

REPORT



EU Asylum at a Crossroads?

State of Asylum Conference 2025

18 June 2025
Valletta, Malta & Online

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State of Asylum Conference 2025

WEDNESDAY, 18 JUNE

08.30 – 09.15 Registration & Welcome Coffee

09.15 – 09.30 Welcome by the Conference
Moderators

09.15 – 09.30 **Opening Address**
Nina Gregori, Executive Director,
European Union Agency for Asylum
(EUAA)

09.30 – 09.45 **Keynote Speech**
Myriam Spiteri Debono
President of Malta

10.00 – 10.15 **Keynote Speech**
Magnus Brunner
Commissioner for Internal Affairs and
Migration, European Commission

10.15 – 11.30 **1st Panel Discussion**
**Migration and Asylum at a Crossroads:
Where do we go from here?**

Moderator: Ali Aslan, Moderator, TV
Presenter and Journalist

Panel:

- Andi Mahila, Deputy Minister of Interior (Albania)
- Michael Spindelegger, Director General, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
- Makis Voridis, Minister of Migration & Asylum (Greece)
- Mari Rantanen, Minister of the Interior (Finland)

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee Break

11.30 – 12.00 Marketplace showcasing EUAA's work



**LOCATION:
VALLETTA, MALTA**

12:00 – 12:30	Reflections on the EUAA Asylum Report 2025 Ward Lutin Head of Asylum Knowledge Centre, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) Jean-Louis De Brouwer Director of the European Affairs Programme, Egmont Institute	10:15 – 11:30	<u>3rd Panel Discussion</u> Drawing lessons from the past. The EUAA's role in the new CEAS. Moderator: Hugo Brady, Senior Strategic Advisor, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) Panel: • Evelina Gudzinskaitė, Chairperson of the Management Board, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) • Mikael Ribbenvik Cassar, Deputy Executive Director (EUAA) and Former Chair of the Management Boards of the EUAA and EASO • David Costello, Former Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) • Robert Visser, Former Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) • Wolfgang Taucher, Former Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)
10:15 – 11:30	<u>2nd Panel Discussion</u> EU Working Together. Stepping up EU Migration and Asylum Management, in the face of mounting European and international challenges Moderator: Lilian Tsourdi, Professor and Jean Monnet Chair in European Migration Law and Governance, Law Faculty of Maastricht University Panel: • Nina Gregori, Executive Director, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) • o Lukas Gehrke, Director of the Global Office in Brussels, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) • Philippe Leclerc, Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR • Kim Freidberg, Director of Home Affairs, Council of the European Union • Beate Gminder, Acting Director-General, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Commission	16:30 – 16:45	Closing Remarks
13:45 – 14:45	Lunch & Networking	17:00 – 18:00	Marketplace showcasing EUAA's work Nina Gregori Executive Director, EUAA
13:45 – 14:45	Marketplace showcasing EUAA's work	18:00 – 20:00	Evening Reception

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Panellists



Nina Gregori
Executive Director, European Union Agency
for Asylum (EUAA)
See bio on p. 5



Lukas Gehrke

Director of the Global Office for Migration (IOM)
Lukas Gehrke is the Director of the IOM Global Office in Brussels. Mr Gehrke leads IOM's efforts to strengthen partnerships and enhance engagement at the EU level. He brings over 20 years of experience in migration and protection issues, most recently serving as Deputy Director General and Director of Policy, Research & Strategy at ICMPD.

Mr Gehrke has held several senior leadership positions where he led in policy engagement, capacity building, and resource mobilisation, while fostering strong relationships with key stakeholders. As a profound expert in the European and international migration debate, he has cultivated a wide network of decision-makers, including government representatives, international organizations, civil society, diaspora groups, and academia across Europe and beyond. For over two decades, Lukas has been dedicated to improving migration, integration and collaboration, leading numerous teams and projects.



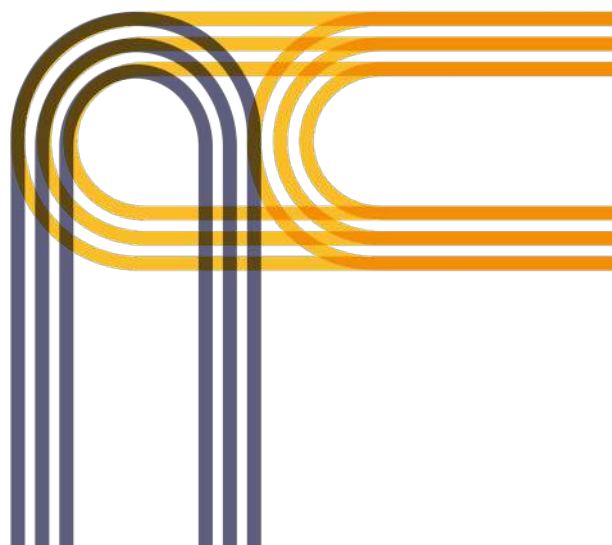
Introduction

The European Union Agency for Asylum hosted its first State of Asylum Conference 2025 on 18 June 2025 in Valletta, Malta.

The event brought together high-level policymakers, EU institutions, international organisations and experts to discuss the current state of play of international protection and migration in the EU and related challenges, as well as the evolving EU migration agenda, particularly with regards to the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

This report provides a summary of the proceedings and the comments provided by the panellists.

Please find a detailed agenda annexed to this report.



Opening Address

by Nina Gregori, Executive Director, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)



The first Keynote Speech was delivered by Nina Gregori, Executive Director, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) who introduced the Conference as an annual flagship event to discuss progress, challenges and innovations in European asylum systems and to examine relevant geopolitical developments against the backdrop of the Asylum Report. The Executive Director outlined the topics for each panel discussing the central question of the conference: Is asylum in the EU at a crossroads? If we are at a crossroads, we need to decide on the direction to take.

Currently, the field of asylum and migration is witnessing two opposing movements: a restrictive one, in particular towards asylum seekers, and one driven by the economic demand, focusing on talent and labour migration. Finding a balance between them is necessary to make migration more sustainable, manageable and predictable.

Challenges over the past decade have become useful lessons equipping the EU with a toolbox for the road ahead. The Pact adopted in 2024 provides a framework for better migration management in the EU and increased resilience when the asylum system is put under pressure. For the EUAA, it is key that the Pact aligns Member State practices, ensuring that asylum procedures are fairer, faster and more efficient, and that those in need of

international protection receive it in a timely manner while those who do not are returned. Success depends mostly on national implementation together with continuous political commitment, allocation of sufficient resources and support by the EUAA and other actors. In this regard, the Agency is currently in the process of updating its tools and guidance, is delivering updated training modules, and continues to provide operational support.

The Pact provides a clear sense of direction. Ms Gregori proposed to close the loop: improve the entry into and exit from the EU territory - expanding legal pathways, enhancing return procedures - which is essential for the credibility of the system towards both citizens and applicants.

The ED subsequently presented the 2025 Asylum Report which provides a factual overview and analysis of what happened in the field of asylum in the past year.

In conclusion, returning to the central question, asylum is at a crossroads. Whatever road is taken, the EUAA is committed to play an instrumental role in the years to come with the implementation of the Pact, providing the evidence base to make informed decisions regarding the implementation of future policies.



Keynote Speech

by President of Malta, Myriam Spiteri Debono

Her Excellency the President of Malta, Myriam Spiteri Debono, opened her speech by acknowledging that the state of asylum in the European Union is undeniably at a crossroads. President Spiteri Debono underscored that the world is facing an unprecedented crisis of human displacement, with forty-three million refugees globally fleeing violence and persecution, according to the United Nations.

She noted that millions are seeking safety, often risking their lives in the process. The President expressed concern about the growing needs of displaced persons in terms of basic services and shelter, while the withdrawal of funding for international organisations like UNHCR and IOM undermines the international community's capacity to respond to humanitarian needs and challenges.

Despite the EU's allocation of EUR one billion in humanitarian aid to support three hundred million people globally in 2025, the landscape remains complex. National budgets are under strain, and governments face challenges in addressing both pressing internal issues and international crises. President Spiteri Debono highlighted that humanitarian asylum is losing ground to utilitarian considerations. She flagged that the principle of non-refoulement risks being sidelined as deportation is increasingly seen as part of the solution in some contexts. She further pointed to the need for closer attention to proposals for a common EU return system.

The new legislative package was welcomed by President

Spiteri Debono as a pivotal step forward and an opportunity to strengthen the EU's commitment to the protection of asylum seekers. She stressed the importance of integration for those seeking refuge, encompassing dignified standards of living as well as rights related to health, education, and employment. While noting the significance of both internal and external security considerations, she called for a common EU system that is fair and responsive to the diverse realities and needs across Member States.

President Spiteri Debono also highlighted Malta's continuing role in migration management, especially given its size and high population density. She referred to the country's new integration strategy, which aims at strengthening social cohesion and empowering newcomers to contribute to society.

In 2021, the launch of the Training Institute on Migration Capacity Partnership for the Mediterranean, in partnership with ICMPD, demonstrated Malta's forward-looking stance in building professional capacities for migration management. The President expressed appreciation for the EUAA's contribution through the institute's technical advisory group, as well as for its operational support to Malta.

In her closing remarks, President Spiteri Debono emphasised our collective duty to respond to migration challenges with compassion, noting that asylum is not only a legal right but also a profoundly human story.





Keynote Speech

by Magnus Brunner, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, European Commission

Magnus Brunner, Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, European Commission welcomed the first State of Asylum Conference organised by the EUAA as a timely effort to reflect on the Pact on Migration and Asylum and to consider whether European asylum is at a crossroads. One thing is certain, the EUAA is well-placed to shape this discussion as it is a pillar of the EU asylum system. Its contributions have been a key factor in shaping the Pact and the Agency is a key actor in its implementation. The Pact brings new challenges for Member States. The support and guidance from the European Commission as well as from EU Agencies is crucial for Member States to overcome these challenges and to ensure that they are ready for the entry into application of these new rules in June 2026.

Some important steps have already been taken. In spring 2025, the Commission came forward with new rules concerning safe third countries and safe countries of origin with the support of the EUAA. At the same time, the new proposal on returns should help take pressure off the EU asylum system, creating more capacity and making it easier for Member States to manage. The latest asylum trends show that asylum applications continue to fall, reflecting the long-awaited improved situation in Syria but also the EU's efforts to work with regional partners, especially in the Balkan corridor.

This is a positive development, but the situation can change quickly and there is a need to be ready, especially in the current geo-political context. For this reason, Mr Brunner welcomed the conference and the inauguration of the EUAA Training Academy the previous day as it will help provide fresh capacity and expertise to Member States.



1st Panel Discussion

Migration and Asylum at a Crossroads: Where do we go from here?

Moderated by Ali Aslan, Moderator, TV Presenter and Journalist

Panel:

Andi Mahila, Deputy Minister of Interior (Albania) | Michael Spindelegger, Director General, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) | Makis Voridis, Minister of Migration & Asylum (Greece) | Mari Rantanen, Minister of the Interior (Finland)

The first panel focused on the main theme of the conference “EU Asylum at a Crossroads?” in light of the Pact on Asylum and Migration. Each panellist was asked to provide an overview of the current state of play, reflect on the expectations deriving from the application of the Pact, and on the elements required for its success.

Makis Voridis, Minister of Migration & Asylum (Greece), described the different approaches that have been used to handle migration, from integration, to securitisation, to finally establishing an effective system of returns. The latter is part of the architecture of the Pact that will require substantial work at a legislative, operational, and administrative level. Complementary to this is the Commission’s proposal on returns, which Greece sees as added value to a common system of returns. Concerning the Pact’s success, Minister Voridis set numerical goals as the main indicator, arguing that these could demonstrate the Pact’s success in working towards a specific target. Lastly, the Minister discussed the impact of the EU acting as one when negotiating agreements, especially with regards to returns. Multilateralism could be resorted to as an alternative when there is no EU-wide consensus.

Returns were also identified as key in an effective asylum system by Mari Rantanen, Minister of the Interior (Finland). The Minister welcomed the Commission’s proposal and highlighted return hubs as being a sign of good progress. With regards to expectations from the Pact, solidarity was a critical topic, especially because of the reciprocity it entails. Working within the EU is not sufficient, as third countries play an important role in the proper implementation of the Pact. When it comes to success, Minister Rantanen also agreed on the importance of quantitative figures as a guarantee for people’s trust and proper use of the system.

Andi Mahila, Deputy Minister of Interior (Albania), emphasized how Albania is implementing a roadmap for the asylum system in line with common EU standards. The elements for a successful Pact are transparency, effective cooperation, and mutual trust. Due to its geographical position along key migratory routes, the Western Balkans occupies a critical role, making it all the more important to promote its political integration with the EU, as genuine partnerships rely on trust, shared values, and long-term goals. Minister Mahila used the recent agreement with Italy as an example in this regard, highlighting that irregular migration can only be tackled with partner countries, equal and multiple actors are required to solve global challenges. The last point he raised concerned the discontinuity of data exchange with the Western Balkans due to their lack of access to Eurodac. The creation of a common framework for the exchange of real-time data on migration flows could solve the issue.

Michael Spindelegger, Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), addressed the changes in trends showing numbers of migrants decreasing due to the Pact and a shift in main countries of origin caused by external geo-political factors. The Pact is an important step as it has required the full engagement of Member States, but only after implementation will it be possible to draw conclusions on its effectiveness. The Agency will have a major role in providing the necessary support to make it happen. The Pact’s success depends on successful implementation in the beginning and a plan that convinces the people. Finally, Mr Spindelegger drew attention to the importance of legal pathways to Europe, which should not only be developed bilaterally but also at an EU level.



Reflections on the EUAA Asylum Report 2025



Ward Lutin, Head of Asylum Knowledge Centre, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), reflected on the recent developments in the field of asylum. He highlighted how asylum is now fully intertwined with migration management. The instrumentalization of migration and asylum by Belarus has raised concerns among Member States, and the development of possible responses to these types of situations has become an important element for effective migration management. Another important development in the field of asylum is the enhanced focus on the creation of partnerships with third countries, as well as the use of the safe third country concept. In light of the several push factors that drive migration to Europe, such as conflicts in neighbouring regions, there has been intensified cooperation with third countries resulting from the idea that solutions need to be found outside of the EU. At the same time, there have been funding cuts to development programmes which compromise this.

Mr Lutin stated that there is still a considerable amount of work to be done, highlighting that over one million asylum applications were received in the EU in 2024. Moreover, one million asylum applications still need to be processed, and the EU hosts over four million people from Ukraine. The Asylum Report analyses how EU Member States have continued their quest for efficiency by increasing the use of the lists of safe countries of origin. Furthermore, they have taken steps to make asylum and reception systems less appealing, leading to a fall in standards.

Finally, Mr Lutin emphasised how resources represent a significant issue for Member States in the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The question of how to ensure that the necessary expertise, knowledge and human resources are available presents Member States with a challenge. To make the Pact work, investment will be required in several areas, especially to guarantee the functioning of courts and tribunals as these will play a crucial role in its implementation. There is also a need to coordinate between different stakeholders, and the Pact highlights the greater role of technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well as the consequent challenges in data protection.

Jean-Louis De Brouwer, Director of the European Affairs Programme, Egmont Institute, welcomed the Asylum Report and congratulated the Agency. He discussed the implementation of the Pact focusing on asylum and protection. Even though the line between asylum and migration is blurred, asylum is too often forgotten. As the number of displaced people increases yearly, protection cannot be limited. Providing protection to those in need is a precondition to build trust with third countries who currently lack trust in the EU. However, trust between Member States will also be put to the test with the



solidarity mechanism.

Prof. De Brouwer proceeded to question the timing of the Commission with regards to the further proposals of the Pact, namely the returns package, the safe third country and the country-of-origin proposals, which add a substantial workload without leaving much time between them. He also noted how, notwithstanding the EU's foundation in the rule of law, it is concerning that the executive is questioning the judiciary's interpretations.

Concerning resources, it is not a matter of quantity but how they are used, and the EU has room for improvement in this regard. With the upcoming Commission proposal for the multiannual financial framework, priority setting is key. Such prioritisation should be transparent in light of the number of upcoming changes. The Agency will have a very important role in supporting, rather than substituting, Member States.

2nd Panel Discussion

EU Working Together. Stepping up EU Migration and Asylum Management, in the face of mounting European and international challenges

Moderated by Lilian Tsourdj, Professor and Jean Monnet Chair in European Migration Law and Governance, Law Faculty of Maastricht University

A key theme that emerged from the panel discussion was what it truly takes to ensure the effective implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The conversation centred on the complexities and challenges of migration management within the EU, which the Pact seeks to address. The panellists emphasised the need for solidarity and close cooperation among EU Member States, international organisations and third countries, as essential conditions for managing migration flows in a fair, balanced, and sustainable way. There was an overall optimistic stance, with details in need of finetuning, while legal pathways such as resettlement were highlighted and lessons learned were shared.

Nina Gregori, Executive Director, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) stressed the importance of political commitment for the successful implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The upcoming Danish presidency of the Council of the EU will be key in driving forward the negotiations on the Solidarity Pool. Ms Gregori, acknowledged the ongoing budget challenges at EU level and across Member States, noting that while asylum and migration funding remains

limited, increased resources would not necessarily translate into a higher number of applicants. The need for more involvement from justice ministries was emphasised, especially when it comes to judiciary and border procedures. Additionally, Ms Gregori highlighted the importance of carefully shaping operational support to strengthen Member States' preparedness without taking over their role.

In March 2024, the EUAA initiated an internal programme to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the changes introduced by the new legislative package. Since then, priorities were adjusted to reflect the needs of Member States and the Commission, and work was undertaken by dedicated EUAA staff in collaboration with the Agency's Management Board. In a short period, 21 products have been finalised, including tailor-made training on the Pact.

The Agency has also been closely collaborating with the European Commission. The EUAA was involved in the country teams supporting the preparation of the National Implementation Plans. A significant task was the preparation of contingency plans by the Member



States, now received by the Agency. These plans are essential for a timely and coordinated response at both EU and national levels in case of disproportionate pressure on asylum systems. Finally, the collaboration with international organisations and partner EU agencies was reiterated as crucial. Looking beyond the Pact, Ms Gregori called for identifying future-oriented and innovative solutions to ensure that support to Member States remains both efficient and effective.

Political commitment for the efficient implementation of the Pact was highlighted as vital also by Beate Gminder, Acting Director-General, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Commission. This broad framework was developed through eight years of negotiations, strengthening cooperation amongst policymakers and promoting a positive spirit of collaboration in the EU. As the implementation timeline approaches, the need for further work and clear communication becomes essential. Solidarity and shared responsibility between Member States at the external borders and those within the European Union are key elements for its effective implementation.

The last few years of collaboration with third countries has improved, focusing on early support for asylum seekers. The importance of having resettlement pledges fulfilled was emphasised for persons in need of asylum and support. Despite the polarised political debate at the EU level, Ms Gminder underlined the strong commitment and dedication from both Member States and EU agencies to make the Pact work. There are still obstacles to be tackled, and a transition period will be necessary, followed by a phase of adjustment and refinement of the entire framework. The Pact is a system which aims to ensure the correct and fair treatment of people arriving in the EU. Reflecting on the past crises of 2016 and 2022, there is a need to invest



more in integration. The European Commission's Pact implementation report addressed the areas where more work is needed. Diaspora communities can support newcomers to integrate and build independent lives. On legal migration, more can be done given the economic drivers behind migratory flows. The EU has limited competence on legal migration policy, hence there is a need to develop intelligent legal pathways, matching the skills of people arriving with immediate employment opportunities.

The need to strike a balance between solidarity and responsibility is essential to the Pact's success according to Kim Freidberg, Director of Home Affairs, Council of the European Union. Prevention, implementation and the external dimension are pivotal in ensuring the Pact's effectiveness; however, not all those elements are under the EU's control. The Pact is politically sensitive and technically complex with challenges at multiple levels. Political commitment remains a complex matter, and whilst Member States appear committed, the first solidarity exercise will be a key test.

Mr Freidberg highlighted the need to ensure that key building blocks, Eurodac and a meaningful solidarity exercise under the lead of the Danish presidency, are in place, together with the already strong support provided by the EUAA and the collaboration of external partners like UNHCR. Another key challenge mentioned concerned additional building blocks, such as the Returns Regulation, and the designations of safe third countries and safe countries of origin. These elements are politically important for the Member States for having domestic support. The establishment of an effective border procedure was underlined, requiring administrative coordination, and a judiciary managing an increased workload. Improved return rates will help the success of the border procedures, in addition to enhanced cooperation with third countries.

Finally, the external environment was mentioned as an overall challenge that is often unpredictable, with crises erupting in places like Sudan, Gaza, and Iran affecting migration flows. Mr Freidberg underlined that failure is not an option, as the credibility of the EU is at stake and a lot of political capital was invested in the Pact. Member States are on track, with a few exceptions,

while key elements such as the development of Eurodac are progressing, though there is more work required by eu-LISA and Member States. Overall, the outlook for the Pact's implementation is optimistic, as there is a strong sense of shared ownership and responsibility. Challenges will be inevitable, but these can be addressed through open discussions at the Council.

Philippe Leclerc, Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR, noted UNHCR's support in the process of the Pact negotiations, with the objective of improving asylum systems and promoting solidarity between Member States. He highlighted that the 7-day timeline for screening persons arriving at the external borders was particularly challenging. Political willingness from Member States is crucial to ensure fair and efficient procedures. UNHCR is ready to contribute to a protection-sensitive implementation.

There are strong synergies with agencies like the EUAA, in areas such as contingency planning, child protection, vulnerability screening and the designation of safe countries of origin where UNHCR has already contributed. Mr Leclerc highlighted the importance of upholding EU values, the rule of law and access to legal counselling. Beyond the Pact, safe third countries and returns were also mentioned as key elements, areas where UNHCR has produced relevant publications, including on return hubs. Finally, Mr Leclerc emphasised two important elements of the Pact, safeguarding the protection dimension and the approach to human rights, and underlined the importance

of early integration for resettled persons, enabling them to rebuild their lives following the consequences of war.

Lukas Gehrke, Director of the Global Office in Brussels, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), recognised the adoption of the Pact on Migration and Asylum as a milestone and stressed the importance of effective implementation in both the internal and external dimension, as well as preparations for its possible consequences. He stressed the importance of supporting Member States in their preparations, including through the use of EUAA guidance products, joint efforts, and a route-based approach engaging with third countries.

The role of IOM in reception and returns was highlighted, while reintegration was described as a key element in effective return policies, considering vulnerability and the financial sustainability of returned persons. The need for further expanding voluntary return and reintegration in countries of origin is essential. Integration was also described as crucial for the integrity of the system and empowerment of persons. Mr Gehrke pointed out the funding challenges that the UN system is currently facing and stressed the need for close collaboration and smart solutions. However, the system cannot be expected to deliver the same outcome with fewer resources. He highlighted the importance of fostering a sustainable external dimension, while legal migration pathways need to be further developed, supporting regional mobility and skills development.



3rd Panel Discussion

Drawing lessons from the past. The EUAA's role in the new CEAS

Moderated by Hugo Brady, Senior Strategic Advisor, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

The third panel considered the transition from EASO to EUAA and reflected on the lessons learned from the past, as well as the Agency's role in the new Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The participants were asked to highlight any major gaps and issues faced by the Agency since its new mandate was established in 2021. The discussion also prompted the participants to reflect on the strategic vision of the Agency and to provide suggestions on how the EUAA could approach the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Robert Visser, former Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) reflected on how the Agency has grown from being first established as EASO. Originally, EASO had rather limited capabilities. Now, under the EUAA regulation, the Agency has an expanded mandate, enabling enhanced support to EU Member States. Regarding the EUAA's role in the reformed CEAS under the Pact and previous statements made that the Agency should not substitute Member States, he expressed his view that the EUAA already substitutes Member States in certain areas, citing the examples of training and the production of Country of Origin Information. This can only enhance the convergence of asylum practices among Member States and drive efficiencies, including in the area of operational support.

Wolfgang Taucher, former Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), discussed how the Agency's ability to support Member States and establish a good reputation was crucial in the transition from EASO to EUAA. The competence of the Executive Director and having a strong Management Board have been key in building trust with Member States. Member States expect the Pact on Migration and Asylum to be an instrument which balances solidarity and responsibility. To fulfil its mandate in the best way possible, the EUAA should focus on good governance and the recruitment of qualified staff.

Similarly, **Evelina Gudzinskaitė, Chairperson of the Management Board, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)**, emphasised that the Agency's ability to offer operational support to Member States was pivotal in fostering trust and engagement with Member States. With an evolving political environment, the Agency needs to be prepared to assist Member States and to commit to the principle of solidarity. Ms Gudzinskaitė considered how the topic of returns, which was highlighted as a key element in the effective management of migration and asylum during the conference, could be considered as a potential future area of work for the EUAA, even though it does not currently fall within its mandate. In terms of

challenges ahead, the EUAA needs to balance being operational and, at the same time, producing high-quality products, in an efficient way. Furthermore, the Agency's new monitoring function will create new dynamics between the Agency and the Member States. It remains to be seen how these new balances will be tackled. Regarding the Agency's vision for the future Ms Gudzinskaitė stated that AI and technological tools should be incorporated into the day-to-day activities and procedures of the Agency to alleviate bureaucracy and to increase forecasting ability.

Reflecting on the challenges and gaps that the Agency has been facing, **David Costello, former Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)** mentioned the difficulties in staff recruitment and swift field deployments. Another challenge lies in the Agency's strong reliance on Member States to gather the information. However, these difficulties can be tackled through the new mandate of the Agency, which foresees the possibility to quickly deploy personnel through the activation of the Asylum Reserve Pool, and it enhances the Agency's capacity to collect information through the

deployment of liaison officers and the establishment of the monitoring mechanism. Mr Costello stressed the need to tackle future challenges through transparency, good governance and close cooperation with Member States, other Agencies and stakeholders. Good governance is critical to ensure that the Agency carries out its mandate in a transparent way and to guarantee independent evaluation of its work. The Management Board plays a vital role in this regard.

Mikael Ribbenvik Cassar, Deputy Executive Director (EUAA) and Former Chair of the Management Boards of the EUAA and EASO reflected on the astonishing

development of the Agency and stated that this was thanks to strong leadership, which has guided the Agency and put it back on track in times of crisis. Mr Ribbenvik Cassar also believed that the Pact on Migration and Asylum will be successful and that the EUAA has a responsibility towards Member States to help restore asylum as a binary system, where only people who are truly in need will receive international protection. It is important to clearly explain this new system to the public as well as how it will be implemented.



Speakers



Nina Gregori

Executive Director, EUAA



Myriam Spiteri Debono

President of the Republic of Malta



Magnus Brunner

Commissioner for Internal
Affairs and Migration, European
Commission



Ali Aslan

Moderator, TV Presenter and
Journalist



Makis Voridis

Minister of Migration & Asylum
(Greece)



Mari Rantanen

Minister of the Interior (Finland)



Andi Mahila

Deputy Minister of Interior (Albania)



Michael Spindelegger

Director General, International
Centre for Migration Policy
Development (ICMPD)



Ward Lutin

Head of Asylum Knowledge Centre,
European Union Agency for Asylum
(EUAA)



Jean-Louis De Brouwer

Director of the European Affairs Programme, Egmont Institute



Lukas Gehrke

Director of the Global Office in Brussels, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)



Lilian Tsourdi

Professor and Jean Monnet Chair in European Migration Law and Governance, Law Faculty of Maastricht University



Philippe Leclerc

Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR



Kim Freidberg

Director of Home Affairs, Council of the European Union



Beate Gminder

Acting Director-General, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Commission



Hugo Brady

Senior Strategic Advisor, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)



Evelina Gudzinskaitė

Chairperson of the Management Board, European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)



Mikael Ribbenvik Cassar

Deputy Executive Director (EUAA) and Former Chair of the Management Boards of the EUAA and EASO



David Costello

Former Chairperson of the
Management Board of the
European Asylum Support Office
(EASO)



Robert Visser

Former Executive Director of the
European Asylum Support Office
(EASO)



Wolfgang Taucher

Former Chairperson of the
Management Board of the
European Asylum Support Office
(EASO)

DISCLAIMER:

Speakers' titles and affiliations were accurate at the time of the conference. Some roles may have since changed.



Connect & Share

Conference Website

Details from the Conference are available on the official event website, which you can access by scanning the QR code



Photos

Photos from the Conference will be shared via a dedicated Flickr page, which you can access by scanning the QR code:



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#StateOfAsylum



Thank You for Attending

The State of Asylum Conference 2025

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us at the State of Asylum Conference 2025. Your presence, active participation, and valuable contributions made this event a success.

Special appreciation goes to our colleagues and partners who worked tirelessly to organise and support the conference. This achievement would not have been possible without their dedication and teamwork.

On behalf of the EUAA, thank you once again for being part of this important event. We look forward to welcoming you to future EUAA initiatives.





#StateOfAsylum

