translation of key elements into technical specifications. Support with the draft of an implementation plan (including tasks, timeframe and budget) - taking into consideration resources available.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ol>



<b>EASO Measure BG 7: Support with developing practical training tools for interpreters in the asylum determination procedure</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees
Current situation	Within the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, a training was provided for interpreters in Sofia regarding their role and responsibilities during the asylum interview. Interpreters do not receive an induction training or information materials/tools when they begin their work for the State Agency for Refugees. A Code of Conduct for interpreters exists but is not systematically applied.
Objective(s)	Improved capacity of interpreters to carry out their roles and responsibilities in the asylum interview. Interpreters and case workers with the capacity to train other interpreters in the future.
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will make available the Code of Conduct currently used.</li> <li>– BG will identify a sufficient number of trainers in all registration and reception centres.</li> </ul>
EASO support	1 activity/2 experts/12 calendar days each, 1 travel day each 2 activities/ 4 experts/ 5 calendar days each, 1 travel day each Translation of relevant materials (e.g. glossary)
Implementation	2015: Q2- Q4, 2016: Q1
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SAR induction training and information package for interpreters (including review of existing Code of Conduct and glossaries for major languages) developed in cooperation with experienced interpreters, SAR caseworkers, legal advisors and the Quality Unit.</li> <li>2. Two trainings for interpreters delivered, in which experienced SAR caseworkers and interpreters act as trainers and receive coaching.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 8: Support with the practical application of quality tools in the asylum procedure</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for Refugees
Current situation	<p>At the State Agency for Refugees, a Quality Unit with 6 staff members (also working in the Dublin procedure) is responsible for ensuring quality in the Bulgarian asylum determination procedure.</p> <p>Within the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, support was provided with regard to developing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guidelines for conducting an interview with applicants for international</li> </ol>



	<p>protection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. A check list for conducting an interview</li> <li>3. An interview template</li> <li>4. A decision making template</li> </ol>
Objective(s)	Effective quality management of the BG asylum procedure.
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will make available quality tools currently used.</li> <li>– Ensuring that the support under this measure is consistent with and complements the ongoing work under the EASO Quality Matrix as well as other relevant EASO products.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>3 activities/ 6 experts/ 52 days, 1 travel day each</p> <p>Preparatory meetings in Malta: participation of BG delegates as category A in EASO quality-related activities</p> <p>Translation of relevant EASO materials (especially the EASO quality tools)</p>
Implementation	2015: Q4, 2016: Q1-Q2
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Templates and checklists further refined in line with the Asylum Procedures Directive and Qualification Directive and building on the relevant EASO Quality Tools.</li> <li>2. Support delivered in the systematic and practical application of quality tools.</li> <li>3. Improved quality management system (including relevant tools for monitoring, communication, feedback and casework) developed and implemented.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 9: Support with contingency planning</b>	
Responsible authorities	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior</p>
Current situation	<p>EASO set up an Early Warning and Preparedness System introduced by the Dublin III Regulation, which aims at preventing crises arising from particular pressures on, or internal shortcomings of, national asylum systems. There is a strong need for contingency planning for ensuring that national asylum systems function properly. These elements set the scene for ensuring the further harmonisation of practices and for strengthening solidarity and practical cooperation among the Member States.</p> <p>In April 2014, the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior developed a National plan for increasing the readiness for reacting in case of increased migration flows. The implementation of the plan will continue until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. The Plan is a prolongation of the Action Plan for Managing the Crisis Situation (November 2013</p>





	<p>– April 2014). The main goals set in the new Plan are: 1) decreasing the number of illegal immigrants at the territory of the country and 2) enhancing the capacity for accommodation of foreign nationals and establishing humane living conditions at the accommodation places.</p> <p>In addition, in March 2014, the State Agency for Refugees developed an Action plan in case of an increased migratory flow from Ukraine.</p>
Objective(s)	National preparedness framework/contingency plan operational – in which reception conditions and access to the asylum procedure should be made available as soon as possible, avoiding delays and creation of backlog.
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will make available the national plan for increasing the readiness for reacting in case of increased migration flows.</li> </ul>
EASO support	2 activities/ 4 experts/ 18 calendar days, 1 travel day each
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q3
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National contingency plan developed. Supporting activities include: <i>guidance on the elements of a contingency plan and the institutions which have to take part in its implementation.</i></li> <li>2. Guidance provided as to the analysis and assessment of indicators in order to determine when an emergency situation has come into effect.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 10: Support with regard to training in the EASO Training Curriculum</b>	
Responsible authorities	State Agency for the Refugees
Current situation	<p>In Autumn 2013, SAR strengthened its capacity with 160 new employees. Currently, SAR has 45 caseworkers and 32 registration officers. Several SAR employees have trained as trainers in modules of the EASO Training Curriculum (Inclusion, Interview Techniques, Evidence Assessment and COI), in order to enable SAR to train the new employees by Bulgarian trainers.</p> <p>In the framework of the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, implemented from 01/11/2013 – 30/09/2014, three modules (Inclusion, Interview Techniques and Evidence Assessment) have been translated into Bulgarian. It is foreseen to make all four modules (the above mentioned modules plus Dublin III) available in Bulgarian on the EASO Training Platform. The module Interviewing Vulnerable Persons has been translated in the context of the RVA project in Bulgaria and is available on the EASO Training Platform.</p>
Objective(s)	Strengthened capacity of SAR staff through the support of the EASO Training Curriculum. Improved skills of SAR trainers in delivering training to their colleagues.



Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will notify EASO 20 working days in advance before the commencement of each training session.</li> <li>– The Measure Coordinator/EASO Training NCP should register the trainees, using the registration template provided by EASO.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>Trainings will be provided online and followed by mandatory face-to-face sessions either in Malta for the train-the-trainer session or in Sofia in case of national trainings. Selected modules include the Asylum Procedures Directive Module, COI Module, Dublin Regulation Module, Module for Managers in the area of asylum, Module on Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, Exclusion, CEAS, Module for Reception, International Refugee Law and Fundamental Rights Module and others upon request.</p> <p>Based on the EASO Operating Plan to Bulgaria, the Dublin Regulation Module will be translated into Bulgarian as soon as the revision is finalised. Further modules can be translated in case a national training plan is provided on how to implement the Modules in national trainings.</p> <p>Train-the-trainer sessions in Malta for the employees of SAR: 8 activities/ 16 trainees/ 4 calendar days</p> <p>At least 4 national trainings for the employees of SAR: 4 activities / 4 experts (coaches)/ 3 calendar days including support during e-learning</p> <p>Participation of BG delegates as category A in EASO Training NCP meetings.</p>
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q4, 2016: Q1-Q2
Deliverable (s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National training plan further developed, based on the needs, priorities and available resources of the State Agency for Refugees.</li> <li>2. Train-the-trainers delivered in the EASO Training Curriculum for up to 16 employees of SAR.</li> <li>3. National trainings delivered for SAR employees in the EASO Training Curriculum, in particular the core modules Inclusion, Interview Techniques and Evidence Assessment (with the support of Member State coaches for national BG trainers).</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 11: Support with regard to training in the regulations of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund</b>	
Responsible authorities	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</p>



Current situation	<p>Mol has been appointed as coordinator for the preparation of the multiannual national program. The AMIF National Programme was submitted to the European Commission on 2 September 2014.</p> <p>The Management and Control Systems for AMIF are under development and the competent authorities will be designated. The Mol is likely to be the RA for AMIF.</p>
Objective(s)	Capacity of SAR, Mol and MLSP staff improved in the area of AMIF project awarding, implementation, monitoring and reporting.
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Measure Coordinator.</li> <li>– BG will provide premises for the workshops and a list of participants 20 days before the events begin.</li> </ul>
EASO support	2 activities/ 4 experts/ 16 calendar days, 1 travel day each
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q2
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Training delivered for existing staff from Mol, MLSP and SAR covering the following subjects: the objectives of financial support and general framework for the implementation of eligible actions; the financing of expenditure; partnership, awarding and executing body methods, selection and award procedures, reporting, monitoring and evaluation; management and control systems to be put in place by the Member States; clearance of accounts.</li> <li>2. Workshops delivered for officials of the future Responsible Authority in the field of asylum and integration.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 12: Support with the professional development in 1<sup>st</sup> instance and judicial instance</b>	
Responsible authorities	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior, Chief Directorate Border Police</p> <p>National Institute of Justice</p> <p>Relevant Administrative Courts</p>
Current situation	The responsible authorities are in the process of further strengthening their capacity in the field of asylum.
Objective(s)	Improved capacity of stakeholders involved in asylum-related matters at 1 <sup>st</sup> instance and the judicial instance.
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– BG will appoint a Coordinator by each responsible authority.</li> <li>– Workshop topics to be indicated by responsible authorities.</li> <li>– Training location(s) and further facilities if needed provided by stakeholders national institutions.</li> <li>– One preparation day for EASO experts in Bulgaria</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 20 working days before the start of the workshops/ad-hoc thematic seminars EASO is provided with a list of participants.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>At least 8 workshops/ad-hoc thematic seminars are delivered, duration of each workshop in total, including preparation, up to 6 days each. Workshop topics to be indicated by the responsible authorities.</p> <p>8 activities/ 16 experts / 6 calendar days, 1 travel day each</p> <p>Participation of BG delegates as category A in EASO-thematic related activities.</p>
Implementation	2015: Q1-Q4, 2016: Q1-Q2
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At least 8 tailor-made workshops delivered, covering for instance the following areas: Dublin III procedure, credibility assessment, examination of identity documents, data collection and statistical analysis, CJEU/ECtHR case law, etc.</li> <li>2. Subsequent on-the-job coaching delivered to ensure the practical application of newly acquired knowledge and skills.</li> </ol>

<b>EASO Measure BG 13: Study visits of Bulgarian officials in the field of asylum and reception to EU Member States</b>	
Responsible authorities	<p>State Agency for Refugees</p> <p>Ministry of Interior, Chief Directorate Border Police</p> <p>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy</p> <p>Administrative Courts dealing with the review of asylum cases</p>
Objectives	On-going exchange and cooperation between the Bulgarian authorities and /Courts and other Member States in the field of asylum and reception.
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appointment of a Coordinator by each responsible authority.</li> <li>– Establishing an inter-ministerial coordination group, in case the beneficiaries opt for a common study visit.</li> </ul>
EASO support	<p>EASO will facilitate the contacts between Bulgaria and the Member State(s), in order for improved connection, positioning and visibility of the beneficiaries with their partners in the EU, as well as exchange of best practices on common issues to be achieved.</p> <p>EASO will provide funding and logistical support, including advising on best-practice cases and Member States to be most usefully visited and liaising with those Member States with a view to organize the study visits.</p> <p>4 study visits/ approx. 6 participants per study visit of max. 3 calendar days</p>



Implementation	2015: Q4, 2016: Q1-Q2
Deliverable(s)	Four study visits to allow the personnel of the above mentioned institutions to benefit from the experiences in other Member States, expanding their institutional network and strengthen further their bilateral relations with the relevant institutions in other Member States.

<b>EASO Measure BG 14: Mid-term review and final evaluation of the implementation of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria</b>	
Responsible authority	EASO
Objective(s)	Evaluation of the implementation of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria.
Pre-condition(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appointment of staff responsible for subject-related topics.</li> <li>– Aggregate and summarise the views of the Bulgarian authorities.</li> <li>– Ensure that the evaluation team has access to and has consulted all relevant information sources and documents related to the Special Support Plan.</li> </ul>
EASO support	Involvement of EASO specialised staff 2 activity / 4 experts/ 12 calendar days each, 1 travel day each
Implementation	2015: Q4, 2016: Q2
Deliverable(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completed mid-term evaluation, which will assess the state of play of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria to inform the continued implementation of the Plan.</li> <li>2. Completed final evaluation, which will assess the performance of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria as well as identify key lessons and proposing practical recommendations for follow-up actions.</li> </ol>

#### **4 COOPERATION WITH UNHCR**

In accordance with Article 50 of the EASO Regulation, EASO aims at continuing in a coherent and complementary way the fruitful cooperation with UNHCR. In this framework, in particular in line with its mandate and role in Bulgaria, as well as on-going activities, UNHCR will support relevant measures in the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria and offer complementary support in the context of the implementation of the SSP.

#### **5 FINAL PROVISIONS**

##### **5.1 General reporting provisions**

A reporting system will be established for monitoring the implementation of the Special Support Plan and to define improvements within the Bulgarian asylum procedure so as to assess any further needs or



changes. In particular, the Support Teams will provide a Final Report to EASO via the corresponding template to be found in Annex B.

## **5.2 Incident reporting**

Participants in EASO activities who have reason to believe that a violation of the present Code of Conduct has occurred or is about to occur, are obliged to report the matter to the Executive Director of EASO and to the Host Member State Coordinator for the Special Support Plan via the appropriate channels.

Any accidents that may occur throughout the participation of experts in the Support Teams shall be reported through the same channels. Incident reporting templates can be found at Annex C.

## **ANNEXES**

**Annex A: Legal Basis**

**Annex B: Format for the Final Report**

**Annex C: Incident reporting template**

**Annex D: Special Support Background**

**Annex E: Generic template for products developed in the context of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria**

**Annex F: EASO Special Support Plan - Code of Conduct for participants**



## Annex A: Legal Basis

(1) EASO was established to improve the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, to strengthen practical cooperation among Member States on asylum and to provide and coordinate the provision of operational support to Member States subject to particular pressure on their asylum and reception systems.

(2) Regulation 439/2010, of 19 May 2010, establishing EASO ("EASO Regulation"), in particular, in Article 2 (1), (3), (4) and (5) thereof, regulates EASO's duty to provide special support to Member States with specific needs, in order to improve their implementation of the instruments of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

(3) In this context, EASO shall support Member States in enhancing their asylum systems' effectiveness and quality by outlining and implementing tailor-made actions and measures. EASO shall fulfil this purpose in conditions that enable it to serve as an independent centre for expertise providing high quality support. EASO shall work closely with the Member States' asylum authorities, with immigration and asylum services and other national authorities, such as members of the courts and tribunals.

The scope of this special support allows defining different measures and actions within the duties foreseen in EASO's mandate. In order to provide effective support to Member States with special and specific needs, these measures range from training to Country of Origin Information (COI), from information gathering and analysis to the application of the Dublin system.

(4) With regard to data collection and analysis, Article 11 of the EASO Regulation stipulates that EASO shall gather and analyse information provided from Member States. On the other hand, Regulation 862/2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection obliges Member States to collect and provide several statistics on international protection.

Hence, in order to strengthen the effectiveness of Member States in providing information, EASO shall support their data collection and analysis capacity.

(5) Regarding COI, EASO shall offer training regarding the production and use of COI, in accordance with Article 6 (4) (e) of the EASO Regulation. Moreover, Article 4 (d) of the EASO Regulation assigns EASO the duty of developing a common format and a common methodology for presenting, verifying and using COI.

Furthermore, Article 4 (3) of Directive 2011/95 of 13 December 2011, on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted ("Qualification Directive") foresees that the assessment of an application for international protection should take into account relevant COI. Moreover, according to Article 8 (2) of the Qualification Directive, Member States shall ensure that precise and up-to-date information is obtained from relevant sources, such as EASO and UNHCR. On the other hand, Articles 23, 30, 31 of Directive 2005/85 of 1 December 2005, on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status, refer to information relating to country of origin.

Consequently, EASO shall support Member States with specific needs regarding their capacity to optimise the use of COI in their decision making process.

(6) Concerning training to the members of the courts and tribunals, Article 6 of the EASO Regulation foresees that EASO shall establish and develop training available to members of courts and tribunals.



The training may be general, specific or thematic and may include "train-the-trainer" methodology. It may address, among others, issues relating to international human rights and the EU asylum Acquis, the handling of asylum applications or the use of legal reports in asylum procedures.

(7) The Dublin system lays down the rules to determine which Member State is responsible for the examination of an application for asylum. It also establishes the procedures to be applied by Member States to request another Member State to acknowledge its responsibility and “take charge” (or “take back”, according to the situation) an applicant.

EASO shall support Member States with specific needs in order to improve their application of the Dublin system and procedures, according to Article 2 (1) and 6 (4) of the EASO Regulation.





## Annex B: Format for the Final Report

### EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria

Measure no [X]	<i>[please insert title]</i>		
EASO Measure Coordinator	<i>[name and surname]</i>	Bulgarian Measure Coordinator	<i>[name and surname]</i>
Expert(s)	<i>[name and surname]</i>	Date of submission	<i>[submission of the report]</i>
Expertise area	<i>[profile]</i>	Time-frame	<i>[date of participation]</i>
Member State(s)	<i>[X]</i>		

Background and introduction *(please provide an overview of the current situation, synergies with other measures and how this measure has contributed to the enhancement of the specific area)*

Specific objectives and deliverables agreed to prior to the participation

- 
- 
- 

Description of activities *(please identify stakeholders and deliverables for each activity)*

- 
- 
- 

Concrete products delivered *(please list the products for each activity)*

- 
- 
-



Coordination with BG, EASO and other relevant stakeholders (*e.g. briefings, follow up meetings, debriefings etc.*)

- 
- 
- 

Recommendation(s) and advice(s) for possible next steps (*SMART formulated*)

- 
- 
- 

Observations and challenges (*please refer to any challenges encountered during the mission as well as any challenges foreseen at the implementation phase*)

- 
- 
- 

Suggestions/Roadmap for implementation (*including timeframe, potential follow-up missions with suggested dates and deliverables, and availability for post-participation consultation*)

- 
- 
- 

**Annex:**

---

- Technical reports/deliverables



## Annex C: Incident reporting template

Article 19 of the EASO Code of Conduct for experts participating in EASO activities states that:

*"Participants in EASO activities who have reason to believe that a violation of the present Code of Conduct has occurred or is about to occur, are obliged to report the matter to the Executive Director of the EASO and to the host Member State focal point for the EASO Special Support Plan via the appropriate channels."*

Should such an incident should occur, or if other incidents need to be reported, please fill the present form.

<b>Name of expert:</b>
<b>Type of incident:</b>
<b>Full description of the incident:</b>
<b>Area Deployed:</b>
<b>Date of incident/accident:</b>
<b>Time of incident/accident:</b>
<b>Describe what activity was taking place, e.g. training, working, etc.</b>
<b>Were any of the following contacted?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Police: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></li><li>• Ambulance: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></li></ul>



- Parent/carer: Yes  No

**What happened following the incident?**

**All of the above facts are a true and accurate record of the incident/accident.**

**SIGNED:**

**DATE:**

**NAME:**



## Annex D

### Special Support

#### Background

#### What is special support?

- Tailor made support
- Capacity building
- Relocation

*Regulation 439/2010, of 19 May 2010, establishing EASO, defines EASO's role to provide special support to Member States with specific needs, in order to improve their implementation of the instruments of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).*

#### How does it work?

A Member State, with certain identified and specific needs for its asylum and/or reception system, may send a written request to EASO for special support. The request must always come from the Member State in need, and addressed to the EASO Executive Director (ED).

Upon receipt of the request, ED assesses the request and makes the decision on whether or not to render the support to the requesting Member State. The assessment will be based on various sources, which include information provided by the Member State, the EASO Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS), the EASO quality process, and any other additional available information. ED may also send EASO experts to assess the situation in the requesting Member State.

After the assessment the ED shall take a definitive decision on the request for special support.

Once a positive decision is made, ED and the requesting Member State agree on an EASO Special Support Plan (SSP), which is tailor made and describes the objectives, the methodology, the activities and the expected results. Both parties sign the SSP.

ED informs the Management Board (MB) members of the request and the main reasons for the decision to accept/reject it. The SSP itself will be shared with MB members. The requesting Member State and ED will agree on how and when to communicate the decision on Special Support (not the EASO Special Support Plan itself) both to other relevant stakeholders and the public at large.

ED informs the MB on the outcome of the SSP one month after end of operations at the latest.



## **Annex E: Generic template for products developed in the context of the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria**

### **Table of Contents**

#### **Introduction**

- Background and current situation.
- Context – EASO Special Support Plan measure; brief outline of objectives; previous/on-going assistance provided in the field and synergies with other activities under the EASO Special Support Plan.
- Statistical overview.
- Intended stakeholders – Direct, and indirect users/stakeholders of the report.
- Purpose of the product – How the product can support the establishment of the Greek asylum system/ reception system.
- Methodology – Including consultation with Greek staff and other relevant stakeholders.

#### **Legal framework**

- International law and principles
- Relevant EU legislation
- National legislation

#### **Technical recommendations/guidance**

##### **Implementation plan**

- Identification and cooperation with relevant stake-holders (other Services, EASO, civil society)
- Identification of potential funding opportunities (when applicable)
- Detailed implementation plan (including specific timeframes)
- Reference to necessary training
- Reference to the adoption of operational guidelines, forms and procedures
- Review and quality mechanisms

#### **Appendix**

- Reference materials



## **Annex F: EASO Special Support Plan Code of Conduct for participants**

### **EASO CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARTICIPATING IN EASO ACTIVITIES**

#### **CHAPTER I - GENERAL PROVISIONS**

##### Article 1

##### Objectives, scope and subject matter

1. The present Code of Conduct aims to promote professional values based on the principles of the rule of law and the respect of fundamental rights and to establish the ethical behavioural standards that guide all persons participating in EASO support activities in Bulgaria.
2. In this regard it sets out principles and rules that guide the conduct of all persons participating in EASO activities in Bulgaria.

##### Article 2

##### Definitions

For the purpose of the present Code, the following definitions apply:

- a) The term “participant” refers to any person participating in EASO activities.
- b) The term “EASO activities” means any activity co-ordinated or led by EASO within the framework of its tasks as described in EASO Regulation and accompanying the EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria.
- c) The term “Member State” also includes those countries which have concluded agreements with the Union by virtue of which they have adopted and apply the law of the Union in the field covered by EASO Regulation and where those countries are participating in activities in Bulgaria as described under the EASO Special Support Plan.
- d) The term “host Member State” refers to the Member State where participants are deployed under the EASO, namely Bulgaria.
- e) The term “discrimination” means any unfair treatment or arbitrary action or distinction based on a person’s sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or and other opinion, membership of a minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- f) The term “harassment” means any improper or unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected to be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

#### **CHAPTER II - PRINCIPLES**

##### Article 3



#### Lawfulness

1. Participants in EASO activities serve the public interest and shall comply with international law, European Union law, the national law of both home and host Member States and the present Code of Conduct.
2. They shall also meet the obligations imposed on them by the provisions stated in EASO Regulation, the accompanying EASO Special Support Plan to Bulgaria or other similar agreed rules.

#### Article 4

##### Fundamental Rights

Participants in EASO activities shall:

- a) At all times, promote and respect human dignity and the fundamental rights of every individual, regardless of their sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- b) Promote compliance with the relevant international and European instruments regarding fundamental rights protection.

#### Article 5

##### Close cooperation

- a) The experts participating in EASO activities shall work in hosting Member States in compliance with the EASO Special Support Plan.
- b) On taking up duty, participants in EASO activities will cooperate with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), other EU bodies such as the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex) and the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Commission and the Member States.

#### Article 6

##### International Protection

Participants in EASO activities shall:

- a) Promote, in full compliance with the principle of *non refoulement*, that persons seeking international protection are recognised, receive adequate assistance, are informed, in an appropriate way, about their rights and relevant procedures and are referred to the national authorities responsible for receiving the asylum requests;
- b) Give special consideration to particularly vulnerable groups of people, including women, unaccompanied minors, disabled persons susceptible to exploitation and victims of exploitation or trafficking in human beings;
- c) Ensure that where necessary persons in the asylum procedure that require healthcare are referred to the national authorities and are given access to healthcare in accordance with the provisions and laws of the host Member State.

#### Article 7





## Performance of Duties

Participants in EASO activities shall ensure that instructions, directives and required duties are carried out promptly and diligently.

### Article 8

#### Responsibility

Participants in EASO activities are individually responsible for the way in which they perform their work.

### Article 9

#### Conflict of interests

To perform their duties properly, participants in EASO activities shall refrain from any activities which would undermine or compromise their independence and the appropriate performance of their duties.

### Article 10

#### Confidentiality

- 1 Confidential or sensitive information in the possession of a participant of EASO activities shall not be publicly disclosed, including in social media or environment, unless the performance of duty or the needs of justice strictly require disclosure or disclosure has been appropriately authorised.
- 2 Participants shall not relay information or express personal opinions or facts regarding EASO activities in the media unless the Executive Director of the EASO gives explicit authorisation.
- 3 Participants are bound by the obligation to behave with discretion regarding current, past and planned or potential EASO activities.

### Article 11

#### Behavioural standards

Participants in EASO activities whether on or off duty shall:

- a) Abstain from all behaviour likely to compromise the prestige and the nature of the public mission in which they are invested or to bring discredit upon their organisation, the host Member State or the EASO.
- b) Act with fairness and impartiality in their dealings with the public and other participants in EASO activities, treating all with courtesy and respect, avoiding all forms of victimisation or discrimination, bearing in mind the diverse nature of people, including backgrounds, and/or origin;
- c) Abstain from actions contrary to the public order;
- d) Refrain from using vulgar, obscene or otherwise offensive speech or gestures that could be considered abusive towards other participants in EASO activities or the public.

## **CHAPTER III - PROHIBITED CONDUCTS**

### Article 12

#### Abuse of authority



All improper use of a position of influence, power or authority is forbidden.

Article 13

Discrimination

All discriminatory behaviours as defined in Article 2(f) towards the public or other participants in EASO activities are forbidden.

Article 14

Harassment

All forms of harassment as defined in Article 2(g) are forbidden.

Article 15

Corruption

1. The use of public position for illegitimate private gains as well as the acceptance of unjustified rewards for actions taken in EASO activities is forbidden.
2. Consent to any form of corrupt activity is forbidden.

Article 16

Use of narcotics and drugs

The use or possession of narcotics and drugs, unless prescribed for medical purposes is forbidden.

Article 17

Consumption of alcohol

The consumption of alcohol while on duty is forbidden.

Article 18

Civil and criminal liability

In accordance with Article 21 and 22 of EU Regulation No. 439/2010, establishing the European Asylum Support Office, participants from Member States shall be subject to the provisions contained therein on civil and criminal liability.

**CHAPTER IV - FINAL PROVISIONS**

Article 19

Reporting

Participants in EASO activities who have reason to believe that a violation of the present Code of Conduct has occurred or is about to occur, are obliged to report the matter to the Executive Director of the EASO and to the host Member State focal point for the EASO Special Support Plan via the appropriate channels.

Article 20

Sanctions



1. In the case of violation of the present Code of Conduct by a participating member of EASO staff, the Executive Director of the EASO will take adequate measures that may include the immediate removal of the deployed EASO staff member from their current activities under the EASO Special Support Plan.
2. If a participant committed the violation from a Member State, the Executive Director will inform the Member State and can immediately remove the person concerned from the EASO activity. It is expected that the relevant authority of the Member State will use its own powers regarding the necessary disciplinary measures and, if applicable, to remove the person concerned from the respective EASO intervention pool for a defined period.