



Strategy on Digital Innovation

EUAA Strategy on Digital Innovation in Asylum Procedures and Reception Systems

September 2023

On 19 January 2022 the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.



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List of abbreviations

Term	Definition
ADIG	Asylum Digital Innovation Group
AI	artificial intelligence
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	country of origin information
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
EUAA regulation	Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021).
Europol	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
EU	European Union
EU+ countries	Member States of the European Union and associated countries
GDISC	General Directors of Immigration Services Conference
IGC	Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
LADO	Language assessment for the determination of origin
Member States	Member States of the European Union
SPD	single programming document
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



Introduction

The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA or Agency), established by Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 ⁽¹⁾, has a mandate to strengthen practical cooperation on asylum and reception among the EU+ countries, to enhance the implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and to support Member States whose asylum and reception systems are under particular pressure. The successful implementation of the CEAS primarily depends on the EU Member States and their asylum and reception systems, which the EUAA continuously supports, in line with its mandate.

Digital innovation in the context of this strategy means the improvement of asylum processes and reception systems through the digitalisation of analogue processes, or their further improvement through digital tools and dematerialisation. Both the enhancement of a digital office environment in general (not specific to asylum and reception) and the improvement of processes that have no link to digitalisation fall outside the scope of this strategy.

Digital innovation and technological advancement have been in the focus of EU+ countries and the Agency for some time. The COVID-19 pandemic offered tailwind to a wave of digitalisation efforts that had already begun in 2015-2016. In 2020-2021, the Agency recorded, catalogued and shared pilot practices tested by the asylum authorities to overcome social distancing and travel barriers ⁽²⁾. The Agency offered guidelines on remote interviewing and registration of asylum seekers, transformed its training delivery format to offer additional remote training solutions and introduced remote interviewing and assisted remote translating capacity within its operations. However, the EUAA's mandate is broader: it requires a more active involvement that should go beyond mapping the fragmented and ad hoc investments in digitalisation made by the individual EU+ countries ⁽³⁾. This enhanced mandate requires the EUAA to build adequate internal capacity to be able to assist in the digitalisation of the CEAS so that any effort in this sense can flow into both permanent and operational support. This internal capacity requires a common vision and a choice of priorities. The EUAA thus needs to step up its internal capacity and become proactive rather than reactive in enhancing its preparedness for incoming requests for support, but also to assist EU+ countries through permanent support in enhancing their own digitalisation preparedness.

There is a variety of roles that the EUAA could take up vis-à-vis the digitalisation of the asylum and reception domain. These include acting as a catalyst of change, as a facilitator, as a disseminator of technology, as a pioneer and developer, or as a service provider ⁽⁴⁾.

In February 2021, an intra-Agency Asylum Digital Innovation Group (ADIG) and a supervising steering committee were set up to exchange information on digital innovative tools under

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/2303 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2021 on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (OJ L 468, 30.12.2021).

⁽²⁾ See EASO, [The digitalisation of asylum processes – Fact sheet](#), 2021.

⁽³⁾ This is in line with European Council Conclusions adopted in 1 and 2 October 2020, as far as the enhanced strategic importance of digitalisation is concerned. See <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13-2020-INIT/en/pdf>.

⁽⁴⁾ Migration Policy Institute workshop conclusions.

development within the EUAA and in EU+ countries, and to prepare a digital innovation strategy.

This EUAA strategy on digital innovation in asylum procedures and reception systems (the strategy) proposes a comprehensive effort for the EUAA to enhance the effectiveness of the CEAS by supporting (when there is EU added value) EU+ countries in a meaningful digital transformation of asylum processes and facilitating the exchange of technology solutions. In this perspective, the Agency is to become a centre of expertise in digital transformation of asylum and reception processes.

The strategy provides a vision on how the EUAA could become such a centre of expertise and proposes an actionable programme to reach this goal.

The strategy takes into consideration the enhanced mandate of the EUAA ⁽⁵⁾ in its roles and responsibilities and is in line with the EU global strategy goals ⁽⁶⁾.

The strategy aims to identify and facilitate synergies among EU+ countries' digitalisation efforts and to facilitate the exchange of innovative tools and practices. There is no intention to build a collection of personal data from asylum seekers in Europe thus replacing Member State's systems.

The strategy was presented to the ADIG steering committee in November 2021⁽⁷⁾ and, after revision, on 20 June 2022. Following discussions, the strategy has been endorsed by the EUAA Management Board on 25 September 2023.

⁽⁵⁾ EUAA Regulation, Article 21 'Migration management support teams' and Article 35 EUAA Regulation 'Cooperation with third countries'

⁽⁶⁾ See EEAS, [*Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe*](#), 2016.

⁽⁷⁾ Two workshops organised by the Migration Policy Institute in October 2021 also contributed to the discussion.

Legal framework

This strategy proposes a course of action based on the mandate given by the EUAA regulation.

Independent centre of expertise

The Agency shall be a centre of expertise by virtue of its independence, the scientific and technical quality of the assistance it provides and the information it collects and disseminates, the transparency of its operating procedures and methods, its diligence in performing the tasks assigned to it, and the information technology support needed to fulfil its mandate. ⁽⁸⁾

Becoming a centre of expertise is particularly challenging in a domain which is evolving as dynamically as asylum and reception digitalisation is. Therefore, the Agency needs to develop its capacities progressively, maximising efforts and focusing on the added value of similar activities of EU+ countries running in parallel.

Permanent support

One of the key tasks of the Agency is to provide technical support, not restricted to countries that are under particular pressure. Its tasks include to ‘facilitate, coordinate and strengthen practical cooperation and information exchange among Member States on their asylum and reception systems’ ⁽⁹⁾. The Agency is also responsible for training and development, producing country of origin information, coordinating the development of common analyses on the situation in countries of origin, and developing common operational standards, indicators and guidelines while monitoring the operational and technical application of the CEAS. All these areas can benefit from specific support through innovative digital tools.

The role of the Agency in collecting and distributing information and facilitating exchange in this field is of critical importance. The EUAA’s strategic placement at the nexus of the implementation of the CEAS makes it an ideal player to facilitate the spreading of best practices and innovative tools as well as to promote the creation of coalitions among EU+ countries to invest into the joint development of digital asylum and reception projects.

Operational support

The EUAA regulation envisages that the EUAA may have its own technical equipment to ‘deploy the necessary technical equipment for asylum support teams and deploy experts from the asylum reserve pool’ ⁽¹⁰⁾. It is important to underline that the EUAA’s capacity is supposed to be subsidiary, complementing the equipment deployed by the host Member State:

⁽⁸⁾ Article 1(3) EUAA regulation.

⁽⁹⁾ Article 2(1)(a) EUAA regulation.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Recital (31) EUAA regulation

to ensure that the asylum support teams, including experts deployed from the asylum reserve pool, are able to perform their tasks effectively with the means necessary, the Agency should be able to acquire or lease technical equipment. This should not, however, affect the obligation of host Member States to supply the facilities and equipment necessary for the Agency to be able to provide the required operational and technical assistance. ⁽¹¹⁾

The EUAA Management Board must be consulted regarding the purchase of equipment, including its financial implications:

Any acquisition or leasing of equipment shall be preceded by a thorough needs and cost/benefit analysis. Any such expenditure shall be provided for in the Agency's budget as adopted by the Management Board and in accordance with the financial rules applicable to the Agency. ⁽¹²⁾

The regulation also touches on the operational side of support, requiring 'instructions for the asylum support teams, including as regards the national and European databases that they are authorised to consult and the equipment that they may use or carry in the host Member State. ⁽¹³⁾

External cooperation

Dedicated funding is envisaged for capacity building activities outside of EU+ countries.

The Agency may benefit from Union funding in accordance with the provisions of the relevant instruments supporting the Union's external policy. The Agency may launch and finance technical assistance projects in third countries regarding matters covered by this Regulation. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Data protection

The EUAA actions promoted with this strategy are fully compliant with the EU acquis on data protection and data processing ⁽¹⁵⁾, especially with regard to personal data. The General Data Protection Regulation ⁽¹⁶⁾ applies to the EU+ countries working jointly with the EUAA in any form of activity under this strategy.

⁽¹¹⁾ Article 2(1)(n) EUAA regulation.

⁽¹²⁾ Article 23(2) EUAA regulation.

⁽¹³⁾ Article 18(2)(f) EUAA regulation.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Article 35(5) EUAA regulation.

⁽¹⁵⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2008).

⁽¹⁶⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016).



Governing principles

All the activities stemming from this strategy will be in line with the guiding principles below.

1. **Principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility:** the EUAA is committed to bridge the digitalisation gap among EU+ countries. Equally, the Agency is committed to provide support to the countries under particular pressure and to those that are facing challenges in modernising their digital infrastructure. The EUAA is tasked with facilitating, coordinating and strengthening practical cooperation among EU+ countries. Therefore, equal access to the support and tools developed under this strategy will also be provided. Furthermore, the EUAA recommends a collective approach to innovation. Any innovation items, be them tools, research, projects or other efforts and concepts, developed individually or jointly by one or more EU+ countries should be made accessible to other EU+ countries, in order to establish a level playing field and to allow all EU+ countries to advance and innovate their asylum procedures in a harmonised way.
2. **Adoption and sustainability:** the EUAA activities on digitalisation support will be planned based on needs and feasibility assessments, prioritised through the applicable value methodology and framed within a clear results framework to measure and monitor their impact. Commitment on the side of the implementing partners and executive sponsorship are preconditions. The EUAA activities on digitalisation support will, where appropriate, follow results-based and theory of change management approaches, as outlined in the EUAA's Operations Manual⁽¹⁷⁾.

The EUAA believes that any innovation in the asylum procedure introduced in EU+ countries should be genuine and meaningful. Genuine innovation is aimed at making *bona fide* improvements to (parts of) the asylum procedure or reception systems by means of digitalisation. Indeed, digitalisation should not be a standalone goal. Rather, innovation should bear relevance and lead to improvements for all those involved: asylum seekers as well as all actors working in the asylum procedure and reception system.

The EUAA also finds that, when aiming to digitalise (parts of) the asylum procedure or reception system, innovation should focus on long-term and sustainable solutions. This is because of the efforts and the potential strain that changes to the procedure, especially large-scale and structural changes, imply for all actors involved. Any such activity should contribute to enhance efficacy, efficiency, predictability and flexibility of the asylum procedure. Furthermore, the EUAA is committed to sustainability and to limit the environmental impact. As outlined in the European Green Deal, automation,

⁽¹⁷⁾ The EASO Operations Manual was designed in a context of transition whereby operational support has evolved from demand-driven emergency response to a more structured and results-based approach enhancing predictability in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It aims at contributing to a coherent and reflective planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of EUAA operations, with close involvement of the key stakeholders, including national counterparts and EUAA units and sectors involved in the implementation of the planned support.

digitalisation and innovation can be very effective in reducing the impact on the environment).

Digital technologies are a critical enabler for attaining the sustainability goals of the Green deal ... the Commission will explore measures to ensure that digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, 5G, cloud and edge computing and the internet of things can accelerate and maximise the impact of policies to deal with climate change and protect the environment⁽¹⁸⁾.

3. **Respect of fundamental rights:** as mentioned in the explanatory memorandum of the proposal for a regulation on EUAA,

All activities of the EUAA shall be carried out in full respect of fundamental rights as enshrined in the Charter, including the right to asylum (Article 18 of the Charter), the protection from refoulement (Article 19 of the Charter), the right to respect for private and family life (Article 7 of the Charter), the right to protection of personal data (Article 8 of the Charter) and the right to an effective remedy (Article 47 of the Charter).⁽¹⁹⁾

All applicants have the right to have their asylum application heard and decided upon by a qualified human being, who should be allowed to perform their task without necessarily taking into account the input provided by algorithms and/or artificial intelligence (AI). Although the EUAA does not discount the support and improvements that algorithms and/or AI can bring to asylum procedures, a request as profound as an asylum application deserves to be heard and decided upon by a human.

Whenever stages or supporting processes of the asylum procedure are automated, in part or in full, it should be ensured that the fundamental rights of applicants are fully respected. Additionally, the EUAA advocates full transparency on such automated procedures, to allow for appropriate scrutiny and accountability of algorithms, codes and programmes, in line with the EU strategy on AI.⁽²⁰⁾

Additionally, no form of digitalisation should ever hamper or restrict the access to and progression of individual asylum procedures, especially not because of any vulnerabilities and/or special needs of the applicant. All applicants should retain their respective equal opportunity to seek and acquire international protection in an EU+ country, regardless of any form of digitalisation in the asylum or reception procedure.

⁽¹⁸⁾ [Communication from the Commission](#) to the European Parliament, the European Council, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - The European Green Deal (COM(2019) 640 final).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 (COM(2018) 633 final) - explanatory memorandum, section 3.

⁽²⁰⁾ [Communication from the Commission](#) – Artificial Intelligence for Europe (COM(2018) 237 final).





4. **Principle of necessity and proportionality** ⁽²¹⁾: the Agency may assist EU+ countries that request it with the examination of applications for international protection, within a framework clearly set out in the operational plan. The Agency may be required to intervene and provide assistance to an EU+ country only in the cases where, following up on a monitoring exercise or in case of disproportionate pressure on the asylum and reception systems of the country, no action or insufficient measures are taken by the EU+ country concerned, thereby jeopardising the functioning of the CEAS. The EUAA mandate to handle personal data is restricted to maintain the orderly functioning of the CEAS and to address disproportionate pressure in an effective manner.

⁽²¹⁾ Article 5 of the [Treaty on European Union](#) (OJ C 191, 29.7.1992) and [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1725](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 295, 21.11.2008).



Vision, strategic objectives and expected benefits

Our vision is that the EUAA will become a platform for supporting the digital innovation of asylum processes in EU+ countries

The EUAA's strategy on digital innovation in asylum procedures and reception systems defines the general framework within which the EUAA will develop its work related to supporting the digital innovation of asylum processes in EU+ countries and in the external dimension of the CEAS, to become a centre of excellence supporting the digital innovation of asylum processes in EU+ countries.

To this end, the EUAA's digital innovation strategic objectives are the following.

1. Enhance the Agency's operational preparedness, with a fit-for-purpose digital environment that ensures the basic pillars of rapid deployment and operational readiness.
2. Enhance the coordination mechanisms and practical cooperation between competent authorities according to a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. Enhance the exchange of information, experiences and best practices related to digital tools in the field of asylum and reception between EU+ countries and/or third countries at management, technical and operational level (centre of expertise).
3. Enhance the implementation and effectiveness of the digital dimension of the CEAS across EU+ countries, through standards and indicators, guidance and practical tools developed by the EUAA, to ensure synergies and harmonisation by further improving asylum and reception processes, by increasing the efficiency, quality, integrity and preparedness of the asylum and reception authorities in Europe and making their processes more scalable (permanent support).
4. Provide support on digitalisation to the EU+ countries whose asylum and reception systems are under specific and disproportionate pressure, in particular due to their geographical position and/or demographic situation, by providing know-how and facilitating technological transfer (operational support).
5. Strengthen asylum and reception systems through digital tools, in the EU+ countries and/or in third countries along the migratory routes, so that they are adequately equipped and prepared to deal with the pressure resulting from a high influx of applicants or to tackle other circumstances requiring flexible systems that can be adapted to changing needs (capacity building).

Pursuing these objectives should lead to the expected benefits described below.

1. Efficiency and quality of asylum processes and reception systems in EU+ countries (and where relevant in third countries) will be enhanced through using digital tools and know-how, which may translate in reduced processing times, reduced costs, faster referrals.



2. Resource management will be framed within a long-term strategic plan, and contingency preparedness will improve.
3. Asylum and reception authorities of EU+ countries benefitting from operational and technical assistance or capacity building will gain a better understanding of the strategic goals of the EUAA and its resource management planning in the field of innovation.
4. Applicants for international protection will potentially benefit from modern, faster and more efficient asylum and reception systems developed through innovative solutions.
5. Cooperation with other Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies, the General Directors of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC) and the intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) will improve, enabling better coordination, pooling of resources including initiation of joint projects under the umbrella of the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security ⁽²²⁾ and beyond it.
6. Dialogue with civil society and academia within the Consultative Forum will be facilitated, thus increasing transparency.

Digital innovation is a fast-paced and swiftly moving field, and the asylum domain is no exception to that. The pace at which digital tools are developed and re-developed, applied across a range of domains and target groups (often with little information or evidence as to what it will result in) makes it a difficult landscape to position oneself in. As a result, it cannot be expected that this strategy can offer a finalised list of digital tools and/or asylum processes (e.g., a work programme) on which digitalisation will focus. To the contrary, this strategy lays out a framework within which opportunities and limitations can be explored, thus rather functioning as a declaration of intent.

⁽²²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5757-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

Implementation of the strategy

This EUAA strategy on digital innovation in asylum procedures and reception systems will be implemented following the EUAA internal planning cycle, through the EUAA's Single Programming Documents (SPDs) and Annual Work Programmes. In line with the priorities set in the SPD for 2022-2025 ⁽²³⁾, the Agency is channelling resources and assistance to areas where they are most needed by using practical and adequate solutions, benefitting from open-source technology where possible.

The strategy is implemented in coherence with other relevant EUAA strategies: the upcoming ICT strategy, the training and learning strategy ⁽²⁴⁾, the external cooperation strategy ⁽²⁵⁾, and the reception strategy ⁽²⁶⁾. The ADIG, as a horizontal working group, is a key actor responsible for providing continuous professional input on the interlinked strategies to its steering committee.

Planning timeline

Fulfilling the digital aspect of the EUAA mandate requires meticulous planning, since becoming a true centre of expertise while also supporting EU+ countries in this field will require significant resources. In order to achieve the strategic goals, internal capacities need to be built consciously and progressively, starting with 'quick-wins' and moving towards more challenging and complex tasks. Several concurring priorities need to be balanced and aligned accordingly.

- Short term action (1-2 years):
 - Member States nominate ICT and digital transformation focal points, to ensure that what the EUAA develops is actually compatible with Member States' national systems.
 - The EUAA will act as information broker, repository and testing ground for national technology solutions developed in the EU+ countries. The Agency will select and onboard, based on the value/prioritisation methodology, the technological tools that were successfully tested in EU+ countries and are likely to have an added value also for other countries. The agency will also facilitate access to such national tools to all EU+ countries through technological transfer ('as is'), while ensuring their compatibility with general EUAA standards.
 - Continued development of fit-for-purpose tools for operations, that can then be 'transformed' in the medium-term approach.
- Medium term action (2-5 years)

⁽²³⁾ EUAA, [Multi-annual programming 2023-2025, Work Programme 2023, Amendment 1](#), December 2022.

⁽²⁴⁾ <https://www.euaa.europa.eu/easo-training-and-learning-strategy>

⁽²⁵⁾ EASO, [External Cooperation Strategy](#), 2019.

⁽²⁶⁾ EASO, [Strategy on Reception](#), 2021.



- The EUAA will further develop and enhance, based on a value/prioritisation methodology, the selected existing national tools by making necessary adaptations to make them accessible and relevant to all EU+ countries, providing one pan-European encompassing version.
- Long term action (5-10 years):
 - The EUAA will develop new technological tools itself, in consultation with EU+ countries and possibly other relevant stakeholders. These tools will preferentially be future-proof, interoperable/modular solutions to better fit specific needs of the stakeholders while fulfilling sustainability and environmental-conscious requirements.

The EUAA aims to achieve the objectives described above through activities falling under different categories. All the activities aimed to advance and implement the EUAA's strategy on digital innovation already align in different ways with existing activities of the Agency. Indeed, the EUAA employs expert staff, has developed proven methodologies and has established contacts and networks which will allow an efficient initiation of the activities under this strategy.

Way forward to implement the objectives

Centre of expertise

The EUAA is uniquely positioned to identify common digitalisation challenges and opportunities in the asylum procedures and reception systems of EU+ countries. This implies both an opportunity and a responsibility for the Agency to become more active in the field of research and development.

The EUAA will remain the source of objective and neutral information while pursuing the best interests of EU+ countries and respecting the fundamental rights of applicants for international protection.

The EUAA will enhance the coordination mechanisms (governance mechanism) and practical cooperation between competent authorities and facilitate the exchange of best practices related to digital tools in the field of asylum and reception between EU+ countries and/or third countries at management, technical and operational level.

The EUAA is committed to assist the EU+ countries in transforming analogue processes into digital ones and in developing know-how and guidelines for innovative tools and solutions through its networks.

The EUAA will co-lead to develop and apply state-of-the-art technologies⁽²⁷⁾ for example together with the EU+ countries, the European Commission, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Agencies (including through the EU Innovation Hub and the Working Group on Digital

⁽²⁷⁾ Special consideration is given to tools using AI.

Transformation under the Performance Development Network) and other networks such as the GDISC and IGC.

The Agency will also seek and promote synergies with the public sector, the industry, civil society, academia and international organisations (e.g. the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) in support of research and innovation exchange.

In the next years, the EUAA may consider to gradually increase its contribution to the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security, e.g. through secondment, starting fellowship, junior professional or exchange programmes.

The EUAA is committed to further enhance inter-agency cooperation, inter alia by developing a digital blueprint for the migration management support teams (MMST) ⁽²⁸⁾ based on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum ⁽²⁹⁾.

The EUAA, in cooperation with the EU+ countries, will be providing guidance and quality assurance on digital services for applicants ⁽³⁰⁾.

To achieve all the above and continue to follow the constant evolution powered by innovation, the EUAA requires dedicated internal capacity and know-how, possibly in the form of an internal **Innovation Lab** as done in other JHA agencies (e.g. European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) ⁽³¹⁾ and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) ⁽³²⁾).

Permanent support

In order to create synergies and bridge the gap between EU+ countries at different stages of digitalising their processes, the EUAA will co-develop **common standards and methodologies** by channelling digital innovation expertise collected within the various EUAA networks.

The EUAA will improve EU+ countries' **data collection, analysis and research** in the interest of early warning and preparedness, efficiency gains and resilience to crisis in the field of asylum and reception. It will do so by exploring and implementing novel ways ⁽³³⁾ to combine and analyse various data sources to better understand asylum-related migration. This could also mean establishing an advisory role towards the Commission, JHA agencies and EU+ countries on the opportunities and risks related to the use of AI, process mining technologies and other methods for predicting asylum-related migration. Within the boundaries of its mandate, the

⁽²⁸⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/migration-management-support-team_en

⁽²⁹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en

⁽³⁰⁾ See for example, 'Let's speak asylum' in the Annex.

⁽³¹⁾ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/operations-services-and-innovation/innovation-lab>

⁽³²⁾ <https://frontex.europa.eu/future-of-border-control/research-and-innovation/research-and-innovation-at-frontex>

⁽³³⁾ In line with the proposed [AI Regulation](#): Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amending certain union legislative acts (COM(2021) 206 final).



EUAA will also develop the capacity to contribute to data analysis and research of asylum-related migration as a centre of expertise in asylum knowledge, especially through innovative data-collection mechanisms and by exploiting interoperability regulations and combining interlinked data from various EU+ countries.

The EUAA will also continue to implement and improve its methodologies for collecting, surveying, analysing and managing information on digital innovation initiatives in EU Member States, and make these available through its factual, legal and case law databases.

Operational support

The EUAA is committed to provide support on digitalisation to EU+ countries facing particular pressure, in particular due to their geographical position and/or situation, by providing know-how and facilitating technological transfer. In order to directly support the EU+ countries under particular pressure with which the EUAA has concluded an operating plan, the Agency will promote direct bilateral cooperation and transfer of knowledge and technology. The identification of appropriate innovation solutions can result from the above-mentioned information exchange. These stop-gap solutions should follow the logic of integration into the operational tools and be fit-for-purpose on the operational landscape. However, the implementation of technology transfer follows a different logic and timeframe, often corresponding to more urgent operational needs.

Capacity building

The EUAA – within the boundaries of its capacity and mandate – will strengthen asylum and reception systems through digital tools in EU+ countries and/or third countries along the migratory routes, so that they are adequately equipped and prepared to deal with the pressure resulting from a high influx of applicants or other circumstances that require flexible systems that can be adapted to changing needs.

Both new and existing initiatives and projects by EU+ countries aimed to (further) digitalise their asylum procedure, or parts thereof, can be supported by the EUAA, either by promoting these efforts or by providing any relevant support through e.g. pooling development and testing efforts, providing a platform for exchanging technical information on ongoing developments and future planning, assisting in the design and implementation of digitalisation projects, facilitating technological transfer of tools and methodologies.

The EUAA will actively promote, among Member States, the launching of Asylum Migration and Integration Fund ⁽³⁴⁾ Union actions aimed at the joint development and testing of new technologies, while ensuring its own participation in such projects. In order to avoid duplications, the EUAA will continuously liaise with other stakeholders such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency ⁽³⁵⁾, the European Union Agency for the Operational

⁽³⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/asylum-migration-and-integration-fund-union-actions-field-asylum_en

⁽³⁵⁾ For example in the field of self-registration or language assessment.

Management of Large-Scale IT Systems ⁽³⁶⁾ and the EU Innovation Hub for Internal Security ⁽³⁷⁾ coordinated by Europol.

The EUAA will also develop technical standards, pre-conditions and software development lifecycle, as outlined in the draft roadmap for the EUAA information systems, which will serve as general framework for technological support and implementation, testing, piloting and subsequently mainstreaming of the proposed tools.

Future activities

The EUAA supports projects and initiatives that comply with the governing principles of this strategy. Respecting the various competences of different JHA agencies, the EUAA aims to work closely with other agencies and networks when supporting EU+ countries in this regard.

All EU+ countries or groups of EU+ countries can both give and receive input from the actions outlined above, in line with the governing principles of this strategy. Where relevant, the EUAA will engage with natural partners to pool resources and exchange knowledge and experience.

Methodology for engaging into activities

The ADIG is responsible for the activities below.

- Supporting the EUAA management's decision-making process with regard to the possible development of new digital tools/procedures:
 - preparing scenarios where the EUAA is warranted to act.
 - establishing a list of criteria to be used to determine the EUAA's role, including outlining the process the EUAA will deploy to decide on its role and specify who should be involved in the decision-making process of onboarding use-cases.
- Advising on a mechanism and governance model, including the necessary validation processes, for selecting and prioritising digital tools or efforts within the scope of this strategy.
- Continuously monitoring emerging digital tools used or developed by EU+ countries and scan the asylum and reception field in the EU+ for processes that are worth digitalising.

⁽³⁶⁾ From the [Cooperation Plan 2020-2022 of eu-LISA and EASO](#): 'The Agencies will map information processing maturity in the Member States ..., gathering lessons learned and developing best practices with the aim of optimising asylum process flows as well as the integration and use of enterprise architecture principles into information systems and tools (national and EU- wide). As envisaged in the Action Plan on Enhancement of Data Quality prepared in the context of the 5th Information Management Strategy action list, the presence of high-quality data in large-scale JHA IT systems, Eurodac included, shall be ensured. Therefore, this work shall contribute to the optimisation of processes and standards, including the unified message format (UMF). The Agencies shall explore together, based on their expertise, and with the MS, innovative solutions including the use of Artificial Intelligence and machine-learning for technical practical tools used in the asylum procedure.'

⁽³⁷⁾ Innovation is key when it comes to analysing statistical data from large-scale EU IT systems. Member States and Agencies are likely to have access to different data and will therefore need to work together in coordinated and innovative ways to produce meaningful results. Furthermore, access to large volumes of previously unconnected data will require innovative thinking to extract the most value.



- Providing a cross-sectoral needs assessment for respective units to take into consideration for the allocation of necessary in-house resources (e.g., staff, budget, investment in digital tools, studies).
- Proposing changes for respective units to take into consideration for the SPD, to ensure flexibility to accommodate new digital developments and/or sudden operational needs.
- Proposing the involvement of other stakeholders in the development of tools.
- Advising the steering committee on practical matters (e.g. sharing information and reports about the innovative use of technology in the field of asylum and reception; what are the margins of error/risks tied to the technology at present and how they may evolve over time; how likely it is that a certain technology will still be valid in two years or would rather be superseded by others; what are the costs tied to its development and roll-out).
- Contributing to a specific communication strategy regarding its work on digitalisation and asylum (keeping abreast of emerging research as to the opportunities and risks connected with the use of digital tools in the migration and asylum systems, and training staff to communicate about the Agency's work).
- Advising the steering committee as regards engagement with stakeholders to secure their buy-in for investing in a particular tool.

Resources

The EUAA should only intervene where there is clear added value. Each activity needs to be carefully pre-assessed as to what resources are needed. In the digital sphere, keeping abreast of the latest innovations and their potential value in the asylum domain, buying and testing particular tools and recruiting experienced staff is exceptionally resource intensive. This is why careful reflection is needed before embarking on such an endeavour. To manage this process, the EUAA will ensure a continuous selection of the asylum practices that merit digitalisation, check the corresponding available resources and ensure that the SPD provides for sufficient flexibility to accommodate new digital developments and/or urgent operational needs.

The EUAA cannot rely solely on contributions from EU+ countries, as they frequently face challenges in catering for their needs themselves. As stated in the EUAA regulation, the Agency needs to have adequate resources, tools and means to function as a powerhouse for process improvement. Therefore, the Agency needs to explore different options for complementing current staff capacity with experts mastering the nexus between digitalisation and asylum (business analysts, developers, case officers, project managers having practical experience in developing/upgrading digital asylum and reception systems). Human resources dedicated to digital innovation will be built progressively, in accordance with the strategic planning of activities, and within the context of the SPD planning cycle. One of the EUAA's long-term goals is to create an internal **Innovation Lab**, functioning as a cross-sectoral coordination structure responsible for the implementation of this strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

A revision of this strategy would be triggered at the request of either the EUAA or EUAA Management Board and in coordination with the European Commission in case the following circumstances materialise:

- new legislative and policy instruments impacting the work of the EUAA;
- significant changes in the international migration and asylum context, and in the priorities of the EU work programme in third countries, when the initiatives target third countries.

Monitoring of the implementation of the activities covered by the strategy will be performed through regular updates provided by the ADIG to the steering committee and the EUAA Management Board.

Evaluations of the strategy – in accordance with the continued evolution of the ICT strategy – will be performed at regular intervals in coordination with the Agency's External Evaluation Advisory Group.



Annex I

The table below is a proposal aimed at supporting the assessment and prioritisation – if needed – of specific projects, based on information available at the time of assessment. It is not meant to replace existing project management structures within the EUAA.

The indicators are color-coded:

- high value/low risk: green;
- medium value/medium risk: yellow;
- low value/high risk: red).

This part of the strategy is a living document and will be updated ⁽³⁸⁾ constantly by the respective EUAA Units.

	Project name EUAA's role	EU added value	EUAA relevance	Sustainability / long-term investment	Feasibility	Urgency	Risks	Resources and efficiency
Knowledge management cluster								
Case management cluster								

⁽³⁸⁾ SharePoint document format ensuring parallel editability.



	Project name EUAA's role	EU added value	EUAA relevance	Sustainability / long-term investment	Feasibility	Urgency	Risks	Resources and efficiency
Training cluster								

The clusters above are examples, other clusters can be added as needed.

Find below further explanation and/or possible guiding questions for each of the proposed clusters.

Each cell is colour-coded (green /yellow /red) based on the overall scores.

A reader-friendly summary (one-pager) would be added to each project.

Depending on maturity, detailed business cases /project plans would be referenced in the table



EUAA's role

Is the EUAA driving the process, facilitating or only contributing to it?

Possible options are: observer; facilitator; coordinator.

EU added value

The EU added value is additional to the value created by actions of individual Member States. It may result from different factors, e.g. coordination gains, legal certainty, greater effectiveness or complementarities, increased convergence. It reflects broader European relevance and significance of the action with a view to presenting models and mechanisms which can be applied not only regionally or nationally but also EU-wide.

Does the project serve one/more/all EU+ countries?

EUAA relevance

To what extent does the project contribute to the strategic objectives of the EUAA as set forward in the SPD? Why it is to be implemented by the EUAA and not another stakeholder? Is it a key mandate for the EUAA? Will it positively contribute to the visibility and reputation of the Agency?

Sustainability

Is the project sustainable? Would its implementation result in a long-term engagement and impact (e.g. including maintenance)? Does the project deliverable require continuous updating or is it one-off (e.g. an event)?

Feasibility

What is the overall feasibility of the project (time, budget, human resources etc. required)? What is the feasibility level compared to other running/planned projects (e.g. framework contract in place vs new procurement)? What are the levels of dependency from other stakeholders?

Urgency

What is timeframe of the project? Is there a time-limitation/urgency element due to external/regulatory needs?



Risks

Are there legal, financial, ethical, reputational risks? What is the likelihood of the risks materialising?

Resources and efficiency ⁽³⁹⁾

Internal resources: to what extent are the financial and human resources needed to carry out the project available?

Human resources: how many full-time equivalents are required (by centre/unit)?

Budget: need from EUAA budget; external funding.

Procurement needs.

External resources: did all the project partners secure the necessary resources?

⁽³⁹⁾ Fit for purpose efficiency; ratio of return against investment.



Annex II – Flagship projects

Within the framework of this Digital Innovation Strategy, the EUAA aims to launch the flagship projects below to reinforce the CEAS through innovative solutions.

- [Common European platform to identify the country of origin of applicants through language assessment](#)
- [Self-registration tool](#)
- [Digital casework assistant](#)

Common European platform to identify the country of origin of applicants through language assessment

Introduction

The language/dialect spoken by an applicant for international protection can indicate the origin of the person in situations where it is not possible to do so with other means (e.g. due to lack of proper identification documents). In the past, language assessment for the determination of origin (LADO) has been relying on human expertise solely. In 2015-2017, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of Germany developed a machine learning tool able to provide fast and reliable assessment indicating geographical area(s) of origin based on recorded voice samples.

EU added value

LADO in general requires large financial and human resource investments. Most EU+ countries cannot afford to build a machine learning tool, buy training data (certified voice samples) and establish a large pool of human experts.

The establishment of a large-scale central tool, accessible to all Member States and complemented by a common pool of language analysts would eliminate an unnecessary duplication of investments and result in considerable savings. A common European and hybrid (machine/human) tool would facilitate more efficient and smarter identification, ultimately leading to better and faster decisions.

EUAA relevance

Since 2020, the EUAA has been actively engaging in discussions with Member States on combining first-line artificial intelligence and second-line human analysis for better quality results in the field of LADO.

The EUAA contributed to a pilot project in 2021-2022 which live-tested the hybrid language assessment model through the combined analysis of voice samples by a machine and by

human experts. The pilot was successful and demonstrated that the model is feasible and can be implemented in practice.

In 2021-2022, the EUAA conducted a feasibility study on language assessment. The conclusions show that Member States expect the EUAA to play a central role in the establishment of a European system and to provide necessary methodology and guidance through the definition of standards. This would however require adequate adaption of EUAA's mandate and assigning resources.

Sustainability

The Commission implementing decision of 25.11.2021 on the financing of components of the Thematic Facility under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and adoption of the Work Programme for 2021 and 2022 ⁽⁴⁰⁾ envisages a specific action on 'cooperation between Member States on language assessment in the field of asylum'. The earmarked financial support allows Member States to cooperate and to finance their support activities towards other countries. As a first step, this allows to build internal capacity for catering the needs of other countries, to establish contingency measures and to bridge the gap until a central platform / expert pool is established.

Feasibility

The pilot project has showed that exchanging and processing voice samples across Member States is feasible in practice. The participating Member States agreed on the legal and technical elements of the exchange. No issues were detected during the implementation. As a first step, the platform for the machine learning tool will be implemented, followed by the establishment of the common pool of human analysts.

Urgency

The current appetite from Member States and the funding made available by the European Commission provide momentum to start a project.

Risks

The main risk of non-delivery is Member States losing interest/willingness to cooperate in the field of LADO. Member States not submitting a proposal for AMIF would jeopardise the project. Losing AMIF funding due to failure to implement the envisaged action also constitutes a risk.

Resources and efficiency

In the first stage the EUAA resource requirements are limited to what is needed to ensure coordination between stakeholders: steering a working group on LADO to establish guidance

⁽⁴⁰⁾ [Commission implementing decision of 25.11.2021](#) on the financing of components of the Thematic Facility under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and adoption of the Work Programme for 2021 and 2022 (C(2021) 8458 final).



on common standards and procedures and consulting with the European Commission. Potentially, the working group could take on an observing role looking at the implementation of the AMIF specific action.

In the second stage (once the EUAA's mandate is adjusted), a horizontal team will be carrying out the transition from the Member States' joint project. This would require gradual building up of capacity for a team running the tool (platform & experts pool), similarly to the EUAA's medical country of origin activities (MedCOI ⁽⁴¹⁾).

Outcome

The project aims at obtaining the following:

- a common European tool improving the identification of applicants for international protection;
- significant cost reduction through pooling of resources;
- making a modern technology tool accessible for all Member States, thus levelling the differences across national administrations in terms of digitalisation.

Conclusion

LADO technology has the potential to transform and upgrade identity management for asylum authorities. Thanks to accelerated and enhanced quality asylum procedures, it would directly contribute to elevating the standards of the CEAS. It would also show how EU solidarity can work in practice: through pooling resources and eliminating inequalities, LADO technology would be made accessible all Member States, including those which do not have the resources to develop it on their own. Moreover, these developments would also suit the European Commission's priority initiative '[Shaping Europe's digital future](#)'.

Self-registration tool

Introduction

In light of the increased demand to address registration bottlenecks in asylum and temporary protection, a self-registration tool could be a 'quick-win' addressing immediate needs. The tool would be multilingual, thus eliminating interpretation needs and related costs. It would also allow for the reduction of waiting times and staff costs. The tool could include features to schedule appointments or to establish electronic communication channels with applicants for international protection.

⁽⁴¹⁾ The EUAA provides access to medical country of origin information (MedCOI). This information supports the national migration and asylum authorities in Europe to reach accurate and fair decisions in international protection and other migration procedures. More precisely, MedCOI is a service for first instance migration authorities of EU+ countries, providing responses to requests for information about the availability and accessibility of medical interventions in countries of origin.

Some Member States already use self-registration tools to optimise the use of resources and improve efficiency in scheduling personal interviews, case-referral and follow-up communication with applicants.

EU added value

The impact of this tool goes beyond use within the EUAA. Its use would result in efficiency and cost reduction gains for all asylum administrations opting for the tool, thus contributing to an improved asylum procedure and a better functioning CEAS. The tool would increase the operational readiness of Member States (and of the EUAA). It could also be implemented as an element of EU-wide contingency planning and better preparedness in case of mass arrivals.

EUAA relevance

The EUAA enjoys a strategic position, overlooking implementation of the CEAS in the Member States. Therefore, it is better placed than individual Member States to facilitate modernisation through awareness-raising activities and direct contribution to progress. Frustration among applicants due to increased waiting time for registration and resulting delayed access to reception or other services is currently one of the major pain points of the asylum and reception systems. With this tool, the EUAA would directly contribute to effectively eliminating the first bottleneck of the process in all Member States. Instead of individual tools, the EUAA could develop a single solution and make it accessible to all Member States free of charge.

Sustainability

The project requires investment from the EUAA's side (involvement of external contractors) as well as Member States volunteering to host piloting of the tool. Funding from Horizon or AMIF could be explored. Through geo-localisation, access of applicants to the tool can be restricted to specific countries.

Feasibility

The implementation would require at least one implementing Member State partner. Member State systems could be used as inspiration/blueprints. External funding (AMIF) would be explored either through national AMIF or specific action(s). The EUAA would be required to contribute from the ICT side, to acquire the tool for internal use (for its operations) and for further distribution through technology transfer.

Robotic process automation (RPA) could be added on a case-by-case basis if there is a willingness to integrate the tool locally in national systems.

The solution could be further developed into a communication channel between the applicant and the asylum authority (e.g. messages generated automatically by the system for appointments, notifications, updates on case-progressing).





Urgency

The project has strategic importance as it would contribute to saving resources (time, money, staff) thanks to faster referral and decisions.

Risks

Member States need to agree to hosting a piloting and providing access to their national system(s).

Support from Member States is needed to access technical information/documentation on how they were developing their own tool.

Resources and efficiency

The first phase of the project (needs assessment, mapping, market research) requires limited resources.

Implementation requires a business case, a project team, implementing Member State partner(s) and external funding.

Outcome

The project aims at developing a modern self-registration tool accessible to all Member States, to improve contingency preparedness and synergies of registration processes.

Conclusion

The EUAA should proactively look for smarter solutions with clear efficiency gains in order to maximise the impact of its support activities despite the limited resources available. Facilitating progress in digitalisation for the benefit of all Member States is a strategic decision. Investment into innovation would pay off in the long run.

Eliminating registration bottlenecks would not solve capacity issues in the subsequent stages of the asylum process. However, overcoming this issue could be relatively easy while delivering a very visible result.

Digital casework assistant

Introduction

Asylum case officers face challenges in processing large amount of information to extract what suits the characteristics and needs of each specific case. Conversely, from the case officer's perspective, having no or limited information can be as challenging as having too much information. The amount of information available on countries of origin and the dynamic changes make it very difficult to be always up to date on the situation and protection needs.



More and more applicants for international protection have digital identities that are accessible through (open) sources of information. Filtering big data, digital presence can be traced and people can be identified (through pictures/videos uploaded online). Semi-automated text-mining of records (including registration or personal interview records) can facilitate better and earlier identification of persons of concern or fight abuse. The authorities have tools to extract case-relevant information from hardware in possession of applicants.

AI is penetrating different business segments with the promise of better efficiency through eliminating human mistakes or bias. Machines can process larger amount of data faster and with more accuracy. Case officers should benefit from the assistance of innovative tools which could eliminate burdensome tasks, thus sparing capacity for high added-value targets. A digital casework assistant could be helpful in several aspects, such as: extracting case-relevant COI and case-law from large amount of data, supporting risk analysis, filtering open source intelligence or applicants' mobile devices.

At the same time, new technology also entails new risks.

EU added value

The impact of this tool goes beyond use within the EUAA. It would result in efficiency gains for all asylum administrations, thus contributing to an improved asylum procedure and a better functioning CEAS.

EUAA relevance

The EUAA enjoys a strategic position, overlooking implementation the CEAS in Member States. Therefore it is better placed than individual Member States to facilitate modernisation through awareness-raising activities and direct contribution to progress. The EUAA has already a strong mandate to provide assistance in knowledge management, in particular if the field of COI, MedCOI and case-law.

Sustainability

The project requires intense cooperation between the EUAA (mainly the Agency's Asylum Knowledge Centre - C3), Member States, the private sector and academia. JHA Agencies could also be involved through the EU Innovation Hub, since law enforcement bodies face similar challenges to identify people and process individual cases.

Feasibility

Implementation would require a consortium of various stakeholders. Different functionalities would be built gradually as individual use cases. Member States needs would be pre-mapped by the EUAA. The Joint Research Centre could be a potential partner for this project. For areas requiring specific data (e.g. interview records, confiscated devices), Member States would be hosting dedicated pilot projects. External funding would be explored through Horizon or AMIF funds.



Urgency

The project has strategic importance as it would contribute to saving resources (time, money, staff) thanks to faster and better quality decisions.

Risks

This is a complex and resource-intensive project. Since the technology is new and constantly evolving, developing a state-of-the-art tool entails the risk of becoming a moving target as technology can become obsolete fast. Proper encryption and cybersecurity features are required.

Stakeholders, especially Member States, need to agree to hosting a piloting and to providing access to their sensitive data.

Safeguards will need to be built in/ensured to avoid adverse effects and secure the respect of fundamental rights and the integrity of the asylum process. In the same vein, some functionalities could attract criticism, for example from civil society, if their features and the related safeguards are not clearly explained.

Resources and efficiency

The first phase of the project (needs assessment, mapping, market research) requires limited resources.

Implementation requires a business case, a project team, implementing Member State partner(s) and external funding.

Outcome

The project aims at developing a digital casework assistant tool that can link the profile of the applicant and the grounds for applying for international protection with relevant sections of COI, geo-databases, jurisprudence, templates and guidance that is relevant to the case.

Conclusion

The EUAA should proactively look for smarter solutions with clear efficiency gains in order to maximise the impact of its support activities despite the limited resources available. Facilitating progress in digitalisation for the benefit of all Member States is a strategic decision. Investment in innovation would ensure return on investment.



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