

## PRESS RELEASE

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## EASO Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2012

***335,365 asylum applications in the EU; Applicants from Afghanistan continued to be the most numerous overall in the EU (28,005); Overall EU protection rate rises to 28 %; Highest recognition rates were noted for citizens of Syria, Eritrea, Mali and Somalia; Greece, Luxembourg, Sweden and Italy formally requested support from EASO in 2012;***

Today EASO released its Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2012. The Report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation of asylum in the EU, by looking at flows of applicants for international protection to the EU, analysing application and decision data, and focusing on some of the most important countries of origin of applicants for international protection in 2012. In particular, the report focuses on three asylum flows that underline the very different characteristics of asylum applicants in the EU: Afghanistan, Syria and Western Balkans countries.

**In 2012 there were 335,365 asylum applications in the EU.** This means that asylum applications in the EU increased by 11% (when compared to 2011). Of these, 260 575 were ‘new’ applicants for international protection (a 1 % increase compared to 256 945 in 2011)<sup>1</sup>, which means that a significant proportion of the increase was determined by an increase in subsequent applications (i.e. those made by persons already having made an application for international protection in the EU).

Applicants from **Afghanistan** continued to be the most numerous overall in the EU (28,005) and included large numbers of unaccompanied minors. In 2012 EASO produced two expert reports on Afghanistan.

**Syria** showed the largest increase in applications (206% compared to 2011). This was due to the deteriorating security situation in Syria over the course of the year. In this context, EASO organized a network of experts with the EU Member States, to pool expertise and to be prepared for such an influx. In 2012, there were over 95% of applications from Syrian citizens being accepted by EU Member States.

The report underlines, however, that when summed together, applicants from the six **Western Balkans countries**<sup>2</sup>, continued to represent the highest number of applications made in the EU for asylum (more than Afghanistan and Syria combined), despite the fact that Member States judged such

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<sup>1</sup> These figures do not include AT, HU, IT and PT. A new applicant is one who has never previously made an application for international protection in the country of destination.

<sup>2</sup> Kosovo, FYROM, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina

applications to well-founded in only 4% of cases overall. EASO will publish a comprehensive report on the Western Balkans in the second half of this year.

Some 9 % more decisions in first instance were taken than in the previous year (260,425), and the overall protection rate at first instance rose to 28 % (71,700 positive decisions granting international or national protection status). The highest recognition rates were noted for citizens of Syria, Eritrea, Mali and Somalia.

The report also highlights major developments with regard to EU/national policy, legislative changes and jurisprudence (the *acquis* and their interpretation) and provides insight into the practical functioning of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by observing developments relating to the different stages of the asylum procedure (from access to procedure to return). In this context, asylum reception and detention conditions and policy in Member States continued to be a challenging area.

In 2012, Member States experienced large variations in asylum flows to their country (when compared to the previous year): Nine Member States faced variations of greater than 45% (plus or minus) compared to the previous year in 2012. Such large variations make long-term planning difficult. Nevertheless, many Member States, made improvements to their asylum systems, instituting quality control systems, improved IT case management tools and better use of Country of Origin Information (COI) in decision-making.

In some cases, EASO received direct requests for assistance with various aspects of Member States' asylum systems: Four Member States (Greece, Luxembourg, Sweden and Italy) formally requested support from the Agency in 2012 in areas including training, COI and statistics.

The EASO Annual Report also serves as a useful tool for national and EU policy-makers helping to identify areas where improvement is most needed (and thus where EASO and other key stakeholders should focus their future efforts), in line with its declared purpose of improving the quality, consistency and effectiveness of the CEAS.

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## Annex: Background on EASO Activities in 2012

On 17 June, EASO published its Annual Activity Report. The report highlights the main activities which EASO performed last year. 2012 was the first full operational year for EASO. EASO's mission is to organise and coordinate operational cooperation and to provide support in the area of asylum. During 2012, the agency has grown from 18 to 58 members of staff. EASO took office in the definitive premises in Valletta Harbour on 3 September 2012. The budget of EASO for 2012 was EUR 10 million. What did EASO do in 2012 to reach its goal of supporting Member States in the area of asylum?

First, EASO continued with its emergency operations in Greece, via the deployment of experts from Member States. In 2012, 37 asylum support teams were deployed to Greece. Moreover, EASO and UNHCR launched a project on administrative appeals and backlog management in Greece. Secondly, EASO further developed its work on a number of projects related to EASO Training, Common Country of Origin Information, Quality and the Interpreters' Pool (which is transformed in the List of Available Languages). Thirdly, EASO dedicated many of its resources in building up its organisation, to reach financial independence and to move to the definitive premises in Valletta's Grand Harbour. Below is a snapshot of some of the many activities that EASO performed in 2012 in the area of asylum:

- 14 train-the-trainer sessions
- Special training sessions in Luxembourg and Greece
- 160 trainers trained by EASO
- 1146 asylum officials trained in the EU
- 9 training modules up-dated
- Worked to secure quality in asylum processes in all Member States
- 3 Country of Origin reports (2 on Afghanistan, 1 on the methodology of such reports)
- 16 Country of Origin meetings with participants from Member States
- 3 practical cooperation workshops with participants from Member States, e.g. on the asylum situation of Syria and Afghanistan;
- Annual Report on the situation of asylum in the EU and on the activities of EASO(2011)
- 4 Unaccompanied Minors expert meetings
- Special support plan with Sweden signed
- Special support to Italy (planning stage)
- Evaluation report on intra-EU relocation projects
- EASO emergency support to Greece and Luxembourg
- Early warning and Preparedness System further developed and quarterly asylum trend analysis reports produced
- Resettlement seminar
- Consultative Forum and consultations with civil society on EASO's asylum work

The report can be found on the EASO website by clicking this link: <http://easo.europa.eu/news/easo-publication/>