



Lines to take

Ward Lutin participation in IARMJ-Africa Chapter 2022 Conference

Date: 16 November 2022
Time: 09.00-10.30
Location: Arusha, Tanzania

Lines to Take (Opening address 15')

Introduction

- Your excellencies, distinguished judges, honorable guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.
- Thank you for inviting me today to this Regional Conference, I am honoured to speak to you on behalf of the European Union Agency for Asylum.
- I would like specially to thank the African Chapter of the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges, and the president of your association in particular, Judge Mlambo, as well as UNHCR for the invitation.
- I would like also to thank the Government of Tanzania for hosting the Conference. It is very nice to be in such a beautiful country.
- I will take this opportunity to speak briefly about the work of the Agency and the current cooperation and projects we have with non-EU countries, with a particular reference to the cooperation with judges.

The EUAA mandate


- With the entering into force of the new regulation on 19 January 2022, **EASO became the EUAA: a fully-fledge European Union asylum agency** mandated with supporting Member States in applying the package of EU laws that governs asylum, international protection and reception conditions, known as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).
- This was an important and long-awaited change for the Agency that addresses various challenges we have been facing.
- The Agency facilitates, coordinates and strengthens **practical cooperation** among Member States on asylum issues.
- To that end, the Agency delivers both **operational support** to Member States under pressure, and the EUAA provides numerous permanent support to all Member States.
- In terms of Operational support, the EUAA implements targeted measures in Italy, Greece and Cyprus to provide direct support to their courts and tribunals dealing with asylum cases.



- If I look at our permanent support, we support all Member States with the implementation of the CEAS. In this respect, convergence, meaning ensuring that a similar case receives a similar outcome regardless of where the application is lodged, remains a key goal. And much of the Agency's work aims at enhancing this, including at the appeal stage.
- The EUAA also deliver **trainings** of national asylum and reception officials with the aim of ensuring a common high-level application of CEAS standards.
- We already have some 30 training modules available, both introductory and advanced ones, which have been delivered to over 50,000 participants.
- We are now working towards developing an Asylum Training Academy, to further enhance the value of the training we provide.
- **Supporting judges is crucial to achieving a truly Common European Asylum System** and decisions taken by courts and tribunals are paramount in the further shaping of the asylum acquis as they support convergence and ensure consistency in the implementation of the Common European Asylum System. Therefore, the Agency, has, in addition to training for 1st instances, **a specific mandate to support judicial training in the field of asylum.**
- As I will highlight shortly, the IARMJ is a key partner in achieving this, including, as shown by today's conference, in the external action of the European Union.
- With the entering into force of the new regulation, the Agency has **strengthened mandate on external dimension and is equipped with new tools to engage with Partner Countries**, including the possibility to deploy Liaison Officers (LOs).
- LOs could bring coordination with actors in the region and contribute to the establishment of protection-sensitive migration management and, as appropriate, facilitate the access to legal pathways to the Union for persons in need of protection including through resettlement.

The EUAA external action

- Linking with this last point, the **EUAA external action and the cooperation with Third Countries** is a strategically important part of our mandate and an area of growing importance.
- In line with the EUAA External Cooperation Strategy, EUAA current engagement in TC is **based on two pillars**, Third Country Support and Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, and concerns four geographical priority areas: Western Balkans, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
- EUAA support to third countries is currently of a **capacity-development nature**, where we assist in developing and/or aligning asylum-related legislation with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) where appropriate, and in supporting the authorities to establish the necessary



structures, procedures and professional knowledge to implement them correctly.

- In providing support to partner third countries, the EUAA takes both a **bilateral and regional approach**. At the bilateral level, the cooperation is currently framed through 'Roadmaps for Cooperation', which are agreed by the EUAA and the partner country concerned, and which are based on a joint needs assessment and designed through a participatory approach.
- In the **Western Balkans**, the EUAA is implementing **six roadmaps for cooperation** with the authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while in **Turkey** we are implementing our fourth roadmap.
- In the **MENA region**, the Agency is implementing a Roadmap with Egypt (2021-2024) and is also working on **possible tailored support to Niger** within the framework of the UNHCRs Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG).
- As part of the EU-Morocco revived migration dialogue, we are also exploring further possibilities of re-starting cooperation with Morocco.
- In relation to the regional approach, in November 2020, the EUAA started a **three-year Regional Pilot Project for North Africa and Niger** under the framework of the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) North Africa.
- The aim is to reinforce exchanges on international protection between EU+ and RDPP NA countries and identifying common needs that can be addressed at regional level, with the support of EUMS experts, through capacity building activities.
- **One of the needs identified** among most countries in the region was to have efficient and robust appeal systems and to **further exchange at regional level on the role of judges** in the asylum procedures.
- Today, the **EUAA is proud to support the IARMJ Africa Chapter once again** and this time **within the framework of the EUAA regional pilot project for North Africa and Niger**.
- On this I am glad to say that in the past years we have already successfully supported judges in the region and also cooperated with IARMJ Africa Chapter in other Regional Conferences.
- This opportunity, gives the Agency the chance to continue providing support activities aimed at bolstering the day-to-day work of members of courts and tribunals also in North Africa and Niger, reinforcing their expertise and knowledge.
- **On the 18 November in the afternoon, my colleagues will deliver a workshop** for judges supported by the Agency where they will have the chance to jointly discuss current needs, priorities and opportunities for cooperation in the future, also with IARMJ and UNHCR. Our aim is to identify how the regional pilot project can be used to further exchange at regional level on the role of judges in the asylum procedures.

IARMJ Europe Chapter-EUAA cooperation

- **The work the Agency is doing to support members of courts and tribunals** is conducted by a dedicated sector based in our headquarters in Malta, a pool of judicial experts from across the European Union and the **EUAA Courts and Tribunals Network**.
- This only judicial network within the Agency comprises of 35 representatives including from national courts and tribunals, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Human Rights, UNHCR, and, together with other judicial associations, the IARMJ.
- In this context, allow me to highlight the **strong cooperation between your association's European Chapter and the EUAA**.
- The Agency's cooperation with judges reviewing asylum cases was initiated already some ten years ago.
- The IARMJ was among the very first stakeholders that we started to work with to support members of courts and tribunals in the field of international protection.
- Since then, the Agency has gradually established itself as a key partner in the field. This is thanks to a long process of building mutual trust based on a respect for the independence of courts and tribunals, and a thorough understanding of the role of the EUAA towards the judiciary.
- **My colleague, Paul Leplomb, will focus later today on judicial independence** and how it shapes the tools and activities we are developing for members of courts and tribunals. The role of the IARMJ, in this respect, remains crucial.

Conclusion

- To conclude, let me stress that **the support to the development of the expertise of the judges in asylum law**, in cooperation with the relevant national stakeholders, is **an integral part of the EUAA's mandate**.
- Supporting judges is indeed crucial to achieving an effective asylum system and decisions taken by courts and tribunals are paramount in the further shaping of the asylum acquis.
- I am pleased and proud that the Agency has, over the years, established itself as a key partner in supporting asylum judges across the European Union and I am looking forward to further strengthen our cooperation also with non-EU countries.
- We have established a strong and fruitful cooperation between IARMJ and EUAA and I look forward to maintaining and expanding that relationship in the years to come, especially with the Agency's new mandate in hand.
- To that note, I wish you all a very productive conference.