



Ad-Hoc Query on Forecasting and Contingency Planning Arrangements for International Protection Applicants

Requested by IE NCP on 21/10/14

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Summary prepared 20 January 2015 by NO EMN NCP on the basis of responses from Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway

Disclaimer: The responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.

1. Background Information

The Irish Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC)¹ is reviewing the procedures in place for

- (i) Forecasting possible future trends in asylum and subsidiary protection applications over the next twelve months.
- (ii) Contingency planning² for possible increase in the number of protection applications received in terms of resource allocation to enable applications to be processed.

¹ The ORAC is the first instance processing authority in Ireland for international protection applications.

² Contingency planning is defined as preparing for a challenging event that may arise in the future and for the purpose of this Questionnaire, this refers to an unexpected and sharp increase in the number of applicants for international protection.

- (iii) Contingency planning for possible increase in reception and accommodation capacity which might be required due to an increase in the number of protection applicants.

The questions asked on **forecasting** concerned whether the Member State (MS) has a system in place for forecasting the number of applications for international protection (naip), and if so the sources for information used, the authorities involved, whether there is a special statistical forecasting unit responsible and whether the forecasting is linked to a system for contingency planning in the event of a significant and rapid change in the naip. The information to some extent updates the information presented in the February 2011 compilation of responses to a 2010 NO EMN NCP *ad hoc* query on forecasting the number of asylum seekers.

The questions asked on **contingency planning** concerned whether the MS has a system for this, how it operates and whether it has a legal basis, the possibilities for mobilizing extra financial and staff resources and whether there is a crisis management capacity that can be mobilized, the authorities involved and whether the possibility of calling on the assistance of e.g. the European Commission, EASO, other relevant EU agencies and/or other MS is included in the planning.

Questions were also asked about the experience of **dealing with backlogs** caused by an unanticipated rapid increase in naip, and whether there is a system in place for dealing with rapid increase in the naip, including whether certain types of applications are given priority.

Responses

Replies for **10** countries signalled that **forecasts on the number of applicants for international protection** (naip) are prepared regularly. (According to the responses to the 2010 query this was then the case for **7** of these countries). Most frequently mentioned as sources of information used when preparing forecast were international organisations, relevant national statistics and media reports. The responses for **4** countries signal that more than one agency is involved in the preparation of the forecasts, and **4** responses mention the involvement of a specialised statistical unit when preparing the forecasts.

Replies for **10** countries signalled that they have **contingency plans** in some form. Where different authorities have different responsibilities each authority may have its own plan. The plans are not based on a legal act, and while the responsibility for formulating and updating contingency plans rests with a specific unit in the organisations, there is no contingency planning unit as such. It is indicated that the plans will cover all volume dependent aspects of the operations. Most responses indicate that the organisation(s) do(es) have a possibility for reallocation of existing resources in the case of a significant increase in the naip, and for **6** countries the responses signal that it is possible for the organisation(s) to mobilize additional resources in such situations. The responses for **4** countries indicate the presence of crisis management arrangement in the case of an unanticipated

rise in the naip. No response indicates that the country has included the possibility of calling for assistance from international sources in their contingency planning.

Experience with **dealing with backlogs** as a consequence of an unanticipated increase in naip is indicated by the responses for **8** countries, and in **one** country the backlogs were said to be the consequence of an anticipated increase. Steps taken to reduce backlogs depended on the institutional arrangements in the country and the portfolio of cases that dominated the backlogs. The response from **one** country described how EASO had been involved in finding solutions. Fast-track procedures for applications from the citizens of countries with a very low expectation that there is a real need for protection as well as high priority given to applications from citizens of countries with very high expectations of a real protection need, were both described as measures for reducing backlogs. Reforms of case processing procedures were also described in some responses.

Comments

It is important that the forecasts prepared for the different stages in the case handling process for applications for international protection are consistent and based on a realistic understanding of the workload, capacities and timing of these stages. Thus forecasting the naip is only the first element in a of forecast which involves the workload for case handling, accommodation, settlement, return to other Dublin countries and acceptance of Dublin requests, as well as the number of assisted and forced return to countries of origin of failed asylum seekers. That these forecasts should be realistic means that they cannot just reproduce any expectations that have determined budget allocation. Effective contingency planning depends on such forecasts. Dealing with backlogs caused by unanticipated increases in the nuiip will also depend on a preparedness to re-examine established case handling practices.