

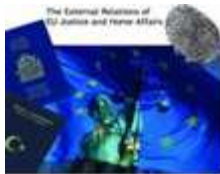


Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
21.05.10

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Launch of the EU Asylum Support Office

On Wednesday, Spain's Minister of Home Affairs, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, signed the Regulation creating the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Strasbourg (France). The EASO aims to promote greater equality in the practical application of this right.

The Office will help Member States' national asylum systems meet their commitments by reinforcing cooperation between them. It will also disseminate best practices, collaborate in implementing solidarity measures and contribute to convergence needed to establish a Common European Asylum System.

Apart from this Regulation, agreement was reached on a modification to the Decision establishing the Refugee Aid Fund, such that funds are transferred to this new office to enable it to carry out its functions.

The Office will have two basic functions. The first will be to help EU Member States facing extraordinary situations of mass asylum requests, by providing experts such as specialist interpreters.

Its other task will be to collect data from each country and from NGOs in order to distribute information on good practices.

The EU has had a Directive on asylum since 2004, but its practical application has faced difficulties as extensive legal and practical differences persist between the Member States.

The harmonisation of systems seeks to ensure that EU countries will offer similar conditions in receiving asylum seekers and studying their asylum applications, and to avoid the increasingly prevalent practice of people seeking asylum in countries where they know their applications will have a greater chance of being accepted. This creates an unfair situation both for EU countries bearing a greater burden and for asylum seekers.



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

Forum to unify criteria and combat cross-border crime

EU attorneys general are considering the creation of a consultative forum which would enable them to unify criteria and advance towards a common European justice system to combat cross-border crime.

A meeting on this was held yesterday the 20th May 2010. The meeting was opened by the First Vice-President of the Spanish Government, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega. The Spanish Justice Minister, Francisco Caamaño, and the President of Eurojust, Aled Williams were also present at the meeting.

In her address, the Spanish Vice-President argued that in a world where threats to security and liberty make no distinctions between countries and regions, and where an increasingly cohesive Europe continues to progress towards greater political and economic unity, the creation of a truly European justice system is no longer just a matter of choice, but of necessity.

She claimed that ecological crimes, trafficking in drugs and persons, attacks on the euro, domestic violence and organised crime 'pose a threat to all citizens' and must be confronted jointly. In order to do so the EU needs clear and coherent criteria, shared priorities and effective mechanisms.

Ms Fernández de la Vega encouraged the attorneys general to take steps towards the construction of a single European justice system and reminded the audience that one of the objectives of the Spanish Presidency of the EU is to promote the creation of a European prosecution service.