

MIEUX

Case Study

Mexico (2017-2018)

Funded by the
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Implemented by
ICMPD



How to read this case study?

MIEUX Thematic Areas



Migration and
Development



Legal Migration
and Mobility



Irregular Migration
and Trafficking in
Human Beings



International Protection
and Asylum Policy



Horizontal
Interventions

Ten features of good practice in MIEUX Actions

- 1 There should be ownership on the part of the partner country
- 2 Actions should provide an opportunity to be innovative in their context
- 3 Actions should be able to be replicated
- 4 Actions should provide tangible results
- 5 Actions should be endorsed at a high level
- 6 Actions should be integrated into existing priorities
- 7 Actions should be based on the highest levels of experience
- 8 Actions should complement and be in synergy with other initiatives
- 9 Actions should provide EU added value
- 10 Actions should act as a catalyst for the acquisition of knowledge through the exchange of experiences

CAPACITY BUILDING BASED ON THE EASO TRAINING CURRICULUM¹

Mexico (2017-2018)

In recent years, asylum applications have increased significantly in Mexico. MIEUX supported the Mexican Government in strengthening its efforts in the area of identification and protection of migrants in need of international protection.



Context

In recent years, Mexico has seen an increase in asylum applications due to the high number of people fleeing violence, insecurity and poverty, in particular from Central America. Between 2012 and 2018, asylum applications increased by 3,553% and reached a new peak in 2019 with just under 70,000 applications.²



Mexico acceded to both the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, which broadens the definition of refugee (including climate refugees), has been incorporated into Mexican national law. The 2011 Refugees, Complementary Protection and Political Asylum Act and its Regulatory Framework, together with the Migration Act, constitute the domestic legal framework governing asylum.



The principal government body responsible for refugee issues, including refugee status determination, is the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance (COMAR for its Spanish acronym) under the Secretariat of the Interior. COMAR's General Coordination Office is located in Mexico City, and three regional offices have been established in Chiapas, Tabasco and Veracruz (states with high numbers of asylum

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**MIEUX
FEATURES**

1 The focus of this case study covers only part of the support provided to the Mexican Secretariat of the Interior. In addition to the topic of international protection and asylum, the Action supported the Mexican Migration Policy Unit to build and further develop the Mexican integration system for immigrants by knowledge transfer of EU practices.
2 UNHCR Global Focus: Mexico (2019). Available at: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2536#:~:text=Some%2069%2C500%20individuals%20applied%20for,of%205%2C900%20applications%20per%20month.> [Accessed 26 August 2020].

applications). However, asylum applications are not limited to these three states, forcing asylum seekers to request protection at the offices of other national institutions, such as the National Institute of Migration (INM for its Spanish acronym).

The comprehensive and protection-driven asylum procedure, in line with international standards agreed upon by Mexico, therefore needed to be streamlined through the different administrative levels and institutional instances, with an eye on vulnerable migrants. At the same time, according to the Law on Refugees and Complementary Protection and its respective Regulation, COMAR has only 45 days to make decisions regarding asylum applications. Well-trained staff members are needed to assess the evidence (e.g. information gathered through personal interviews), make a fair decision and present it in a well-reasoned manner during this short timeframe. In light of the above, INM and COMAR requested MIEUX's support to strengthen inter-institutional coordination and cooperation as well as exchange between migration and case officers, and their European peers.

Action Design

EASO acts as a centre of expertise on asylum and has developed a wide range of operational tools including manuals, informational and practical tools, and reporting templates. The comprehensive EASO training curriculum and tools laid the foundation for the design of this Action focusing on INM and COMAR.

INM's border migration officers are often the first point of contact for migrants reaching Mexico and play a crucial role in facilitating effective access to international protection. Based on the respective EASO practical guide, a single training session on access to the asylum procedure was organised for migration officers working at the border and in detention centres in Chiapas.

Following a training needs assessment conducted by COMAR among its staff members, the training topics were defined based on the existing needs among case and reception officers, and in line with the EASO training curriculum. Two-day, face-to-face sessions on core and in-depth curriculum modules³ were organised depending on the level of experience.

In addition, shorter and more condensed half-day training sessions on specific modules targeted local COMAR and INM offices via video conference. The EASO practical guides were shared with all participants ahead of the training.

EASO-certified trainers provided the core of the expert team. Experts from the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden were deployed for this Action.

³ Core modules: Interview Techniques and Evidence Assessment. In-depth modules: Interviewing Children, Interviewing Vulnerable Persons, and Exclusion.

Impact

- The varied capacity building activities increased inter-sectoral dialogue and coordination. This was achieved by joint cooperation in the initial design phase of the Action and joint participation at activity level. The INM highlighted that, through the MIEUX activities, synergies and linkages both at strategic and operational levels with COMAR had been reinforced.
- The personal interview plays a key role in providing asylum applicants with a fair and effective opportunity to present the grounds for their application. Based on the EASO practical guide for personal interviews of asylum applicants, the workshop on interviewing children and vulnerable persons promoted a structured interview method. The structured approach guides the case officers through the stages of preparation for the personal interview, opening the interview and providing information, conducting the personal interview and post-interview actions. Following the interactive training and practising different interviewing skills in specific case scenarios, COMAR has standardised its method to conduct interviews of asylum applicants and their assessment.
- The training modules were particularly useful to better understand and properly take into account the psychological component of asylum applicants. Following the MIEUX peer-to-peer exchanges, COMAR changed how children are interviewed and revised the corresponding decision process. Furthermore, COMAR produced a practical guide on interview techniques.
- Following the training sessions, and similarly to COMAR, INM revised its interview questionnaires and strengthened its efforts to make child migrants feel more comfortable during their interview (e.g. staff no longer wear their uniforms when conducting interviews).
- Following the workshop on access to asylum procedures for first-contact officials, INM included the respective EASO practical guide in the reading material of the entry-level online training module on international protection for migration officers. The Capacity Building Unit of the INM also planned to use the guide as a basis to design one of three sessions of the new online training module on international protection and human rights available for all INM staff members.
- The MIEUX experts highlighted that they gained better insight into the migration situation in Latin America. It was helpful for them to listen to the Mexican case officers' experiences since asylum applications from Latin America have also increased in Europe.

Practices

- **Identification and response to the special needs of vulnerable groups** was mainstreamed in all training sessions, with a specific focus on unaccompanied minors and the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Combining capacity building activities with field visits:** The visit to the detention centre and border with Guatemala was an excellent opportunity for the EU peers to get a better understanding of the current migration situation and the challenges faced by the Mexican Government.
- **Synergies with international actors:** Close coordination with the local UNHCR office avoided duplication of capacity building efforts. This proved to be particularly important as Canada has supported Mexican efforts to strengthen its COI unit, a thematic area that was planned to be covered within the framework of the Action. MIEUX's flexibility allowed to refocus the specific activity on another relevant topic. UNCHR's Protection Officers participated as observers or actively as speakers in all activities.
- **Incorporating technology:** The video-conference training targeted all federal INM and COMAR officers, gathering staff from different locations to attend the same virtual training course simultaneously. While this certainly brought limitations compared with a face-to-face session, it provided an opportunity to share good practices and lessons learnt with a high number of staff members (for instance, the half-day video-conference seminar on interviewing vulnerable groups with a specific focus on children was attended by 128 INM staff members).

Lessons Learnt

Despite the fact that migration and case officers in Europe and Mexico are dealing with the same challenges, it was key to place those learning at the centre of the capacity building process in order to achieve the expected results. The well-produced EASO training modules had to be adapted and fine-tuned to the Mexican normative framework and migration context. This was achieved by transferring the knowledge in an efficient and engaging way. Theoretical aspects and the relevant normative framework were covered from a practical perspective by applying these in specific case scenarios.



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Migration EU Expertise



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Since launching operations in 2009, the Migration EU eXpertise (MIEUX) Initiative has provided space to request capacity development activities and EU expertise, allowing the sharing of knowledge and practices between peers working in institutions in and outside of Europe.

The adoption of the Global Compact on Migration and the creation of the UN Network on Migration coincided with MIEUX's ten-year anniversary. To mark the occasion, MIEUX undertook a comprehensive analysis of its achievements, methodologies and practices.

By delving into MIEUX's portfolio of over 100 interventions, this series of case studies intend to offer a glimpse of the broad range of tools, methodologies and approaches that can inspire or be used by governments and migration and development practitioners to advance a cooperative and sustainable international architecture of migration.