

## 27th Management Board takes stock of implementation of recently signed Operational Plans

***On 27 and 28 February 2018, the 27th meeting of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) took place in Valletta, Malta to take stock of the implementation of the Agency's operational support in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Italy. The meeting also discussed management and administrative issues.***

The Management Board meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Wolfgang Taucher, also focused its discussions on the latest asylum trends in the EU+ as well as the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

Members of the Management Board, which represents all of the Member States in the EU+, as well as the European Commission and UNHCR, discussed the implementation of the new Operational Plans that were signed between EASO, Greece, and Italy, respectively, as well as the updated Special Support Plan (SSP) that was signed with Cyprus, in December 2017. These Plans provide a mandate for EASO's operational support activities for the asylum authorities in the three countries throughout 2018.

The Operational Plan signed with Greece sustains EASO's existing activities, including supporting the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, Dublin processing and capacity-building through training and workshops. In parallel, the Operational Plan signed with Italy has added a new dimension to EASO's activities in the country by mandating the Agency to have an enhanced role in supporting with the handling of registration of applications for international protection, including through the preparation of files in the National Asylum procedure. This measure aims at relieving some of the pressures on the Italian Asylum System. Similarly, the extension of the SSP with Cyprus provides for EASO to support backlog management and in the field of reception and open accommodation.

The Management Board also discussed the asylum trends for 2017, which were released by EASO in January on a [newly enhanced interactive portal](#). Amongst numerous findings, EASO revealed that the EU+ received 43% fewer asylum applications in 2017 than 2016. Syria remained the most common country of origin of applicants, with more than 98,000 applications. Together with Iraqi, Afghan and Nigerian nationals, these four main countries of origin constituted one in three applications throughout the EU+ in 2017. During the meeting, the Management Board also discussed the latest asylum findings from January 2018, which will be published in the coming days.

The meeting also held an exchange on the state of play regarding the functioning of the Dublin system as well as ongoing preparations for the future transition of EASO into the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA). Once the EUAA Regulation is adopted, the Agency will see its mandate and responsibilities

significantly enhanced, while the Management Board will also take on new roles.