Notes from EMN Cluster Meeting 31 May 2017,

Working together for efficient and coordinated asylum and migration processes.

organised by NO EMN NCP

The agenda and a list of participants is included in Annex 1.

In the session on how different agencies can work together more effectively in the critical arrival phase of the asylum process, participants from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the National Police Immigration Service (PU) first presented an ongoing project in Norway (designated PUMA) to develop more effective procedures for asylum applications, drawing on the experiences gained during the surge in asylum applications in Norway during the autumn of 2015. This surge included an unprecedented large number of asylum seekers crossing the external Norwegian Schengen border with the Russian Federation. Emerging from the project are modifications to the following processes:

•   Establishing the applicant's identity, as this is one factor in the determination of whether the asylum seeker is to be granted protection in Norway or not. If 'not', then the ID determination is crucial for the return to the country of origin. The aim of the new process is to reduce significantly the total period before such decisions can be made and the consequences be implemented: a period which was mostly a period of waiting. The modifications would involve e.g. better early information collection and assessment, as well as avoiding duplication of effort by the agencies involved.

•   Risk assessment to identify the efforts that are needed to determine whether the applicant is someone clearly in need of protection or represents a case that warrants further investigations.

•   The logistics of the asylum seeker movements between the locations of the initial registration, the fact finding interviews, the health examinations, the accommodations (in a reception centre) while the application is considered, and the point of departure if s/he is to be returned to the country of origin or another Dublin country.

The expectation is that the results from the PUMA project will enable the two agencies to work more effectively with their own tasks as well as more effectively together: to ensure that the whole process is greatly improved for both the asylum seekers and the agencies, within the limits set by the resources and political priorities given to the agencies.

During a tour-de-table session following the PUMA presentation

•   FI reported that during the 2015 surge they had had similar procedures, divisions of labour between agencies and challenges as those in NO. Steps have been taken to streamline

the processes in light of the experiences gained, including how the agencies coordinate their activities. One comment was that it would be of interest to compare countries' timing of procedures, resources and time required for the different stages in the process, and whether differences can contribute to explaining the difference in e.g. acceptance rates for asylum seekers from the same country of origin.

• In NL there is a national centre for first determining, registering and linking the identity characteristics (biometrics, name, documents, social network traces e.g. on smartphones) of all asylum seekers, making use of 'kiosks' that all police officers in NL understand how to operate. Linking ID documents confidently to the correct person was said to be a real challenge.

• In LT the processes are similar to those in FI, but with much smaller numbers.

• LU has small absolute numbers of asylum seekers, but a large number relative to its population. The police is responsible for establishing identity and travel routes, during a first interview with the asylum seeker. The findings are passed on to the immigration authorities. BE and NL may be asked to assist, e.g. in situations of capacity problems commented that there is an e see how much time.

• NO described long established processes (for more than 10 years) of cooperation and coordination between all agencies affected, of projections of future work-loads linked to immigration regulation and asylum seekers, both for operational planning and for budgeting. Current projections are evaluated four times a year by groups formed for arriving at coordinated projections related to asylum cases; regular residence, visa and expulsion cases; and return procedures.

In the last session NO presented some examples of steps to modernize the asylum and admission process, covering the use of

• A dedicated reception centre with information and self-registration of key information about the applicant: both case related and for a possible future integration process (the information requested can easily up- and down-scaled). Challenges include how to (i) link the information to the physical person; (ii) verify the information provided; (iii) how to cross-check with information from asylum interviews.

• Skype interviews, which reduces the need for travels by the asylum seeker, the interviewer, the interpreter. The system is currently used in 50 percent of cases. One disadvantage is reduced possibility to understand body language. Another is reduced personal contact needed to establish trust between the interviewer and the applicant. A recent evaluation has concluded that such interviews are not as good as face-to-face one, but of acceptable quality for non-problematic cases.

• Improvements to the shared data base/registration system

• Booking of key resources (e.g. interpreter)

•   Managing the capacity of the reception centres and location of their residents.

•   Better business intelligence reporting tools and Lean management: assist in planning, in understanding processes, to possible needs for improvements and the need for rapid, complete and correct registrations of all cases.

•   Robots for basic operations (starting with registering itineraries for resettlement refugees, and generating and sending rejection letters and case documents to representatives). (A comment was made that the danger that (non-qualified) applicants may quickly learn how to 'game' the system may require that the information and algorithms used may need to be modified quite frequently. In a comment LU recommended that NO looks at some of the features recently developed in the FR system for handling information about foreigners.)

Annex 1

Agenda
EMN Cluster Meeting 2017
Working together for efficient and coordinated asylum and migration processes
Oslo, 31 May 2017

Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) **Meeting room 672**
Hausmannsgt. 21, Oslo

Receiving and considering applications for visitor's and residence permits, including applications for international protection typically involves a range of government agencies: border guards and police units as well as immigration and asylum authorities to mention a few. For effective immigration and asylum management it is important that there is a common understanding of the division of tasks between these agencies, as well as how their priorities and operations are interdependent. The participants at this EMN Cluster meeting are invited to exchange information about how these challenges are met in their countries, and to identify 'good practices'. **We would especially like to focus on cooperation and coordination between the police units and immigration services in the asylum admission phase.**

(We will be serving a light snack/lunch)

13:30 – 13:45 **Registration at the UDI reception**

13:45 – 14:30 **Welcome and "tour de table". Participants are invited to present current plans or projects in their member states aimed at improving efficiency and cooperation between different government agencies involved in the asylum and migration processes.**

14:30 – 15:15 **How different agencies can work together more effectively in the critical admission phase of the asylum process.**
Introduction to the discussion: *The project PUMA/ASSIST* Simen Lindviksmoen and Mirza Gogic, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, and Petter Abrahamsen, National Police Immigration Service.

15:15 – 15:30 **Coffee/tea break**

15:30 – 16:15 **Modernizing the asylum and admission process. New tools and new solutions. How to involve the applicant as a resource to improve efficiency.**
Introduction to the discussion: *Implementing new ICT tools in the asylum process* by Roar Iost Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

16:15 – 16:30 **Closing**

Participant list:

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