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Introduction to the Tool Boxes

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With the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, the European Union has embarked on an ambitious project to work towards a common asylum system, based on agreed minimum standards. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, considers this a challenge as well as an opportunity, with important repercussions for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, both within the EU and beyond.

To help understand this process, we have developed the UNHCR Tool Boxes on asylum Matters - or "Tool Box" for short. We hope this will prove to be an essential companion for those involved in migration and asylum issues, and that it will help them get a better grasp of the EU mechanisms and the implications of the developing EU asylum system for the international protection regime.

The purpose of this Tool Box is to provide a systematic overview of the institutional set-up, the legislative instruments and the political concerns surrounding the ongoing development in the EU towards the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice (AFSJ) and, more specifically, a common European asylum policy.

What the Tool Box is not

As this Tool Box deals mainly with the development of the European Union's asylum policy, it does not provide detailed information on other important policy areas of the EU within and outside the area of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

Furthermore, the Tool Box does not intend to be an exhaustive overview of the EU asylum policy development process, and does not include comments by academics or by NGOs such as ECRE, Amnesty International and other specialist NGOs.

What is in the Tool Box?

The Tool Box is structured as follows:

Tool Box 1 contains information on:

- The EU institutions;
- The European decision making process;
- The history and the challenges of the asylum harmonisation process;
- The EU enlargement process;
- The external dimension of JHA EU policy;
- The co-operation between UNHCR and the EU.

Each Chapter in Tool Box 1 is followed by a series of questions meant to trigger a discussion on these subjects.

Tool Box 2 contains:

- All relevant adopted texts constituting the asylum and migration acquis;
- UNHCR's comments and observations on these texts.

As new texts are adopted, these can be added to the binder, while obsolete versions can be removed.

Tool Box 3 contains:

- Various training tools: power point presentations, overheads, quizzes, role plays and a CD Rom containing the contents of the three Tool Boxes.

These tools accompany the texts of Tool Boxes 1 and 2. Together the texts and related tools form a single package. Therefore, it is recommended that the reader / trainer use them in tandem.

Who should use the Tool Box?

The Tool Box is primarily meant for trainers. Sections of the Tool Box can also be used for self-study in skills development or as briefing material. In addition, we hope that the Tool Box will serve as a useful reference tool for government practitioners, NGOs representatives, and other individuals working or interested in the European asylum policy development and its impact on third countries.

Final remarks

- The Tool Box should be considered as a work in progress. As developments take place, certain parts will need to be updated, or new notes will be drafted. These updates and additions should be introduced in one of the three Tool Boxes, as appropriate.
- Among the many experts involved in the creation and completion of this Tool Box, UNHCR Brussels would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to all interns who have contributed to this ambitious project, and to the editor, Ms Sarah Perman. We would also like to thank the Europe Bureau of UNHCR headquarters for its continuous support, as well as all the UNHCR offices in EU Member States and acceding countries without which the production of the Tool Box would not have been possible.
- For any comment or suggestion on the contents of the UNHCR Tool Box on EU asylum matters, please write to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Brussels at :
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UNHCR Brussels
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TOOL BOX 1: THE FUNDAMENTALS

Introduction to the Tool Boxes

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