



Ex-post Evaluation of the European Refugee Fund 2011- 2013 and Ex-post Evaluation of the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2008-2010



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Ex-post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund 2011- 2013 and Ex-post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2008-2010

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Content and structure of this report

The report follows the general structure of the EC's template for evaluation final reports annexed to the evaluation's terms of reference; the structure has only been slightly adapted to take account of the double scope of the evaluation, i.e. 2011-2013 for the ERF on the one side, and 2008-2010 for ERF Community Actions on the other. The table below provides the correspondence between the EC's template and the report's structure, as well as a brief description of its content:

Evaluation final report template		Interim report	Content description
1. Executive summary	↔	1. Executive summary	This section provides the abstract and executive summary of the evaluation
2. Introduction	↔	2. Introduction	This section provides a reminder of the purpose and scope of the evaluation
3. Background of the initiative	↔	3. Background of the initiative	This section provides a reminder of the background of the ERF
4. Evaluation questions	↔	4. Evaluation questions	This section presents the fine-tuned list of Evaluation Questions (EQ).
5. Method/ process followed	↔	5. Method/ process followed	This section presents the progress of the evaluation and methodology used. EQs and the chosen methodology to answer them (including judgment criteria and indicators) were defined during the first phase of the evaluation; the report provides a short reminder of the key steps followed by the evaluation as well as an overview of the data collection and consultation strategy.
6. Implementation state of play	↔	6. PART I ERF 2011-2013 6.1. Implementation of ERF 2011-2013	This descriptive section presents the implementation of the ERF 2011-2013 actions
7. Answers to evaluation questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevance ▶ EU added value ▶ Efficiency ▶ Effectiveness ▶ Coherence 	↔	6.2. Answers to evaluation questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevance ▶ EU added value ▶ Efficiency ▶ Effectiveness ▶ Coherence ▶ Sustainability 	This section presents answers to the EQs related to the ex-post evaluation of the ERF 2011 to 2013
	↔	7. PART II ERF 2008-2010 CAs 7.1. Implementation of ERF 2008-2010 CAs 7.2. Answers to evaluation questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevance ▶ EU added value ▶ Efficiency ▶ Effectiveness ▶ Coherence 	This descriptive section summarises the implementation of the ERF 2008-2010 Community actions. This section presents answers to the EQs related to the ex-post evaluation of the ERF CAs 2008-2010.
8. Conclusions	↔	8. Conclusions & recommendations	This section summarises the main conclusions and presents the recommendations of the evaluation.
9. Recommendations	↔		
10. Annexes	↔	9. Annexes	

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABAC	Accrual Basic Accounting
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AP	Annual Programme
AWP	Annual Work Programme
CA	Community Action
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of Origin Information
EAC	European Asylum Curriculum
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EBF	European Borders Fund
EC	European Commission
EIA	Extended Impact Assessment
EIF	European Integration Fund
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERF	European Refugee Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISF	Internal Security Fund
ISSG	Inter Service Steering Group
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
MS	Member State (s)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RA	Responsible Authority
RF	European Return Fund
SFC	System for Fund Management
SOLID	Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows

List of country codes

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

1 Abstract and executive summary

1.1 In English

Abstract

Pursuant to the Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund (ERF) for 2008-2013, the European Commission mandated the consulting firm EY to conduct the ex-post evaluation of the ERF 2011-2013, as well as of the ERF's Community Actions for the period 2008-2010. The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach including desk research, interviews, surveys, an open public consultation and country visits to ensure that all relevant stakeholders were consulted. On this basis, answers were developed for evaluation questions related to the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and sustainability of the ERF, as well as its EU added value.

With the €386 million programmed under the ERF in 2011-2013, in total, the 1,500 projects implemented in 27 Member States (MS) and 15 Community Actions reached around 1,000,000 asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (including refugees). Emergency measures were also implemented in 11 MS faced with particular pressure.

The evaluation found that the ERF was overall an effective and relevant instrument to support the efforts of MS to cope with the reception of seekers of international protection. It was particularly effective in contributing to the improvement of reception conditions and the integration of target groups, and provided added value to MS, especially to those with relatively less developed asylum systems that needed to establish national asylum policies and build necessary infrastructure. However, the ERF could have better contributed to the implementation of the Common European Asylum Systems by putting more emphasis on promoting the convergence of asylum systems and incentivising solidarity between MS to share the burden of receiving seekers of international protection.

1.1.1 Objectives and methodological approach

Pursuant to the Council Decision No 2007/573/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund (ERF) for 2008-2013, the European Commission (EC) mandated the consulting firm EY to conduct the ex-post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund (ERF) 2011-2013, as well as the ex post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2008-2010.

This evaluation examined the implementation of actions co-financed by the ERF during **2011-2013** through the **Annual Programmes and Community Actions (CA)**, as well as the implementation of actions co-financed by the ERF under the **2008-2010 Community Actions**. In line with the legal obligations for the evaluation of the ERF, the evaluation aimed both to ensure the transparency and accountability for the implementation of the Fund, and to contribute to improving the future implementation of EU financial instruments in the field of asylum. In accordance with the Better Regulation guidelines, the evaluation addressed eight evaluation questions relating to the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and sustainability of the ERF actions implemented at EU and MS level, as well as their EU added value.

The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach in order to address the evaluation questions and ensure all the relevant stakeholders were consulted. This included: an extensive **review of relevant EU and Member State data and documents** (ERF background documents, Member States multiannual strategies and programmes, 2011-2013 national evaluation reports, and so on); **over 120 interviews** (by telephone and in person) to gather input from European Institutions, EU Agencies, national responsible authorities and other stakeholders; **eight national case studies** in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, the United Kingdom and Sweden; **two online surveys** of beneficiaries of Community Actions and of actions supported through the national Annual Programmes (13 respondents to the CA survey and 55 respondents to the national beneficiaries survey); and the results of **online public consultations** launched by the EC between May and August 2016 (12 weeks, 19 respondents).

The Evaluation's main conclusions for the six evaluation criteria are presented below.

1.1.2 Key findings

Relevance

This criterion examined the extent to which the ERF was in line with needs at EU and Member State level.

The evaluation found that the objectives of the ERF 2008-2013 were adequately formulated in its legal basis to cover most existing MS needs in the field of asylum from 2011 to date. The general objective of the ERF (article 2) was particularly relevant to the need to support MS in coping with the resources and capabilities required for receiving refugees, displaced persons and beneficiaries of international protection. **The emergency measures mechanism implemented through an additional financial reserve proved crucial** to addressing the drastic and unexpected rise of asylum flows from 2013 (notably in transit and in receiving EU countries) and the intensification of needs in MS subject to particular pressure. There is, however, a shortcoming with the methodology used for allocating ERF funding to MS. **Allocations were mainly based on past trends (asylum flows during the past three years), which at times meant that funding did not completely reflect the current financial needs of MS with regards to the reception of asylum seekers.**

The diversity of eligible actions (as listed under articles 3 and 4 of Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC) was consistent with ERF objectives and adequately broad to cover almost any existing needs at the EU and MS levels. The ERF's broad scope and the flexible approach available to MS in their use of the ERF greatly contributed to its overall relevance. The evaluation found, however, that more incentives could be provided to address the needs for resettlement and relocation activities as well as for actions aimed at raising the awareness of EU citizens.

At the national level, two specific objectives (as set out in article 3 of Decision 573/2007) were particularly relevant to the needs expressed by the MS, namely, to improve reception conditions and asylum procedures for persons seeking international protection and to improve the integration of refugees, in line with the implementation of the related Directives of the Asylum package. This was reflected in the programming of MS, with 90% of all projects and 90% of programmed amounts being dedicated to reception and integration measures. With the exception of a few MS from northern, central and eastern Europe, less attention was given to other ERF objectives aimed at improving tools and methods and strengthening the capacity of authorities working with asylum issues, despite existing needs in these fields.

The evaluation found that, whilst the ERF was relevant to MS needs, a greater emphasis could have been placed on and more incentives could have been provided for the EU needs of promoting the convergence of asylum systems and greater solidarity between MS to share the burden of receiving refugees and displaced persons. First, the need for solidarity was not clearly reflected in the objectives of the ERF as defined in its legal basis; the general objective did not mention the need to ensure a 'balanced' effort between MS. Second, the low priority given by MS to relocation and resettlement (specific objectives set out in article 3 of Decision 573/2007) showed that, despite strong needs at the EU level, the EU voluntary mechanism did not significantly incentivise MS to partake in these responsibility-sharing initiatives.

Finally, the evaluation looked into the relevance of national strategies and programmes. The vast majority of national stakeholders interviewed expressed overall satisfaction with the ERF objectives and eligible actions. It appears, however, **that the ERF annual programmes sometimes lacked an overarching strategic focus**, as they were often replicated from one year to the next without further consultation and needs assessment, and seemed to be designed to facilitate the use of the Fund (that is, to finance reception and integration projects through the awarding body method).

Effectiveness












This criterion examined the extent to which the objectives of the ERF, as stated in its legal basis, have been achieved.

The ERF 2011-2013 amounted to €386 million in programmed financing and €315 million in payments¹. Overall, it supported the implementation of more than 1,500 projects through MS annual programmes (shared management mode), 15 Community Actions (direct management mode) and emergency measures in 11 MS.

The ERF 2011-2013 overall succeeded in supporting MS in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and asylum seekers, with different results depending on the relevant ERF specific objective. The ERF was particularly significant in contributing to the improvement of reception conditions and asylum procedures and the integration of refugees and displaced persons (90% of the shared management portion of the ERF, excluding technical assistance). According to aggregated figures provided by MS, almost one million asylum seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of international protection benefited in some way from services or activities funded by the ERF between 2011 and 2013. The ERF's contribution to enhancing MS capacity to develop and improve tools and methods was less significant. Finally, the ERF had a limited impact in terms of MS involvement in resettlement and relocation programmes, although it did encourage a few MS to get involved in or continue and strengthen their resettlement programmes. The number of new MS participating in resettlement remained limited during the 2011-2013 period (only three), and the ERF did not have significant results in the area of relocation.

¹ As 20 programmes are not yet closed at the date of the evaluation, the payment amount cannot be considered as definitive.

Table 1: Traffic light assessment of the ERF's effectiveness

Description	Level of effectiveness	Comments
General objective of the ERF (article 2 of Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC)		
Support and encourage the efforts made by the Member States in receiving, and in bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons, taking account of EU legislation on those matters, by co-financing eligible actions		The ERF effectively supported the efforts of the Member States, but it did not fully take account of the EU legislation as well as of the need for greater convergence between the Member States
Priorities (according to Council Decision No. 2007/815/EC)		
Implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives		The ERF mainly focused on the reception and integration of refugees and was effective in covering the first needs of asylum seekers and refugees
Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims for international protection and to underpin administrative structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States		Practical cooperation and the development of tools and methodologies were implemented in a few projects
Actions helping to enhance responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries		Solidarity and responsibility sharing were important aspects of a few projects, especially Community Actions, and brought about short term rather than long term change
Specific objectives (article 3 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC)		
Improve the reception conditions and asylum procedures		The improvement of reception conditions was the main field of the activities implemented under the ERF, and provided concrete and effective support to asylum seekers
Improve the integration of target group persons		Numerous projects targeted integration and were effectively implemented through the development of social counselling or assistance for accommodation, amongst other types of actions
Enhance MS' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies		Few projects were developed in this area
Support resettlement activities		Resettlement activities were implemented in few Member States during the programme
Support transfer activities		No transfer activities were implemented, except one Community Action aimed to release the pressure on Malta (14 persons were resettled)
Emergency Measures		The Emergency Measures were very effective in facing the urgent needs following the increase in asylum flows
Community Actions		A small number of projects were implemented and the results could have been better disseminated among the potential interested stakeholders

The type and intensity of impacts differed from one MS to another as they depended on national asylum policies in place, as well as on the way in which each MS decided to use the Fund. **The ERF brought stronger and more visible support to MS that had relatively less developed asylum systems and needed to establish national asylum policies and build necessary infrastructures (for example HU and BG).** It also effectively supported MS that were faced with emergency situations

(such as GR, BG, IT). **In other MS, the ERF was mainly used to support existing policies.** It contributed to improving the reception and integration of refugees through a larger scope of action under existing mechanisms and/ or through additional and new services implemented by innovative projects (IT, FR, AT, LU). A few MS from northern Europe put a greater emphasis on strengthening their resettlement programmes (including UK, SE, and ND).

The ERF brought positive changes to national asylum systems and final beneficiaries, **and made a small contribution to the overall improvement of asylum procedures at EU level, as well as to the harmonisation of asylum systems EU-wide.** It did not play a significant role in favouring the convergence of national practices and infrastructure, however, as these were not objectives of national annual programmes, and community actions remained limited in number and impact. There is room for improvement in the exchange of national practices between MS authorities within the framework of the ERF and in discussion on how they took account of community legislation in the field of asylum under ERF projects.

Finally, the evaluation found that **the ERF monitoring and evaluation systems at both EU and MS level were limited and did not allow a more robust assessment of the performance of the Fund.** The creation of the ERF 2008-2013 did not rely on a quantitative baseline and it did not define indicators and (qualitative and quantitative) targets to be achieved, against which the evaluation could draw further judgements on the ERF effectiveness (and efficiency).

Efficiency

The efficiency criterion assessed the extent to which the ERF achieved its objectives at a reasonable cost. It largely focused on assessing the costs incurred to manage the ERF at the programme and project levels. It also sought to measure the cost-benefits of the Fund by comparing costs against the (positive) changes generated by the ERF at all levels (EU, MS, project).

The evaluation concluded that the administrative costs incurred at MS and programme level to manage and implement the ERF (0.33 Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) per €1 million of ERF programmed within RAs) were reasonable. These costs were overall comparable to those of other EU funds, although there were wide variations between MS: small MS, particularly the Baltic countries, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Hungary, had higher levels of administrative costs compared to the size of their programmes. Moreover, the complexity required to manage the ERF seemed necessary to ensure the robustness and reliability of the management and control systems.

However, the evaluation noted some negative *perceptions* linked to the administrative part of the ERF. Administrative burden was rated as high by most responsible authorities and project implementers interviewed in the MS. This perception could be explained by the remaining scope for simplification as well as internal reasons specific to each MS.

First, simplification measures which may have contributed to a reduction of costs have been implemented under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in place for the 2014-2020 period. These include the simplification of the programming cycle (from annual to multiannual) and the merging of the three SOLID Funds, the coexistence of which was source of additional complexity and duplication of work.

Second, inefficiencies were also due to a **lack of experience and to insufficient technical and administrative capacities and resources of Responsible Authorities in some MS.** A learning curve was observed and MS progressively optimised their workload, simplified processes and improved internal organisation. **Efficiency gains could be obtained** through a reduction in the number of projects, internal reorganisation, a clearer distribution of tasks within the administrations responsible for managing the Fund (such as a separation between administrative, control and strategic tasks), and a greater level of mutualisation of tasks between the RAs responsible for the other SOLID Funds (European Integration Fund and Return Fund). Other observed best practices included the development of capacity-building initiatives to help project implementers monitor their projects and comply with the EC's legal requirements with regards to expenditure eligibility and financial management.

With regard to benefits, the evaluation showed that with 1,500 projects and one million asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection potentially reached by services and activities supported by the Fund, the ERF had an average of €247,000 in co-financing per project and almost €400 support per final beneficiary. However, no further conclusions may be drawn on the cost-effectiveness of the ERF due to **the absence of quantitative indicators reflecting the actual benefits of the ERF.**

Coherence

This criterion refers to the extent to which the objectives and actions of the ERF were articulated in an effective way with those funded by other existing financial instruments (EU instruments and national programmes) implemented by various stakeholders, including the EU, Member States and international organisations.

The ERF was complementary to other SOLID Funds, but the co-existence of the ERF and the European Integration Fund (EIF) was a source of additional complexity and administrative burden due to the need for rigorous monitoring and auditing. As for other EU Funds, although overlaps could have occurred with the European Social Fund (ESF), and to a smaller extent with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), coherence and complementarity were ensured through active cooperation between the national authorities responsible for managing these instruments in all MS in which interviews were conducted.

At the national level, ERF projects adequately complemented each other as they either provided different services, or covered different regions or target groups. Significant progress was made in terms of synergies and mutual knowledge amongst project holders in the MS thanks to initiatives taken by RAs in terms of communication tools and meetings.

At the EU level, the evaluation found limited coherence between CAs and national projects funded by the annual programmes. Furthermore there was little evidence of networking and exchange of best practices between MS authorities to capitalise on ERF measures and actions, except for an initiative launched by the Finish Responsible Authority where informal meetings are being organised with 10 other MS to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Lastly, complementarity with EASO may be considered work in progress. Some projects have yet to be followed up by EASO (for example the Dublin 2010 project) and EASO has not been systematically made aware of funded CAs.

Sustainability

This criterion examined the durability of the effects of the projects financed by the ERF and their broader impacts to understand whether the Fund actions are sustainable (or only generate immediate effects).

The evaluation concluded that the sustainability of ERF projects results and impacts depended on the type of actions implemented and/or outputs obtained during their implementation. Structural effects on MS reception capacities (through investments in accommodation and reception infrastructures) were likely to be the most sustainable, provided the MS invest the necessary money for upkeep after construction. **The production of studies and development of tools and methods were also sustainable, provided they were disseminated.**

For projects aimed at providing **training and capacity-building to national authorities and partners in the field of asylum, staff turnover was a key factor which could decrease their sustainability.** Integration projects and projects aimed empowering asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (through language courses, for example) are considered to be less sustainable, especially in transit MS where language courses were provided to asylum seekers who often desired to reach another country. Finally **innovative projects were not systematically mainstreamed by MS authorities, especially with regards to CAs, which reduced their sustainability.**

Overall, it appeared difficult to assign sustainable effects to ERF 2011-2013 without considering the cumulative effects of ERF 2007-2013 and ERF 2008-2010. Sustainable effects were in several cases 'cumulative short term effects': the ERF continued to provide support to MS development capacity and instruments, thus contributing to long term effects in terms of policy development.

Lastly, **the evaluation found that projects implementers often relied heavily on external funding, particularly EU funds (according to 13 MS).** It was thus not obvious whether projects would continue without EU funds (including projects supported since ERF creation). Less sustainable projects tended to be those related to the provision of services not funded by MS and for which NGOs often cannot find alternative sources of funding once ERF projects end.

Added value

This criterion examined the extent to which the ERF provided additional value, which would not have occurred without the EU's intervention.

The ERF provided added value to Member States and non-State actors by bringing additional funding that allowed the implementation of projects which would probably not have been implemented otherwise. It appeared to add most value in Member States that had relatively less national funding and less developed asylum systems, where it contributed to a partial (re)structuring of the asylum system (EE and BG, for example). In other MS, the added value of the ERF was the ability to finance innovative projects, providing previously non-existing services or extending the scopes of activities and addressing the needs of new and more vulnerable target groups. However, some ERF-funded activities also corresponded to usual and recurring activities that would probably have been funded by national funding.

Apart from its financial added value, the EU dimension of the Fund did not provide significant added value with regards to cooperation, exchange of best practices and solidarity-sharing mechanisms (especially on relocation).

1.1.3 Recommendations

The evaluation makes six key recommendations addressed to the European Commission and Member States.

1. Enhance the contribution of the Fund to the harmonisation of standards and development of the CEAS:

- ▶ *At EC level:* (i) Foster strategic programming; (ii) Create more opportunities for informal and frequent exchanges to develop networking, exchange of views and good practices between MS; (iii) Better leverage EASO's expertise and capacity to develop opportunities for exchanges on good practices; and (iv) Further develop synergies between CAs and national projects.
- ▶ *At MS level:* (i) Better identify needs related to the implementation of the standards required as part of the CEAS and more clearly demonstrate how planned/selected projects contribute to these standards and share of best practices with other MS; and (ii) based on the needs, allocate the funds between types of projects/priorities for the whole programming period on either investments and institutional capacity-building projects that lead to heavy structural changes (in MS with low financial capacity and less mature asylum systems), or innovative projects to better address asylum seekers needs, or improve the tools and methodologies used by administrative structures to process claims for international protection (in MS with mature asylum systems), and/or exchanges of good practices.

2. Strengthen the solidarity dimension of the Fund, which would involve, at EC level:

- ▶ Better formulate the objectives of the ERF to take into account the need to support a balanced effort between MS, as well as the need for greater solidarity between MS and support to the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.
- ▶ Find a way to integrate the most updated data on asylum flows, and to take into account the level of development of national asylum systems in the funding allocation system.
- ▶ Maintain the emergency measures mechanism.
- ▶ Restructure incentives to increase the transfers, and dedicate a specific budget for the implementation of resettlement projects and EU resettlement programmes as well as intra-EU transfers of beneficiaries of international protection.

3. Improve the strategic programming, notably through dialogue with national stakeholders:

- ▶ *At EC level:* (i) Further develop the strategic dialogue between the EC and the MS when defining multiannual programmes as well as during the implementation of the programmes; and (ii) Streamline the template of the national multi-annual programme to better focus on demonstrating the added value of ERF (AMIF) funding and contribution to the implementation of the CEAS. In addition, create a requirement to conduct a baseline needs assessment.
- ▶ *At MS level:* (i) Continue seeking to involve all types of stakeholders in the definition of national strategies and programmes, for instance through online consultations or programming meetings.

Ensure the representation of key groups in the programming, monitoring and implementation of programmes (such as authorities, NGOs, and legal actors); and (ii) Enhance networking between national project implementers so that they share best practices. This could be done through online interactive platforms, regular meetings with all project implementers, thematic workshops on various topics (integration, reception, and so on).

4. Improve the monitoring and evaluation tools and capacities at EU, MS and project level

- ▶ *At EC level:* (i) Develop a common framework for a set of monitoring indicators on outputs, results and impacts together with MS; (ii) Ensure that indicators are RACER (Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor and Robust); (iii) Make sure that these indicators reflect the objectives of the Fund and that they have baseline data and clear targets; (iv) Further align the evaluation requirements with the Better Regulation guidelines and support MS in improving the quality of their evaluation practice: improve evaluation questions and suggest both relevant and realistic methodologies to be implemented at national level; and (v) Revise the format of the National evaluation reports to foster clear evidence-based conclusions and recommendations.
- ▶ *At MS level:* (i) Where relevant, complement the EU common framework with additional indicators and monitoring arrangements and develop the capacity of project implementers to monitor their activities effectively.

5. Enhance the efficiency of the Fund, which involves:

- ▶ *At EC level:* (i) Assist the less experienced MS or those having specific difficulties in the smooth implementation of their management and control systems; and (ii) Ensure that MS with smaller programmes are not disadvantaged by the high administrative and set up costs.
- ▶ *At MS level:* (i) Ensure that resources and expertise are adequate to implement the tasks as required under the MCS, even during busy periods; (ii) Continue to identify opportunities to reduce the administrative burden of the project implementers, such as the number of attachments required, the length of application forms, reduction in number of questions, use of online application functionality, and the use of electronic systems; (iii) More specifically, limit the reporting requirements to minimise the administrative tasks for project implementers: streamline the reporting format, focus on reporting of results and impacts, and limit the reporting frequency; and (iv) Develop guidelines and training to help project implementers abide with RA (and EC) implementation rules.

6. Improve the sustainability, the impacts and the added-value of funded projects, which would involve at MS level:

- ▶ When selecting pilot/innovative projects, ensure learning from experience and the dissemination of results at both national and EU levels.
- ▶ Include sustainability as a criterion for selecting projects. Attention should be paid to: (i) the capacity to find alternative funding after the project ends; (ii) the capacity to disseminate the results widely (studies, tools, and so on); (iii) the choice of relevant target persons that would allow multiplying effects (such as trainings and conferences); and (iv) the capacity to maintain/ensure the upkeep of equipment in the longer term (infrastructure).
- ▶ More specifically, increase the awareness to CAs amongst national stakeholders and increase the dissemination of their results to ensure their use in the long term.
- ▶ Avoid recurring financing of repetitious or less innovative projects (for more than three years, for example).

1.2 En Français

Résumé

Conformément à la Décision du Conseil N°2007/573/CE portant création du Fonds européen pour les Réfugiés (FER) pour la période 2008-2013, la Commission européenne a mandaté le cabinet EY pour réaliser l'évaluation ex-post du FER de 2011 à 2013, ainsi que l'évaluation ex-post des actions communautaires financées par le FER de 2008 à 2010. L'évaluation a appliqué une approche de méthodes mixtes incluant une recherche documentaire, des entretiens, des enquêtes, une consultation publique ouverte et des visites pays permettant d'assurer que l'ensemble des parties-prenantes aient été consultées. Sur cette base, des réponses ont été formulées à des questions évaluatives portant sur l'efficacité, l'efficience, la pertinence, la cohérence et la durabilité du FER, ainsi que sa valeur ajoutée communautaire.

Avec un budget total de 386 millions d'euros programmés au titre du Fonds entre 2011 et 2013, les 1 500 projets mis en œuvre dans les 27 Etats membres (EM) et les 15 Actions communautaires financées par le FER ont bénéficié à près de un million de demandeurs d'asile et bénéficiaires de la protection internationale (incluant les réfugiés). Des mesures d'urgence ont également été mises en œuvre dans 11 EM soumis à une pression particulière.

L'évaluation a conclu que le FER a globalement constitué un instrument efficace et pertinent pour soutenir les efforts des EM en matière d'accueil des demandeurs d'une protection internationale. Il s'est révélé particulièrement efficace pour améliorer les conditions d'accueil et l'intégration des groupes visés, et a apporté une plus-value aux EM, notamment ceux dotés de systèmes d'asile relativement moins développés nécessitant d'établir des politiques d'asile nationales et de construire les infrastructures adaptées. Cependant le FER aurait pu mieux contribuer à la mise en œuvre du régime d'asile européen commun en mettant davantage l'accès sur la promotion de la convergence des systèmes d'asile et en incitant davantage de solidarité entre les MS pour répartir la charge liée à l'accueil des demandeurs d'une protection internationale.

1.2.1 Objectifs et approche méthodologique

Conformément à la Décision du Conseil N°2007/573/CE portant création du Fonds européen pour les Réfugiés pour la période 2008-2013, la Commission européenne (CE) a mandaté le cabinet EY pour réaliser l'évaluation ex-post du Fonds européen pour les Réfugiés (FER) de 2011 à 2013, ainsi que l'évaluation ex-post des actions communautaires financées par le Fonds européen pour les Réfugiés de 2008 à 2010.

L'évaluation a examiné la mise en œuvre des actions cofinancées par le FER sur la période 2011-2013 par le biais à la fois des programmes annuels et des actions communautaires (AC), ainsi que la mise en œuvre des actions cofinancées par le FER sur la période 2008-2010 par le biais des actions communautaires uniquement. Conformément aux obligations réglementaires relatives à l'évaluation du Fonds, l'évaluation a visé à la fois à assurer la transparence et la redevabilité du Fonds et à contribuer à améliorer la mise en œuvre future des instruments financiers de l'Union européenne dans le domaine de l'asile.

Conformément aux lignes directrices de la Meilleure Réglementation², l'évaluation a répondu à huit questions évaluatives portant sur l'efficacité, l'efficience, la pertinence, la cohérence et la durabilité des actions mises en œuvre par le FER aux niveaux européen et national, ainsi que sur leur valeur ajoutée communautaire.

L'évaluation a appliqué une approche de méthodes mixtes afin de répondre aux questions évaluatives et pour s'assurer que l'ensemble des parties-prenantes pertinentes ait été consulté. Celles-ci ont inclus : une revue approfondie des données et documents pertinents au niveau UE et au niveau national (documents cadres du FER, stratégies et programmes multi annuels des Etats membres (EM), rapports d'évaluation nationaux 2011-2013, etc.) ; plus de 120 entretiens (menés par téléphone et en face-à-face) afin de recueillir les contributions des institutions européennes, des agences

² Better Regulation guidelines

européennes, des autorités responsables dans les EM, et d'autres parties-prenantes ; huit études de cas nationales menées en Autriche, Belgique, Bulgarie, France, Hongrie, Italie, au Royaume-Uni et en Suède ; deux enquêtes en ligne à destination des bénéficiaires des actions communautaires et de ceux des actions soutenues par les programmes annuels nationaux (13 répondants à l'enquête « AC » et 55 répondants à l'enquête aux bénéficiaires nationaux) ; et les résultats de la consultation publique ouverte lancée par la CE entre mai et août 2016 (12 semaines) (19 répondants).

Les principales conclusions de l'évaluation autour de chacun des six critères d'évaluation sont présentées ci-après.

1.2.2 Principales conclusions

Pertinence

Ce critère apprécie la mesure dans laquelle le FER a répondu aux besoins existants au niveau de l'UE et des Etats membres

L'évaluation a conclu que les objectifs du FER 2008-2013 tels que présentés dans sa base légale étaient formulés de manière adaptée pour répondre à la plupart des besoins des EM en matière d'asile depuis 2011. L'objectif général du Fonds (article 2) est apparu particulièrement pertinent au regard du besoin de soutien des EM pour faire face aux ressources et au renforcement de capacités nécessaires à l'accueil de réfugiés, de personnes déplacées et de personnes bénéficiant d'une protection subsidiaire. Le mécanisme d'aide aux mesures d'urgence, mis en œuvre par une réserve financière additionnelle, s'est révélé crucial dans le contexte de hausse considérable et imprévue des flux de demandeurs d'asile depuis 2013 (notamment dans les pays d'accueil et de transit de l'UE) et de l'intensification des besoins des EM soumis à une pression particulière. Il a persisté cependant une faiblesse au niveau de la méthode d'allocation des financements FER aux EM ; la distribution du Fonds aux EM s'est en effet essentiellement basée sur des chiffres de tendances passées (flux de demandeurs d'asile et d'accueil de réfugiés au cours des trois dernières années) et ne pouvaient donc pas parfaitement refléter les besoins financiers actuels pour l'accueil de demandeurs d'asile et de réfugiés.

La diversité des actions éligibles (telles que listées à l'article 3 et à l'article 4 de la Décision du Conseil No 2007/573/EC) était cohérente avec les objectifs du FER et suffisamment large pour couvrir tout type de besoin au niveau de l'UE et des EM. Le large périmètre d'action du FER et l'approche flexible pouvant être adoptée par les EM dans leurs choix d'utilisation du FER ont fortement contribué à sa pertinence générale. L'évaluation a néanmoins regretté le manque de mesures incitatives pour répondre aux besoins en matière de réinstallation et de transfert intra-communautaire ainsi qu'en faveur de la sensibilisation des citoyens européens.

Au niveau national, deux des objectifs spécifiques du Fonds (tels que précisés à l'article 3 de la Décision 573/2007) ont été particulièrement pertinents pour répondre aux besoins exprimés par les EM en matière d'amélioration des conditions d'accueil et des procédures de demande d'asile et d'intégration des réfugiés, conformément à la mise en œuvre des Directives y afférent au sein du « Paquet Asile » de l'UE. Ce constat se reflète dans les programmations des EM, au sein desquelles 90% des projets et 90% des montants programmés ont été concentrés sur des mesures d'accueil et d'intégration. A l'exception de quelques EM d'Europe du Nord, du Centre et de l'Est, une attention nettement moindre a été accordée aux autres objectifs du FER visant l'amélioration des outils et méthodes et le renforcement de la capacité des autorités à travailler sur les questions de l'asile, en dépit de besoins réels en la matière.

L'évaluation a conclu que bien que le FER ait été pertinent pour répondre aux besoins des EM, les besoins communautaires en matière de convergence des systèmes d'asile et de solidarité renforcée entre EM pour répartir la charge liée à l'accueil des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées auraient pu être davantage mis en avant et promus par le FER, tant dans ses objectifs que dans leur déclinaison opérationnelle. Tout d'abord, le besoin de solidarité n'apparaît pas clairement dans les objectifs du FER tels que définis dans sa base légale ; son objectif général ne fait aucune mention de la nécessité d'assurer un effort « équilibré » entre EM. En outre, la faible priorisation donnée par les EM aux actions de réinstallation et aux transferts intra-communautaires (objectifs spécifiques définis dans l'article 3 de la Décision 573/2007) montre qu'en dépit de forts

besoins au niveau UE, leur mécanisme fondé sur la seule volonté des EM n'a pas significativement incité ces derniers à prendre part aux initiatives de partage de responsabilité en matière d'asile.

Enfin, l'évaluation a soulevé la question de la pertinence des stratégies et programmes nationaux. Une bonne satisfaction a été exprimée à l'égard des objectifs et actions éligibles du FER par les parties-prenantes interrogées dans les EM. Néanmoins **les programmes annuels ont pour certains manqué d'une réelle vision stratégique globale** ; ils ont souvent consisté dans la réplication des programmes des années précédentes sans consultation suffisante ni véritable analyse de besoins, et ont semblé construits de sorte à simplifier la mise en œuvre du Fonds (i.e. par le financement de projets d'accueil et d'intégration au moyen d'une mise en œuvre par appel à projets).

Efficacité

Ce critère apprécie la mesure dans laquelle les objectifs du FER tels qu'exposés dans sa base réglementaire ont été effectivement atteints.

Les montants du FER 2011-2013 se sont établis à 386 millions d'euros en volumes programmés et à 315 millions d'euros en volume décaissés. Globalement, le Fond a soutenu la mise en œuvre de plus de 1 500 projets via les programmes annuels des EM (gestion partagée), 15 actions communautaires (gestion directe par la Commission) et des mesures d'aide d'urgence dans 11 EM.

Le FER 2011-2013 a globalement soutenu avec succès les EM dans leurs efforts pour accueillir les réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile et supporter les conséquences de cet accueil, avec des résultats néanmoins différenciés en fonction des objectifs spécifiques du Fonds. Le FER s'est révélé particulièrement important dans sa contribution à l'amélioration des conditions d'accueil et des procédures d'asile, et à l'intégration des réfugiés et personnes déplacées (90% du FER utilisé selon le mode de gestion partagée, hors assistance technique). Selon les données agrégées fournies par les EM, près d'un million de demandeurs d'asile et de réfugiés ou bénéficiaires de protection internationale ont bénéficié d'une façon ou d'une autre de services ou d'activités financées par le FER entre 2011 et 2013. Le FER a plus faiblement contribué au développement et à l'amélioration des méthodes et outils des EM pour mettre en œuvre leur politique d'asile. Il a enfin eu un impact limité sur l'engagement des EM dans des programmes de réinstallation et de transfert intra-communautaire : bien qu'il ait encouragé quelques EM à s'engager ou poursuivre leurs programmes de réinstallation, le nombre de nouveaux pays participant à ces actions est resté limité sur 2011-2013 (trois seulement), tandis que le FER n'a pas permis de résultat significatif en matière de transfert intra-communautaire.

Figure 1: Evaluation de l'efficacité du FER (feux tricolores)

Description	Degré d'efficacité	Commentaires
Objectif général du FER (article 2 de la Décision du Conseil No 2007/573/CE)		
Soutenir et encourager les efforts faits par les États membres pour accueillir des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées et supporter les conséquences de cet accueil, par le cofinancement d'actions éligibles, en tenant compte de la législation communautaire dans ces domaines		Le FER a soutenu efficacement les efforts des Etats membres, mais il n'a pas parfaitement pris en compte la législation communautaire en matière d'asile ni le besoin d'une convergence accrue entre EM
Priorités (Décision du Conseil No 2007/815/CE)		
Mise en œuvre des principes et des mesures prévus dans l'acquis dans le domaine de l'asile, y compris ceux qui concernent les objectifs d'intégration.		Le FER s'est concentré sur l'accueil et l'intégration des réfugiés, et s'est révélé efficace pour répondre aux besoins immédiats des demandeurs d'asile et réfugiés
Mise au point d'outils de référence et de méthodes d'évaluation afin d'évaluer la qualité des procédures d'examen des demandes de protection internationale et de soutenir les structures administratives en vue de relever les défis posés par la coopération pratique renforcée avec les autres États membres.		La coopération opérationnelle et le développement d'outils et de méthodologies ont été intégrés dans un nombre limité de projets
Actions contribuant à assurer un meilleur partage des responsabilités entre États membres et pays tiers		La solidarité et le partage de responsabilité ont constitué des aspects importants d'un petit nombre de projets, notamment les Actions communautaires, et ont uniquement apporté des changements de court terme
Objectifs spécifique du FER (article 3 de la Décision du Conseil No 2007/573/CE)		
Améliorer les conditions d'accueil et les procédures d'asile		L'amélioration des conditions d'accueil a constitué le principal champ d'intervention du FER, et a permis un soutien concret et efficace aux demandeurs d'asile
Améliorer l'intégration des personnes visées		De nombreux projets ont ciblé l'intégration et ont été mis en œuvre de manière efficace via le développement d'un accompagnement social ou l'appui à l'hébergement, entre autres activités
Renforcer la capacité des États membres d'élaborer, de suivre et d'évaluer leurs politiques d'asile		Peu de projets ont été mis en place dans ce domaine
Soutenir les activités de réinstallation		Les activités de réinstallation ont été mises en œuvre dans un nombre limité d'Etats membres
Soutenir les activités de transfert intra-communautaire		Aucune activité de transfert n'a été mise en œuvre, à l'exception d'une Action communautaire visant à réduire la pression à Malte (14 personnes ont été réinstallées)
Mesures d'urgence		Les mesures d'urgences ont été très efficaces pour répondre aux besoins urgents apparus après la hausse des flux de demandeurs d'asile.
Actions communautaires		Peu de projets ont été mis en œuvre et leurs résultats auraient pu être mieux diffusés vers les parties-prenantes intéressées.

La nature et l'intensité des impacts du FER ont varié d'un EM à l'autre en fonction des politiques d'asile en place, et la façon dont chaque EM a utilisé le Fonds. Le FER a apporté un soutien fort et plus visible dans les EM dont les systèmes d'asile étaient relativement moins développés et

nécessitaient d'établir une politique nationale et de construire des infrastructures adaptées (HU, BG, etc.). Il a également soutenu efficacement les EM confrontés à des situations d'urgence (GR, BG, IT...). Dans les autres EM, le FER a principalement été utilisé pour étendre des activités et politiques préexistantes. Il y a contribué à améliorer l'accueil et l'intégration des réfugiés au travers d'un élargissement des périmètres d'action et/ou du financement de services nouveaux ou additionnels par le biais de projets innovants (IT, FR, AT, LU). Quelques pays d'Europe du Nord ont par ailleurs mis l'accent dans le renforcement de leurs programmes de réinstallation (UK, SE, ND...).

Le FER a permis des changements positifs pour les systèmes d'asile nationaux et pour leurs bénéficiaires finaux, et il a faiblement contribué à l'amélioration générale des procédures d'asile au niveau communautaire, ainsi qu'à l'harmonisation des systèmes d'asile à l'échelle de l'UE. Il n'a pas joué de rôle significatif en faveur de la convergence des politiques et des infrastructures nationales dans la mesure où ces aspects n'étaient pas des objectifs des programmes annuels nationaux et où les actions communautaires sont restées limitées en nombre et en impact. Des améliorations restent à apporter pour multiplier les opportunités permettant aux EM de se rencontrer et d'échanger, dans le cadre du FER, sur leurs pratiques nationales et sur la façon dont ils ont pris en compte la législation communautaire en matière d'asile dans les projets du FER.

Enfin, l'évaluation a mis en avant la faiblesse des systèmes de suivi et d'évaluation du FER à la fois au niveau national et au niveau communautaire, ne permettant pas de mesurer de manière robuste la performance du Fonds. La création du FER 2008-2013 ne s'est pas appuyée sur une situation initiale quantifiée et n'a pas défini d'indicateurs associés à des valeurs cibles (ni qualitative ni quantitative) par rapport auxquelles l'évaluation aurait pu formuler des jugements clairs relatifs à l'efficacité (et à l'efficacité) du FER.

Efficiences

Le critère d'efficacité apprécie la mesure dans laquelle le FER a atteint ses objectifs à un coût maîtrisé. Il s'est largement efforcé de mesurer les coûts nécessaires à la gestion du FER au niveau des programmes et des projets. Il a aussi tenté de mesurer le rapport coût-bénéfice en comparant ces coûts avec les changements (positifs) générés par le FER à tous niveaux d'intervention (UE, EM, projet).

L'évaluation a conclu que le coût administratif nécessaire à la gestion et la mise en œuvre du FER à l'échelle des EM et des programmes nationaux (0,33 équivalent-temps-plein (ETP) par million d'euros de FER programmé, au niveau des autorités responsables) était raisonnable. Ce niveau de coût est en effet comparable à celui d'autres fonds de l'UE en moyenne, malgré d'importants écarts entre EM : pour les petits EM, en particulier les pays baltes, la Slovaquie, la République Tchèque, le Luxembourg et la Hongrie, le FER a représenté une charge administrative comparativement plus élevée par rapport à la taille de leurs programmes annuels. De plus la complexité requise pour gérer le FER est apparu dans l'ensemble nécessaire pour assurer la robustesse et la fiabilité des systèmes de gestion et de contrôle.

L'évaluation a noté néanmoins une perception négative à l'égard de la charge administrative demandée par le FER, dont le poids a été considéré comme élevé par la plupart des autorités nationales et des porteurs de projet interrogés. Cette perception peut s'expliquer à la fois par la persistance d'une marge de simplification et par des raisons internes à chaque EM.

D'une part, des gains d'efficacité auraient pu être obtenus par des mesures de simplifications qui ont pour la plupart été mises en œuvre dans le cadre du « Fonds Asile Migration Intégration » en place pour la période 2014-2020, c'est-à-dire la simplification du cycle de programmation (passé d'une programmation annuelle à une programmation pluriannuelle) et la fusion des trois fonds du programme SOLID, dont la coexistence s'est révélé source de complexité additionnelle et de duplication du travail au niveau des autorités responsables.

D'autre part des facteurs d'inefficacité ont également été le fait de l'inexpérience et de l'insuffisance des ressources et des capacités techniques et administratives des autorités responsables de certains EM. A cet égard il a été observé une courbe d'apprentissage au fil des programmations, les EM ayant progressivement optimisé leurs méthodes de travail, simplifié leurs processus et amélioré leur organisation interne. Des gains d'efficacité ont également été permis par la réduction du nombre de projets, des réorganisations internes et la clarification de la répartition des tâches entre les administrations responsables de la gestion du Fonds (par exemple via la séparation des services en charge des aspects administratifs, de contrôle, et stratégiques), et une plus grande mutualisation des

tâches entre les autorités responsables des autres fonds du programme SOLID (Fonds retour et Fonds intégration). D'autres bonnes pratiques ont inclus le développement d'initiatives de renforcement des capacités des porteurs de projets afin de les accompagner dans le suivi de leurs projets et dans le respect des exigences légales communautaire en matière de gestion financière et d'éligibilité des dépenses.

En termes de bénéficiaires, l'évaluation a montré qu'avec 1 500 projets ayant permis de toucher un million de demandeurs et bénéficiaires de la protection internationale, le FER a consacré en moyenne 247 000 euros par projet, et près de 400 euros par bénéficiaire final. L'évaluation ne peut cependant pas conclure sur le rapport coût-efficacité du FER en raison de l'absence d'indicateurs quantitatifs permettant de refléter correctement les réels bénéficiaires du FER.

Cohérence

Ce critère renvoie à la mesure dans laquelle les objectifs et les actions du FER ont été articulés de manière efficace avec ceux des autres instruments financiers existants (instruments UE et programmes nationaux) mis en œuvre par divers acteurs, y compris l'UE, les Etats membres et les organisations internationales.

Le FER s'est révélé complémentaire des autres fonds SOLID, mais la coexistence du FER et du Fonds européen pour l'Intégration (FEI) a été la source d'une complexité et d'une charge administrative additionnelles dues à la nécessité de mettre en place des mesures de suivi et d'audit rigoureuses. En ce qui concerne les autres fonds UE, en dépit de redondances possibles avec le Fonds social européen (FSE) et, dans une moindre mesure, avec le Fonds européen pour le Développement régional (FEDER), la cohérence et la complémentarité ont été assurées grâce à une coopération active entre les autorités nationales responsables de la gestion de ces instruments dans l'ensemble des EM interrogés.

Au niveau national, les projets du FER se sont complétés les uns les autres de manière adéquate dans la mesure où ils ont porté sur des services distincts ou qu'ils ont couvert des régions ou des cibles différentes. Des progrès significatifs ont été réalisés dans les EM en termes de synergies et de connaissance mutuelle entre porteurs de projets grâce aux initiatives prises par les autorités responsables en matière de communication et de réunions d'échanges.

Au niveau de l'UE, l'évaluation a relevé une cohérence limitée entre les ACs et les projets nationaux financés par les programmes annuels. Peu de mises en réseau et d'échanges de bonnes pratiques ont par ailleurs été repérées entre les autorités des EM pour capitaliser sur les mesures et les actions du FER mises en place dans leurs pays respectifs, à l'exception d'une initiative lancée par l'autorité responsable de Finlande dans le cadre de laquelle des réunions informelles ont été organisées avec 10 autres EM pour discuter de sujets d'intérêt commun.

Enfin, la complémentarité avec le Bureau européen d'appui en matière d'asile (EASO) reste à consolider. Le Bureau doit encore prendre le relais de certains projets (comme c'est le cas du projet « Dublin 2010 » par exemple), tandis qu'il n'a pas été systématiquement mis au courant des ACs financées.

Durabilité

Ce critère apprécie si les effets des projets financés par le FER s'inscrivent dans la durée et incluent des impacts plus larges afin de comprendre si les actions du Fonds ont des impacts durables (et non seulement des effets immédiats de court terme).

L'évaluation a conclu que la durabilité des résultats et des impacts du FER a varié selon le type d'actions mise en œuvre et/ou selon leurs réalisations. Les effets de nature structurelle sur la capacité d'accueil des EM (par le biais d'investissements dans des infrastructures d'hébergement et d'accueil) sont les plus durables à la condition que les EM consacrent les fonds nécessaires à l'entretien des infrastructures financées après leur construction. La production d'études et le développement d'outils et de méthodes ont également produit des effets durables, à condition d'avoir fait l'objet d'une diffusion.

Concernant les projets visant la formation et le renforcement de capacité des autorités nationales et de leurs partenaires en matière d'asile, la rotation de personnel a constitué un facteur clé ayant réduit leur durabilité. Les projets d'intégration et ceux visant le renforcement de capacité des demandeurs d'asile et des bénéficiaires de la protection internationale (par exemple au travers de cours de langue)

ont été considérés comme moins durables, en particulier dans les pays de transit où des cours de langue ont été proposés à des demandeurs d'asile désireux de rejoindre un autre pays. Enfin, les projets de nature innovante n'ont pas fait l'objet d'une capitalisation systématique de la part des autorités des EM, en particulier en ce qui concerne les ACs, ce qui a limité leur durabilité.

De manière générale, il est apparu difficile de déterminer des effets durables liés au FER 2011-2013 sans prendre en compte les effets cumulés du FER 2007-2013 et du FER 2008-2010. Les effets durables ont été dans de nombreux cas le résultat de l'accumulation d'effets de court terme : le FER a fourni un support continu au développement de la capacité et des instruments des EM, contribuant ainsi à des effets de long terme sur le développement des politiques.

Enfin, l'évaluation a conclu que les porteurs de projets reposaient fortement sur les financements externes, en particulier sur les fonds UE (d'après les éléments recueillis dans 13 EM). La poursuite des projets sans fonds UE est apparue peu évidente (y compris les projets anciens soutenus depuis la création du FER). Les projets les moins durables ont été ceux portant sur la fourniture de services non financés par les EM et pour lesquels les ONGs ne peuvent souvent pas trouver de financement alternatif après la fin des projets.

Valeur ajoutée

Ce critère vérifie la mesure dans laquelle le FER a présenté une valeur ajoutée qui n'aurait pas été obtenue sans une intervention à l'échelle de l'UE.

Le FER a apporté une valeur ajoutée aux Etats membres et aux acteurs non-gouvernementaux en fournissant un financement additionnel ayant permis la réalisation de projets qui n'auraient probablement pas été mis en œuvre autrement. Il semble avoir apporté une valeur particulièrement forte dans les Etats membres dotés de financement nationaux plus limités et de systèmes d'asile moins développés, où il a partiellement pu contribuer à la refonte des systèmes d'asile (EE et BG par exemple). Dans les autres EM, la valeur ajoutée du FER a résidé dans sa capacité à financer des projets innovants au travers de services qui n'existaient pas auparavant ou d'une extension d'activités ou la prise en charge des besoins de cibles nouvelles et plus vulnérables. Cependant certaines activités financées par le FER ont également concerné des activités habituelles et récurrentes qui auraient pu être prise en charge par des financements nationaux.

Outre sa valeur ajoutée financière, la dimension communautaire du Fonds n'a pas apporté de plus-value particulière en matière de coopération, d'échanges de bonnes pratiques et de mises en place de mécanismes de partage de responsabilité (notamment en ce qui a concerné la relocation).

1.2.3 Recommandations

L'évaluation a identifié six recommandations clés à destination de la Commission européenne et des Etats membres.

1. Renforcer la contribution du Fonds à l'harmonisation des standards et au développement du régime d'asile européen commun

- ▶ *Au niveau communautaire* : (i) Renforcer la programmation stratégique ; (ii) Créer davantage d'opportunités pour des échanges informels plus fréquents entre EM afin d'encourager la mise en réseau, et l'échange de vues et de bonnes pratiques ; (iii) Faire davantage levier sur l'expertise et la capacité d'EASO pour développer les opportunités d'échanges de bonnes pratiques ; et (iv) Poursuivre le développement de synergies entre les ACs et les projets nationaux.
- ▶ *Au niveau national* : (i) Mieux identifier les besoins liés à la mise en œuvre des standards du régime d'asile européen commun et mieux démontrer la contribution des projets prévus/sélectionnés à l'atteinte de ces standards et au partage de bonnes pratiques avec d'autres EM, et (ii) sur la base des besoins, allouer les fonds pour toute la période de programmation selon les types de projets et les priorités : soit pour des projets d'investissement et de renforcement de capacités institutionnelles permettant d'obtenir des changements visibles et structurels (dans les EM dotés d'une capacité financière plus restreinte et de systèmes d'asile moins matures), soit pour des projets innovants permettant de mieux répondre aux besoins des demandeurs d'asile et améliorer les outils et les méthodes des administrations pour traiter les demandes de protection internationale (dans les EM dotés de systèmes d'asile plus matures), soit encore pour des projets de partages de bonnes pratiques.

2. Renforcer la dimension “solidarité” du Fonds, ce qui devrait impliquer, à l’échelle communautaire, de :

- ▶ Mieux formuler les objectifs du FER afin de prendre en considération la nécessité de soutenir un effort équilibré entre les EM, ainsi que la nécessité d’une plus grande solidarité entre EM et d’un soutien à la mise en œuvre de la Réglementation Dublin ;
- ▶ Rechercher un moyen d’intégrer des données plus récentes en matière de demande d’asile et de prendre en compte le niveau de développement des systèmes d’asile nationaux dans le calcul d’allocation des financements ;
- ▶ Conserver les mesures d’urgence ;
- ▶ Revoir les incitations pour augmenter les transferts intra-communautaires et dédier un budget spécifique à la mise en œuvre de projets et de programmes de réinstallation ainsi qu’au transfert intra-UE de bénéficiaires de la protection internationale.

3. Améliorer la programmation stratégique, notamment à travers un dialogue avec les parties-prenantes nationales :

- ▶ *Au niveau communautaire* : (i) Poursuivre le renforcement du dialogue stratégique entre la CE et les EM lors de la définition des programmes multi annuels ainsi que pendant la mise en œuvre des programmes ; et (ii) Simplifier le format-type des programmes nationaux multi-annuels afin de les centrer davantage sur la démonstration de la valeur ajoutée du financement FER (FAMI) et sa contribution à la mise en œuvre du régime d’asile européen commun. En complément, imposer la réalisation d’une évaluation des besoins.
- ▶ *Au niveau national* : (i) Continuer à rechercher la participation de tous types de parties-prenantes dans la définition des stratégies et des programmes nationaux, par exemple au travers de consultations en ligne ou de réunions de préparation de la programmation. Assurer la représentation des principaux groupes de parties-prenantes dans la programmation, le suivi et la mise en œuvre des programmes (tels que les autorités, les ONGs et les acteurs juridiques) ; et (ii) Renforcer la mise en réseau entre porteurs de projets nationaux afin d’encourager l’échange de meilleures pratiques. Cela pourrait être réalisé par le biais de plateformes en ligne interactives, de réunions régulières rassemblant tous les porteurs de projets, ou encore d’ateliers de travail thématiques portant sur divers sujets (intégration, accueil, etc.)

4. Améliorer la capacité et les outils de suivi et d’évaluation aux niveaux UE, national et projet

- ▶ *Au niveau communautaire* : (i) Développer, en lien avec les EM, un cadre commun d’indicateurs de suivi des réalisations, des résultats et des impacts ; (ii) Vérifier que les indicateurs sont conformes aux critères de qualité « RACER » (indicateurs pertinents, acceptés, crédibles, facile à renseigner et robustes) ; (iii) S’assurer que ces indicateurs reflètent effectivement les objectifs du Fonds et qu’ils disposent d’une valeur initiale (baseline) et d’une valeur cible ; (iv) Poursuivre l’alignement des prérequis en matière d’évaluation avec les guides de la Commission pour une meilleure Réglementation et soutenir les EM dans l’amélioration de la qualité de leur pratique en matière d’évaluation : améliorer les questions évaluatives et suggérer des méthodes pertinentes et réalistes à mettre en œuvre au niveau national ; (v) Revoir le format des rapports d’évaluation nationaux pour encourager la formulation de conclusions et de recommandations claires et argumentées.
- ▶ *Au niveau national* : (i) Si pertinent, compléter le cadre commun par des indicateurs additionnels et des modalités de suivi complémentaires, et développer la capacité des porteurs de projets à suivre leurs activités de manière efficace.

5. Renforcer l’efficience du Fonds, ce qui implique de:

- ▶ *Au niveau communautaire* : (i) Assister les EM les moins expérimentés ou ceux rencontrant des difficultés pour faciliter la mise en œuvre de leurs systèmes de gestion et de contrôle ; et (ii) S’assurer que les EM dotés de programmes plus petits ne soient pas désavantagés par des coûts de mise en place et de gestion administrative.
- ▶ *Au niveau national* : (i) S’assurer que les ressources et l’expertise soient adaptées pour mettre en œuvre les tâches requises par les systèmes de gestion et de contrôle, y compris pendant les périodes de forte activité ; (ii) Continuer à identifier des pistes de réduction de la charge

administrative pour les porteurs de projets, par exemple en réduisant le volume de pièces demandées, en limitant la longueur des demandes de financement ou le nombre de questions posées, en recourant à des demandes de financement en ligne et à des systèmes électroniques ; (iii) De manière plus spécifique, limiter les demandes de reporting pour limiter les tâches administratives des porteurs de projet : simplifier le format de reporting, cibler sur la remontée des résultats et des impacts, et limiter la fréquence de reporting ; en (iv) Développer des guides méthodologiques et mettre en place des formations pour aider les porteurs de projets à se conformer aux règles de gestion des autorités responsables (et de la CE).

6. Améliorer la durabilité, les impacts et la valeur ajoutée des projets financés, ce qui devrait impliquer, au niveau national, de :

- ▶ S'assurer, lors de la sélection d'un projet pilote ou innovant, que celui-ci sera en mesure de capitaliser sur son expérience et de diffuser les résultats obtenus aux niveaux national et UE ;
- ▶ Inclure la durabilité en tant que critère de sélection des projets. Une attention doit être portée à : (i) la capacité à mobiliser des financements alternatifs à l'issue de la période de financement, (ii) la capacité à diffuser les résultats de manière large (dans le cas d'études, du développement d'outils, etc.), (iii) le choix de cibles pertinentes susceptibles de multiplier les effets (cas de formations et de conférences) et (iv) la capacité à assurer le maintien des équipements sur le long terme (cas des infrastructures) ;
- ▶ De manière plus spécifique, augmenter la connaissance des ACs parmi les parties-prenantes nationales et renforcer la diffusion des résultats de ces actions pour assurer leur utilisation sur la durée ;
- ▶ Eviter le financement récurrent de projets répétitifs ou peu innovants (au-delà de trois ans par exemple).

1.3 Auf Deutsch

Abstract

Gemäß der Entscheidung Nr. 573/2007/EG des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates zur Einrichtung des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds (EFF) für den Zeitraum 2008 bis 2013 beauftragte die Europäische Kommission die Unternehmensberatung EY mit der Ex-post-Bewertung des EFF 2011 bis 2013 sowie der EFF-Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen für den Zeitraum 2008 bis 2010. Für die Bewertung wurde ein „Mixed-Methods“-Ansatz zu Grunde gelegt, der Bürostudien, Befragungen, Erhebungen, eine öffentliche Konsultation und Länderbesuche umfasste, um zu gewährleisten, dass alle einschlägigen Interessenträger einbezogen wurden. Auf dieser Grundlage wurden Antworten auf die Evaluierungsfragen mit Blick auf die Wirksamkeit, Effizienz, Relevanz, Kohärenz und Nachhaltigkeit des EFF sowie auf seinen EU-Mehrwert entworfen.

Insgesamt wurden mit den 1500 in den 27 Mitgliedstaaten umgesetzten Projekten und 15 Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen im Zuge des für 2011 bis 2013 mit 386 Mio. EUR ausgestatteten EFF rund eine Million Asylbewerber und Personen, die internationalen Schutz genießen (einschließlich Flüchtlinge), erreicht. Zudem wurden in elf Mitgliedstaaten, die unter besonders starkem Druck geraten waren, Sofortmaßnahmen durchgeführt.

Die Bewertung ergab, dass der EFF insgesamt ein wirksames und wichtiges Instrument zur Unterstützung der Mitgliedstaaten bei der Aufnahme von Personen, die um internationalen Schutz ersuchen, darstellte. Der Fonds hat insbesondere die Verbesserung der Aufnahmebedingungen und die Integration der Zielgruppen vorangebracht und einen Zusatznutzen für die Mitgliedstaaten bewirkt, vor allem für jene mit noch wenig entwickelten Asylsystemen, die ihre nationale Asylpolitik erst noch gestalten und die nötige Infrastruktur aufbauen mussten. Allerdings hätte der EFF stärker zur Umsetzung des Gemeinsamen Europäischen Asylsystems beitragen können, indem die Angleichung der Asylsysteme intensiver gefördert und mehr Anreize für die Solidarität der Mitgliedstaaten bei der Aufnahme von Personen, die um internationalen Schutz ersuchen, gegeben worden wären.

1.3.1 Ziele und methodischer Ansatz

Gemäß der Entscheidung des Rates Nr. 2007/573/EG zur Einrichtung des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds (EFF) beauftragte die Europäische Kommission (EK) das Beratungsunternehmen EY zur Durchführung der Ex-post-Evaluierung des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds 2011-2013 sowie der Ex-post-Evaluierung der Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen des Europäischen Flüchtlingsfonds 2008-2010.

Bei dieser Evaluierung wurde die Implementierung der vom EFF mitfinanzierten Maßnahmen in der Zeit zwischen 2011-2013 durch die **Annual Programmes und Community Actions (CA) [Jährliche Programme und Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen]** sowie die Implementierung der vom EFF unter den **Gemeinschaftsarbeit 2008-2010** mitfinanzierten Maßnahmen untersucht. In Übereinstimmung mit den gesetzlichen Verpflichtungen für die Evaluierung des EFF zielte die Evaluierung sowohl darauf ab, die Transparenz und Verantwortung für die Implementierung des Fonds sicherzustellen, als auch zur Verbesserung der weiteren Implementierung der EU-Finanzinstrumente im Bereich Asyl beizutragen. Gemäß den Richtlinien für eine bessere Rechtssetzung behandelte die Evaluierung acht Evaluierungsfragen in Bezug auf die Effektivität, Effizienz, Relevanz, Kohärenz und Nachhaltigkeit der auf EU- und MS-Ebene implementierten Maßnahmen sowie ihren Mehrwert für die EU.

Bei der Evaluierung wurde ein Mischmethodenansatz angewandt, um die Evaluierungsfragen zu behandeln und um sicherzustellen, dass die entsprechenden Interessenvertreter konsultiert wurden. Dies beinhaltete: eine umfassende **Prüfung relevanter EU- und Mitgliedsstaatsdaten und Dokumente** (EFF-Hintergrunddokumente), mehrjährige Strategien und Programme der Mitgliedsstaaten, nationale Evaluierungsberichte 2011-2013 usw.); **mehr als 120 Befragungen** (telefonisch und persönlich), um Input von europäischen Institutionen, EU-Agenturen, national zuständigen Behörden und sonstigen Interessenvertretern einzuholen; **acht nationale Fallstudien** in Österreich, Belgien, Bulgarien, Frankreich, Ungarn, Italien, im Vereinigten Königreich und in Schweden; **zwei Online-Umfragen** von Begünstigten von Gemeinschaftsarbeit und von Aktionen, die durch die nationalen Jahresprogramme unterstützt werden (13 Befragte bei der CA-Umfrage und 55 Befragte bei der nationalen Begünstigtenumfrage); und die Ergebnisse von **öffentlichen Online-**

Konsultationen, die von der EG zwischen Mai und August 2016 eingeführt wurden (12 Wochen, 19 Befragte).

Die wichtigsten Schlussfolgerungen für die sechs Evaluierungskriterien werden unten dargelegt.

1.3.2 Zentrale Erkenntnisse

Relevanz

Dieses Kriterium untersuchte den Umfang, in dem der EFF mit den Bedürfnissen auf EU- und Mitgliedsstaatenebene übereinstimmte.

Bei der Evaluierung stellte sich heraus, dass die Ziele des EFF 2008-2013 in ihrer Rechtsgrundlage angemessen formuliert waren, um die meisten Bedürfnisse der MS im Bereich Asyl von 2011 bis heute abzudecken. Das allgemeine Ziel des EFF (Artikel 2) war insbesondere relevant für den Bedarf, MS im Umgang mit den erforderlichen Ressourcen und Fähigkeiten für die Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen, Vertriebenen und Personen, die internationalen Schutz genießen, zu unterstützen. **Der über eine zusätzliche Finanzreserve implementierte Notmaßnahmenmechanismus erwies sich als wesentlich** beim Umgang mit dem drastischen und unerwarteten Anstieg der Asylströme ab 2013 (insbesondere in Transitstaaten und aufnehmenden EU-Ländern) sowie mit der Verschärfung des Bedarfs in MS, die unter besonders großem Druck stehen. Es besteht allerdings ein Defizit in der Methodik, den MS EFF-Gelder zuzuteilen. **Allokationen basierten hauptsächlich auf vergangenen Trends (Asylströme während der vergangenen drei Jahre), was zeitweise bedeutete, dass die Finanzierung die derzeitigen finanziellen Bedürfnisse der MS im Hinblick auf die Aufnahme von Asylsuchenden nicht vollständig reflektierte.**

Die Vielfalt von geeigneten Maßnahmen (wie unter den Artikeln 3 und 4 von Ratsentscheidung Nr. 2007/573/EG aufgeführt) war konsistent mit den EFF-Zielen und umfangreich genug, um fast alle bestehenden Bedürfnisse auf EU- und MS-Ebene abzudecken. Die große Bandbreite des EFF und die den MS zur Verfügung stehende flexible Herangehensweise in ihrer Verwendung des EFF trugen erheblich zu seiner allgemeinen Relevanz bei. Bei der Evaluierung wurde allerdings herausgefunden, dass mehr Anreize bereitgestellt werden könnten, um den Bedarf für Um- und Neuansiedlungsaktivitäten zu adressieren sowie für Maßnahmen, die das Bewusstsein von EU-Bürgern steigern.

Auf nationaler Ebene waren insbesondere zwei spezifische Ziele (wie in Artikel 3 der Entscheidung 573/2007 dargelegt) relevant für die von den MS geäußerten Bedürfnisse, nämlich die Verbesserung der Aufnahmebedingungen und Asylverfahren für Personen, die internationalen Schutz suchen, sowie die Verbesserung der Integration von Flüchtlingen in Übereinstimmung mit der Implementierung der verbundenen Richtlinien des Asylpakets. Dies wurde in der Programmgestaltung von MS mit 90 % aller Projekte und 90 % geplanter Beträge für Aufnahme- und Integrationsmaßnahmen reflektiert. Mit Ausnahme weniger MS aus Nord-, Mittel- und Osteuropa wurde anderen EFF-Zielen, die auf die Verbesserung von Tools und Methoden sowie auf die Stärkung der Kapazität von Behörden, die sich mit Asylfragen befassen, ausgelegt waren, trotz des bestehenden Bedarfs in diesen Bereichen weniger Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt.

Bei der Evaluierung stellte sich heraus, dass obwohl der EFF für die Bedürfnisse der MS relevant war, mehr Fokus auf die Förderung der Konvergenz von Asylsystemen und stärkerer Solidarität zwischen MS hätte gelegt und dafür Anreize hätten geschaffen werden können, um die mit der Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen verbundene Belastung zu teilen. Zum einen wurde der Bedarf an Solidarität in den Zielen des EFF, wie in seiner Rechtsgrundlage definiert, nicht klar reflektiert; im allgemeinen Ziel wurde der Bedarf der Sicherstellung eines „ausgeglichene“ Bemühens zwischen den MS nicht erwähnt. Zum zweiten zeigt die geringe Priorität, die MS der Neu- und Wiederansiedlung einräumten (spezifische Ziele dargelegt in Artikel 3 der Entscheidung 573/2007), dass trotz des starken Bedarfs auf EU-Ebene, der freiwillige EU-Mechanismus den MS keinen signifikanten Anreiz bot, um an diesen Initiativen mit gemeinsamer Verantwortung teilzunehmen.

Zu guter Letzt wurde bei der Evaluierung auf die Relevanz nationaler Strategien und Programme geachtet. Die große Mehrheit der befragten nationalen Interessenvertreter drückte ihre allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit den EFF-Zielen und den förderfähigen Maßnahmen aus. Es scheint allerdings, **dass es den EFF-Jahresprogrammen manchmal an ganzheitlichem strategischen Fokus mangelt**, da

diese häufig von einem Jahr zum nächsten ohne weitere Konsultation und Bedarfsbewertung kopiert werden und darauf ausgelegt zu sein scheinen, die Nutzung des Fonds zu vereinfachen (d.h. Finanzierung von Aufnahme- und Integrationsprojekten durch das Vergabeverfahren).

Effektivität

Dieses Kriterium untersuchte den Umfang, in dem die in der Rechtsbasis des EFF dargelegten Ziele erreicht wurden.

Der EFF 2011-2013 belief sich auf eine Finanzierung von 386 Millionen € und 315 Millionen € an Zahlungen³. Insgesamt unterstützte er die Implementierung von mehr als 1.500 Projekten durch MS-Jahresprogramme (geteilter Managementmodus), 15 Gemeinschaftsarbeiten (direkter Managementmodus) und Notmaßnahmen in 11 MS.

Der EFF 2011-2013 war bei der Unterstützung von MS in der Aufnahme und im Tragen der Konsequenzen der aufgenommenen Flüchtlinge und Asylsuchenden insgesamt erfolgreich, wobei die Ergebnisse abhängig vom relevanten spezifischen EFF-Ziel unterschiedlich waren. Der EFF war insbesondere im Beitrag zur Verbesserung der Aufnahmebedingungen und Asylverfahren sowie in der Integration von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen (90 % des gemeinsamen Verwaltungsanteils des EFF, einschließlich technischer Unterstützung) erheblich. Gemäß den aggregierten, von MS bereitgestellten Zahlen profitierten fast eine Million Asylsuchende, Flüchtlinge und Personen, die internationalen Schutz suchen, in gewisser Weise von Dienstleistungen oder Aktivitäten, die zwischen 2011 und 2013 vom EFF finanziert wurden. Der Beitrag des EFF zur Verbesserung der MS-Kapazität, um Tools und Methoden zu entwickeln und zu verbessern, war weniger erheblich. Letztlich hatte der EFF begrenzte Auswirkungen im Hinblick auf die MS-Beteiligung an Um- und Neuansiedlungsprogrammen, obwohl er ein paar MS ermutigte, sich in Umsiedlungsprogrammen zu engagieren oder diese fortzusetzen und zu stärken. Die Anzahl an neuen MS, die an der Umsiedlung teilnahmen, blieb in der Zeit zwischen 2011-2013 begrenzt (nur drei), und der EFF hatte keine erheblichen Ergebnisse im Bereich der Umsiedlung.

³ Da 20 Programme am Tag der Evaluierung noch nicht geschlossen sind, kann der Zahlungsbetrag nicht als definitiv erachtet werden.

Tabelle 2: Ampelbewertung der Effektivität des EFF

Beschreibung	Effektivitätsniveau	Anmerkungen
Allgemeine Ziele des EFF (Artikel 2 der Ratsentscheidung Nr. 2007/573/EG)		
Unterstützung und Förderung der Bemühungen der Mitgliedsstaaten in der Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen sowie im Tragen der daraus resultierenden Konsequenzen unter Berücksichtigung der EU-Gesetze zu diesen Angelegenheiten durch Mitfinanzierung förderfähiger Maßnahmen		Der EFF unterstützte die Bemühungen der Mitgliedsstaaten effektiv, berücksichtigte jedoch nur teilweise die EU-Gesetzgebung sowie den Bedarf einer stärkeren Konvergenz zwischen den Mitgliedsstaaten.
Prioritäten (gemäß Ratsentscheidung Nr. 2007/815/EG)		
Die Implementierung der im gemeinschaftlichen Besitzstand dargelegten Grundsätze und Maßnahmen im Bereich Asyl, einschließlich derer, die sich auf Integrationsziele beziehen		Der EFF fokussierte sich hauptsächlich auf die Aufnahme und Integration von Flüchtlingen und war effektiv in der Abdeckung der ersten Bedürfnisse von Asylsuchenden und Flüchtlingen.
Die Entwicklung von Referenz-Tools und Evaluierungsmethoden zur Bewertung und Verbesserung der Qualität von Verfahren für die Untersuchung von Ansprüchen auf internationalen Schutz und zur Untermauerung administrativer Strukturen in dem Bestreben, die Herausforderungen zu meistern, die durch eine verstärkte praktische Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Mitgliedsstaaten entstehen.		Praktische Zusammenarbeit und die Entwicklung von Tools und Methoden wurden in ein paar Projekten implementiert
Maßnahmen, die bei der Verbesserung der Aufgabenteilung zwischen Mitgliedsstaaten und Drittländern helfen		Solidarität und Aufgabenteilung waren wichtige Aspekte ein paar neuer Projekte, insbesondere Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen, und bewirkten eher kurz- als langfristigen Wandel
Spezifische Ziele (Artikel 3 von Entscheidung Nr. 2007/573/EG)		
Verbesserung der Aufnahmebedingungen und Asylverfahren		Die Verbesserung der Aufnahmebedingungen war der Hauptbereich unter den EFF implementierten Aktivitäten und brachte Asylsuchenden konkrete und effiziente Unterstützung
Verbesserung der Integration von Personen der Zielgruppe		Zahlreiche, auf Integration abgezielte Projekte wurden durch die Entwicklung von Sozialberatung oder Hilfe bei der Unterbringung effektiv implementiert
Verbesserung der MS-Kapazität, um ihre Asylrichtlinien zu entwickeln, zu überwachen und zu evaluieren		In diesem Bereich wurden wenige Projekte entwickelt
Unterstützung von Umsiedlungsmaßnahmen		Umsiedlungsmaßnahmen wurden während des Programms in wenigen Mitgliedsstaaten implementiert
Unterstützung von Transfermaßnahmen		Es wurden keine Transferaktivitäten implementiert, außer eine Gemeinschaftsmaßnahme zur Lockerung des Drucks auf Malta (14 Personen wurden umgesiedelt)
Notfallmaßnahmen		Die Notfallmaßnahmen waren sehr effektiv, wenn es darum ging, den dringenden Bedürfnissen nach dem Anstieg der Asylströme entgegenzutreten
Gemeinschaftsmaßnahmen		Eine geringe Anzahl an Projekten wurde implementiert und die Ergebnisse hätte unter den potenziell interessierten Interessenvertretern besser verbreitet werden können

Die Art und Intensität der Auswirkungen waren von MS zu MS unterschiedlich, da sie von vorhandenen nationalen Asylrichtlinien abhängig waren sowie davon, auf welche Art der MS den

Fonds zu verwenden entschied. **Der EFF sorgte für eine stärkere und sichtbarere Unterstützung der MS**, die relativ gering entwickelte Asylsysteme hatten und nationale Asylrichtlinien einrichten sowie notwendige Infrastrukturen (zum Beispiel HU und BG) aufbauen mussten. Er unterstützte außerdem MS, die Notsituationen gegenüberstanden (wie GR, GB, IT), effektiv. **In anderen MS wurde der EFF hauptsächlich verwendet, um bestehende Richtlinien zu unterstützen.** Er trug zur Verbesserung der Aufnahme und Integration von Flüchtlingen durch einen größeren Handlungsspielraum unter bestehenden Mechanismen und/ oder durch zusätzliche und neue, durch innovative Projekte implementierte Dienstleistungen (IT, FR, AT, LU), bei. Ein paar MS aus Nordeuropa setzten stärker auf die Unterstützung ihrer Umsiedlungsprogramme (darunter GB, SE und ND).

Der EFF führte zu positiven Veränderungen bei den nationalen Asylsystemen und Endbegünstigten **und leistete einen geringen Beitrag zur Gesamtverbesserung von Asylverfahren auf EU-Ebene sowie zur Harmonisierung von Asylsystemen EU-weit.** Er spielte allerdings keine erhebliche Rolle bei der Begünstigung der Konvergenz nationaler Praktiken und Infrastruktur, da diese keine Ziele nationaler Jahresprogramme waren und die Gemeinschaftsarbeit in Zahl und Auswirkung begrenzt blieb. Es besteht Spielraum für Verbesserung im Austausch nationaler Praktiken zwischen MS-Behörden innerhalb des Rahmens des EFF und in der Diskussion darüber, wie sie die Gemeinschaftsgesetze im Bereich Asyl unter den EFF-Projekten berücksichtigen.

Schließlich wurde bei der Evaluierung herausgefunden, dass **die EFF-Überwachungs- und Evaluierungssysteme sowohl auf EU- als auch auf MS-Ebene begrenzt waren und keine solidere Bewertung der Leistung des Fonds ermöglichten.** Die Einrichtung des EFF 2008-2013 verließ sich nicht auf eine quantitative Baseline und definierte keine Indikatoren sowie zu erreichende (qualitative und quantitative) Ziele, gegen die bei der Evaluierung weitere Schlüsse hinsichtlich der Effektivität (und Effizienz) des EFF gezogen werden könnten.

Effizienz

Anhand des Effizienzkriteriums wurde der Umfang bewertet, in dem der EFF seine Ziele zu angemessenen Kosten erreicht hat. Der Fokus lag größtenteils auf der Bewertung der entstandenen Kosten, um den EFF auf Programm- und Projektebene zu verwalten. Zudem wurde versucht, die Kostenvorteile des Fonds zu messen, indem die Kosten mit den vom EFF auf allen Ebenen (EU, MS, Projekt) generierten (positiven) Veränderungen verglichen wurden.

Die Evaluierung kam zu dem Schluss, dass die entstandenen Verwaltungskosten auf MS- und Programmebene für die Verwaltung und Implementierung des EFF (0,33 Vollzeitäquivalent pro 1 Million € geplant innerhalb RAs) angemessen waren. Diese Kosten waren insgesamt vergleichbar mit denen anderer EU-Fonds, obwohl es große Abweichungen zwischen MS gab; kleine MS, insbesondere die baltischen Staaten, die Slowakei, die Tschechische Republik, Luxemburg und Ungarn hatten im Vergleich zur Größe ihrer Programme höhere Verwaltungskosten. Zudem erschien die zur Verwaltung des EFF erforderliche Komplexität notwendig, um die Robustheit und Zuverlässigkeit der Management- und Kontrollsysteme sicherzustellen.

Allerdings wurden bei der Evaluierung einige negative Wahrnehmungen in Verbindung mit dem administrativen Teil des EFF verzeichnet. Der Verwaltungsaufwand wurde von den meisten zuständigen Behörden und Projektumsetzern, die in den MS befragt wurden, als hoch bewertet. Diese Wahrnehmung könnte durch den verbleibenden Spielraum für Vereinfachung sowie aus internen, für jeden MS spezifischen Gründen erklärt werden.

Zum einen wurden Vereinfachungsmaßnahmen, die möglicherweise zu einer Kostensenkung beitrugen, unter dem Asyl-, Migrations- und Integrationsfonds (AIMF) implementiert, der für den Zeitraum zwischen 2014-2020 eingerichtet ist. Dazu zählt die Vereinfachung des Planungszyklus (von jährlich zu mehrjährig) und die Zusammenlegung der drei SOLID-Fonds, deren Koexistenz die Quelle zusätzlicher Komplexität und Doppelarbeit war.

Zum zweiten waren Ineffizienzen auch auf **mangelnde Erfahrung und unzulängliche technische und administrative Kapazitäten und Ressourcen von zuständigen Behörden in einigen MS zurückzuführen.** Eine Lernkurve wurde beobachtet und MS optimierten ihre Arbeitsbelastung progressiv, vereinfachten Prozesse und verbesserten die interne Organisation. Effizienzsteigerungen konnten durch eine Reduktion der Projektanzahl, interne Umstrukturierung, eine klarere Aufgabenverteilung innerhalb der für die Verwaltung des Fonds verantwortlichen Administrationen (wie eine Trennung zwischen administrativen, Kontroll- und strategischen Aufgaben) und durch ein

höheres Mutualisierungsniveau von Aufgaben zwischen den für die anderen SOLID-Fonds verantwortlichen RAs (Europäischer Integrations- und Rückkehrfonds) erreicht werden. Andere beobachtete Praktiken beinhalteten die Entwicklung von kapazitätsaufbauenden Initiativen, um Projektumsetzern zu helfen, ihre Projekte zu überwachen und die rechtlichen Anforderungen der EG im Hinblick auf die Förderfähigkeit von Ausgaben und Finanzmanagement einzuhalten.

Im Hinblick auf die Vorteile zeigte die Evaluierung, dass der EFF mit 1.500 Projekten und einer Million Asylsuchender und Personen, die internationalen Schutz genießen, was durch Dienstleistungen und vom Fonds unterstützter Aktivitäten erreicht wurde, durchschnittlich 247.000 € an Ko-finanzierung pro Projekt und fast 400 € Unterstützung pro Endbegünstigtem hatten. Allerdings können aufgrund **fehlender quantitativer Indikatoren, die den tatsächlichen Nutzen des EFF reflektieren**, keine weiteren Schlüsse über die Kosteneffektivität des EFF gezogen werden.

Kohärenz

Dieses Kriterium bezieht sich auf den Umfang, in dem die Ziele und Maßnahmen des EFF auf effektive Weise mit denen von anderen bestehenden Finanzinstrumenten finanzierten artikuliert werden (EU-Instrumente und nationale Programme), die von verschiedenen Interessenvertretern, einschließlich den EU-Mitgliedsstaaten und internationalen Organisationen implementiert werden.

Der EFF war eine Ergänzung zu anderen SOLID-Fonds, aber die Koexistenz des EFF und des Europäischen Integrationsfonds (EIF) war aufgrund des Bedarfs einer strikten Überwachung und Prüfung eine Quelle für zusätzliche Komplexität und Verwaltungsaufwand. Wie für andere EU-Fonds, obwohl Überschneidungen mit dem European Social Fund (ESF) [Europäischer Sozialfonds] und in geringerem Maße mit dem European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) [Europäischer Regionaler Entwicklungsfonds] hätten auftreten können, wurden Kohärenz und Komplementarität durch aktive Kooperation zwischen den für die Verwaltung dieser Instrumente in allen MS, in denen Befragungen durchgeführt wurden, verantwortlichen Behörden sichergestellt.

Auf nationaler Ebene ergänzten EFF-Projekte einander angemessen, da sie entweder unterschiedliche Dienstleistungen anboten oder unterschiedliche Regionen oder Zielgruppen abdeckten. Dank Initiativen, die von RAs im Hinblick auf Kommunikationstools und Meetings ergriffen wurden, konnten im Hinblick auf Synergien und gemeinsamen Erkenntnissen unter Projektnehmern in den MS erhebliche Fortschritte erzielt werden.

Auf EU-Ebene ergab die Evaluierung, dass es eine begrenzte Kohärenz zwischen CAs und nationalen, durch die Jahresprogramme finanzierten Projekte gab. Zudem gab es wenig Nachweise von Networking und Austausch von bewährten Praktiken zwischen MS-Behörden, um EFF-Maßnahmen und -Aktionen zu nutzen, außer für eine von der zuständigen Behörde in Finnland eingeführten Initiative, bei der informelle Sitzungen mit zehn anderen MS organisiert werden, um Themen von gemeinsamem Interesse zu besprechen.

Schließlich kann die Komplementarität mit EASO als laufende Arbeit erachtet werden. Einige Projekte müssen vom EASO noch nachverfolgt werden (zum Beispiel das Dublin 2010 Projekt) und EASO wurde noch nicht systematisch auf finanzierte CAs aufmerksam gemacht.

Nachhaltigkeit

Dieses Kriterium untersuchte die Dauerhaftigkeit der Auswirkungen der vom EFF finanzierten Projekte und ihre breiteren Auswirkungen, um zu verstehen, ob die Maßnahmen des Fonds nachhaltig sind (oder nur Sofortwirkungen generieren).

Aus der Evaluierung ging hervor, dass die Nachhaltigkeit von EFF-Projektergebnissen und -Auswirkungen von der Art der implementierten Maßnahmen und/oder von dem während ihrer Implementierung erreichten Output abhingen. Strukturelle Effekte auf die Aufnahmekapazitäten der MS (durch Investitionen in Unterbringungs- und Aufnahmestrukturen) waren wahrscheinlich am nachhaltigsten, vorausgesetzt, die MS investieren das für die Instandhaltung nach dem Bau erforderliche Geld. **Die Erstellung von Studien und Entwicklung von Tools und Methoden war ebenfalls nachhaltig, vorausgesetzt, sie wurden verbreitet.**

Bei Projekten, die darauf abzielen, nationalen Behörden und Partnern im Bereich Asyl Schulung und Kapazitätsaufbau zu bieten, war die Mitarbeiterfluktuation ein Schlüsselfaktor, der ihre Nachhaltigkeit vermindern konnte. Integrationsprojekte und Projekte, die darauf abzielen, Asylsuchenden und Personen, die internationalen Schutz suchen (zum Beispiel durch Sprachkurse) zu befähigen, werden

als weniger nachhaltig erachtet, insbesondere in Transit-MS, in denen Asylsuchenden, die oftmals wünschten, ein anderes Land zu erreichen, Sprachkurse angeboten wurden. Letztlich **wurden innovative Projekte von MS-Behörden nicht systematisch eingebunden, insbesondere im Hinblick auf CAs, was deren Nachhaltigkeit reduzierte.**

Insgesamt erschien es schwierig, dem EFF 2011-2013 nachhaltige Auswirkungen zuzuordnen, ohne die kumulativen Effekte des EFF 2007-2013 und EFF 2008-2010 zu berücksichtigen. Bei den nachhaltigen Auswirkungen handelte es sich in einigen Fällen um „kumulative kurzfristige Auswirkungen“: Der EFF unterstützte weiterhin die Entwicklungskapazität und Instrumente der MS und trug somit zu langfristigen Effekten im Hinblick auf die Richtlinienentwicklung bei.

Schließlich **ergab die Evaluierung, dass Projektumsetzer sich oft stark auf externe Finanzierung stützten**, insbesondere auf EU-Fonds (gemäß 13 MS). Es war somit nicht offensichtlich, ob Projekte ohne EU-Fonds weiterlaufen würden (einschließlich Projekte, die seit EFF-Einrichtung unterstützt werden). Weniger nachhaltige Projekte pflegten diejenigen zu sein, die sich auf die nicht von MS finanzierte Dienstleistungserbringung bezogen und für die NRO oft keine alternativen Finanzierungsquellen finden können, sobald EFF-Projekte enden.

Gemeinschaftlicher Mehrwert

Dieses Kriterium untersuchte den Umfang, in dem der EFF Mehrwert bot, der ohne Intervention der EU nicht entstanden wäre.

Der EFF brachte Mitgliedsstaaten und nicht-staatlichen Akteuren Mehrwert durch zusätzliche Finanzierungen, die die Implementierung von Projekten ermöglichte, die ansonsten wahrscheinlich nicht implementiert worden wären. Es schien, dass der meiste Mehrwert den Mitgliedsstaaten zugutekam, die weniger nationale Finanzierung und weniger entwickelte Asylsysteme hatten, wo sie zu einer teilweisen (Um)-Strukturierung des Asylsystems beitrug (z. B. EE und BG). In anderen MS bestand der Mehrwert des EFF in der Fähigkeit, innovative Projekte zu finanzieren, indem vormals nicht existierende Dienstleistungen angeboten wurden oder der Umfang an Aktivitäten erweitert wurde, sowie auf die Bedürfnisse neuer und anfälligerer Zielgruppen eingegangen wurde. Allerdings entsprachen einige EFF-finanzierte Aktivitäten normalen und wiederkehrenden Aktivitäten, die wahrscheinlich durch nationale Fördermittel finanziert worden sind.

Abgesehen von seinem finanziellen Mehrwert bot die EU-Dimension des Fonds keinen erheblichen Mehrwert im Hinblick auf Kooperation, Austausch von bewährten Praktiken und Mechanismen gemeinsamer Solidarität (insbesondere zur Umsiedlung).

1.3.3 Empfehlungen

Bei der Evaluierung wurden sechs Empfehlungen ausgesprochen, die an die Europäische Kommission und die Mitgliedsstaaten gerichtet sind.

1. Verbesserung des Beitrags des Fonds zur Harmonisierung von Standards und Entwicklung des CEAS:

- ▶ Auf EG-Ebene: (i) Förderung von strategischer Planung; (ii) Schaffen von mehr Möglichkeiten zum informellen und häufigen Austausch zur Entwicklung von Networking, Austausch von Meinungen und bewährten Praktiken zwischen MS; (iii) Bessere Ausschöpfung der EASO-Expertise und Kapazität, um Chancen zum Austausch über gute Praktiken zu entwickeln; und (iv) Weitere Entwicklung von Synergien zwischen CAs und nationalen Projekten.
- ▶ Auf MS-Ebene: (i) Bessere Identifikation der Bedürfnisse in Bezug auf die Implementierung von Standards, die als Teil des CEAS erforderlich sind sowie eine deutlichere Demonstration, dessen wie geplante/ausgewählte Projekte zu diesen Standards beitragen und Teilen von bewährten Praktiken mit anderen MS; und (ii) die Gelder basierend auf den Bedürfnissen auf Projekttypen/Prioritäten für den gesamten Planungszeitraum auf Investment- und institutionelle Projekte zum Aufbau von Kapazitäten zugeteilt werden, die zu starken strukturellen Änderungen führen (in MS mit geringer finanzieller Kapazität und weniger ausgereiften Asylsystemen) oder innovative Projekte, um besser auf die Bedürfnisse von Asylsuchenden eingehen zu können oder um die Tools und Methoden zu verbessern, die von administrativen Strukturen zur Verarbeitung von Ansprüchen auf internationalen Schutz (in MS mit ausgereiften Asylsystemen) und/oder Austausch von bewährten Praktiken zu verbessern.

2. Stärkung des Solidaritätsausmaßes des Fonds, der auf EG-Ebene beinhalten würde:

- ▶ Bessere Formulierung der Ziele des EFF, um den Bedarf zur Unterstützung einer ausgeglichenen Bemühung zwischen MS zu berücksichtigen sowie des Bedarfs einer stärkeren Solidarität zwischen MS und Unterstützung für die Implementierung der Dublin-Verordnung.
- ▶ Einen Weg finden, um die aktuellsten Daten zu Asylströmen zu integrieren und um das Entwicklungsniveau nationaler Asylsysteme im Finanzierungsbereitstellungssystem zu berücksichtigen.
- ▶ Erhalt des Notmaßnahmenmechanismus.
- ▶ Umstrukturierung von Anreizen, um die Transfers zu steigern und um ein spezifisches Budget für die Implementierung von Umsiedlungsprojekten und EU-Umsiedlungsprogrammen sowie für EU-interne Transfers von Personen, die internationalen Schutz genießen, zu verwenden.

3. Verbesserung des Strategieplans, insbesondere durch einen Dialog mit den nationalen Interessenvertretern:

- ▶ *Auf EG-Ebene:* (i) Weiterentwicklung des strategischen Dialogs zwischen der EG und der MS bei der Definition von Mehrjahresprogrammen sowie während der Implementierung der Programme; und (ii) Straffung des Musters des nationalen Mehrjahresprogramms, um sich besser auf die Demonstration des Mehrwerts von EFF (AMIF)-Finanzierung zu fokussieren und Beitrag zur Implementierung des CEAS. Zusätzlich eine Anforderung erstellen, um eine Baseline-Bedarfsbewertung durchzuführen.
- ▶ *Auf MS-Ebene:* (i) Weiterhin versuchen, alle Arten von Interessenvertretern in der Definition von nationalen Strategien und Programmen einzubeziehen, zum Beispiel durch Online-Konsultationen oder Planungssitzungen. Die Darstellung von Schlüsselgruppen in der Planung, Überwachung und Implementierung von Programmen (wie Behörden, NRO und Rechtsakteure) sicherstellen; und (ii) das Networking zwischen nationalen Projektumsetzern verbessern, damit sie die bewährten Praktiken teilen. Dies könnte über interaktive Online-Plattformen, regelmäßige Sitzungen mit allen Projektumsetzern, Themen-Workshops zu verschiedenen Themen (Integration, Aufnahme usw.) erfolgen.

4. Verbesserung der Überwachungs- und Evaluierungstools und Kapazitäten auf EU-, MS- und Projektebene

- ▶ *Auf EG-Ebene:* (i) Entwicklung eines gemeinsamen Rahmens für umfassende Überwachungsindikatoren zu Outputs, Ergebnissen und Auswirkungen zusammen mit MS; (ii) Sicherstellen, dass die Indikatoren RACER sind (Relevant [Relevant], Accepted [Akzeptiert], Credible [Glaubwürdig], Easy to monitor [Leicht zu überwachen] und Robust [Robust]) sind; (iii) Sicherstellen, dass diese Indikatoren die Ziele des Fonds reflektieren und dass sie Ausgangsdaten und klare Ziele haben; (iv) Weitere Ausrichtung der Evaluierungsanforderungen mit den Besseren Rechtssetzungsrichtlinien und Unterstützung der MS bei der Verbesserung der Qualität ihrer Evaluierungspraxis: Verbesserung der Evaluierungsfragen und Empfehlung sowohl relevanter als auch realistischer, auf nationaler Ebene zu implementierender Methoden; und (v) Überarbeitung des Formats nationaler Evaluierungsberichte zur Förderung klarer evidenzbasierter Schlüsse und Empfehlungen.
- ▶ *Auf MS-Ebene:* (i) Gegebenenfalls Ergänzung des gemeinsamen EU-Rahmens um zusätzliche Indikatoren und Überwachungsvereinbarung und Entwicklung der Kapazität von Projektumsetzern zur effektiven Überwachung ihrer Aktivitäten.

5. Verbesserung der Effizienz des Fonds, die beinhaltet:

- ▶ *Auf EG-Ebene:* (i) Unterstützung der weniger erfahrenen MS oder derjenigen, die spezifische Schwierigkeiten in der reibungslosen Implementierung ihrer Management- und Kontrollsysteme haben; und (ii) Sicherstellen, dass MS mit kleineren Programmen nicht durch die hohen Verwaltungs- und Einrichtungskosten benachteiligt sind.
- ▶ *Auf MS-Ebene:* (i) Sicherstellen, dass Ressourcen und Expertise angemessen sind, um die Aufgaben bei Bedarf auch in stressigen Zeiten unter dem MCS zu implementieren; (ii) Weiterhin Chancen identifizieren, um die administrative Last der Projektumsetzer zu reduzieren, wie die Anzahl an erforderlichen Anhängen, die Länge der Antragsformulare, die Reduktion der Fragenanzahl, die Verwendung einer Online-Antragsfunktion sowie die Verwendung von

elektronischen Systemen; (iii) Genauer gesagt, Begrenzung der Meldeanforderungen zur Minimierung der administrativen Aufgaben für Projektumsetzer: Straffung des Berichtsformats, Fokus auf die Meldung von Ergebnissen und Auswirkungen und Begrenzung der Meldehäufigkeit; und (iv) Entwicklung von Richtlinien und Schulung, um Projektumsetzern bei der Einhaltung von RA- (und EG)-Implementierungsregeln zu helfen.

6. Verbesserung der Nachhaltigkeit, der Auswirkungen und des Mehrwerts von finanzierten Projekten, die auf MS-Ebene beinhalten würden:

- ▶ Bei der Auswahl von Pilot-/innovativen Projekten sicherstellen, aus Erfahrung zu lernen und Ergebnisse sowohl auf nationaler als auch auf EU-Ebene zu verbreiten.
- ▶ Nachhaltigkeit als Kriterium zur Auswahl von Projekten einbeziehen. Besonders zu beachten ist: (i) die Kapazität, nach dem Projektende eine alternative Finanzierung zu finden; (ii) die Kapazität, die Ergebnisse weit zu verbreiten (Studien, Tools usw.); (iii) die Auswahl der entsprechenden Zielpersonen, die einen Multiplikationseffekt ermöglichen (wie Schulungen und Konferenzen); und (iv) die Kapazität, die Instandhaltung der Ausrüstung längerfristig aufrechtzuerhalten/sicherzustellen (Infrastruktur).
- ▶ Insbesondere die Steigerung des Bewusstseins unter nationalen Interessenvertretern für CAs und Steigerung der Verbreitung ihrer Ergebnisse, um langfristig ihre Nutzung sicherzustellen.
- ▶ Vermeidung wiederkehrender Finanzierung von sich dauernd wiederholenden und weniger innovativen Projekten (zum Beispiel mehr als drei Jahre).

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

Pursuant to Article 50 (3) of Council Decision 2007/573/EC establishing the European Refugee Fund, the European Commission 'shall submit to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions for the period 2011-2013 an **ex-post evaluation report**'. Article 49(2) of the same Council Decision specifies the ERF 'shall be evaluated by the Commission in partnership with the Member States (MS) to assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of actions in the light of the general objective referred to in Article 2 in the context of the preparation for the reports set out in Article 50(3)'.

As the initial deadline of 31 December 2015 could not be met⁴, the new targeted date for the submission of the report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions is the second quarter of 2017⁵.

In this context, EY (in consortium with RAND and The Hague) conducted a study in view of analysing the national evaluation reports and other relevant documentation and evidence for the European Refugee Fund (ERF) for the Commission. An **ex-post evaluation report** will be drawn from this study and submitted to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

This ex-post evaluation aims to both:

- ▶ Examine the implementation of actions co-financed by the ERF during **2011-2013** through the **annual programmes and Community actions**;
- ▶ Examine the implementation of actions co-financed by the ERF under the **2008-2010 Community Actions**.

It should also: (i) meet the above-mentioned legal obligations for evaluation on the Fund; (ii) ensure the transparency and accountability for the implementation of the European Refugee Fund; and (iii) contribute to making the future implementation of EU financial instruments in the field of asylum more relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable and coherent.

Six main evaluation criteria are considered in this evaluation of the ERF:

- ▶ **Relevance:** to assess the extent to which the **intervention's objectives are pertinent** to needs, problems and issues addressed;
- ▶ **Effectiveness:** to assess the extent to which **objectives set are achieved**;
- ▶ **Efficiency:** to assess whether desired effects are achieved at a **reasonable cost**;
- ▶ **Sustainability:** to assess the extent to which **positive effects are likely to last** after an intervention has terminated;
- ▶ **Coherence & complementarity:** to identify potential **contradictions** between the intervention and other interventions with similar objectives and to assess whether they **complement each other**;
- ▶ **European added value:** to assess the extent to which EU funded interventions bring additional value compared to what could have been achieved with Member States' resources only.

2.2 Scope of the evaluation

- ▶ **Two different temporal and thematic scopes** were considered, each of them corresponding to two different parts in the reports⁶:

⁴ The initial deadline was difficult to meet as the ex-post evaluation of the ERF for 2011-2013 has to take account of national evaluation reports, which could not be carried out before the end of the eligibility period of the 2013 annual programmes, i.e. 30 June 2015, and which were submitted to the Commission only in November 2015.

⁵ The evaluation will go through the RSB during the first quarter of 2017.

- **Part I** covers the **2011-2013 period** and relates to both (i) shared management actions, under **MS Annual Programmes (APs)** and (ii) **Community Actions (CAs)** implemented under direct management mode;⁷⁸
 - **Part II** focuses on **direct or joint management mode during 2008-2010 period** and thus evaluates Community Actions only.
- ▶ **Geographic scope:** the evaluation has covered all EU Member States participating in the ERF (EU28, except Denmark).⁹
 - ▶ **Stakeholders' scope:** the evaluation has included both **key** and **secondary actors** in its data collection strategy.
 - Key actors are composed of **Member State national authorities** and **beneficiaries** of the ERF;
 - Second level stakeholders include **EU decentralised agencies** (in particular EASO), other **partners in the implementation of the ERF** and **International Organisations** in the domain of migration and asylum, such as the UNCHR, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, etc.

⁶ Each period (2011-2013 and 2008-2010) is dealt with in a separate chapter in the report. Meanwhile the evaluation framework has followed a thematic approach rather than a temporal one, proposing specific judgement criteria and indicators for Community Actions on the one side, and for Annual Programmes on the other side. Based on this framework, the data collection strategy has ensured that both periods are well covered when assessing Community Actions.

⁷ Community actions under 2011-2013 annual work programmes (AWPs) were implemented until March 31st 2016 whilst actions financed under MS annual programmes were implemented until June 30th 2015.

⁸ The different management modes (share management and direct management) are defined later in the report.

⁹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia (from 2013), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

3 Background of the initiative

3.1 Policy background

The establishment of Common European Asylum System (CEAS)

Asylum is a fundamental right granted to people fleeing persecution or serious harm in their own country and therefore in need of international protection. Granting it is an international obligation, first recognised in the **1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees**.

Article 3(2) of the Treaty on European Union states that *'the Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime'*. It thus **provides for the adoption of measures related to asylum, immigration and safeguarding the rights of third-country nationals**.

The increasing asylum phenomenon combined with the burden borne by only some Member States and the removal of internal borders across most of EU countries have raised awareness for greater coherence and cooperation in the asylum field, leading to the will, ever since 1999, during Tampere European Council, to create a **Common European Asylum System (CEAS)**. It was preceded by a change introduced in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam which shifted Asylum from the third pillar (intergovernmental) to the **first pillar** (Community) so as to prompt the development of a harmonised process by giving the Commission a strong role in initiating legislation in asylum and immigration policies.

The 'first phase' of the CEAS was completed in 2006 under the Hague **multi-annual programme** adopted at the end of 2004 by the European Council (updated in 2009 for the 2010-2014 period with the **Stockholm Programme**), which led to the adoption of an action plan related to asylum, immigration and external borders, and favouring cooperation between MS.

From a legal point of view, the CEAS took shape as an integrated framework composed of five legislative acts, aimed at guaranteeing asylum seekers rights and equality of treatment across EU MS. These acts, known altogether as the "**Asylum package**", were composed of the following instruments:

- ▶ The **Dublin Regulation**, which sets principles to determine which Member State is in charge of examining a given asylum requests (Dublin II adopted in January 2003);
- ▶ The **EURODAC Regulation**, which creates an EU common asylum fingerprints database (2000);
- ▶ The **Reception Conditions Directive**, which establishes common minimum standards of living conditions for asylum-seekers (September 2003);
- ▶ The **Asylum Procedures Directive**, which establishes common standards of safeguards and guarantees to access a fair and efficient asylum procedure (September 2003);
- ▶ The **Qualification Directive**, which fixes common ground and criteria for asylum granting (September 2003).

In 2005, the '**second phase**' of the CEAS was launched to resolve remaining obstacles to a genuine common system, through new and reshaped instruments. After long and complex negotiations, the legislative framework of the **new 'Asylum package' was eventually adopted in June 2013** by the European Parliament. The regulation and directives pre-cited were all recast in order to deepen the harmonisation of systems among MS.

The Hague and Stockholm programmes also created two EU agencies: **Frontex** (operational since October 2005) that manages operational EU cooperation at the external borders, and the **European Asylum Support Office** (EASO, operational since February 2011), that supports practical cooperation on the specific topic of asylum.

EU funding instruments in the field of asylum

The ERF was first established in 2000 in order to:

- ▶ Support MS in the implementation of their asylum policies;
- ▶ Favour the convergence of different systems and cooperation between MS;
- ▶ Share the costs of receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees.

The first European Refugee Fund (ERF I) covered the 2000-2004 period with a €216 million budget (Council Decision No 2000/596/EC), followed by ERF II, implemented for 2005-2007 period with a budget of €114 million. **ERF III was established for 2008-2013 period with a €628 million budget.**

ERF 2008-2013 became part of the General Programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows' (SOLID) which consisted of three other instruments in addition to the ERF: External Borders Fund (EBF), European Return Fund (RF), and European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF). The whole programme was granted almost €4 billion for the management of the Union's external borders and for the implementation of common asylum and immigration policies for the period 2007-2013. As for the covered period, the ERF was the only European **financial instrument** aimed at supporting MS in the implementation of their asylum policies.

Emerging challenges for the 2014-2020 programming period

The persistent migratory pressure of the last years has stressed **the need to enhance practical cooperation, solidarity and responsibility sharing between the EU Member States**, in particular towards those most affected by migration and asylum flows, in order to prevent crisis and better manage emergency situations. This priority has been identified in the Communication on Intra-EU Solidarity in the field of Asylum¹⁰ - the Commission's strategy which aims at furthering mutual trust and provides tools and framework to face the different needs and situations of Member States - and in the new **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2014-2020**.

For the period **2014-2020** the number of financial instruments in the area of home affairs is reduced from the existing six tools (the European Borders Fund, the European Refugee Fund, the European Return Fund, the European Integration Fund – SOLID FUNDS -, ISEC - Prevention of and Fight against Crime - and CIPS - Terrorism & other Security-related Risks) to **two main instruments**:

- ▶ The **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**¹¹ which focuses on people flows and the integrated management of migration;
- ▶ The **Internal Security Fund (ISF)** which supports the implementation of the Internal Security Strategy and the EU approach to law enforcement cooperation (ISF Police), as well as the management of the Union's external border and the common visa policy (ISF Borders and Visa).

On May 13th 2015, the European Commission adopted the European Agenda on Migration,¹² which outlines a series of steps that the EU should take to build a coherent and comprehensive approach to reap the benefits and address the challenges deriving from migration. This crisis does not only put pressure on the southern states that are the first access point for the vast majority of refugees moving to Europe, but also on all the other Member States. Following the European Council Conclusions of 25 and 26 June 2015,¹³ at the 8 and 9 July 2015 informal JHA Council, MS supported in principle the European Commission's proposal to use the emergency response mechanism under Article 78(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to relocate Syrian and Eritrean applicants for international protection from Italy and Greece. Likewise, MS supported a Commission recommendation for a European resettlement scheme.

3.2 Context and baseline

Trends in the field of asylum in Europe from 2008 to date

¹⁰ COM(2011)835 final.

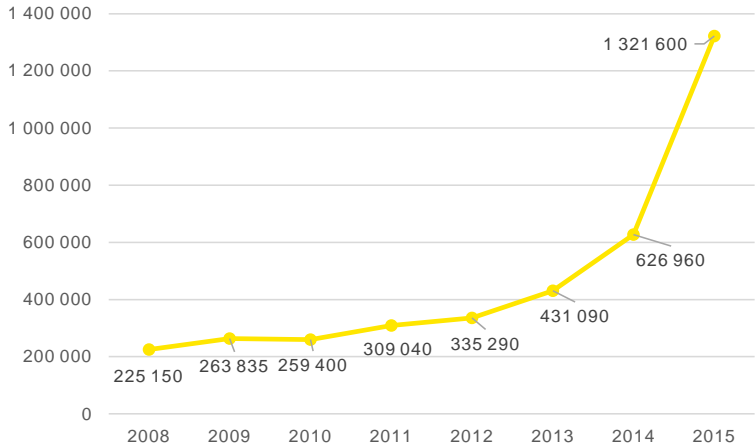
¹¹ REGULATION P7_TA-PROV(2014)0237 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

¹² COM (2015) 240 final.

¹³ EUCO 22/15.

Worldwide, the number of asylum application has raised consistently over the last four decades, as shows the 2014 UNHCR Asylum Trends report (published in March 2015).¹⁴ More specifically, an **intense rise** in the number of asylum claims was observed in 44 industrialised countries during **2014** (+45% compared to 2013), making this year's figure close to an all-time high recorded in 2012 (900,000 claims).¹⁵ The **biggest increase** was observed in **Europe** (+44% increase of asylum applicants between 2013 and 2014 in the European Union). Back in 2005, and even though the number of asylum applications was then lower, with an average of 300.000 asylum applications a year, the Extended Impact Assessment (EIA) for the establishment of the integrated SOLID funds still noted that the enlarged EU received about 75% of the asylum claims registered by the UNHCR in its 'top 36 asylum countries'.

Figure 2: Asylum applications trends in the EU¹⁶ 2008-2015



Source: [Eurostat database on international migration and asylum](#)

The number of asylum applicants varies significantly within the EU, and is concentrated in a **limited group of Member States**, which are consequently **disproportionately affected** by these flows and by pressure. **Germany** was still the largest single recipient of new asylum claims in 2014 with 173,100 new applications, followed by **Sweden** (75,100), **Italy** (63,700), **France** (59,000) and **Hungary** (41,300). Hungary, Sweden and Italy have thereby seen a huge increase in asylum applicants in 2014 (twice as many as in 2013 for Hungary, for instance), while France did not appear in the top-5 receiving countries, for the first time since the year 2000. The United Kingdom also ranked less than in 2013, while countries like Belgium – which used to systematically appear among top 10 recipient countries – have registered significantly less asylum applicants than the previous years.

Baseline establishing the ERF III

Back in 2005 – before the migration crisis affecting Europe – the urge for more **solidarity** between MS to share the burden of receiving asylum seekers and the need of the **harmonisation of asylum** systems had already emerged at EU level. The 2005 'extended impact assessment' (EIA) for the establishment of the integrated SOLID funds underlined the increasing importance of the management of asylum as a political issue in most MS, as well as the development of common standards affecting the obligations of MS with regards to the reception of asylum seekers and asylum procedures, and the integration of refugees and of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. These standards also have repercussions on the voluntary return of (rejected) asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons. Several problems were raised:

- ▶ Economic differences between the EU and other parts of the world;

¹⁴ 2015 Asylum Trend Report was published in June 2016.

¹⁵ Mid-year trend [reported by UNHCR](#) note a higher increase in asylum applications: close to one million asylum applications were registered in the world during the first half of 2015 (558,000 in 2014 corresponding period).

¹⁶ 2008-2012 data refers to EU 27, 2013 data refers to EU 28.

- ▶ Increasing trend in illegal migration towards the EU;
- ▶ Demographic trends within the EU, and in particular an ageing population;
- ▶ The European Union's successive enlargements, raising the needs to enhance and maintain border security.

The combination of these factors urged the EU to ensure 'a **balance of efforts** between Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving persons in need of international protection'¹⁷ and to **support MS** in the implementation of their migration policy, as well as to **raise standards** in the asylum field across EU Member States, and **favour cooperation**.

In **2012**, the Council Decision establishing the ERF was amended (Council Decision No 281/2012) to reinforce Articles related to resettlement, 'in light of the establishment of a **Joint EU Resettlement Programme**'. This Decision was preceded by an **impact assessment published in 2009** stressing the need for **deeper responsibility sharing** between the EU and third countries and across EU Member States, in order to **accelerate resettlement programmes' elaboration and implementation** and to resettle a higher number of refugees. The 2009 impact assessment set up a **baseline scenario for resettlement** and defined the potential impact that could be expected from the establishment of a Joint EU resettlement programme.

Figure 3: 2009 IA Baseline and impact resettlement indicators (selection)¹⁸

Indicator	Baseline 2008	Expected impact from the preferred option
Number of persons resettled in the EU	4,378	<i>Increase</i>
% of all resettled*	6.7%	
Number of MS having resettlement quotas	10 ¹⁹	<i>Increase</i>
Average estimated cost related to resettlement / per Person	€15,000	Decrease
Direct financial cost / effect of economies of scale	N/A	€1,78 million decrease

Source: 2009 IA on resettlement

*calculation by EY

3.3 Presentation of the ERF

Legal background, objectives and priorities of the ERF

The ERF was established for the period 2008 to 2013 by **Decision No. 2007/573/EC**. Article 2 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC states the general objective of the Fund which is '**to support MS in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons, taking account of Community legislation on those matters, by co-financing the actions provided for in this Decision**'.

The intervention of the ERF is framed by **strategic guidelines**, adopted by the Commission in **Decision No. 2007/815/EC**. Taking into account the development and implementation of Community legislation in the area of asylum, they formulate three priorities and several specific priorities, as follows:

¹⁷ Annex to the General Programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows – Extended impact assessment 2005.

¹⁸ In addition to these expected impacts, the EU Joint Resettlement programme established by Council Decision No. 281/2012 also aims to increase strategic use of resettlement at an EU level and ensure that it is better targeted towards those most in need.

¹⁹ Sweden, Finland, Denmark, UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, Romania and the Czech Republic.

Figure 4: list of priorities and specific priorities (**Decision No 2007/815/EC**)

Priorities	Specific priorities *
<p>Priority 1: Implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community <i>acquis</i> in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Specific Priority 1 deals with actions aimed at taking into account the special needs of vulnerable people, notably unaccompanied minors (definitions of such target groups, procedures to identify them...); ▶ Specific Priority 2 focuses on actions improving the treatment of persons in need of international protection (identification, application process).
<p>Priority 2: Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims for international protection and to underpin administrative structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Specific Priority 1 concerns actions related to the evaluation of national asylum systems; ▶ Specific Priority 2 focuses on the development of tools aimed at enhancing national decision making process; ▶ Specific Priority 3 finances measures designed to favour cooperation between MS, and in particular information and data sharing.
<p>Priority 3: Actions helping to enhance responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries (optional priority).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Specific Priority 1 supports actions related to resettlement; ▶ Specific Priority 2 supports actions related to transfer of asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection.

* As stated in Article 14, 'The Community contribution to supported projects [...] **shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of a specific action**'. However, if an action addresses a specific priority, the European share can be raised to 75% of the total cost.

To achieve its general objective and set strategic priorities, the ERF **co-finances** actions whose types are defined in the Council Decision, which contribute to the financing of technical assistance at the initiatives of MS or the Commission (Article 2).

Eligible actions

The ERF 2008-2013 could be implemented through two channels:

- ▶ **Annual programmes** (defined in the article 3 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC), implemented by national authorities at the **Member State level** on a **shared management mode and based on EC-approved multi-annual programmes 2008-2013**;
- ▶ **Community actions** (defined in the article 4 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC), implemented either in a **direct or joint management mode**. Direct centralised management mode concerned grants awarded by the European Commission or contracts for service following a call for tenders published by the Commission. Joint management for the budget implementation concerned international organisations.²⁰ Each year, the EC designed an **Annual Work Programme (AWP)** setting up Community Actions priorities, objectives to reach, budget to be allocated and management modes.

²⁰ International organisations, whose standards in terms of accounting, audit, and internal control offered guarantees equivalent to international standards and had been reviewed and approved by the European Commission.

Article 3 of the Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC defines the **main eligible actions** for financing:

- ▶ Reception conditions and **asylum procedures**;
- ▶ **Integration** of target group persons;
- ▶ Enhancement of Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their **asylum policies**;
- ▶ **Resettlement** and transfer activities.

Article 4 of the Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC defines the types of actions that can be eligible to Community Actions. Aimed at **strengthening the European Union cooperation** regarding asylum policy and the reception of refugees and displaced persons, Community Actions are created and implemented at the **Commission's initiative** and must meet some criteria:

- ▶ Be **transnational**;
- ▶ Involve **partner** associations or institutions from other Member States;
- ▶ Tackle an issue linked to the asylum policy of interest to the **Community as a whole**.

Finally, Article 5 of Decision No. 2007/573/EU allows financing of measures to help Member States facing **particular migratory flow pressure or emergency situation**. Those measures are separate from and in addition to those financed through Annual Programmes and are subject to eligibility criteria.

The rules for the implementation of the ERF were adopted by Commission **Decision No. 2008/22/EC**, which provides rules for management and control systems, administrative and financial management, as well as for the eligibility of expenditure on projects co-financed by the Fund.

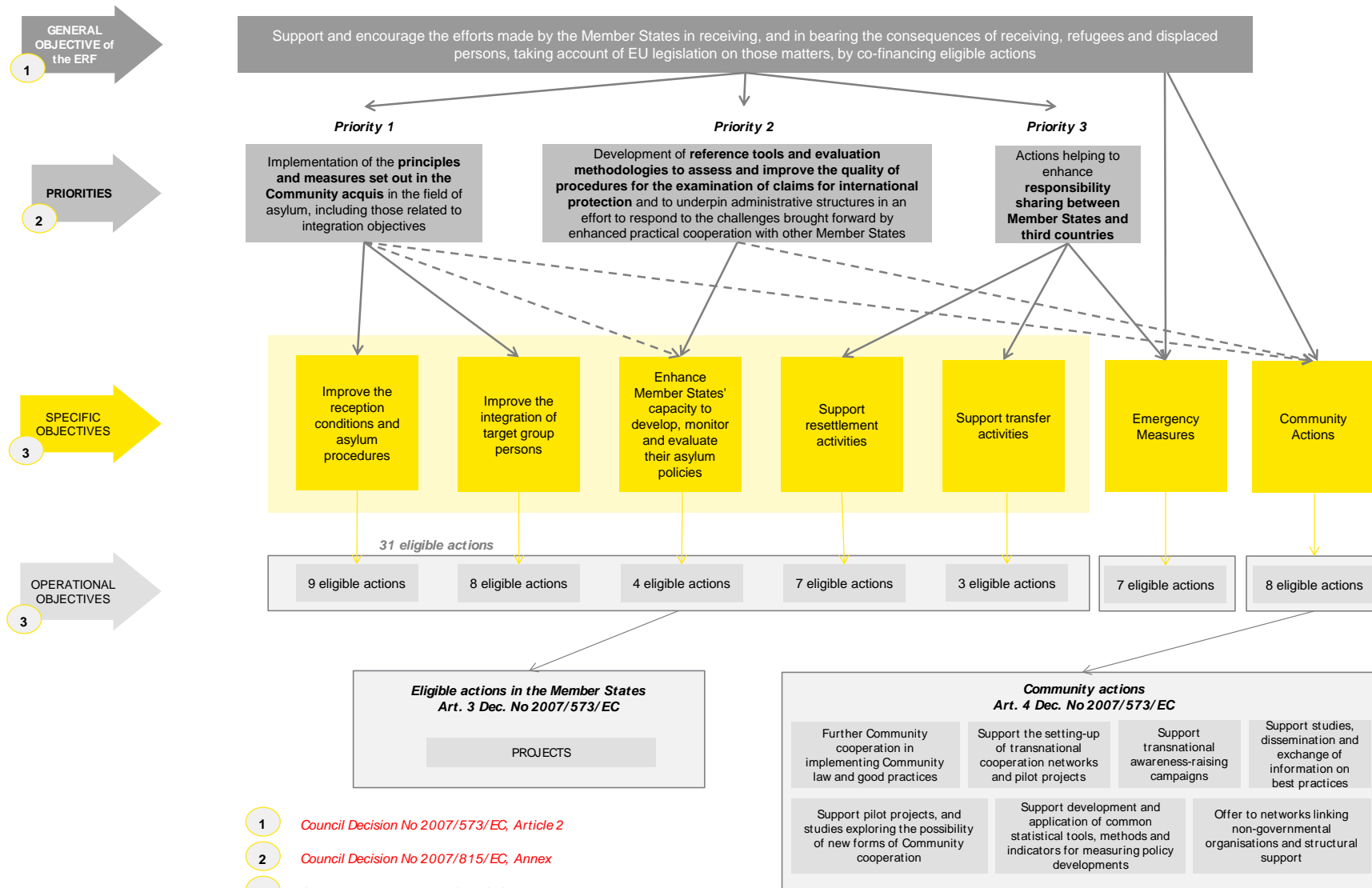
The ERF intervention logic

In addition to the preliminary identification of existing information on the baseline,²¹ the intervention logic that was developed during the first phase of the evaluation is composed of:

- ▶ The development of an objectives tree that presents the objectives to be achieved through the ERF according to its regulatory and strategic framework;
- ▶ The development of an impact diagram which analyses the results and impacts that could be practically expected from the actions funded by the ERF. It relies on an identification of typical ERF-funded actions and types of activities as first elements to achieve the expected objectives of the Fund. This chain of events guides the assessment process.

²¹ This task constituted a key step to have an initial understanding of the problem that led to the creation of the ERF III (2008-2013) and analyse the starting point against which the ERF will have to be evaluated.

Figure 5: ERF Objectives tree



- 1 Council Decision No 2007/573/EC, Article 2
- 2 Council Decision No 2007/815/EC, Annex
- 3 Council Decision No 2007/573/EC, Article 3 and Article 4

Figure 6: ERF architecture coherence between Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC and National Evaluation Reports

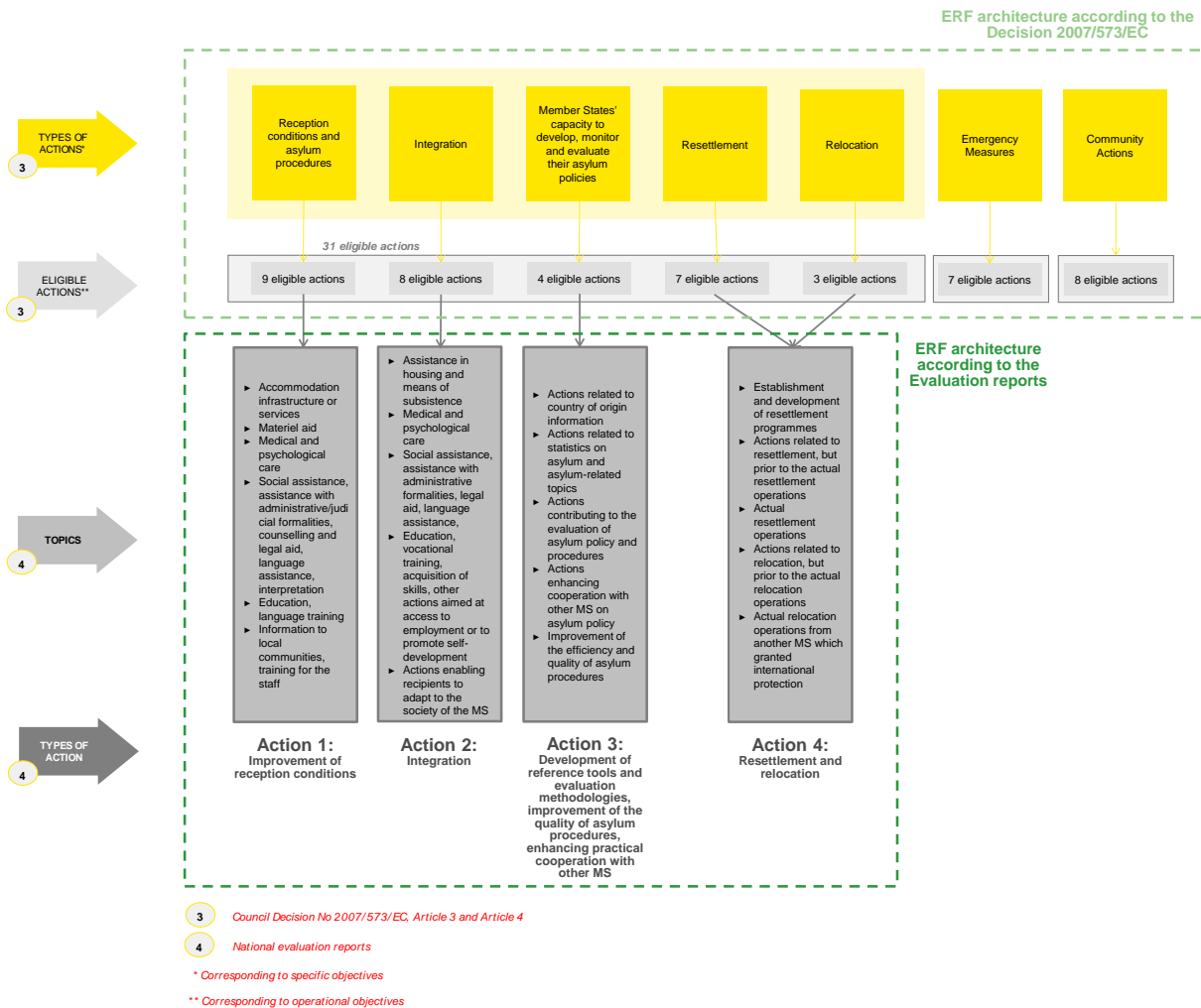
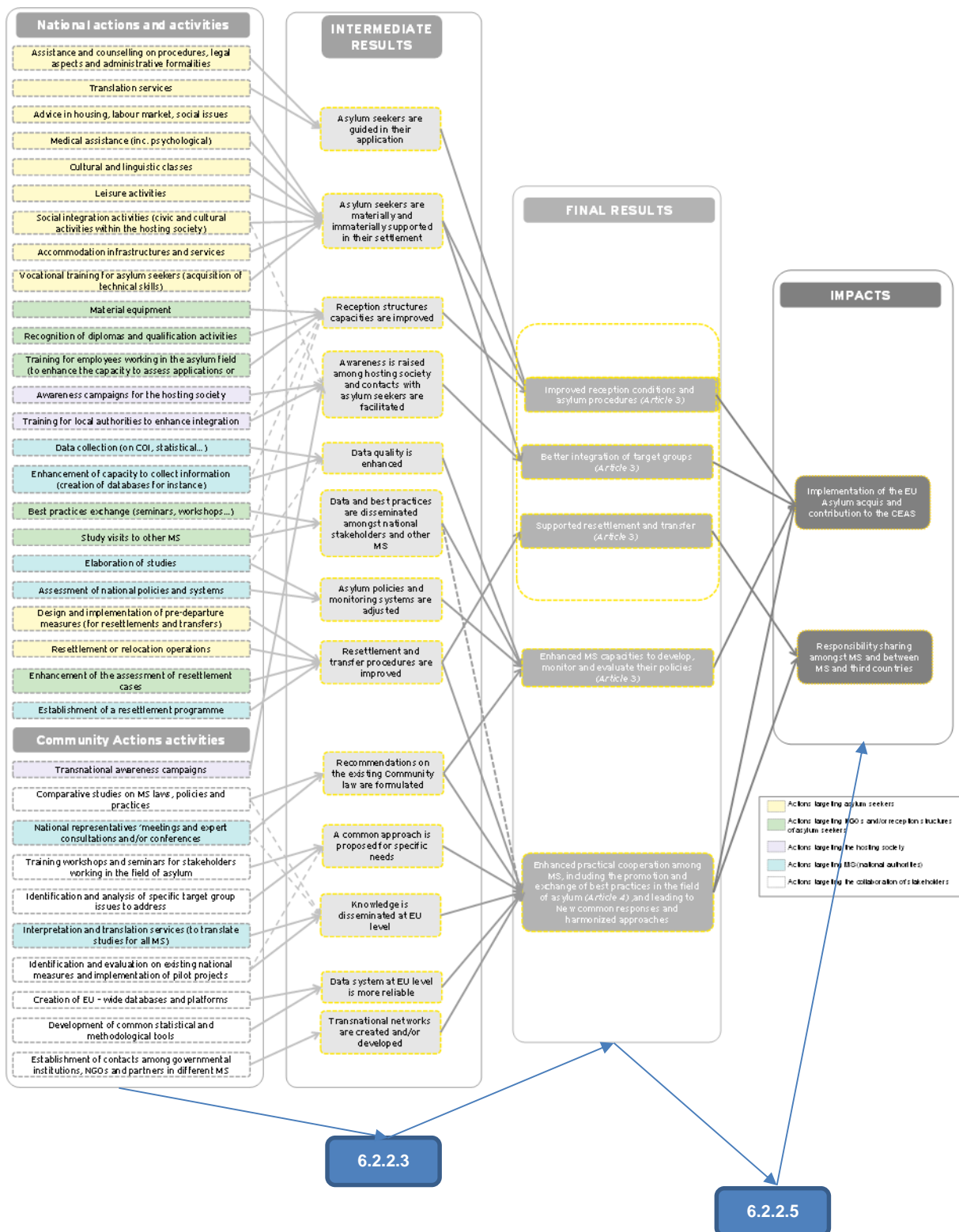


Figure 7: ERF intervention logic diagram



NB: this figure intends to show:

- ▶ The activities that may result from the implementation of the ERF operational objectives (as per figure 4), with an effort of categorization. The types of activities are consistent with the list of "topics" defined in the national evaluation reports (as per figure 5);

- ▶ The potential results of the ERF, by establishing causal links between activities and results. The different types of final results are consistent with the specific objectives of the ERF (as per figure 4), except with regards to Community actions whose result has been refined;
- ▶ The final expected impact of the ERF. The two types of impact clearly reflect the general objective and the priorities of the ERF, although they have been refined to streamline the logical approach (for instance, priority 2 cannot be considered as an expected impact): the implementation of the Asylum acquis and contribution to the CEAS corresponds to Priority 1; The enhancement of responsibility sharing amongst MS and between MS and third countries partly corresponds to Priority 3.

NB: The achievement of these expected results and impacts has been assessed in the report as follows:

- ▶ Section 6.2.2.2 analyses the effectiveness of the ERF at project level;
- ▶ Section 6.2.2.3 analyses the **achieved results** based on the different **types of activities**: reception, integration, enhancement of MS' capacity, resettlement, transfer (Community actions are analysed in separate sections);
- ▶ Section 6.2.2.5 concludes on the **impacts**.

4 Presentation of fine-tuned evaluation questions

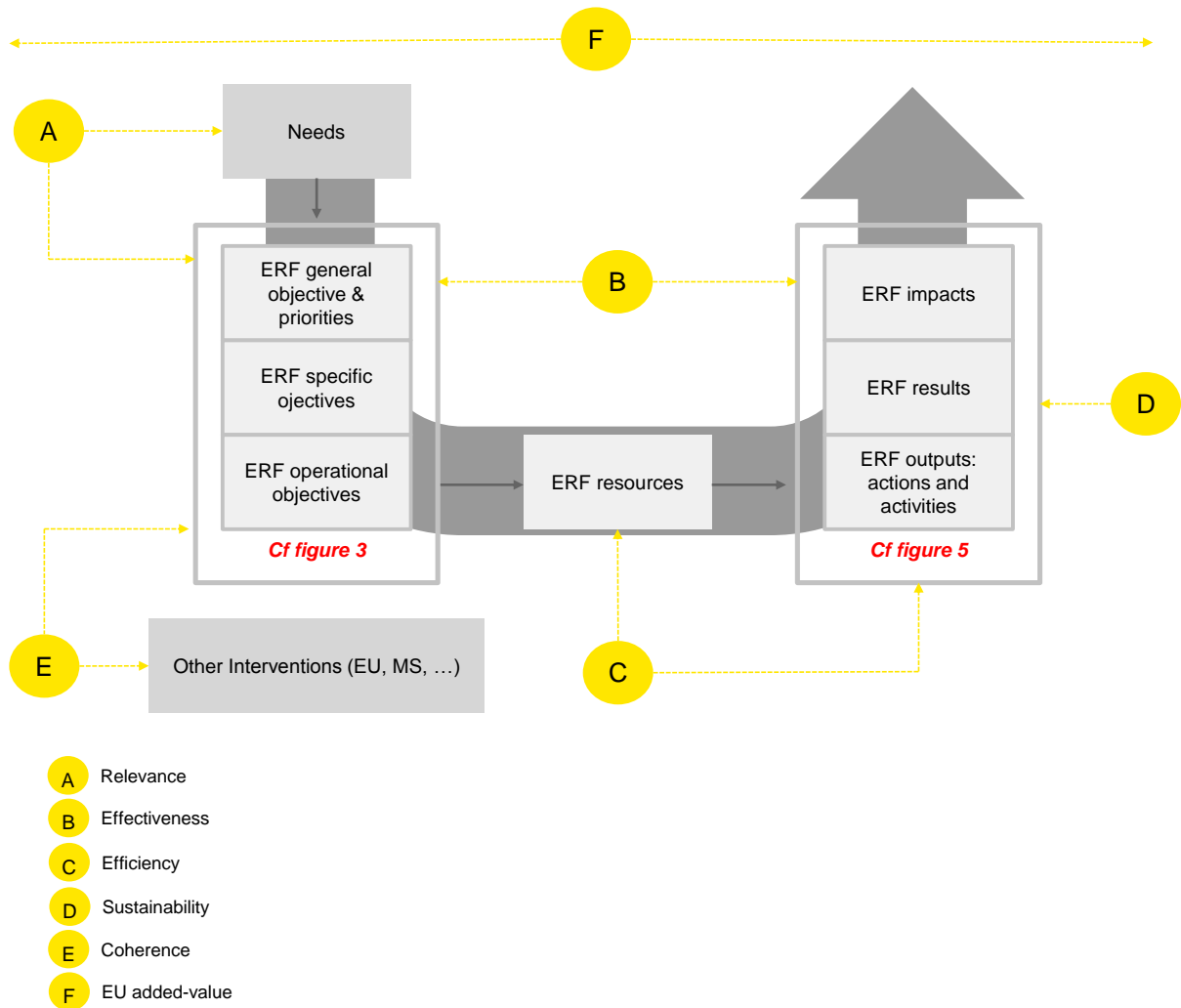
The evaluation questions proposed in the Terms of Reference were subjected to an assessment of their completeness and adequacy with regards to the objectives of the evaluation during phase 1. **Eight evaluation questions** were retained, corresponding to the following **six groups of evaluation criteria**:

Evaluation criterion	Evaluation Question (EQ)*
A. Relevance	EQ5. To what extent did the ERF objectives correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?
	EQ6. To what extent did the ERF actions correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?
B. Effectiveness	EQ1. To what extent did the ERF actions contribute to the achievement of the objectives defined in Articles 2 and 3 of Council Decision and to the priorities defined by the Strategic guidelines?
	EQ2. To what extent did the ERF emergency measures contribute to the achievement of the Fund's objectives and priorities?
C. Efficiency	EQ3. To what extent were the effects of the ERF achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources?
D. Sustainability	EQ4. To what extent have the positive effects of the ERF actions lasted after the interventions were terminated?
E. Coherence and complementarity	EQ7. To what extent were the ERF actions coherent with and complementary to other actions related to asylum, financed by other EU financial instruments – including the activities of EASO – and from national resources of the Member States?
F. EU added value	EQ8. What is the additional value of the ERF actions compared to what the Member States would have been able to carry out through investments necessary for the implementation of EU policies in the field of asylum without the support of the Fund?

** the EQs' numbers correspond to those defined in the Terms of Reference as well as in the Inception Report of the evaluation. These numbers do not provide any indication of the sequencing of the present report as it has been decided to answer to the relevance questions before the other evaluation criteria.*

Each criterion covers a specific aspect of the ERF intervention, as shown in the figure below. In particular, the effectiveness looks at the achievement of expected outputs, results and impacts in relation to set operational, specific and general objectives.

Figure 8: Evaluation Framework



For each question, a methodological approach was defined through a number of **judgment criteria**, the **identification of documents and sources** and the choice of complementary **data collection tools**. In order to comply with the evaluation scope, judgment criteria, indicators and/or descriptors and sources are both generic/common to all types of actions, and specific to Annual Programmes on the one hand and Community Actions on the other.

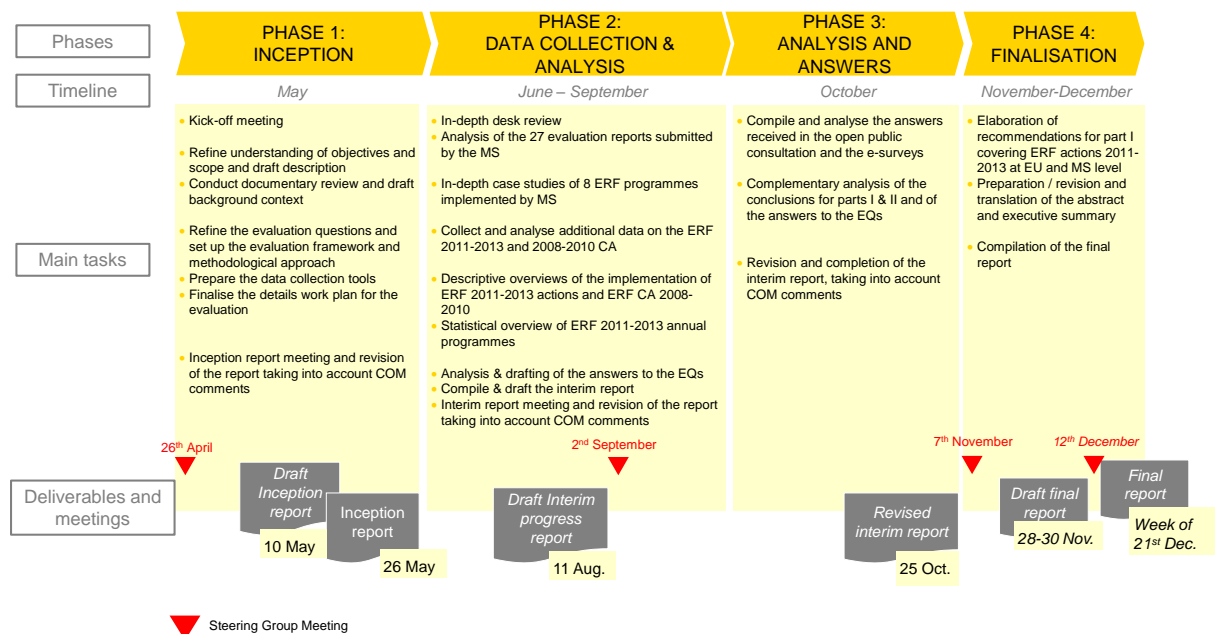
The detailed evaluation framework as well as the methodological approach for each EQ were presented in the inception report and will be added as an annex of the final evaluation report.

5 Method/process followed

5.1 Methodological approach and timeline

The evaluation followed a four-phased approach that was implemented over an 8-month period in 2016. The figure below presents a comprehensive overview of the steps and the key deliverables produced.

Figure 9: Overview of the evaluation approach and timeline



5.2 Work undertaken

General overview

The following tasks and work have been conducted during the evaluation process:

- ▶ **Desk research and analysis:** in-depth documentary review was conducted to thoroughly understand the context, background and functioning of the ERF. On the basis of documents provided by the EC during the inception phase, information gaps were identified by the evaluation team and additional documents were collected (MS multi-annual programmes, missing national evaluation reports, documentation regarding the five selected Community Actions, etc.). The list of the documents collected is available in the Annex section;
- ▶ **In-depth analytical review of national evaluation reports:** the 27 national evaluation reports have been thoroughly analysed. Both quantitative and qualitative information have been consolidated in a database, which constituted the basis of the descriptive analysis of the ERF (see *next chapters*) and contributed to the answers to the evaluation questions;
- ▶ **In-depth analysis of financial data:** financial and budgetary data were collected from the SFC 2007 database and from ABAC and have been analysed in the descriptive chapter. Initial analyses were updated with the most up-to-date ABAC figures provided by the EC in November 2016 (cut-off date: 4 November 2016);
- ▶ **Completion of data collection according to the agreed data collection plan.** *The detailed consultation strategy is presented in the next section;*
- ▶ **Analysis and reporting:** data gathered through interviews, field visits, surveys and desk research (including the analysis of national evaluation reports) has been subject to

triangulation and used to develop answers to the evaluation questions as presented in the following chapters of the report;

- ▶ **Presentation of the interim report to the EC:** a draft interim report was sent to the European Commission on 4 August for review. A steering group meeting was held on 2 September to present the preliminary analysis and the progress made on data collection. Following this meeting, comments from the EC were taken into account and answers to the evaluation questions were completed by 20 October 2016. These were discussed during a steering group meeting on 7 November;
- ▶ **Drafting of the final report to the EC:** a draft final report was sent to the European Commission on 30 November for review. A steering group meeting was held on 12 December to discuss final conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation. Final comments were taken into account and included in the final report sent on 23 December 2016.

Detailed update by data collection tool

Desk research

In-depth documentary review was conducted on the basis of relevant documents identified, received and collected. Particular attention was paid to:

- ▶ **Legal documents** adopted by the EU Institutions (Council Decisions, Commission Implementing Decisions, Staff Working Documents and so on, establishing, specifying or amending the ERF principles and functioning, as well as Extended Impact Assessments);
- ▶ **MS multi-annual and annual programmes**, in order to prepare the interviews with Responsible Authorities, to refine questions and points to raise and to collect information about emergency measures;
- ▶ **National Evaluation Reports** to populate analytical grids with report content (qualitative and quantitative data), to deepen the understanding of the ERF implementation by Member States and get a comprehensive view of implementation on the EU level. The database developed was used for the descriptive chapter on the implementation of Annual Programmes between 2011 and 2013 (using the quantitative data and analysis of the types of actions and projects implemented by beneficiaries of the Fund) and to elaborate answers to the evaluation questions (using the analysis of qualitative data from the evaluation reports);
- ▶ **SFC 2007 financial data:** data concerning Member States' programming, commitments and payment requests were compiled into a unique database and thoroughly analysed. These data have been used to describe the financial implementation of the ERF 2011-2013 (chapter 6.1) and to contribute to the answers to the evaluation questions (chapter 6.2), in particular to the questions regarding the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency criteria;
- ▶ **Documents regarding Community Actions**, which enabled the evaluation team to understand the use and implementation of this instrument better, and to elaborate the descriptive chapter dedicated to Community Actions.

Interviews

Face-to-face or phone interviews were conducted with several stakeholder groups:

- ▶ **Responsible Authorities:** 17 out of the 19 planned phone interviews (all Responsible Authorities except those interviewed through case studies) were conducted. Two Member States provided written feedback (MT and RO);
- ▶ **EC Officials and other EU stakeholders:** these interviews were carried out from September. Three interviews were conducted (DG Regio, DG HOME Unit 3, and EASO) whilst two stakeholders (DG EMPL and DG JUST) declined interview requests or orientated the evaluation team towards another stakeholder. The LIBE Committee, ECRE and the EU Council did not reply to interview requests. Additional interviews are planned for December to clarify a few points related to external coherence and implementation of Community Actions;

- ▶ **Other international institutions:** field visits in MS selected for the case studies represented the opportunity to meet local branches of the UNHCR and/or the IOM. A complementary interview was conducted with UNHCR representation in Brussels;
- ▶ **Beneficiaries of the five selected CAs:** After selection of five Community Actions, interviews were conducted with 13 organisations: all selected Community Actions' leaders were interviewed as well as a selection of co-beneficiaries in the eight MS chosen for the case study visits.

The full list of interviews is available in Annex 2.

Case studies

The validated data collection strategy included the completion of eight case studies, the objectives of which were to provide in-depth understanding of the ERF's implementation on the national level, and to better understand and illustrate the causal links between the ERF intervention and the achievements/results/impacts and identify cases of best practice or specific difficulties encountered.

The preparation of the eight case studies required the collection of data from, in addition to national evaluation reports, the multi-annual strategies, the annual work programmes, and interviews with organisations benefitting from the ERF. To date, the following information on each of the sampled Member States can be provided:

- ▶ **Austria:** field visit conducted in July (10 interviews);
- ▶ **Belgium:** field visit conducted in September (10 interviews);
- ▶ **Bulgaria:** field visit conducted in July (12 interviews conducted);
- ▶ **France:** field visits conducted in July and September (11 interviews to date); the case study is still in progress (finalisation phase);
- ▶ **Hungary:** field visit conducted in July (11 interviews);
- ▶ **Italy:** field visit conducted in July (9 interviews);
- ▶ **Sweden:** field visit conducted in August (9 interviews);
- ▶ **United Kingdom:** field visit conducted in July (11 interviews).

E-Surveys

Two specific e-surveys were launched targeting two different stakeholder groups:

- ▶ An e-survey targeting **beneficiaries of Community Actions between 2008 and 2013** (leading partners) was launched on 11 July and closed on 1 September. 17 responses, out of a total population of 56 recipients of the e-survey invitation, have been received, **13** of which were usable for analysis.
- ▶ An e-survey targeting **all beneficiaries of the Annual Programmes** between 2011 and 2013 in the **eight case study countries** was launched on 29 September and closed on 20 October. 64 responses, out of a total population of 276 recipients of the e-survey invitation, have been received, **55** of which were usable for analysis.

ERF Open Public consultations

Two Public Consultations on the European Refugee Fund (ERF) actions for 2008-2010 and for 2011-2013 were published on 11 May 2016 and remained open online until 9 August 2016 (12 weeks, as required by the Better Regulation guidelines). The questionnaires were developed by DG HOME. The questions were the same for both periods, 2008-2010 and 2011-2013. The results were sent to EY so that they can be taken into consideration in the ex-post evaluation of the ERF.

In total, seven contributions were received for 2008-2010 and 12 for 2011-2013. Out of these 19 contributions in total, five contributors (from CY, SK, HU and LV) responded to both consultations.

Annex 3 provides a synthesis of received contributions.

Challenges and difficulties encountered

A certain number of anticipated challenges were faced during the data collection phase and during the revision of the interim report. The following difficulties had to be taken into account for the elaboration of the interim report:

- ▶ **Availability of key stakeholders:** the scheduling of interviews and case study field visits was challenging, mainly due to the vacation period, work overload in some Member States (such as Sweden and Lithuania) and particular national contexts (in particular the “Brexit” and the politically charged nature of this topic created difficulties with regards to the availability of the UK Responsible Authority).
 - The evaluation team had to postpone some case study field visits and phone interviews with Responsible Authorities until after the summer break, between the end of August and the beginning of September.
- ▶ **Evaluation temporal scope and internal staff turnover:** the temporal scope of the evaluation (2011-2013 for Annual Programmes and 2008-2013 for Community Actions) raised the issue of the sometimes high staff turnover rates in national administrations and beneficiary organizations; consequently, the evaluation team sometimes had to struggle to find the appropriate and/or relevant persons to interview within some organisations, particularly in Sweden and the UK, or have noted a lack of “institutional memory” regarding some projects implemented at the end of the 2000s or the early 2010s.
 - In these cases, the evaluation team focused during the interviews on long-term and still observable impacts and prospective issues related to the AMIF. More relevant contacts were also systematically requested from the interviewees.
- ▶ **Outdated or incomplete contact lists:** connected with the previous point, contact lists made available by the European Commission turned out to sometimes be outdated (stakeholders no longer in position) and/or incomplete. This was particularly the case for the Community Actions’ contact list, which did not include email addresses for co-beneficiaries of the CAs, though targeted for the e-survey.
 - The evaluation team was able to identify some co-beneficiaries’ contact details when the organisation in question had already been leading partner of another Community Action. Contact information was also collected during interviews with Responsible Authorities, or found using team members’ networks.
- ▶ **Availability of data on community actions:** up-to-date, complete and reliable data on ERF Community Actions necessitated some reparative tasks by the evaluation team, to reconstruct a history for each Community Action, by matching administrative data with financial data, reviewing the final reports and investigating inconsistent data with involved stakeholders.
- ▶ **Current context of asylum in Europe:** from a more analytical point of view, the politically charged nature of asylum in Europe, particularly since 2013, have made it sometimes difficult to focus the interviews on the 2011-2013 period. Furthermore, and as anticipated in the inception report, the use of the ERF has varied significantly between Member States depending on their specific situations and contexts, often leading to very different views concerning the perceived relevance and added value of the Fund.
- ▶ **Quality of national evaluation reports and reliability of output and result indicators:** national evaluation reports 2011-2013 (as submitted by MS in compliance with article 50 of Decision No. 573/2007/EC) have been used as the main source of comparable information with regards to indicators related to the number of operations and the number of target group persons. They have also provided qualitative information with regards to the types of actions implemented in the MS, as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, complementarity, added-value, impacts, and sustainability of MS’ annual programmes. Several limitations had to be considered:
 - As mentioned in some national evaluation reports and as noted during the evaluation process, provided figures may not be fully reliable due to heterogeneous monitoring systems at programme and project level (with different indicators followed by the stakeholders in terms of

target group persons),²² weak reporting and inconsistent understanding of the indicators' definition. This may have resulted in a certain margin of error in analysing indicators in absolute value.

- Overall, approximately 10 reports can be considered of good quality (AT, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IE, IT, SE and UK),²³ with sufficient figures and analyses, and clear conclusions and evidence-based answers to evaluation questions. As for the 17 other reports, weaknesses include: lack of evidence, insufficient data triangulation (with limited data collection tools used), absence of evaluative judgements (simple description of projects with no conclusions, for instance), and absence of limitations mentioned.

²² For example, on reception activities: some project implementers may have considered inflows during the implementation period (new beneficiaries only), others may have considered the number of beneficiaries at a certain date (active file), and others may have added up all persons having benefited from the project (cumulative number).

²³ All national evaluation reports (NER) were considered as soon as they provided relevant information or data. However, provided judgements and conclusions have been systematically cross-checked and triangulated with other sources and data. When needed, their lack of reliability has been mentioned.

6 PART I: ex-post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund 2011-2013

6.1 Implementation of the ERF 2011-2013 actions

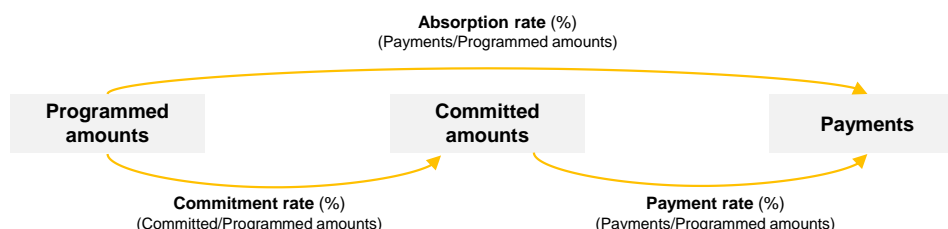
6.1.1 Definitions, data sources and limitations

Financial data and corresponding data sources

The analysis of the ERF implementation is based on the following figures and definitions:

- ▶ **ERF contribution available (programming, or programmed amounts)** are amounts available for projects and measures (including technical assistance) within each MS Annual Programmes approved by the Commission, as well as within CAs' Annual Work Programmes;
- ▶ **ERF committed amounts (commitments)** are amounts allocated to projects and measures (and technical assistance) by the Responsible Authority of each Annual Programme, as well as by the Commission as regards CAs. The **commitment rate (in %)** compares ERF committed amounts to ERF programming;
- ▶ **ERF achieved amounts (achievements or payments)** are amounts certified by the Certifying Authority and paid by the RA (or by the EC as regards CAs) for the implementation of project and measures (including technical assistance services). On the one hand, the **absorption rate (in %)** compares these ERF achieved amounts to ERF programmed amounts, allowing analysis on operation progress (operations still running or not even started). On the other hand, the **payment rate (in %)** compares ERF achieved amounts to ERF/RA commitments.

Figure 10: Definition of the different rates



The following sources have been used for the ex-post evaluation:

Table 3: Data sources

	Annual Programmes ²⁴	Community Actions
Programmed amounts	SFC2007	Annual Work Programmes 2011, 2012, and 2013.
Commitments	SFC2007 (dated: 19 September 2016).	CAs listing as obtained by the EC and cross-checked with grant awards.
Payments	Two different sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For closed APs (see below, point (1)): ABAC (figures received from the EC as at 4 November 2016): these data reflect <u>actual payments</u> net of any recoveries made by the EC to the MS on that date. 	Project Monitoring data and list of payments in ABAC as provided by the EC and final implementation reports.

²⁴ SFC 2007 is the EC's System for Fund management in the European Community 2007-2013 (via which RAs and CAs report their APs' closure documents to the Commission).

	²⁴ Annual Programmes	Community Actions
	- For open APs (see below, point (2)): SFC2007 (dated: 4 November 2016) for open programmes: these data reflect <u>requests for payments</u> , not yet reimbursed by the EC to the MS.	

The table below summarises the status of the annual programmes:

- (1) Closed programmes correspond to the annual programmes accepted by the Commission for which the net EU contribution has been paid.
- (2) Open programmes correspond to the annual programmes currently not fully accepted by the Commission. They can be one of various stages: created, returned for corrections or eligible. The final EU contribution cannot yet therefore be fully paid to the Member States.

Table 4: Closure status (Date: 4 November 2016)

Member States	2011	2012	2013
Austria	Closed	Closed	Open
Belgium	Closed	Open	Open
Bulgaria	Closed	Closed	Open
Croatia	Closed	Closed	Open
Cyprus	Closed	Closed	Open
Czech Republic	Closed	Closed	Open
Estonia	Closed	Closed	Closed
Finland	Closed	Closed	Open
France	Closed	Open	Open
Germany	Closed	Closed	Closed
Greece	Open	Open	Open
Hungary	Closed	Closed	Open
Ireland	Closed	Closed	Closed
Italy	Closed	Closed	Open
Latvia	Closed	Open	Closed
Lithuania	Closed	Closed	Closed
Luxembourg	Closed	Closed	Closed
Malta	Closed	Closed	Open
Netherlands	Closed	Closed	Closed
Poland	Closed	Closed	Open
Portugal	Closed	Closed	Closed
Romania	Closed	Closed	Closed
Slovakia	Closed	Closed	Closed
Slovenia	Closed	Closed	Closed
Spain	Closed	Closed	Open
Sweden	Closed	Closed	Closed
United Kingdom	Closed	Closed	Closed

NB: The figures provided in the following sections include Emergency Measures. Where this does not apply, it is indicated in footnotes.

Implementation and evaluation data

- ▶ **A project** corresponds to a contract, a grant agreement or any equivalent form of legal instrument that has been signed with the beneficiary of the ERF. It can be both a “national project” (funded in the framework of an AP under shared-management mode) or a “Community Action” (directly funded by the EC under Direct Management mode).

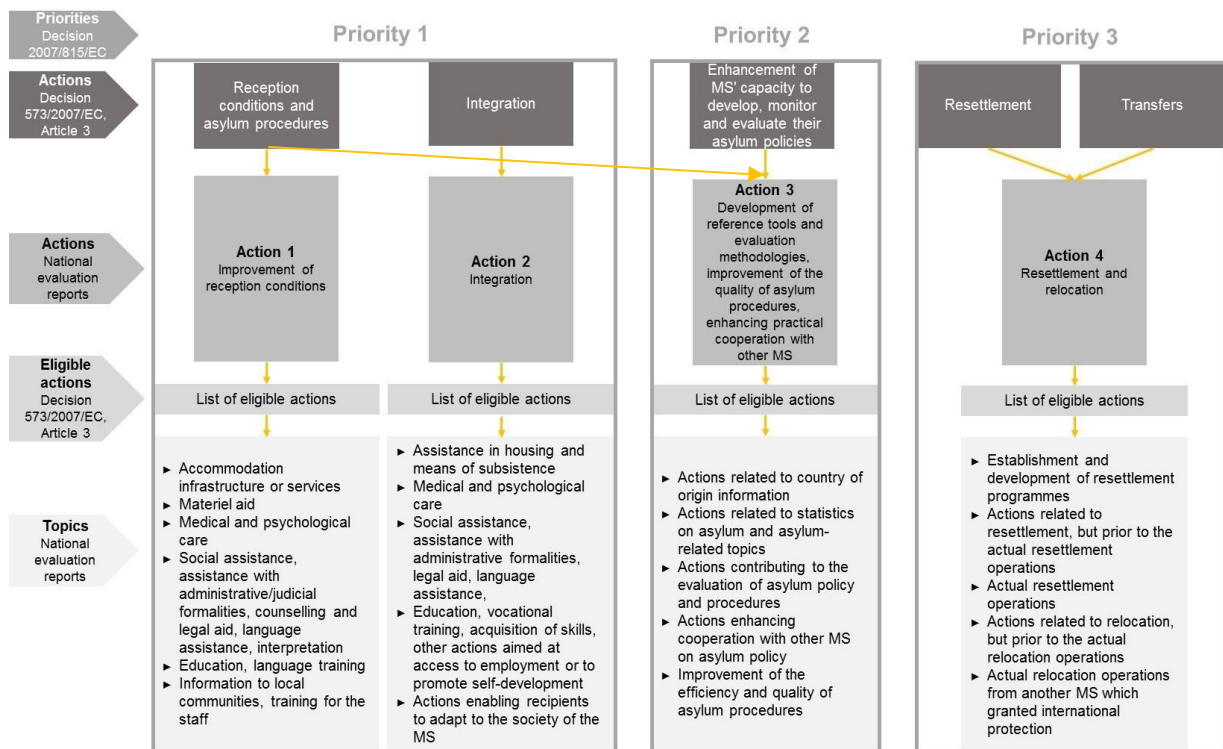
- ▶ **Actions** correspond to the variety of eligible actions as defined in Article 3 of Decision 573/2007/EC. These actions are organised into five categories (or types of actions). Each category corresponds to a specific objective of the ERF (as shown in the intervention logic figure available in section 3.3):

- Reception conditions and asylum procedures;
- Integration;
- Enhancement of Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in the light of their obligations under existing and future Community legislation relating to the Common European Asylum System, in particular with a view to engaging in practical cooperation activities between Member States;
- Resettlement of persons;
- Transfer of persons.

In the national evaluation reports, actions are grouped into in four categories (or types of actions): (1) Improvement of reception condition, (2) Integration, (3) Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies, improvement of the quality of asylum procedures, enhancing practical cooperation with other Member States on asylum policy and (4) Resettlement and relocation. These categories correspond to the types of actions defined in the Decision 573/2007/EC, except that resettlement and transfer of persons have been grouped in one single category.

- ▶ **Topics (or types of outputs)** correspond to the outputs implemented through projects based on the list of ERF eligible actions. Topics are specified for each type of actions in the national evaluation report template. For example, the improvement of reception conditions includes the following topics:

- Accommodation infrastructures or services;
- Material aid;
- Medical and psychological care;
- Social assistance, assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation;
- Education, language training;
- Information to local communities, staff training.



- ▶ **Operations** correspond to an indicator defined in the template for national evaluation reports to 'provide comparable information across all Member States on the outputs funded under the ERF III programme'. They include the topics defined above. 'A project assigned in its entirety to only one topic is one operation, recorded under this topic. A project, including a project covering several ERF III Actions, related to several topics which are broadly of comparable importance in the project, is as many operations'.
- ▶ **Executing body method** is the type of project implementation where projects are implemented directly by the Responsible Authority itself, alone or in association with another public body.
- ▶ **Awarding body method** is the type of project implementation where the Responsible Authority grants a subsidy from the Fund to projects received, as a rule, on the basis of open calls for proposals. However, projects may be funded without a call for proposals under certain circumstances.

Limitations

The following conditions must be considered when reading the analysis performed in this interim report:

- ▶ **Heterogeneous interpretation of some outputs and results indicators requested in the national evaluation reports:** the MS programmes' direct outputs and results (planned and achieved, as requested under section 4 of the reports' template) have not been analysed (by the persons in charge of the evaluation) in a consistent way across the different MS. In particular, the provided figures for the 'No. of operations' were not consistent in the UK, Italy and Finland reports and have not been compared and aggregated with the figures provided by the other MS;
- ▶ **Analysis of the ERF financial implementation subject to delays and incomplete data as regards payments:** 20 annual programmes are not closed at the time of the ex-post evaluation

(as can be seen from above tables).²⁵ Payments figures used for these programme relate to requested payments and may differ from the actual payments made by their final closure.

Table 5: Overview of the financial implementation of the ERF between 2011 and 2013 (including emergency measures)

		2011	2012	2013	Total
Closed programmes on 4.11.16	Total ERF contribution programmed for the annual programmes	107 928	83 332	62 707	253 967
	Final total ERF contribution (payments)	90 447	69 166	52 746	212 359
	Absorption rate for closed annual programmes	84%	83%	84%	84%
Open programmes on 4.11.16	Total ERF contribution programmed for the annual programmes	8 792	27 926	82 754	119 472
	Forecast total ERF contribution (payments)	6 486	20 181	65 123	91 790
	Forecast absorption rate	74%	72%	79%	77%

Sources: Programming and commitments: SFC 2007 for all programmes; Payments: SFC 2007 for opened programmes and ABAC for closed programmes

6.1.2 Programmed EU Contribution

According to Article 12 of the Decision No. 573/2007/EC, the available financial envelope for the implementation of the ERF from 2008 to 2013 amounted to €628 million.

For the 2011-2013 period, the available financial envelope amounted to €386.2 million, out of which €373.5 million were dedicated to annual programmes in the 27 MS, and €12.7 million were programmed for Community Actions. The total budget for 2011-2013 shows a 32% increase compared to the previous 2008-2010 period in which €292.2 million were programmed, out of which €271 million were allocated to annual programmes in the 26 MS²⁶ and €20 million to Community Actions.

Table 6: ERF annual contribution programmed for APs and CAs between 2008 and 2013

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL 2011-13	TOTAL 2008-13
Total ERF contribution programmed to the annual programme in M€ (1)	76,2	94,7	100,5	116,7	111,3	145,5	373,5	644,9
Total ERF contribution programmed to the CAs in M€ (2)	7,1	9,9	3,8	4,0	4,2	4,5	12,7	33,5
Total ERF contribution programmed in M€	83,3	104,6	104,3	120,7	115,5	150,0	386,2	678,4

(1) source: Financial reports available on SFC2007 for 2011, 2012 and 2013 & Synthesis of national evaluation reports 2008-10 for 2008, 2009 and 2010

(2) source: CA's annual work programmes

²⁵ The cut-off date is 4 November 2016.

²⁶ Croatia acceded to the European Union only in mid-2013.

The decrease in the share and total amount dedicated to CAs between both periods is explained by the creation of the EASO (European Asylum Support Office) in 2010 and the transfer of some activities undertaken under CAs before 2010 to the newly created Office.

6.1.3 MS’ annual programmes

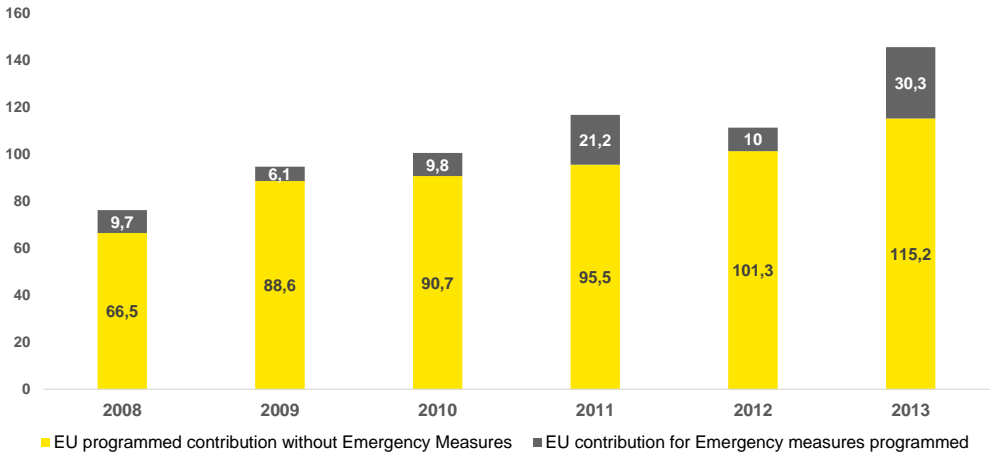
6.1.3.1 Financial implementation of MS’ annual programmes between 2011 and 2013

EU contribution to the annual programmes²⁷

A total of €373.5 million have been allocated to the annual programmes for 2011-2013.

After a stagnation between 2011 and 2012, the EU programmed contribution increased by 30.7% in 2013 which allowed the intensification of the EU’s support towards Member States on the verge on the migration crisis. As the table below shows, the increase in the total ERF budget between 2012 and 2013 is due to a larger amount (and share of total funding) dedicated to **Emergency Measures**: in euros, the allocation to emergency measures was multiplied by 3,5 between 2012 and 2013. Countries which directly faced a high influx of asylum-seekers as **Malta, Cyprus, Italy, Greece**, but also **Germany, France, Netherlands, Bulgaria** and **Hungary** implemented **Emergency Measures** in 2013.

Figure 11: Evolution of the European budget available for the implementation of the ERF between 2008 and 2013 (in M€)



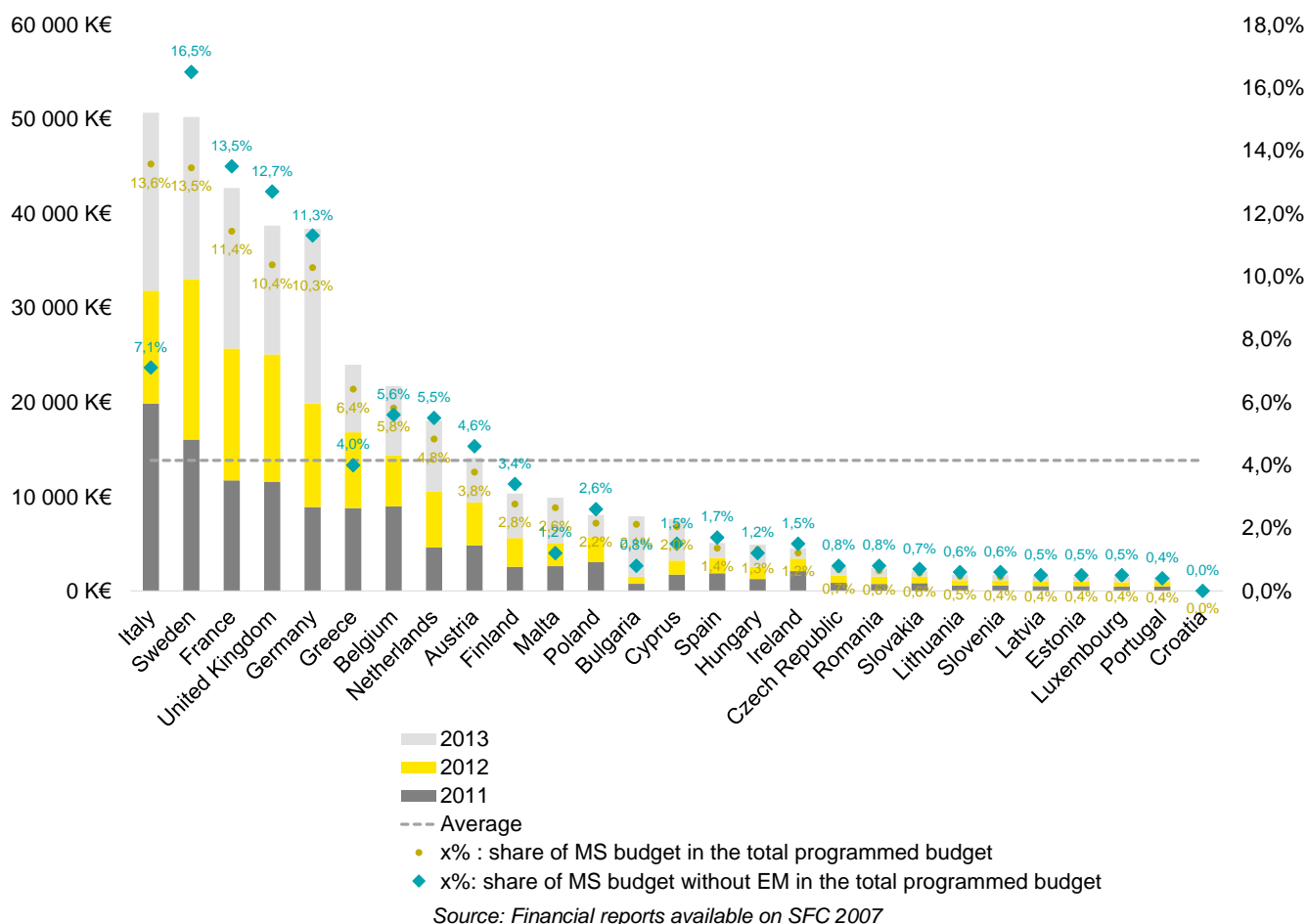
Source: The national evaluation reports on the results and impacts of actions for 2008 to 2010 and financial reports available on SFC 2007 for 2011-2013

The total ERF contribution **varied significantly** across Member States. Five Member States (**Italy, Sweden, France, the United Kingdom and Germany**) gathered almost **60%** of the ERF contribution in the period 2011-2013. **Croatia, Portugal, Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia** are the six Member States receiving the smallest envelope, gathering altogether around 2% of the total. This budget distribution fits the criteria defined in the Council Decision 2007/573/EC establishing the ERF, which include (among other criteria)²⁸ the number of persons falling into target groups registered in the three previous years.

²⁷ Source : Financial reports available on SFC 2007.

²⁸ An analysis of the consistency between the annual allocations to MS and the actual number of asylum seekers has been included in the report as an analysis of the ERF relevance.

Figure 12: Distribution of the EU programmed contribution per Member States (in thousands of € and in % of total programmed contribution)

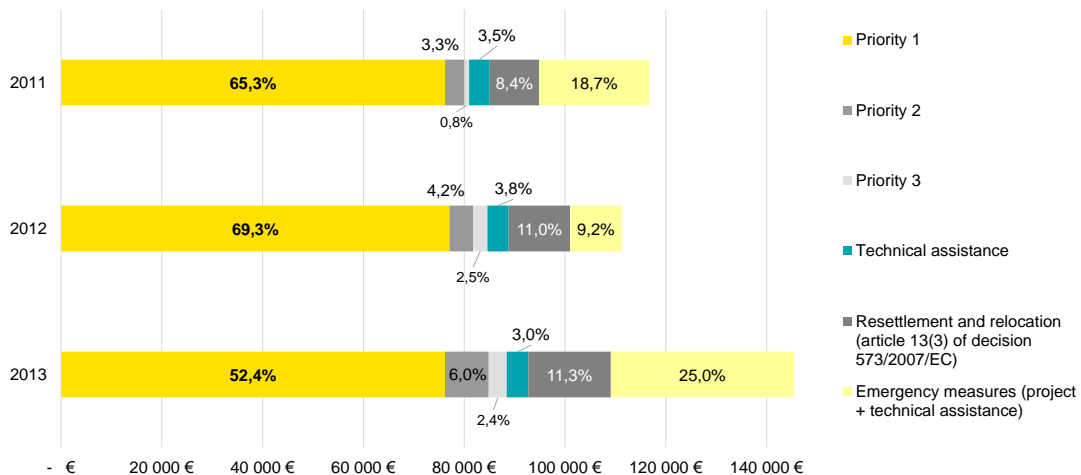


The ERF contribution for 2011-2013 is divided between several funding envelopes: 61.4% for projects under **Priority 1**, 4.6% for projects under **Priority 2** and 2% under **Priority 3** (*Priorities are defined in section 3.3*). The programmed budget also includes a Technical Assistance envelope (3.4%) and Emergency Measures²⁹ (18.3%, including specific technical assistance for emergency measures). Lastly, the programmed budget dedicated to resettlement and relocation actions³⁰ as defined in the article 13(3) of decision 573/2007/EC amounted to 10.3% of total budget.

²⁹ Emergency measures programming includes both the amounts dedicated to the measures' implementation and the technical assistance required and used by Member States, when the information was available. In cases where Member States gathered general technical assistance and technical assistance relative to emergency measures, the evaluation considers that no emergency measures' budget was dedicated to technical assistance.

³⁰ Article 13(3) of Decision 573/2007/EC is different from Priority 3. It is a financial incentive for Member States to design and implement a resettlement strategy, and which establishes that 'Member States shall receive a fixed amount of €4,000 for each resettled person falling into one of the following categories: (a) persons from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme; (b) unaccompanied minors; (c) children and women at risk, particularly from psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation, (d) persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement'.

Figure 13: Yearly distribution of ERF programmed budget, per Priority (in thousands of €)



Source: The national evaluation reports on the results and impacts of actions for 2008 to 2010 and financial reports available on SFC 2007 for 2011-2013

Table 19 in Annex 1 details, for each Member State, the distribution of the ERF contribution between Priorities, emergency measures and resettlement activities linked to article 13(3) of Council Decision 573/2007/EC. It shows that the distribution of the programmed budget among the different priorities, technical assistance, emergency measures and resettlement activities (article 13(3) of decision 573/2007/EC) varied significantly among the Member States. Priority 1 represents between 34% and 100% of the programmed budget in Member States, Priority 2 between 0% and 18% and Priority 3 between 0% and 10%. The budget dedicated to technical assistance represented less than 10% of ERF budget of each Member State. The more variable share of the ERF budget concerned the emergency measures (between 0% and 71% of national budgets) and the resettlement operations linked to article 13(3) of decision 573/2007/EC (between 0% and 52% of the national budgets).

The number of Emergency Measures programmed between 2011 and 2013 highly varied among the Member States as calling upon Emergency Measures depended on the geographical situation of the Member State and/or the asylum pressure. Consequently, Italy was the main beneficiary between 2011 and 2013, with 45% of the total allocation dedicated to Emergency Measures. As shown by figure 11, whilst Sweden (16.5%), France (13.5%), the UK (12.7%) and Germany (11.3%) were the four major beneficiaries of the Fund's regular programming (without considering the emergency measures), Italy eventually turned out to be the main beneficiary between 2011 and 2013, with 13.6% of the Fund and 45% of the total allocation dedicated to emergency measures.

Commitments and payments

The commitment, absorption and payment rates have been calculated for each Member State for the period 2011-2013 (see tables 18 and 20 in Annex 1).

The average ERF **commitment rate** across the 2011-2013 period is 95%. In 2011, the rate was of 97%, and the average across years was offset by lower rates in 2012 (92%) and 2013 (93%). The median commitment rate is particularly high, reaching almost 96%.

A few Member States (especially IE and CZ) encountered difficulties in planning their budgets as shows the average 2011-2013 commitment rate lower than 80%, due to one or two years with a very low utilisation of programmed allocation. This is the case for **Czech Republic** where only 76% of the available ERF amount had been committed. According to the evaluation report, this is due to the need for the beneficiaries to co-finance 25% of the projects by themselves, which appeared to be a hard constraint for most national stakeholders and led to many of them not applying in the end. In **Ireland**, the problem had been the same in 2012 (29%) and was addressed in 2013 by refocusing projects under specific priorities that allowed a higher ERF funding part (see more analysis under the effectiveness question, section 6.2.2.1).

To date,³¹ 59 national programmes are currently closed and 19 programmes still remain open: one from 2011, four from 2012 and 14 from 2013. As mentioned previously, the figures provided for closed programmes have been given by the Commission from ABAC and the figures for opened programmes are those mentioned in the financial reports on SFC 2007 and were used to calculate absorption and payment rates.

The average ERF **absorption rate** across 2011-2013 period is of 81.4%. It varies across years with 83% in 2011, 80.3% in 2012 and 81% in 2013.

The absorption rate varies significantly between Member States: from 41% in Ireland to 98% in Slovenia. Except Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Romania and Sweden, all other Member States with low absorption rates have at least one programme still open with the Commission.

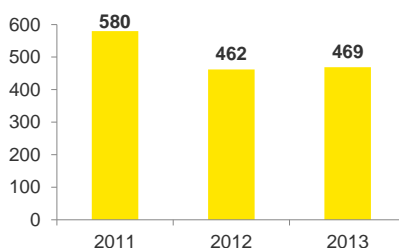
The average ERF **payment rate** across 2011-2013 period is of 85.7%. It varies across years with 85.5% in 2011, 87.4% in 2012 and 87.3% in 2013.

6.1.3.2 Overview of the implementation of the 2011-2013 national projects³²

Number of projects³³

A total of **1,511 projects**, including Emergency Measures, were implemented under the ERF 2011-2013 amongst all Member States. This number appears stable, with 1,617 projects implemented between 2008 and 2010. The figure below shows the distribution of the number of projects per year which is stable, although slightly higher in 2011.

Figure 14: Total number of projects per year



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

The average number of projects implemented by a Member State (MS) is **56**. **France, Germany, Austria and Greece** are the MS which carried out the highest number of projects along the covered period: nearly **half of the projects** were implemented in these four countries. Besides Croatia (which acceded to the European Union in 2013), **Portugal** is the MS with the **lowest number** of projects implemented (only nine). The United Kingdom, Luxembourg and Slovakia also implemented few projects (less than 15 per country between 2011 and 2013).

Whilst most MS implemented ERF projects every year according the available figures in the national evaluation reports, Ireland and the United Kingdom did not implement any projects in 2012. In Ireland, the choice had been made to launch a call for applications in 2010 for projects with a duration from 18 months to three years, thus covering 2012. In the United Kingdom, a call for proposals in 2012 was abandoned because of a change in strategy, as there was an urgent need for funding for selection missions element of the Gateway Protection Programme from 1 February 2014 to 30 June 2015.

Funding methods³⁴

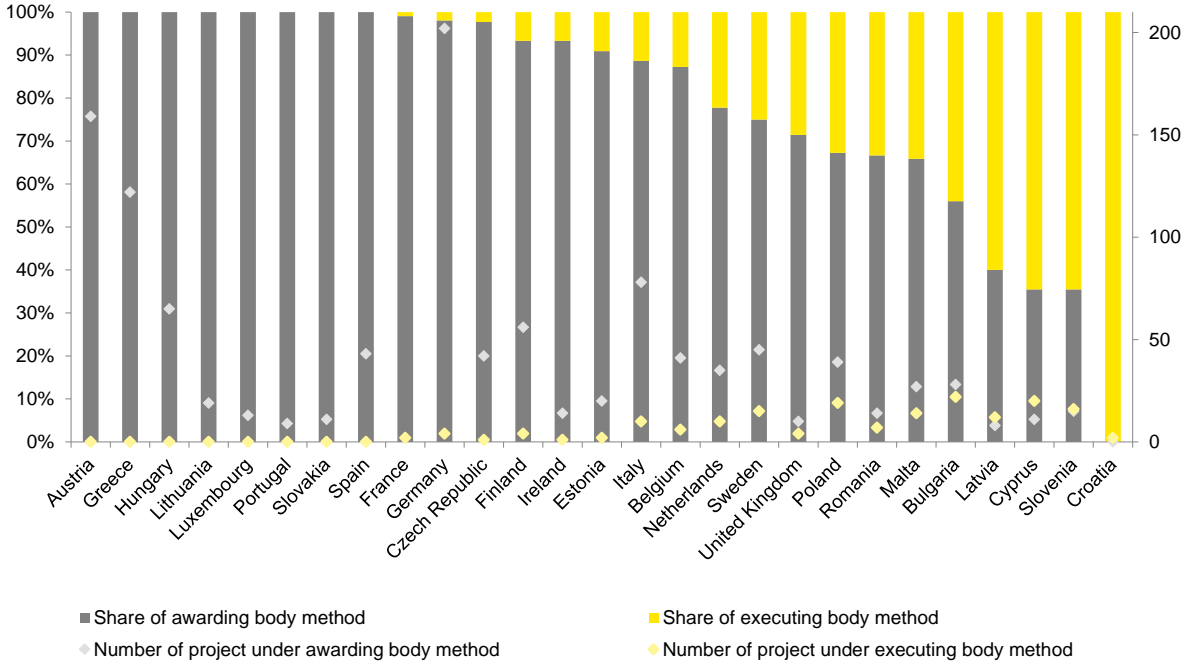
³¹ Beginning of November 2016.

³² Depending on Member States, the number of projects per Member State considered in all this section includes or not emergency measures.

³³ Sources: national evaluation reports, section 1.1.

Almost **90%** of the projects (1,340) were implemented through the “**awarding body method**” (see definition in the introduction paragraph of 6.1). This general distribution was stable across years.

Figure 15: **Share of project funding method per MS**



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

The share of projects implemented through each method differs from one country to another. Some Member States as Austria, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain only used the awarding body method (call for proposals) to select projects. On the other hand, Latvia, Cyprus and Slovenia implemented more than 50% of the ERF-funded projects through the “executing body method”. Croatia implemented its two projects only through the “executing body method”.

The Member States described in their evaluation reports the significant change in the distribution of projects among awarding and executing body methods between the period 2008-2010 and 2011-2013.

Among countries which used the executing body method, the Czech Republic and Romania did not notice any significant change.

For six Member States (HU, LV, LU, SK, SE and UK) the number of projects under the executing body method during the period 2011-2013 is lower than during the period 2008-2010. The United Kingdom explained this decrease by the new procurement arrangements for the Gateway Protection programme (a specific programme implemented by the UK government and the UNHCR for the resettlement of refugees). Concerning the other countries, no significant explanation was given in the evaluation reports.

The 11 other Member States implementing the executing body method (BE, BG, CY, EE, FI, FR, DE, MT, NL, PL, SI) underlined an increase in the share of projects funded under this method. The main explanation is the increase in the number of asylum seekers: the national needs focused on reception

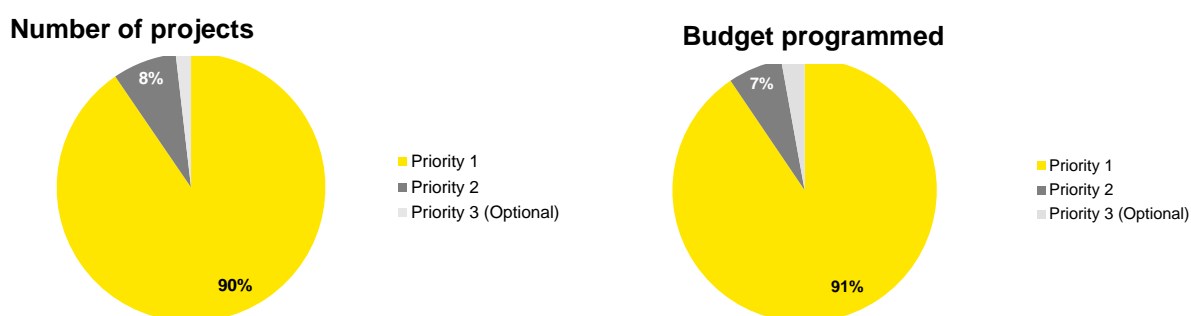
³⁴ Sources: national evaluation reports, sections 1.5 and 2.4.

capacity and condition which are usually topics covered by the State (BG, CY, EE, FI, DE, NL, PL, and SI). For the same reason, Belgium and Cyprus implemented emergency measures under the executing body method. The Netherlands pointed out another explanation: the financial crisis, which reduced the capacity for NGOs and other beneficiaries to ensure the implementation of the ERF.

ERF priorities and specific priorities covered by projects³⁵

Without considering emergency measures, resettlement and relocation (according to article 13(3) of Decision 573/2007/EC), and technical assistance, the distribution of projects and programmed amounts by Priority is as follows:

Figure 16: Distribution of projects per Priority³⁶



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports / Financial reports on SFC 2007

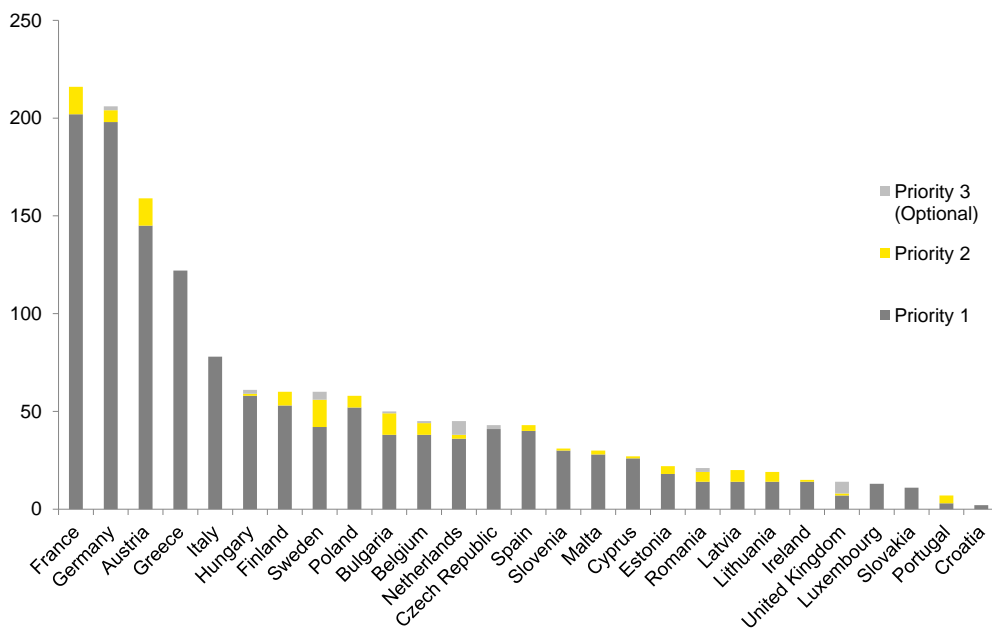
More than 90% of the projects were implemented under Priority 1 between 2011 and 2013; **8% under Priority 2** and **less than 2% under Priority 3**. This distribution is close to the situation during the 2008-2010 period.

The distribution of the programmed budget is close to the distribution of the number of projects by priorities. However, the projects under Priority 3 tend to be bigger (with an average budget per project of €270,000) than the project under Priority 2 (average budget per project of €150,000). The projects under Priority 1 had an average budget per project of €176,000.

³⁵ Source: National evaluation reports, sections 1.3, 1.4 and 2.5 and financial reports on SFC 2007 for financial data.

³⁶ Data available on the national evaluations reports do not take into account resettlement operations funded only from the fixed amount set out in Article 13 of Decision 573/2007/EC. For countries which implemented emergency measures under any Priority, these are not included in the total amount.

Figure 17: Distribution of projects per Priority among the Member States



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

Annual programmes thus focused more on the implementation of **field and concrete support for asylum seekers** addressing urgent and day-to-day issues (Priority 1), than on the development of assessment methods and tools to increase knowledge on targeted groups (Priority 2), or the resettlement of persons (Priority 3). This was especially the case for **Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Croatia**, which only implemented projects under Priority 1.

Portugal, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Belgium, Sweden and Finland implemented more than 20% of the national projects under **Priority 2**. Portugal even implemented 57% of its projects under Priority 2.

Finally, the optional Priority 3 was implemented by only nine Member States (BE, BG, CZ, DE, HU, NL, RO, SE and UK). Only the Netherlands and the United Kingdom carried out more resettlement projects with respectively 16% and 43% of their projects implemented under this Priority (far more than the European average of 2%).

As shown by figure 65 in Annex 1, **about 63%** of the projects did not implement **any Specific Priority**. **Specific Priority 2 of Priority 3 was not implemented** in any project. Of the projects that implemented at least one Specific Priority, **81%** implemented **Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1**. Again, direct and concrete support to asylum seekers is favoured by the beneficiaries of the ERF since this Specific Priority aims to identify and answer the needs of vulnerable persons.

The MS strategies concerning the implementation of Specific Priorities appeared to be very different from one Member State to another and it was not possible to establish any specific or common features. 10 MS did not implement any Specific Priorities, whereas three MS (Slovakia, Spain and Greece) implemented all their projects under specific priorities. 16 countries implemented Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1 and among them 5 implemented only this Specific Priority. For the other ones, the Specific Priorities of Priority 2 are the most represented.

Different trends in terms of priorities' evolution in comparison to the previous 2008-2010 period can be observed in the different MS according to the evaluation reports:

- ▶ Some Member States (especially AT, BE, EE, EL, LV, RO and SI) did not show any significant change in the distribution of priorities in comparison of the previous period. These countries were focused on the implementation of Priority 1 and continue to implement main projects under this Priority;

- ▶ Most Member States (CZ, DE, FI, IT, LU, MT, PL and SK) registered an increase in the share of projects implemented under Priority 1 to face the asylum crisis. Except for Finland, where the increase in Priority 1 projects is linked with the abortion of projects implemented under Priority 3 between 2008 and 2010, and Malta, where the increase is due to an increase of the total number of projects, the Member States redirected their projects under Priority 1 to the detriment of Priority 2. Indeed, the number of projects under Priority 2 decreased in six Member States (CZ, DE, IT, LU, PL and SK);
- ▶ The number of projects under Priority 2 slightly increased in six Member States (FR, IE, LT, NL and PT);
- ▶ The United Kingdom mentioned a strengthened focus on Priority 3 during the period 2011-2013 to satisfy the requirement of the Gateway protection programme. To a lesser extent, the share of projects implemented under Priority 3 also increased in Germany, Hungary and Sweden. The actual number of projects under Priority 3 also increased in the Netherlands due to an increase in the total number of projects, but decreased relatively to the total number of projects;
- ▶ Three countries (CY, BG, and ES) showed changes in the implementation of the Priorities because of a change in the classification of the projects and not in the scope of their activity.
- ▶ Finally, some Member States (especially BE, DE, FR, EL, IE) tended to implement more projects under Specific Priorities compared to the previous period. The financial incentives motivated the countries to benefit from the extra 25% of EU financing through projects implementing Specific Priorities.

Types of final beneficiaries of the 2011-2013 national projects³⁷

More than half (57%) of the ERF beneficiaries are national non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The second main type of beneficiaries is **State or federal public authority**, representing **19.5%** of the total of beneficiaries. **Private and public law companies** are also highly involved in the implementation of the projects, representing **15%** of the beneficiaries. Thus, beneficiaries operating at **national level** seems to be favoured by the Responsible Authorities when implementing projects, over **international organisations**, which represent **less than 2%** of beneficiaries and over, **local or regional authorities** (representing less than 5% of beneficiaries).

As previously stated, the projects are mainly implemented by national NGOs (it is especially the case in Spain and Portugal, where only NGOs benefited from the ERF), but the specificities of some countries can be mentioned:

- ▶ **Germany** stands out with **84%** of the projects implemented by **private and public law companies**. To a lesser extent, private and public law companies are also involved in Slovenia with the implementation of 48% of the projects (the European average being at 15%);
- ▶ In **Hungary, Malta, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus, Sweden** and **Croatia**, **national public authorities** are favoured: they implemented more than half of the projects, in each country;
- ▶ In some Member States such as **Italy, Finland, Slovakia, Sweden** and **the United Kingdom**, beneficiaries operating on a **regional or local level** to implement projects are widely used, representing around 20% in each country, compared to 4% on average across all Member States;
- ▶ **Estonia** is the only Member State where **international organisations** were an important beneficiary with more than **30%** of the national projects implemented;
- ▶ Finally, **education and research organisations** implemented more than **10%** of the projects in **Finland, Slovenia and Estonia** (2.5% on European average).

³⁷ Source : National evaluation reports, section 1.2.

6.1.3.3 Focus on resettlement operations related to the fixed amount set out in article 13(3) of ERF decision³⁸

12 Member States organised operations of resettlement between 2011 and 2013, and a total of 9,058 persons were resettled through the assistance of the ERF. This number varies significantly from one Member State to another, starting from only six persons in Czech Republic to more than 4,400 persons in Sweden. The overall number of resettled persons slightly increased between 2011 (2,463) and 2013 (3,809).

6.1.4 The programmes' outputs and results

6.1.4.1 The programmes' outputs³⁹

Number of operations by type of action and topic

Methodological note: the national evaluation reports provide the number of operations undertaken under different types of actions:

- ▶ *Action 1: The improvement of reception conditions*
- ▶ *Action 2: The improvement of integration*
- ▶ *Action 3: The development of reference and evaluation methodologies, the improvement of the quality of asylum procedures and the enhancement of practical cooperation with other Member States on asylum policy*
- ▶ *Action 4: Resettlement and relocation⁴⁰*

These actions are subdivided into different types of outputs (or topics). One single project can be counted several times (within several topics) if composed of different types of outputs. This explains why the number of operations is higher than the number of projects contributing to an action. On the other hand, projects can be counted only once as an operation for one given topic (refer to the definition of "operation"). As figures provided for Finland, Italy and the United Kingdom reports are not consistent with the definition of the "number of operations" indicator, they have been excluded from the analysis based on number of operations.

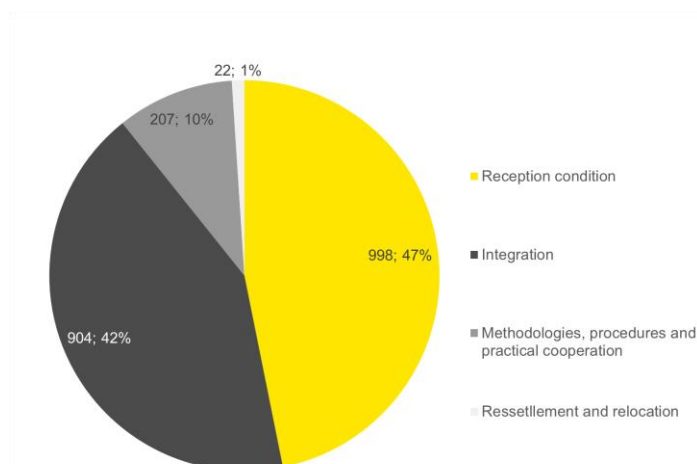
As shown in the methodological introduction of this chapter, Priority 1 is covered by actions 1 and 2, Priority 2 by action 3, and Priority 3 by action 4, in line with Decisions No. 2007/573/EC and No. 2007/815/EC of 29 November 2007.

³⁸ Source: National evaluation reports, section 3.

³⁹ Source: National evaluation reports, chapter 4.

⁴⁰ The term "relocation" has been used as such in the national evaluation reports to designate the transfer of beneficiaries of international protection as defined in Article 3(1)(e) of Decision No. 573/2007/EC.

Figure 18: **Distribution of operations per action**

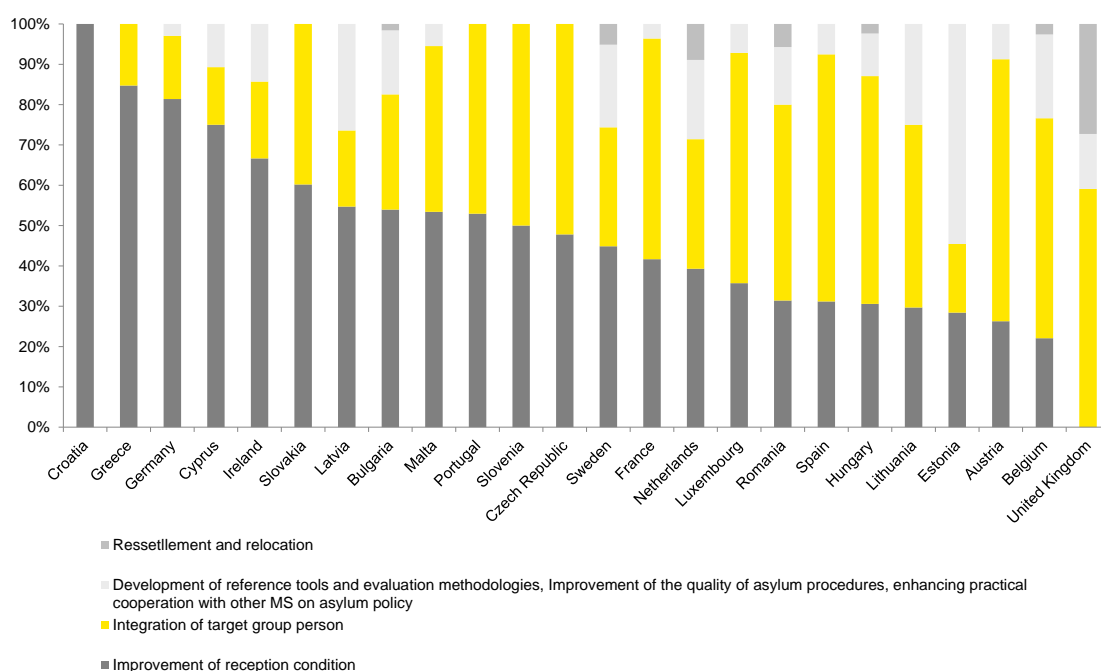


Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

According to the national evaluation reports, out of the 1478 projects, 2131 operations have been registered during the implementation of the ERF between 2011 and 2013.

- ▶ The main action implemented is the ‘improvement of the reception condition’ with 998 operations (47% of the total number of operations). All Member States, except the United Kingdom, participated in this action.
- ▶ The action ‘improvement of integration’ provided 904 operations (42% of the total number of operations). All Member States participated in this action.
- ▶ The action ‘development of reference and evaluation methodologies, the improvement of the quality of asylum procedures and the enhancement of practical cooperation with other Member States on asylum policy’ resulted in 207 operations (10% of the total number of operations). 18 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, IE, LV, LI, LU, MT, NL, RO, SE, UK) participated in this action.
- ▶ The action ‘resettlement and relocation’ provided the smallest number of operations (22) representing 1% of the total number of operations. Seven Member States (BE, BG, HU, NL, RO, SE, UK) implemented operations through this action.

Figure 19: Share of the types of actions per MS



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

10 Member States (BG, HR, CY, EL, IE, LV, MT, PT, SK, SI) implemented more than 50% of their operations under the action ‘improvement of reception condition’. Six Member States (BE, CZ, ES, LU, SI, UK) implemented more than 50% of their project under the action ‘integration of the target group person’. Only Estonia implemented more than 50% of its operations under the action ‘development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies, improvement of the reception procedure, enhancing practical cooperation with other MS on asylum policy’. The United Kingdom provided 27% of its operations under the Action ‘resettlement and relocation’, whereas no other MS registered more than 10% of its operations under this action.

6.1.4.2 The programmes’ results⁴¹

Number of final beneficiary persons for action 1 and 2

Methodological note: according to the national evaluation reports, a number of final beneficiaries have been registered for each type of output (topic) of action 1, 2,⁴² and 4 (number of persons resettled).⁴³

The registration of the number of target group persons provided by the national evaluation reports follow the same rules as for operations (see section 6.1.4.1): one person can be counted more than once if benefiting from several topics under the same type of action. The total number of beneficiary persons for action 1 and action 2 is not available as summing up the number of beneficiaries by topic would lead to some double or triple counting.

However, the evaluation reports provide the total number of persons belonging to the ERF target groups who have been reached directly by the projects implemented under the ERF III programmes 2011-2013. This figure excludes double counting. It gathers the beneficiaries of Action 1 and 2 (Priority 1) and the beneficiaries of resettlement operations. Thus the number of beneficiaries of Priority 1 will

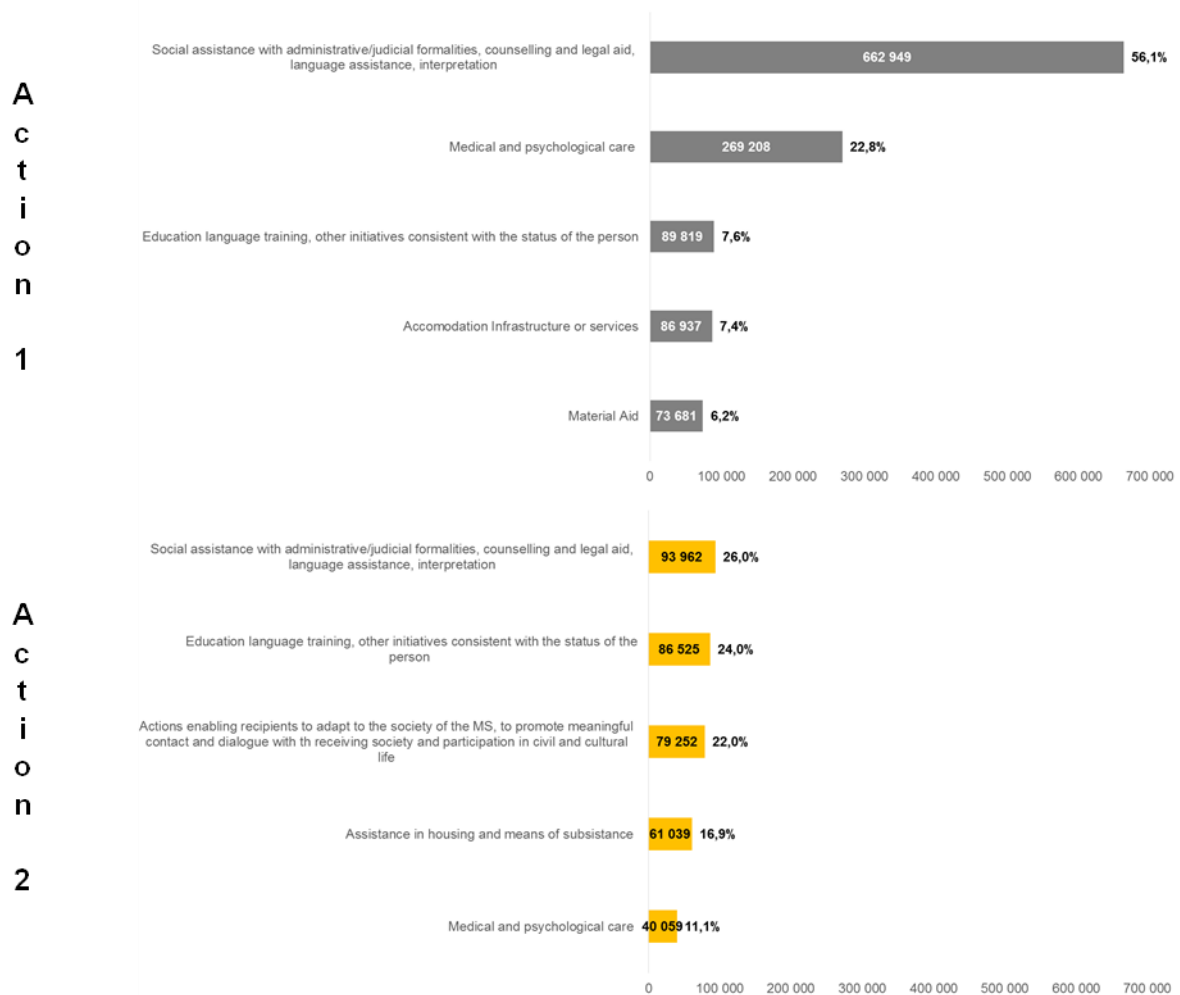
⁴¹ Source: National evaluation reports, chapter 4.

⁴² Some Member States did not inform some of the indicators in the evaluation report (stated as NA), the figures only take into account data available in the evaluation reports.

⁴³ Projects under action 3 did not directly target refugees.

be considered as the total number of persons reached by the ERF III less the number of persons resettled under Action 4 (Priority 3).

Figure 20: Number of beneficiaries per type of topic under Action 1 and 2



The number of persons reached under each topic of action 1 are higher than under action 2. Refugees supported under two different topics may be the same persons.

Under Action 1 (Improvement of reception condition), the topic ‘Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance interpretation’ was the main one implemented by the Member States between 2011 and 2013 with 662,949 persons targeted by the projects. The number of persons reached by the topic ‘Information to local communities, as well as training for the staff thereof, who will be interacting with those received in the host country’ is not relevant and was not registered in the evaluation report.

Under Action 2 (Integration), ‘Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation’ was the main topic in terms of the number of refugees supported.

The number of beneficiaries of Action 1 and 2 varies significantly between the Member States. France (27% of the total number of beneficiaries), Greece (25%) and Germany (11%) registered together more than 60% of the beneficiaries of the Priority 1.

6.1.5 Community actions 2011-2013

Methodology and limitations

The following conditions must be considered:

- ▶ **Final list of Community Actions.** As the Commission's CA database was incomplete and out-of-date (it also showed inconsistencies with other sources, including the grants award decisions and the list of selected projects as available from the Commission's website), specific work has been done with the EC during the conduct of the evaluation to reconstruct the final list of CAs and identify related commitments and payment;
- ▶ **Data related to commitments and payments.** The financial execution of the CAs envelope has been reconstructed by the evaluation team, based on ABAC information;
- ▶ **Data related to procurements.** Eight procurements were envisaged in the AWP's but only seven went ahead as planned. They were mostly related to long-term strategic IT resources with EU added-value.

6.1.5.1 Objectives and Priorities of the Community Actions

The EC's strategy for CAs between 2011 and 2013 was defined in the successive annual work programmes (AWPs) which set out objectives, priorities and foreseen results for each year.

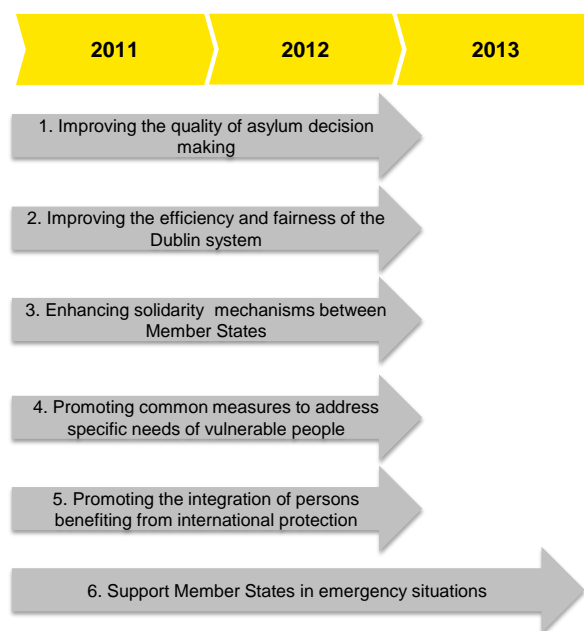
Whilst keeping a common broad and flexible approach in 2011 and 2012, with six Priorities listed during these two years, the Commission revised its approach in 2013 to focus on the need to support stakeholders confronting the emergency situation in Greece. The entire CA budget for that year was thus allocated to UNHCR to support the clearance of the appeals backlog for asylum claims in Greece.

The EC's approach during the first two years intended to respond to all potential challenges through:

- ▶ Two Priorities focused on **enhancing responsibility sharing between MS, and ensuring equal redistribution** through compensation measures and emergency answers (Priority 3 and Priority 6). They included actions that were expected to favour responsibility-sharing through facilitating intra-EU relocation. As for the support to MS in emergency situations and situations requiring urgent action (in terms of reception, accommodation, transport, and so forth), 2012 AWP specified the need to support Greek authorities in the implementation of the Action Plan on Migration and Asylum with the involvement of the UNHCR. Before being retained as the only CA measure for 2013, emergency support was already considered a top priority in 2012 ('up to 50% of the indicative amount available for grant i.e. around M€ 2' could be used for this objective)⁴⁴ and in 2011;
- ▶ Three Priorities targeted at several aspects of **the EU acquis**, such as the improvement of integration of persons benefiting from international protection (Priority 5), the improvement of asylum decision-making (Priority 1) and the improvement of the Dublin system (Priority 2), especially through exchange of information and development of best practices;
- ▶ One Priority aimed to promote common measures to address **specific needs of vulnerable groups**, in particular those of unaccompanied minors (Priority 4).

⁴⁴ Source : Annual Work Programme for CAs for the year 2012.

Figure 21: **Planned Priorities for 2011–2013 Community Actions**⁴⁵



Source: EY analysis based on ERF annual work programmes

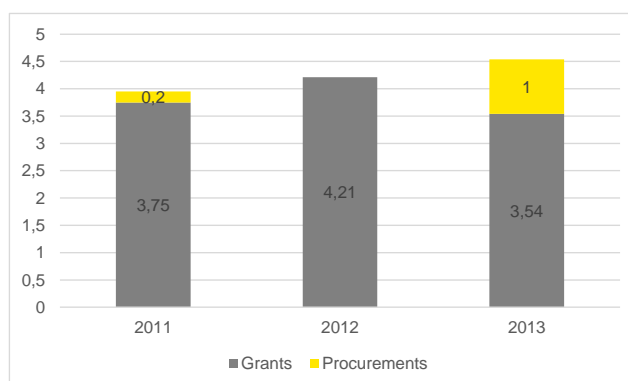
6.1.5.2 Available resources

- ▶ According to the annual work programmes, €12.7 million were made available to finance ERF Community Actions from 2011 to 2013. This envelope decreased by 40% in comparison with the previous 2008-2010 period. Around 3.2% of the total ERF's available resources were used to finance transnational actions or actions of interest to the Community. This is below the limit of 4% which was defined in article 1 of Decision No. 458/2010/EU, which set out that 'the Commission may rise up to 4% of the Fund's available resources to finance transnational action (...)'.⁴⁶
- ▶ Resources were budgeted to finance CAs through both grants (€11.5 million) and procurements (€1.2 million).

⁴⁵ This figure shows planned Priorities according to the AWP (i.e. EC's strategies with regards to CAs), and does not intend to show the ones that were actually implemented (see next sections to get information on implemented CAs).

⁴⁶ Decision No. 458/2010/EU amended article 4.1 of the ERF Decision No. 537/2007/EC: it decreased the percentage of ERF budget available for the implementation of Community Actions from 10% to 4% following the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office in 2010. Indeed, the EASO was entrusted with some of the tasks previously financed under the ERF as regards strengthening practical cooperation on asylum matters. The limit for the funding of CAs was reduced in order to free up resources for funding the Support Office and to take account of the reduced scope of the Community Actions.

Table 7: CAs programming in M€ per year (grants and procurements)



Source: EY, according to AWP

6.1.5.3 Implemented Community Actions through procurements

The budget available for procurements was defined in the Annual Work Programmes for a total of €1.2 million to be spent into three studies forecast in 2011 and 2013 as follows:

Year	Study	Collected information on the study's implementation
2011	Study on the feasibility of developing Eurodac into a supporting tool for the CEAS	According to the EC, this study did not take place in 2011.
2013	Study on the implementation of the Qualification Directive	According to the EC, this study was carried out.
2013	Study on the implementation of the CEAS	A 'study on the temporary protection directive' was performed.

6.1.5.4 Implemented Community Actions through grants

Number of Community Actions

- ▶ **15 Community Actions** were financed by the ERF through grants from 2011 to 2013, with eight projects implemented in 2011, six in 2012 and one in 2013. Three grants were directly awarded (one each year) and 12 grants were awarded following an open call for proposals.
- ▶ Two calls for proposals were launched respectively in 2011 and 2012 (in 2013, the available budget was directly granted to one single project). The table below shows the number of proposals selected every year.

Table 8: Proposals selected per year

Year	No of Calls	Proposals Received	Proposals ineligible	Proposals not selected	Proposals rejected	Reserve	Proposals selected
2011 (1)	1	33	9	10	5	2	7
2012 (2)	1	38	2	20	11	0	5

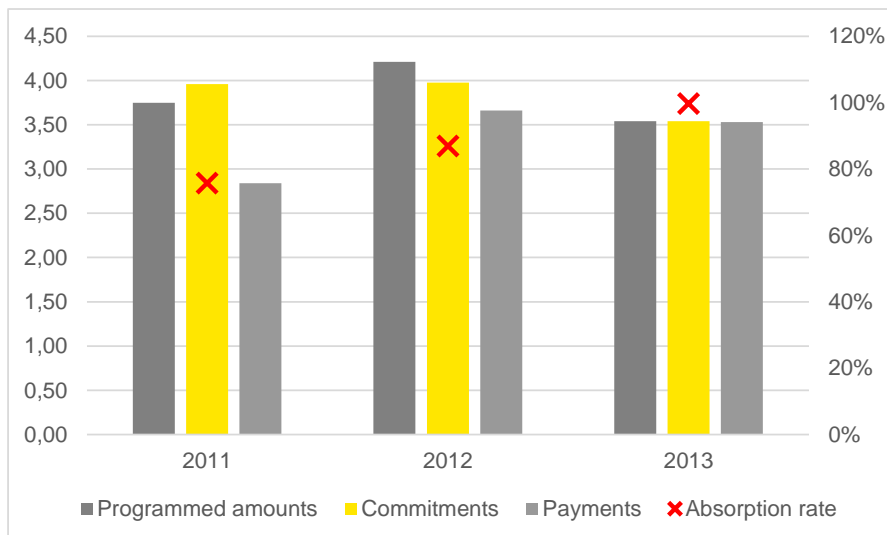
Source 1: 2011 award decision

Source 2: 2012 award decision

Financial analysis

- ▶ CA commitments amounted to **€11.48 million from 2011 to 2013**, and ranged between **€3.54 million and €3.98 million** every year. The average committed budget by project amounted to €567,000 in average in 2011 and 2012.
- ▶ The absorption rate amounted to 87% during the three year period.

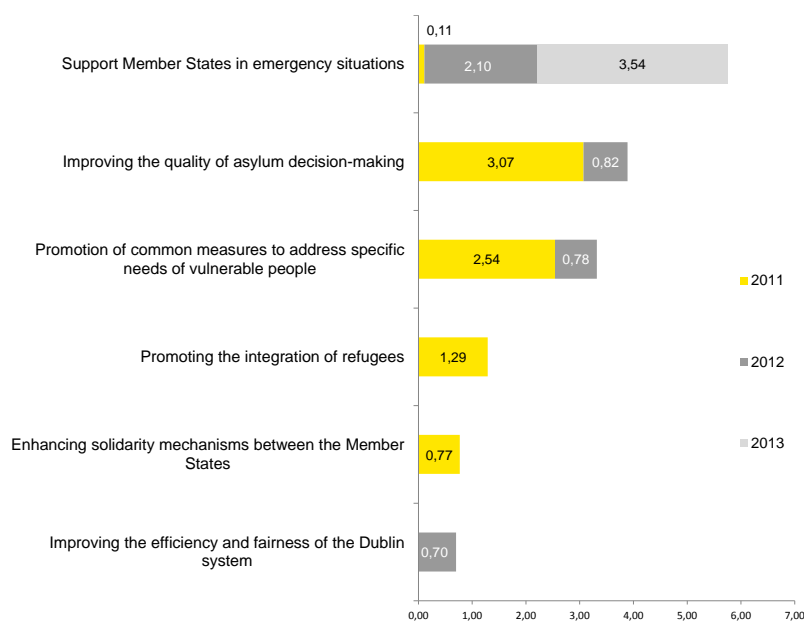
Table 9: Implemented budget for 2011-2013 CAs through grants (in M€)



Objectives and content of funded Community Actions

Whilst all set priorities were implemented during 2011-2013, the biggest share of the budget was dedicated to the support of Member States in emergency situations as well as to improve the quality of decision-making.

Figure 22: Global budget committed per Priority during 2011 – 2013 (in M€)



Source: EY qualitative database from projects' grant applications

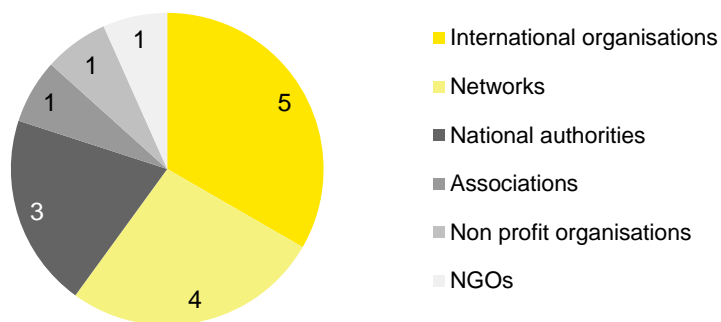
Four types of Community Actions were implemented from 2011 to 2013:

- ▶ A total budget of €5.6 million was used to **support the emergency situation related to the Greek asylum system through two directly awarded grants to the UNHCR**. With a respective budget of €2.1 million and €3.5 million, they aimed at reforming and setting up a new Greek asylum system, especially following the infringement proceedings by the Commission against Greece for not complying with the EU asylum acquis. The CA 2013 also aimed at reducing Greek backlog through the provision of additional staff and trainings;
- ▶ **€2.52 million were used for the implementation of five Community Actions aiming at developing methodological tools**. With an average budget of €500,000, they consisted of:
 - Facilitating **integration**, and in particular the access to education, employment and housing, through a pilot project in charge of comparing transnational systems, providing recommendations and developing a UNHCR-developed on-line integration evaluation tool containing refugee integration data;
 - Improving **protection**, by identifying best practices and providing recommendations on how to efficiently apply and improve internal protection;
 - Identifying and sharing **alternatives to detention** through training delivery, reports on the laws and practices at the national, European and international level, and through networking and conferences;
 - Improving the **availability of medical information**, by reducing duplication of effort for Member States needing to research information on medical treatments in the country of origin through the MedCoi platform;
 - Developing the CEAS, by transforming the previous European Database of Asylum Law into a **juridical quality improved resource of relevant case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights**.
- ▶ **€2.42 million were used to finance six Community Actions aimed to address the needs of vulnerable people, particularly unaccompanied minors and victims of torture**. With an average budget of €400,000, these actions were aimed at:
 - Identifying and exchanging good practices on credibility assessment with particular attention to children and gender related asylum cases;
 - Helping vulnerable people by identifying their needs, creating national standard operating procedures and encouraging harmonization;
 - Helping victims of torture by improving the access to psychological and medical care through the development of common tools and transnational trainings;
 - Developing the European Network of Guardianship Institutions (ENGI) by increasing the support of guardians for the Unaccompanied Minors Asylum Seekers (UAMS);
 - Finally, two projects focused on family reunification: CA HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4032 aimed at supporting UAMS within the Dublin system by identifying, testing and promoting common national Standard Operating Procedures and Support to Family Reunification, and CA HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4015 aimed at increasing the reception of unaccompanied minors in families through the exchange of best practices and the raise of awareness.
- ▶ **Finally two Community Actions focused on responsibility-sharing mechanisms** through:
 - **relocation** of 91 persons (set target as per the application documents) to release the pressure on Malta;
 - **resettlement** of 26 refugees fleeing the situation in Libya and facing precarious humanitarian conditions.

6.1.5.5 Beneficiaries of Community Actions

During the 2011-2013 period, Community Actions were mainly led by international organisations and networks.

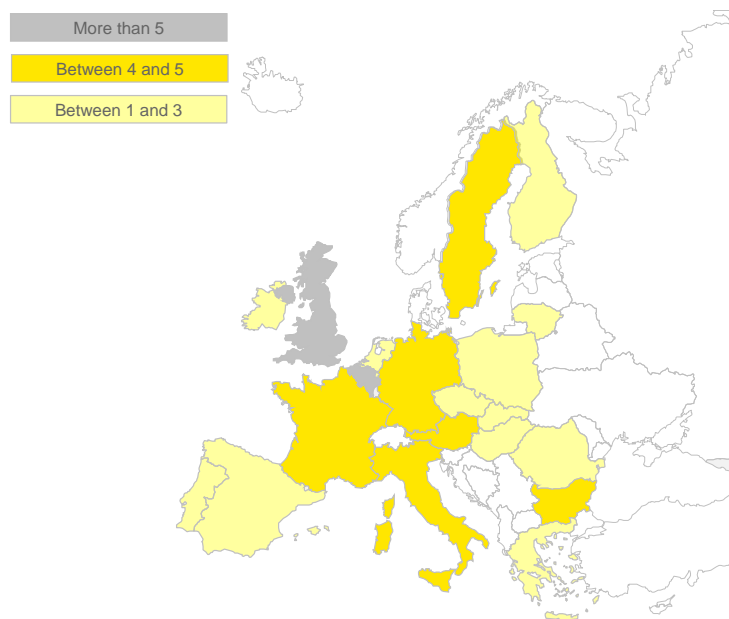
Figure 23: Lead beneficiaries' profiles



Source: Analysis EY on the basis of the Commission data; 15/15 Community Actions

All CAs (except one) involved several partners. CAs' partners were based in 19 Member States. As shown in the figure below, they were mainly concentrated in Belgium and in the United Kingdom (seven projects involving national structures were implemented in each of these countries).

Figure 24: Geographical distribution of partners for 2011 – 2013 Community Actions



Source: EY analysis from Commission database

6.2 Answers to the Evaluation questions

6.2.1 Relevance

(EQ5): To what extent did the ERF objectives correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?

(EQ6): To what extent did the ERF actions correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?

Methodological introduction

The evaluation of the relevance of the ERF aims to assess whether the Fund's objectives, priorities and actions matched the needs and problems faced by the Member States in the field of asylum during the start of the 2011-2013 period to date.

Whilst initially⁴⁷ split into two separate questions focusing respectively on the relevance of the ERF's objectives for the first one (EQ5), and the relevance of the ERF's actions for the second one (EQ6), the ex-post evaluation analyses the relevance criterion in a single chapter, with two sub-sections focusing on:

- *The extent to which the ERF objectives and actions could address past and current needs at EU and MS levels;*
- *The extent to which the strategic approaches applied in the MS, and the use they made of the ERF, were aligned with national policies and actually relevant to existing needs. It is worth mentioning that the scope of the needs was so large compared to the ERF envelope available that the strategic approaches chosen by the MS did not necessarily reflect all of them. They resulted from internal choices made in relation with national policies and other existing interventions (NB: the coherence between the ERF and other interventions is analysed in the coherence chapter).*

The answer to the relevance evaluation question used mixed methods and several data sources:

- *Identification and qualification of existing needs based on documentary review, interviews at EU and national levels as well as on the results from surveys (including the open public consultation);*
- *Needs' coverage analysis and identification of uncovered (or inadequately covered) needs based on ERF objectives and priorities as defined in Council Decision No. 2007/573/EC as well as in the Annex to Council Decision No. 2007/815/EC. The objectives and priorities of the ERF have been analysed and classified in hierarchical order through the reconstruction of the intervention logic during the first stage of the evaluation exercise (see section 3);*
- *Assessment of the adequacy of the Fund's distribution to respond to MS needs based on quantitative analysis and consultation/ interviews conducted (mainly at MS level);*
- *Analysis of national programming process and review of actual multiannual strategies, annual programmes and financial programming in order to assess the relevance of the ERF at a more micro-level and considering implemented processes.*

Main conclusions

- ▶ **The ERF objectives were adequately formulated to cover most existing MS needs in the field of asylum from 2011 to date** with regards to improving national asylum systems: improve reception conditions of asylum seekers, facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of international

⁴⁷ In the Terms of Reference and in the Inception report.

protection, and make asylum procedures fairer and more effective (*but they did not put sufficient emphasis on EU level needs and the need for greater convergence between MS, see finding # 1 below*).

- ▶ The ERF was able to adapt to increasing needs in the MS over the period, especially the need to maintain satisfactory reception conditions despite higher asylum flows and to accelerate the asylum procedures in EU reception countries which have become more urgent over time. In this context **emergency measures were particularly relevant to address emergency situations.**
- ▶ **The diversity of eligible actions was consistent with the general and specific objectives of the ERF as set out in its Decision.**
- ▶ However, the following shortcomings have to be raised regarding the relevance of the ERF 2011-2013:
 - **# 1: The solidarity and harmonisation dimensions could have been better taken into account and incentivised** in the ERF Decision and strategic documents, as well as in the types of actions eligible for ERF funding. The ERF objectives were mainly formulated as an additional “support” to the MS, which is overall relevant, but they did not sufficiently address the need for a “balance” of effort between the MS (only the need to support the MS), and voluntary-based mechanism proved inadequate for targeting EU’s needs in terms of supporting intra-EU transfers (and to a smaller extent EU resettlement policy). **This resulted in an inadequate emphasis on these dimensions in the MS annual programmes and few actions related to relocation and the implementation of the Dublin Directive;**
 - **# 2: ERF annual programmes lacked a strategic view.** They were often replicated from one year to another and rarely went through a large consultation of national stakeholders. In a few MS (not quantified), they were based on previously planned projects rather than on a targeted needs assessments and a clear strategic planning;
 - **# 3: The allocation mechanism to the MS, which was based on historic inflows (previous three years), did not reflect actual and evolving needs of the MS** in the context of the drastic increase in asylum flows in some MS from 2013. Moreover, it did **not take into account the actual needs in terms of convergence** and gap-filling for the implementation of the minimum standards set out in the asylum package directives.

6.2.1.1 Relevance of the ERF objectives and eligible actions

Existing needs intensified over the 2011-2013 period

The establishment of the ERF for the period 2008-2013 was supported by an impact assessment, which defined the main problems⁴⁸ in the field of asylum in Europe. The need for **greater solidarity between MS to share the burden of receiving asylum seekers**, as well as the **need for harmonising asylum systems in line** with the development of the CEAS, emerged as key problems, especially in the context of the CEAS and the implementation of the Asylum package. Given the contextual changes, these needs remained valid during the implementation period of the ERF III. As the situation evolved since 2005, the increase in the number of asylum seekers together with the implementation of the second phase of the CEAS rendered these needs even more significant and urgent. Over the course of the 2011-2013 period, the number of asylum applications increased drastically (see section 3.2), although there was a high level of variation between MS. A priority that emerged from 2013 was thus to support those MS most affected (main borders and/or corridor countries - EE, IT, BG, MT, HU) in order to cope with the substantial resources and capabilities required to handle this influx of asylum seekers and thus increase solidarity and responsibility-sharing between MS.

The views expressed by the MS mostly focused on **each country’s national interests: these needs confirmed the necessity to support the implementation of the common asylum policy and of**

⁴⁸ Although it did not quantify any baseline situation.

common standards as parts of the EU asylum package, but the interviewees rarely put their own national needs into perspective with EU standards and EU-wide needs.

- ▶ Most MS authorities (20) highlighted during the interviews the need for improved reception conditions of asylum seekers, and easier integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Both dimensions were perceived as important, but a few MS put a greater emphasis on reception (EL, HU, FR), or on integration (DE). More specific needs were mentioned, such as the need for psychological and social support (integration and reception), for legal assistance (integration), accommodation, and improved access to the labour market (integration).
- ▶ A few MS mentioned the need for the development of higher standards and for fairer and more effective asylum procedures: CY insisted on the need to reduce the length of asylum procedures, as did CR with regards to the proceeding of asylum requests.
- ▶ The need to raise awareness on the issue of refugees and asylum seekers amongst EU citizens and ensure better acceptance of reception centres by local communities were mentioned by a few MS, such as AT and IT (there is a more specific need in the north of the country where reluctance to integrate refugees is higher than in the south). Although less considered as a key priority in national ERF programming, these are important needs.

The need for exchanges of experience and best practices at EU level was mentioned several times, which involved both national authorities and non-State partners active in the field of asylum to build greater capacity and increase cooperation. In particular, MT identified the need to improve national capabilities through cooperation between MS, and so did LT and IE.

The ERF objectives could have responded to most existing needs. However, the solidarity and harmonisation dimensions could have been more strongly emphasised (through dedicated and clearly formulated objectives) and better incentivised (through dedicated and adapted mechanisms).

In the above mentioned context, the ERF overall remained relevant over the 2011-2013 period. As shown in the table below, the ERF's objectives were largely aligned with existing needs and challenges related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. They particularly insisted on the **need to accompany the development of the CEAS** and implement the principles and measures of the *acquis* in the field of asylum (as mentioned in the general objectives, in Priority 1 and in several specific objectives which covered more or less directly one or several Directives of the *acquis*, especially the reception conditions and asylum procedures objectives). Moreover, the ERF proved able to adapt and react promptly to the specific needs that emerged from the asylum crisis through the utilisation of the Emergency Measures mechanism and by redirecting the CAs' financial envelopes towards specific support to Greece in 2012 and 2013.

However, the need for greater solidarity and responsibility-sharing between MS was not as clearly translated into clear objectives and priorities as could have been expected. Although the 2015 IA stated the need to 'promote a *balance* of efforts between MS in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons' as the general objective of the Fund,⁴⁹ the ERF in Decision No. 573/2007/EC did not put any emphasis on the word 'balance'.

⁴⁹ The general objective was also formulated as follows: 'ensure a balance of efforts between MS regarding their international protection obligations by supporting a common asylum policy based on an equitable sharing of responsibility and financial burden between MS in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons'.

Figure 25: Needs' coverage matrix (comparing needs and ERF objectives from a theoretical perspective)

Existing needs <i>(sources: 2005 ERF IA, documentary review and interviews with national authorities and stakeholders)</i>	Evolution of needs from 2011 to 2013 <i>(sources: 2011 AMIF IA and discussion with national authorities and other stakeholders)</i>	Analysis of needs' coverage by the ERF's objectives (general objectives, priorities and specific objectives, as per the Fund's intervention logic)*
General needs (common to MS and EU level)		
1. High influx of asylum seekers in Europe: need to support MS to cope with the substantial resources and capabilities required from receiving asylum seekers	Increased & priority need With a focus on the MS faced with higher flows and weaker capacity of their asylum system.	Well covered by the ERF's objectives: the need to support and encourage the efforts made by the MS is directly covered by the general objective of the ERF, which shows the great focus of the Fund on providing additional resources and capabilities to the MS.
2. Need for greater solidarity between MS to share the burden of receiving asylum seekers (including the support to the Dublin law)	Increased & priority need, in line with need No. 1.	Partially covered by the ERF's objectives: only one Specific Objective specifically focuses on the need to "provide MS with support services in the event of duly substantiated emergency situation". All other objectives and priorities may contribute to this solidarity principle, but they do not put any emphasis on it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The general objective of the ERF did not mention the need to support a "balance" of efforts between the MS - Priorities do not specifically focus on the solidarity principles (except with regards to responsibility sharing between MS and third countries)
3. Need to harmonise asylum systems and implement common standards developed by the EU	Ongoing need	Well covered by the ERF's objectives: the general objectives specifically mention that the support provided by the ERF has to take account of EU legislation on asylum matters, whilst Priorities 1 and 2 directly focus on the need to "Implement the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis" and "develop reference tools and evaluation methodologies to (...) improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims and to underpin admin structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other MS".
Specific/operational needs (specific to certain MS)		
Improved reception conditions, integration, and asylum procedures	Ongoing need	These needs are taken into account through the harmonisation of asylum systems and the raising of standards. Most specific objectives directly respond to the related challenge.
Greater capacity for partners of asylum	Ongoing need	These needs are taken into account through the support of MS efforts. Priority 2 and most Specific Objectives directly respond to the related challenge.
Raise awareness of EU citizens	Ongoing need	This need is not specifically mentioned in the ERF Objectives and Priorities.

* Legend:

- in green = very good coverage of corresponding need mentioned in the left column

- in orange = partial/ not fully adequate coverage of corresponding need mentioned in the left column

The diversity of eligible actions allowed for adequate coverage of almost all existing needs at EU and MS levels, but proved inadequate for targeting some of the EU's needs in terms of supporting EU resettlement policy and intra-EU transfers

Article 3 of Decision No. 573/2007/EC established a series of 31 eligible actions grouped into five categories related to the ERF's specific objectives (see the architecture of the ERF in section 3): (i) reception conditions and asylum procedures; (ii) integration; (iii) enhancement of MS' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies; (iv) resettlement; and (v) transfer of persons

(relocation). Article 4 also listed eight types of eligible actions specifically related to Community Actions.

All Member States stated that the priorities and the types of eligible actions that could be funded by the ERF were adapted to their identified needs in the field of asylum. As confirmed by all MS authorities, eligible actions were regarded as sufficiently broad to accommodate for virtually all existing needs and to adapt to new and emerging challenges. All actions could bring an opportunity for MSs to build their capacity and provide solutions on their national territories. A theoretical analysis of these actions shows, however, that no specific emphasis was placed on actions aimed at increasing the awareness of EU citizens (apart from 'information to local communities'). The non-eligibility of EU citizens as target groups for ERF actions has also been raised as a problem by a few Responsibilities Authorities and/or national stakeholders (as in AT, for instance).

The additional incentive provided to MS for resettlement operations was a particularly relevant measure to accelerate participation in voluntary responsibility sharing (see sections 6.1.4.2 and 6.2.2.1). It allowed MS to address some of the EU's challenges more effectively. Such incentives could have been more widely used to encourage other actions and measures that were not adequately addressed, such as Priority 2 measures and relocation. Indeed, the Fund's voluntary-based mechanism was only partially relevant. Having a list of eligible actions proved inadequate for targeting some of the EU's needs in terms of responsibility sharing mechanisms effectively, particularly the wider development of relocation partnerships/agreements within the EU.

Overall the ERF envelope was considered insufficient to adequately support a number of increasingly important actions. In the meantime, the allocation mechanism did not properly reflect the relative needs of the different MS

Whilst all MS stated that the general and specific objectives of the ERF were adapted to their identified needs in the field of asylum, a recurring criticism of the ERF, made by national stakeholders (at least national authorities from AT, HR, EL, IT and LT) was the limited amount of resources, especially in light of the increasing number of asylum-seekers in Europe from 2013 onwards (end of the eligibility period). This issue was particularly raised by the MS faced with high inflows of asylum seekers and refugees.

Moreover, the financial allocation mechanism did not fully support the principle of solidarity in practice. Budget allocated to the Member States was only partially aligned with the number of asylum seekers and refugees entering each country.

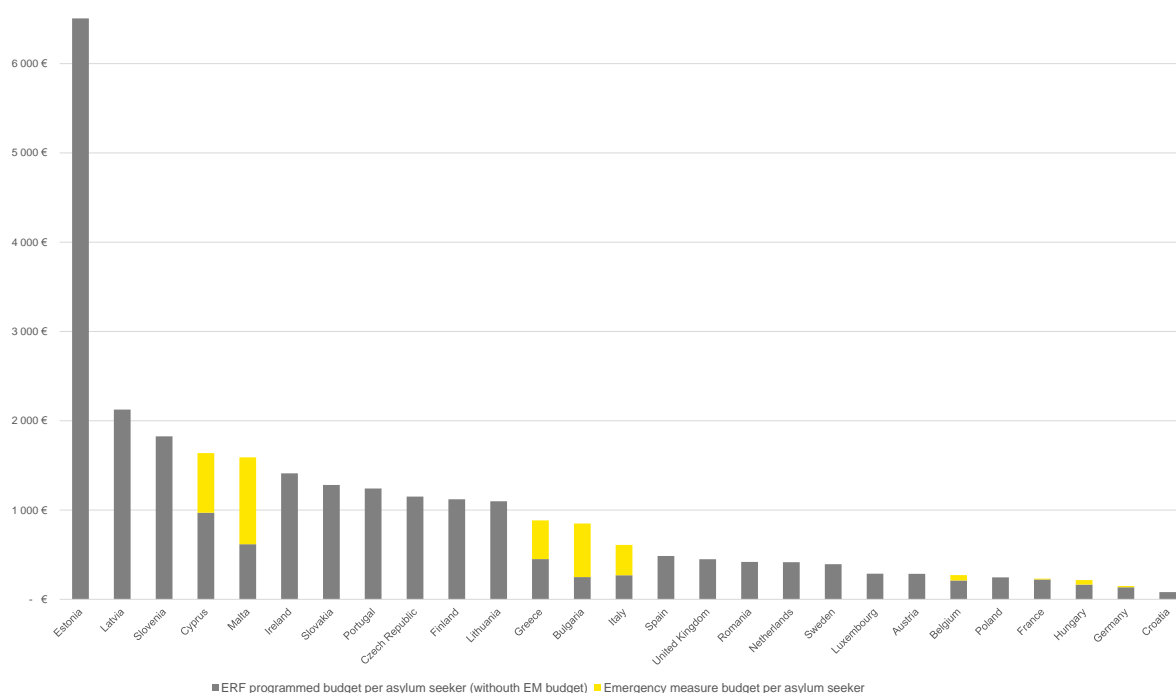
The annual distribution of ERF resources for eligible action in the MS is described in article 13 of Decision No. 573/2007/EC. The mechanism is summarised as follows:

- ▶ Each Member State shall receive a fixed amount of €300,000 from the Fund's annual allocation. This amount shall be raised to €500,000 per annum for Member States which acceded to the European Union from 1 May 2004;
- ▶ The remainder of the available annual resources shall be broken down between the Member States as follows: (a) 30% in proportion to the number of persons having the refugee status and/or enjoying a form of subsidiary protection and/or being resettled, admitted over the previous three years; (b) 70% in proportion to the number of persons who had applied for international protection or had been enjoying temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2011/55/EC over the previous three years.

The analysis of the average programmed budget dedicated to one asylum seeker between 2011 and 2013 reveals **discrepancies between Member States**, as shown in the graph below. Member States that received, relatively speaking and in absolute terms, the smallest number of refugees tended to have nonetheless higher levels of programmed budget.

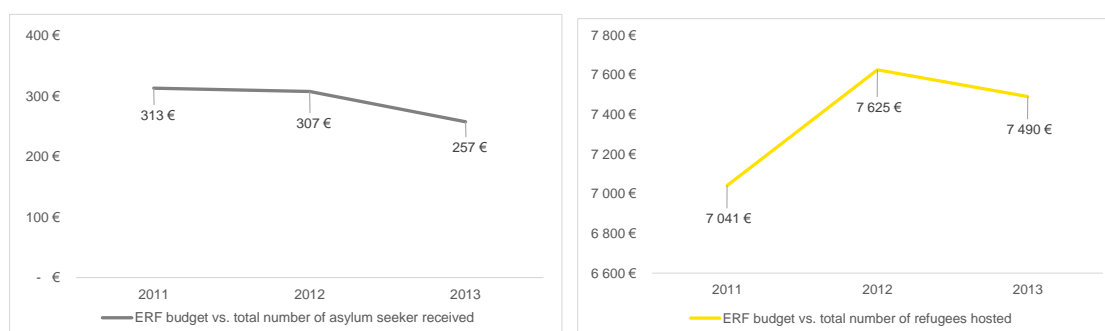
This shortcoming could be mitigated, to a certain extent, by the emergency measures' envelope which allowed the support of MS that experienced particular pressure (and as shown in the graph below). Having such an emergency system proved highly relevant to address key priority needs and ensure effective solidarity amongst the EU MS. In addition, the creation of the EASO in 2011 allowed the coverage of some gaps that could not be sufficiently addressed by the ERF in terms of practical cooperation between MS.

Figure 26 : Average ERF programmed budget per asylum seeker received in each Member State across 2011-2013



The graphs above present the evolution over the period under evaluation of the average budget programmed per category of target group. The general decrease of the average budget programmed per asylum seeker, compared with the increase in the number of asylum seekers and the increasing needs, confirm the abovementioned observations.

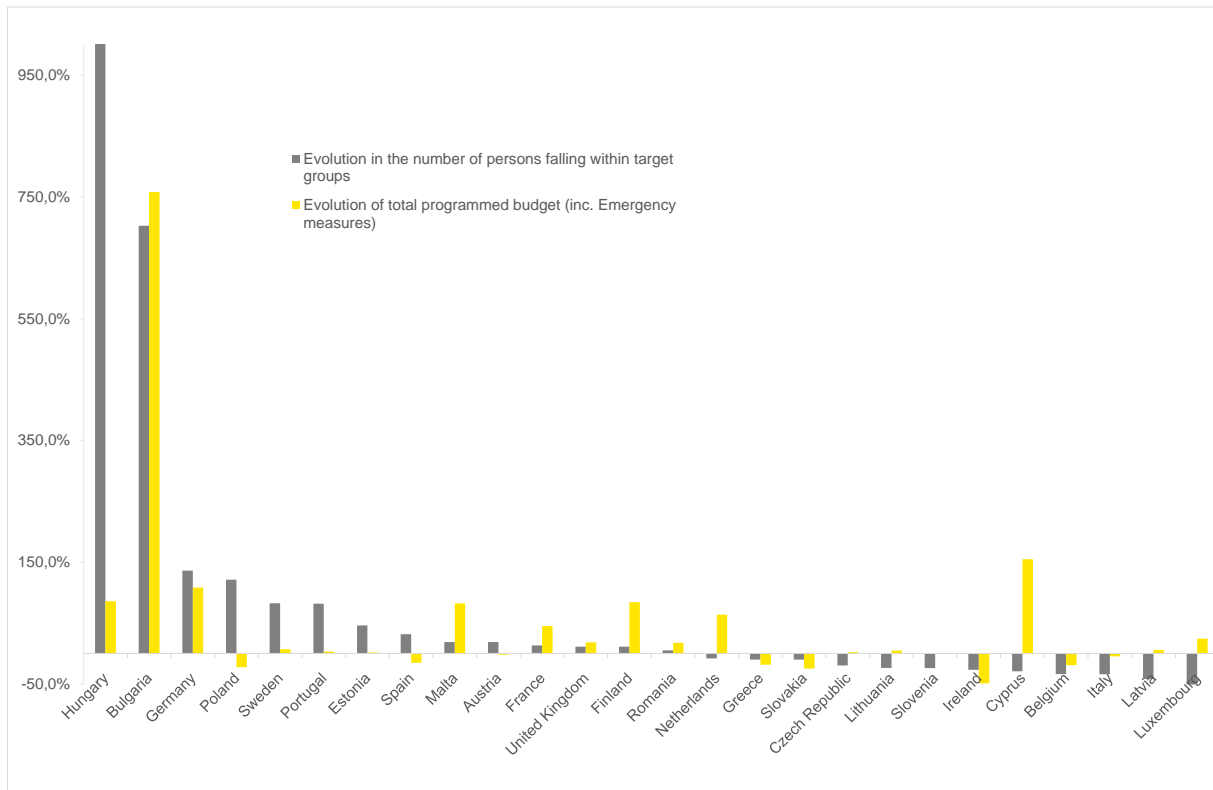
Figure 27 : Evolution of the total programmed budget per asylum seeker received (left) and per refugee hosted (right)



Source: Eurostat and SFC 2007

The graphs below detail the evolution, between 2011 and 2013, of the number of people falling within the scope of the target groups (asylum seekers and refugees) and national ERF programmed budgets, and reveals the inadequacy of the allocation system to fully reflect the dynamic nature of needs:

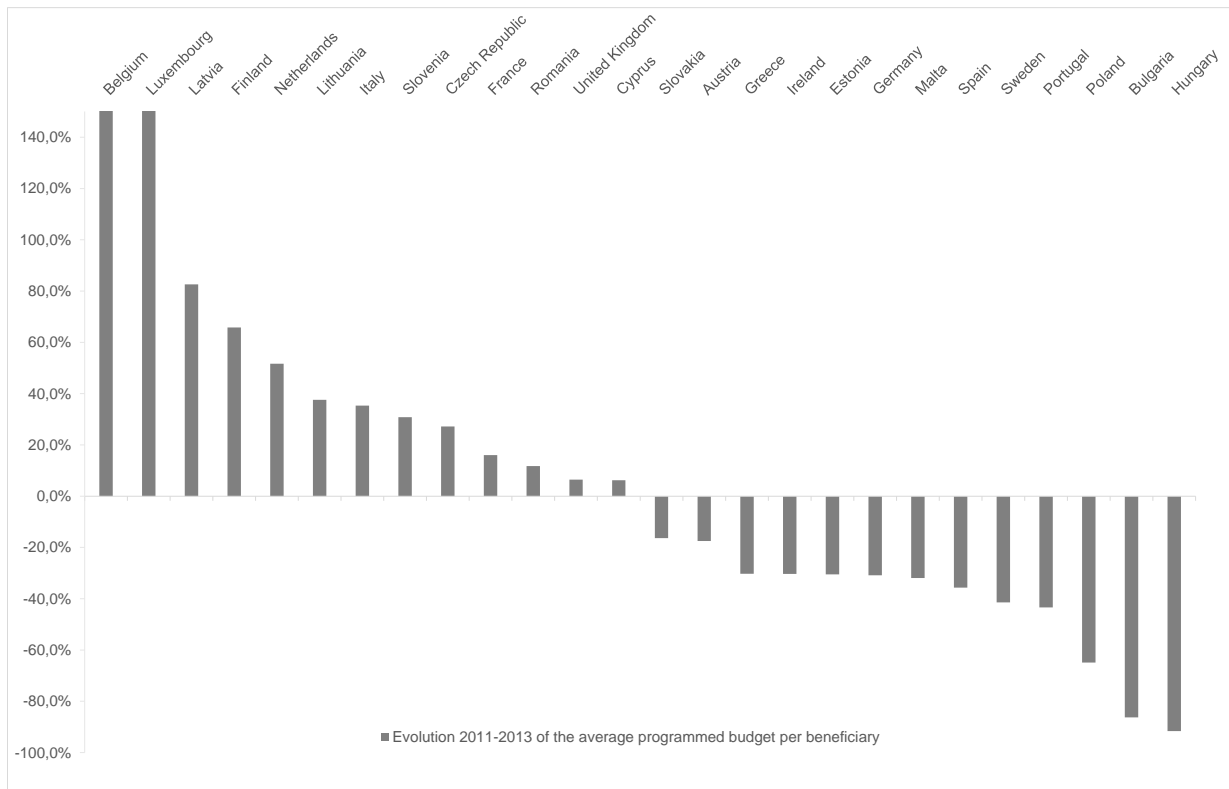
Figure 28 : Comparative evolution of programmed budgets and the number of received persons falling within target groups (asylum seekers and refugees)⁵⁰ per Member State (2011-2013)



As shown above, a significant number of Member States (notably HU, BG, DE, PL, PT, SE, EE, RO, ES, MT and AT) faced an important and unpredictable increase in the number of asylum seekers and refugees to be accommodated, which was not matched by an increase in the programmed budget from the ERF; some MS (HU, PL, ES, MT) even saw a decrease (from 2011 to 2013) in their programmed budget. These discrepancies reflect the inability of the ERF allocation system to fully take into account the reality of the dynamic situation in Europe, which had the effect of diminishing the responsibility-sharing dimension of the ERF.

⁵⁰ Source : Eurostat.

Figure 29 : Comparative evolution of the number of received asylum seekers and refugees and programmed budget per final beneficiary per Member State (2011-2013)



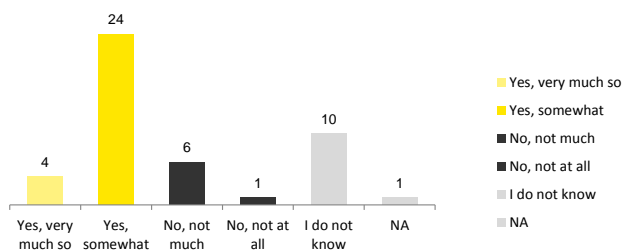
6.2.1.2 Relevance of CAs and APs' strategic approaches

Overall, the ERF multiannual and annual programmes are considered somewhat aligned with immediate national needs of the MS

As mentioned, all interviewees (Responsible Authorities, as well as national beneficiaries) agreed that the ERF's objectives and eligible actions were, generally speaking, relevant to their needs and consistent with the challenges faced in terms of asylum (except with regards to the inadequate allocation mechanism). Member States have all found an interest in the three priorities defined in Decision 815/2007/EC and have been able to align the national multiannual and annual programmes with their national policies. Some Member States, including in particular CY and EE, even clearly stated that the ERF priorities and objectives were used as a basis to design their own priorities and objectives.

Figure 30: Perception of national beneficiaries on the relevance of the ERF

“Do you think the ERF responded to your country's needs in the field of asylum between 2011 and 2013?”



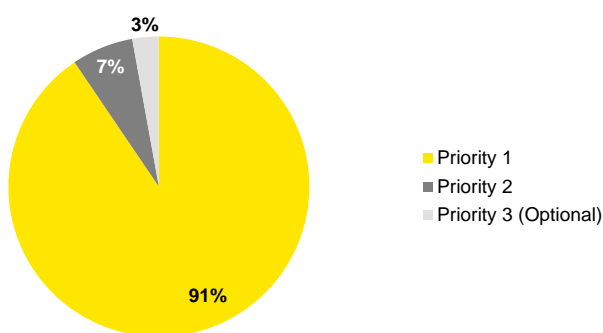
Source: EY survey; 46/55 answers

Source: EY e-survey analysis, question 27

Programmes mainly focused on Priority 1,⁵¹ thus revealing less interest in practical cooperation and responsibility-sharing actions despite existing needs in these fields

The detailed distribution of programmed budget across priorities per Member State shows that most MS favoured **Priority 1** in their national programming: 91% of the ERF programmed amount (excluding emergency measures, technical assistance and resettlement operations) was allocated to Priority 1 projects (and 90% of the total number of projects were Priority 1). Under this Priority, the increased Community co-financing for projects addressing specific priorities (75% instead of 50%) also demonstrates the relevance of addressing the special needs of vulnerable people, notably unaccompanied minors, as one third of Priority 1 projects took account of these needs and this part increased over time.

Figure 31 : Total programmed budget distribution among Priorities across 2011-2013



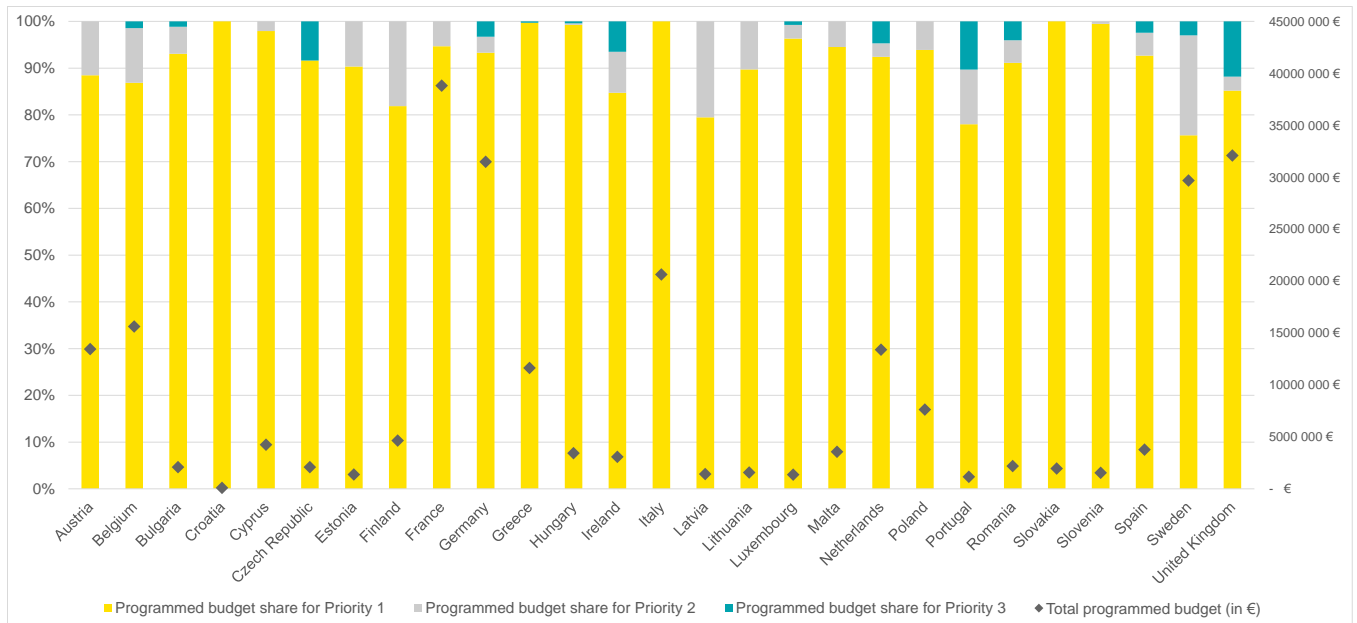
- ▶ The focus on Priority 1 is mostly aligned with national needs:
 - For a number of Member States, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe (SI, EE, HU, LT, CZ, SK, HR, CY, BG), eligible actions in Priority 1 were most often used to increase reception capacities and improve reception conditions, as there had previously been little developed capacity due to the relatively low numbers of asylum-seekers;
 - In other MS, which have already developed significant reception capacity (such as FR, DE,

⁵¹ Priority 1 corresponds to 'implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives' (Decision No. 2007/815/EC) - See section 3.

BE, AT or SE), the focus on Priority 1 is explained by the high number of final beneficiaries to target and the necessity to cover their (more or less basic) needs. In AT and DE for example, the ERF allowed to reveal the need to include integration in their action's scope, and to focus on gaps to be covered, such as psychological and psychotherapeutic care, legal counselling and improvement of the management of procedures.

- ▶ **Only five MS had recourse to Priority 2** in a significant manner, that is, exceeding 10% of total ERF programming:⁵² LV (18.5%), SE (12.6%), AT (11%), BE (10.7%) and PT (10.2%).
- ▶ **The UK is the only MS which dedicated more than 10% of its budget to implement projects under Priority 3.** In the UK, six out of the 14 implemented projects were dedicated to enhancing responsibility-sharing between Member States and third countries through resettlement. With the resettlement of refugees who require humanitarian protection being a key priority for the UK, the ERF was used for maintaining, expanding and generally developing the resettlement programme and for acting as a model and market leader for emerging resettlement States across Europe. Priority 3 of the ERF turned out to be fully relevant for the UK. Although several other MS used Priority 3 measures (SE, RO, NL, CZ and PT⁵³), no MS declared conducting operations related to relocation despite the apparent need for increased cooperation between MS.

Figure 32 : Member States' distribution of programmed budget across priorities over 2011-2013

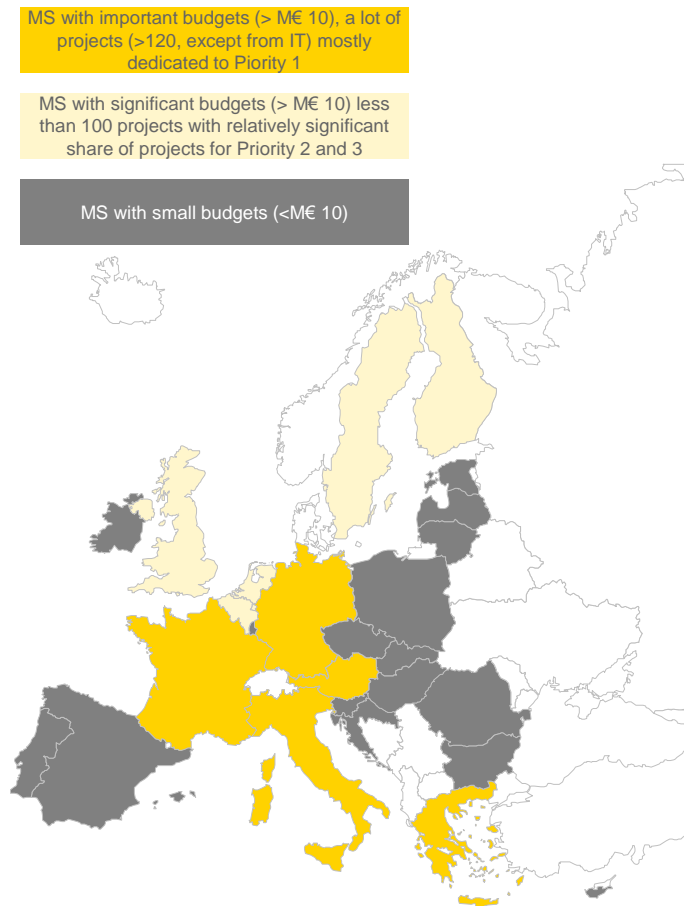


Based on these elements, a typology of Member States can be drawn: mature Member States, receiving the majority of asylum seekers within the EU between 2011 and 2013 were allocated significant budgets (> €10 million) and formed two categories: FR, DE, AT, IT and EL focused almost exclusively on the implementation of projects under Priority 1, while SE, UK, FI, NL and BE were more willing to diversify their allocated budgets among priorities, leaving a greater share to Priorities 2 and 3. The remaining Member States would have smaller programmed budgets implemented mixed approaches.

⁵² Considered ERF programming exclude emergency measures.

⁵³ Budget was engaged for Priority 3 according to SFC 2007 database, although PT did not declared any projects under Priority 3 in its national evaluation report.

Figure 33: Typology of Member States based on programmed budgets and use of the ERF funding



Even though Priorities 2 and 3 were relevant to help MS progress in the development of the CEAS, it appeared difficult for Responsible Authorities to make them a priority.

On the one hand, the diverse eligible actions (from reception conditions to integration) directly cover most concrete needs of people seeking or benefiting from international protection. **Several interviews at EC and national level (EC and MS) confirmed, however, that the focus on Priority 1 in EU-15 MS might also result from other factors than actual *priority* needs** (but still existing needs), namely, the fact that Priority 1 projects (mostly launched through the awarding body method) are easier to implement than Priority 2 projects (mostly launched through the executing body method). In this sense, the priority was determined by the method.

The ERF is broad and highly adaptable, but national programming sometimes lacked a strategic view and did not always take sufficient account of the partnership principle

All Responsible Authorities explained during interviews that the priorities as defined in Council Decision 815/2007 are flexible and wide enough to accommodate Member States' national contexts and policies. While this statement represents a positive characteristic of the ERF with regards to final beneficiaries, it also reveals the wide leeway left to Member States to design their multi-annual and annual programmes, and the discretion they retain to remain vague in their ERF implementation strategy. MT and NL, for instance, both declared during the interview that the ERF's objectives were general enough for them to design a flexible multi-annual programme, leaving leeway to **anticipate any change in migration flows and/or in their country's needs.**

However, in some MS such as FR and most EU-15 MS, the ERF was not implemented **following a clear strategic approach** that would evolve with Member States' needs: the ERF was rather used as an 'extra' source of financing, and a tendency to replicate the same approach from year to year could be observed. For example the work programmes of France, Belgium of the United Kingdom are very similar regarding the objectives and the type of actions supported from year to year with entire parts maintained without any modifications between the programmes. Some Member States as the Netherlands also provided work programmes with very detailed description of the projects (beneficiaries, operational actions) which question the methodology of the redaction of the programme. Indeed the programme may have been developed to be in line with the preselected projects rather than to answer the national needs and to allow the selection of the most relevant projects. The absence of evolution in the distribution of projects across Priorities from year to year and, in particular, since the ERF 2008-2010 (as was illustrated by the analysis of national evaluation reports, and specifically the question relative to the potential changes in the distribution in Priorities), also reflects this lack of strategic approach. Indeed, the continuous focus on Priority 1, targeting immediate needs and the neglect of Priority 2 and 3 by Member States, even if corresponding actions would have longer-term impacts, do not lend themselves to the conclusion that Member States considered the ERF as a strategic tool that would enable them to design and implement a more structured strategy.

The definition of ERF multiannual and annual programmes **was not based on regular consultation and needs assessments in the MS** (in IE and FR, for instance). Despite being aware of national priorities (especially on the occasion of project calls), in the countries visited, civil society had not been as widely consulted as it was when defining the AMIF multiannual strategy.

6.2.2 Effectiveness

(EQ1): To what extent did the ERF actions contribute to the achievement of the objectives defined in Articles 2 and 3 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC and to the priorities defined by the Strategic guidelines (Decision No. 2007/815/EC)?

Methodological introduction

The effectiveness question assesses the extent to which actions and projects financed by the ERF during the 2011-2013 period contributed to the achievement of the objectives and priorities set out in ERF Regulations (these objectives and priorities have been further analysed in the ERF intervention logic presented in section 3.3; As defined in this section, outputs relate to the operational objectives, results to the specific objectives, and impact to the general objectives).

The effectiveness analysis used mixed-methods based on a triangulation of the various data sources, mainly the national evaluation reports, the surveys and the interviews performed at the EU and national level. It followed a bottom-up approach, from project to EU level, and from implementation level to impacts:

- *Section 6.2.2.1 analyses the implementation of annual programmes in terms of financial execution and the quality of their monitoring systems (section 6.2.2.1). Based on available data, documentary analyses and interviews, it assesses the extent to which the MS succeeded in programming and monitoring their financial envelope;*
- *Section 6.2.2.2 analyses the effectiveness of the ERF with regard to outputs and results achieved at national and EU level. The analysis of outputs and results has been divided into five sub-questions, each of which focuses on one of the specific objective defined in article 3 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC: (i) Effectiveness with regard to reception conditions; (ii) Effectiveness with regard to integration of persons from the ERF target groups whose stay in a particular Member State is of a lasting and stable nature; (iii) Effectiveness with regard to enhancing Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in the light of their obligations under existing and future Community legislation relating to the CEAS, in particular with a view to engaging in practical cooperation activities between Member States; (iv) Effectiveness with regard to resettlement of persons referred to in Article 6(e) (any third-country national or stateless person who is being or has been resettled in a Member State); (v) Effectiveness with regard to transfer of persons falling under international protection.*

For each specific objective, the evaluation draw conclusions based on several analyses and data sources:

- *General figures related to the number of operations and the number of target group persons, overall, and by MS. These figures inform on implemented projects and on the number of asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection that could have been reached thanks to the ERF in the EU and its MS;*
- *Perception expressed by the MS (in national evaluation reports, interviews and surveys' results) on the extent to which the ERF was effective or not;*
- *Types of projects that have been funded to contribute to each objective, through a general overview at the EU level, as well as selected examples from MS. Some success factors and/or failures are presented from a qualitative perspective, and key results are described;*
- *The extent to which set targets have been met.*
- *Section 6.2.2.3 then draws general conclusions related to the overall effectiveness of the ERF and measurement of its impacts at EU and MS levels.*

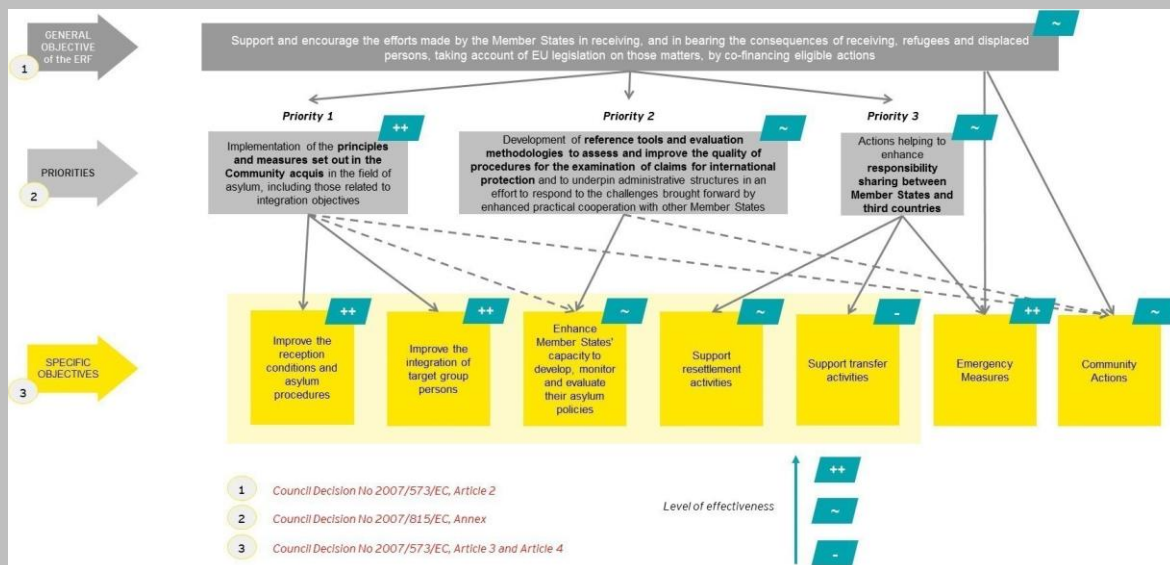
Some limitations have to be considered when reading this section: indicators available on the programmes' implementation mostly relate to the number of projects or operations (output level) and

to the number of final beneficiaries from the target group (asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection) (result level). As presented in section 3.3 and at the beginning of chapter 6, these indicators do not fully reflect the intended objectives of the ERF as they have not been quantified (no targets were defined in the ERF Decision), and observed trends depend more on the asylum flows than on the effectiveness of funded projects.

Main conclusions

- ▶ The ERF **2011-2013** was particularly effective in supporting MS in their efforts to improve their reception and integration policies and infrastructures. It also **was highly effective in supporting the MS faced with emergency situations**. In particular, it contributed to improve the Greek asylum system and supported Italy in its effort to provide temporary accommodation to asylum seekers during the migration crisis.
- ▶ However, the ERF brought less visible results in terms of enhancing MS' capacity to monitor and evaluate their asylum policies and developing transnational practical cooperation through Community actions. The ERF did not contribute much to encourage the MS to engage in relocation and, to a smaller extent, resettlement activities. Although it **provided positive incentive for a few MS to become involved in or to expand their already existing resettlement operations**, these remained very limited in number.

Figure 34: Level of effectiveness of the different objectives, priorities and specific objectives



- ▶ The ERF was the most effective in **MS having acceded to the EU more recently**. In these MS, the ERF brought support to enhance the capacity of national authorities in charge of asylum policies and contributed to the setting up of structured national policies and related infrastructures. In EU-15 MS, the ERF had more limited, but still tangible impacts with regard to the improvement of reception conditions for asylum seekers, as well as the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Although these impacts were minor, local and partial compared to the overall changes obtained through MS policies and national funding, they generated positive consequences for the final beneficiaries through additional services, such as improved legal advice, social assistance, psychological support, or accommodation. It had a positive cumulative effect by enlarging/complementing existing asylum reception systems in some MS (such as FR and IT) and focused on innovative projects, thus participating in the development of more relevant interventions supporting the well-being of refugees issues in some others (such as AT and LU).
- ▶ The following other transversal limits have been raised regarding the effectiveness of the ERF 2011-2013:

- **# 1: The ERF was not fully effective in contributing to the harmonisation of the MS asylum systems and implementation of the CEAS.** It did not sufficiently support cooperation and experience-sharing amongst the MS, as the results of the CAs were not widely disseminated and most ERF projects remained purely national.
- **# 2: the ERF 2011-2013 was not effective in applying the solidarity and responsibility-sharing principle,** despite the helpful role played by the emergency measures. The allocation of funding was not adequate for compensating for the gaps in terms of additional needs. The ERF did not support any relocation measure from the MS (apart from two CAs).
- **# 3 The ERF monitoring and evaluation system was poor and could not allow an effective assessment and follow up** of the performance of the Fund: set indicators were weak, no targets were defined (apart from the number of beneficiaries), and monitoring data were not fully reliable. Effectiveness was mainly measured through indicators that were not directly linked to the objectives to be reached by both programmes and projects.

6.2.2.1 Effectiveness of the ERF implementation

Weaknesses in the ERF monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Neither baseline nor quantified (or at least measurable) targets were established to allow the assessment of the progress made against ERF's objectives. This was the case both at EU level and in the MS. The multiannual programmes 2008-2013 rarely entailed qualitative needs' assessment and relevant indicators to inform on the achievement of set objectives. When existing, indicators mostly related to a number of asylum seekers and refugees to be received and/or integrated, and did not detail qualitative aspects of Priority 1 (how the reception and integration and asylum procedures would be improved?) or expected progress under Priority 2 (what is expected from the development of tools and methodologies and from the improvement of administrative structures?).

Existing indicators and monitoring and evaluation data available on the ERF are weak:

- ▶ **No specific common framework was developed for the evaluation and monitoring of the ERF at the set-up of the Fund for 2008-2013.** The EC's model reports on implementation of the annual programmes as per Commission Decision No. 2008/22/EC did not request any specific quantitative indicators.
- ▶ Requested indicators to be provided by the MS in the national evaluation reports⁵⁴ were not operational to allow adequate monitoring of annual programmes. Output indicators are limited to the number of projects and the 'number of operations', and the result indicators corresponded the number of target persons (asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection); **they do not reflect the expected impact of the ERF in terms of changed experience for the beneficiaries and/or in terms of consequences of the national asylum systems with regard to the implementation of the CEAS.**
- ▶ **Monitoring data are not fully reliable.** The definition of the units to be measured is not clear and it is likely that both RAs and evaluation experts in charge of completing the national evaluation reports did not understand rightly what was expected with regard to the 'number of operations'. Moreover, as mentioned in several evaluation reports, the level of trust in the reported figures was low: they were based on the monitoring data provided by the project beneficiaries, with no monitoring visits and controls to ensure their reliability and homogeneous understanding. Yet monitoring systems at project level were very heterogeneous in terms of quality and types of indicators followed (for instance, the 'number of target persons' could relate to the number of beneficiaries at a certain date, or to the number of new beneficiaries during the different years of recurring projects, or to the cumulative number of beneficiaries during the funding period).

⁵⁴ 2008-2010 and 2011-2013.

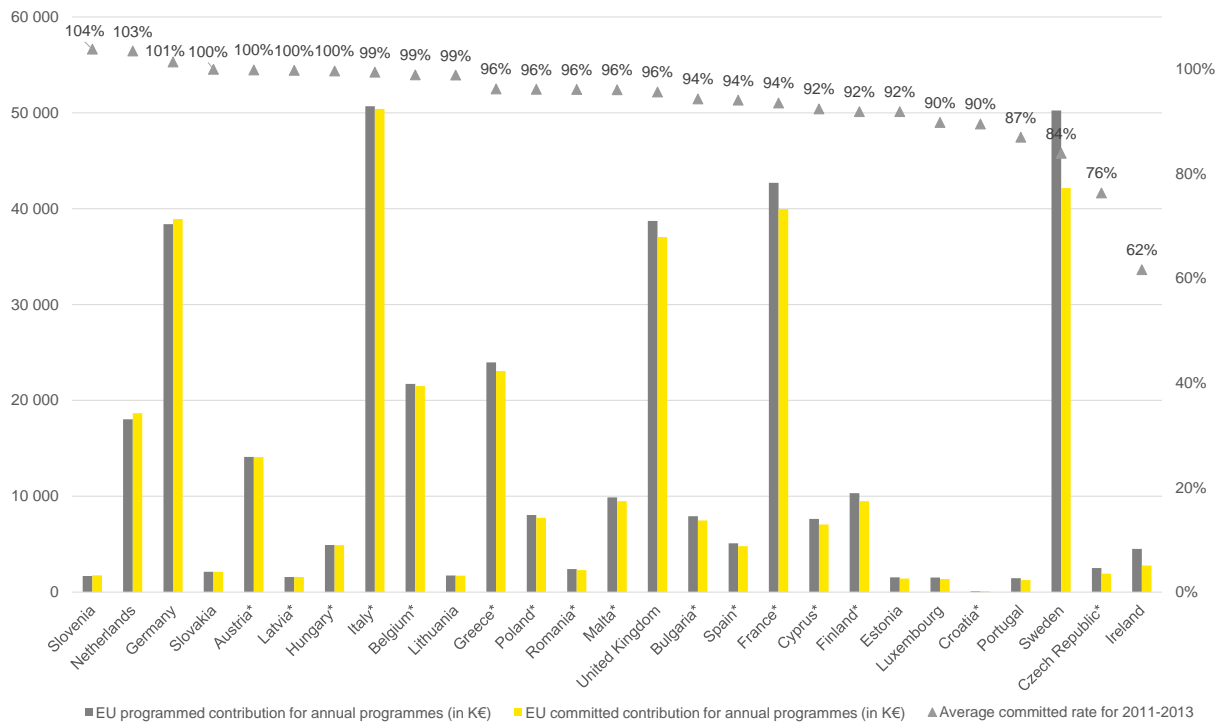
- ▶ MS did not specifically develop any national monitoring and evaluation frameworks until the AMIF. Their selected indicators were generally chosen according to the data available, instead of the needs for following the accomplishment of set objectives. Whilst requirements in terms of monitoring and evaluation arrangements were raised and common European indicators were set up, some MS have defined their own framework that complements the EC's one and better addresses their monitoring needs and reflects their national strategy with regards to the AMIF.
- ▶ **The quality of the national evaluation reports as requested by the EC were generally weak** (see section 5), and their requested formats were not adapted to clearly report on the results of the programmes (accountability perspective) or to support decision-making. At first their imposed architecture did not correspond to the ERF intervention logic as per Decision No. 573/2007/EC, which made their appropriation more difficult for stakeholders. Some questions were not well formulated (for example the efficiency question, 'were resources needed to implement the projects sufficient and available on time?'). The format did not allow sufficient flexibility to include relevant analyses and evidence-based judgements. No recommendations were drawn. To overcome these limitations, some evaluators drafted a separate report for the RA which included useful analyses and conclusions, thus enabling easier decision-making.

Generally speaking, the ERF did not experience major commitment or absorption issues

The ERF global commitment rate amounts to 95%. This overall satisfactory commitment rate shows the Responsible Authorities' capacity to perform effective programming and effectively involve national stakeholders to implement projects. Some Member States committed less than 90% of their annual envelopes, which is the case of LU, HR, PT, SE, BE, CZ and IE.

- ▶ For LU, the 2011 rate was only of 59.9%, which dragged the total commitment rate down for the whole period. This was due to the **lack of interest of national beneficiaries** to respond to the 2011 call for proposals, which focused exclusively on projects that would bring additional services to target groups and complement the State's already existing services. The Responsible Authority understood that this call for proposals was too narrow, and integrated housing building in the next ones, which attracted more beneficiaries in the subsequent years.
- ▶ In CZ, the commitment rate was low year after year, and the Responsible Authority explained it by the difficulties it encountered finding national beneficiaries that would be able to complete the European funding for the implementation of projects. Indeed, organisations working in the Czech field of asylum declared they were not structured enough to be able to find complementary funding or to auto-finance the gap left by the ERF to implement their projects. The State did not cover this financing gap either.

Figure 35: Average ERF 2011-2013 commitment rate per Member State



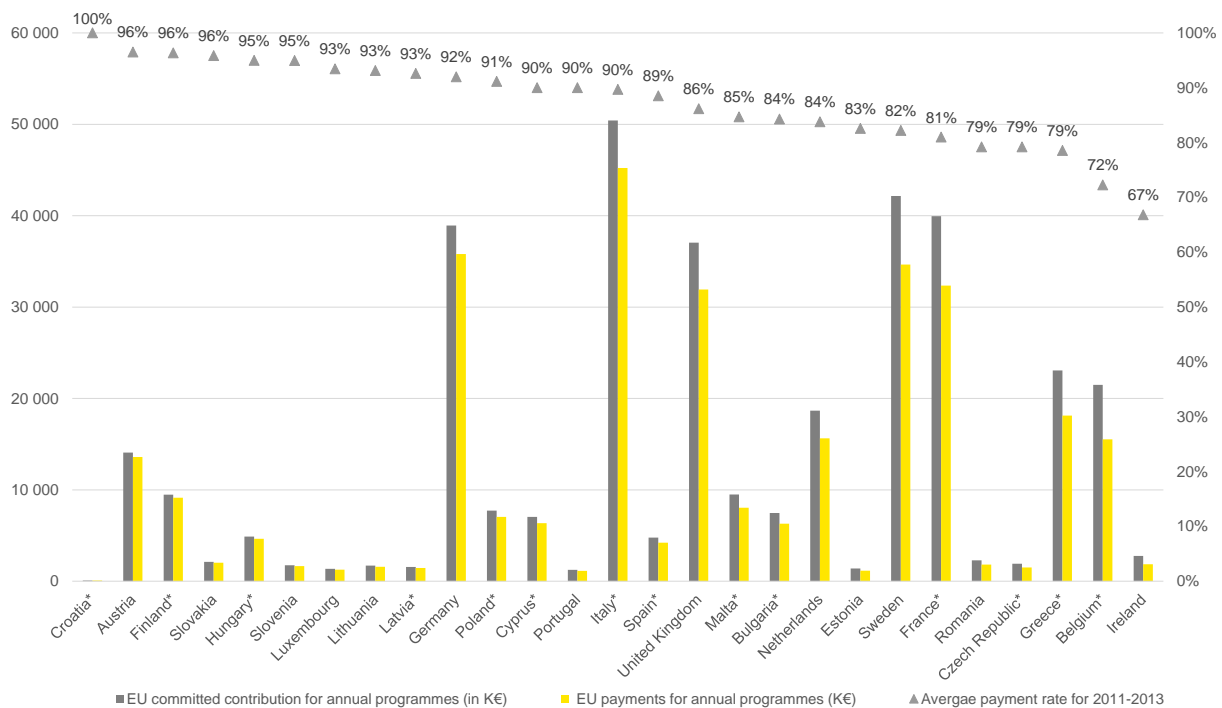
*Non closed programmes

Source: EY based on SFC 2007

The average absorption rate of the ERF (across Member States and covering 2011-2013 period) is of 81.4% (NB: 19 programmes are still open at the date of the evaluation, which means that this rate might change until their final closure).

Delays in payment are nevertheless observed in EL and LV, whose 2011 and 2012 budgets are both still open. SK, FR, BE and DE also opened programmes in 2011 or 2012. However, these countries did not detail reasons for the observed delays. National beneficiaries in BG explained that the national selection process for annual projects was long and could postpone the beginning (and consequently the closing) of projects. The fact that the ERF is based on annual projects might also explain delays and low absorption rates, since it is required for beneficiaries to apply every year, and to go through the selection and monitoring process every year, multiplying the administrative burden. In order to bypass this difficulty and be more efficient, some Member States, such as HU and DE, have favoured projects with multi-annual strategy and which consequently benefit from the ERF several years in a row. As a result, HU and DE absorption rates are high (95% and 93%, respectively).

Figure 36: Average ERF 2011-2013 payment rate per Member State



*Non closed programmes

Source: EY based on SFC 2007

6.2.2.2 Effectiveness of the ERF at project level

At project level, according to available data, quantitative targets were exceeded due to the rise in asylum flows. In the meantime, the heterogeneous quality of activities and services provided led to diverse results and benefits for target beneficiaries

In all the MS, most projects co-financed by the ERF annual programmes were considered successful and achieved, or even over-achieved in relation to their expected targets in terms of outputs and results (number of projects/operations, and number of target persons for Priority 1).

In quantitative terms, all MS achieved their targets except Luxembourg and the UK. However, as stated in the UK evaluation report, although just over half of output targets were met or exceeded (53%, or 86 out of 163), focusing only on the overarching participant target, a total of 9,473 refugees were supported (107% of the target). In the case of Luxembourg, only three projects did not meet their objectives, which did not question the overall effectiveness. Generally speaking, the number of final beneficiaries is not sufficient to inform about the actual effectiveness of ERF projects. The main reason for over-achievement of set targets was the asylum crisis, since more persons needed to be received and assisted. However, this positive change does not reflect the quality of services.

ERF projects' impacts sometimes went beyond their set objectives: 12 Member States observed positive spill-over effects. This was the case with five MS which specifically raised **effects that benefitted a wider target audience than the primary target group**. In AT, for instance, some actions benefitted the general population and EU citizens. In FR some projects focussed on unaccompanied minors benefitted this specific group, not all of whom were necessarily asylum-seekers. In CY, the involvement of volunteers to implement projects led to greater awareness-raising amongst the hosting population. Finally, ERF-funded projects could have inspired the development of new activities linked to the original projects. In IE, an interpreter training programme inspired the development of similar trainings for sign language.

From a qualitative perspective, it is hard to conclude on the effectiveness of ERF projects given their diversity and the different approaches of MS. Generally speaking, ERF projects in MS having acceded

to the EU since 2004 (such as HU, BG) aimed to fill in gaps and address basic and emergency needs of asylum seekers (mainly accommodation), whereas some EU-15 MS (LU, AT, and FR to a certain extent) focused on improving the well-being of the target persons through various courses, psychological support, and so forth. The analysis of success stories and of projects analysed within case studies allowed the identification of some best. With regard to integration, for example, these include recognition of refugees' competencies and skills, common activities with local communities and awareness-raising of EU citizens, and self-entrepreneurship of refugees.

The ERF's effectiveness was also influenced by:

- ▶ **Activities aimed to enhance the participation of target persons.** For instance, high participation was observed in Finland with regard to education and language courses. Similarly, it was encouraged through media coverage in Spain;
- ▶ **Professionalism and quality of partnerships:** Networking and close collaboration (between NGOs, national authorities/offices and other stakeholders) were key success factors to maximise the effectiveness and increase and sustain the impact of implemented actions. As highlighted in the German evaluation report, previous practical experience facilitated coordination and synergies between different projects. In the visited MS, collaboration appeared rather effective in ensuring the smooth implementation of Priority 1 projects, ensuring synergies and avoiding duplication between national projects.

In contrast, some internal and external difficulties had negative influence on the projects' implementation:

- ▶ **Project management:** Difficulties in project management can be related to different factors. The most commonly mentioned, by AT, DE, FI, IT and PL, is related to the lack of capacity of ERF beneficiaries to foresee the delays in receiving the funding, and the long pre-financing period. For AT, BE, BG and FI, major difficulties were related to the eligibility profiles. In Belgium, for measures addressing the integration of minors and underage refugees, the number of identified minors was smaller than expected.
- ▶ **Target groups themselves:** For seven Member States (BG, FI, FR, LU, PT, RO, UK), lack of motivation or interest in the projects within target group persons (mainly asylum seekers) constituted a major problem. In the case of Finland for instance, the mobilisation of single parents, and in particular single mothers, presented a particular challenge. As described in the Finnish report, 'They didn't seem to have the motivation to participate in project operations such as training events or social interactions'. The report added that it the main reason for this did not become clear.
- ▶ **Economic crisis:** Finally, the under-achievement is also linked to external context for eight Member States. Between 2011 and 2013, the asylum crisis was accompanied by the economic crisis. The reduction of public resources and the rise of unemployment and discrimination reduced the probability for refugees to enter the labour and housing markets in the mid-term (as was raised in MS such as AT, BE, CY, ES, IT, RO, UK). National budget cuts prevented the implementation of some projects in Cyprus and the re-prioritisation of project activities led to the cancellation of 11 planned workshops in the UK.

6.2.2.3 Effectiveness of the ERF at results level: achievements with regard to each specific objective

6.2.2.3.1 Effectiveness with regard to reception conditions

The improvement of reception conditions of persons having applied for international protection (action 1 under Priority 1) was one of the main focus of the ERF contribution in the 27 MS (together with integration measures). The ERF supported almost 1,000 operations in this field, which were 47% of the total number of operations co-financed by the ERF in the MS from 2011 to 2013, and it reached

more than 662,000 persons in total.⁵⁵ With more than 1,000,000 new asylum seekers having entered the 27 MS from 2011 to 2013, it can be estimated that the ERF reached almost **two thirds of asylum seekers**. France, Greece, Germany, and Hungary were the MS having the higher number of beneficiaries in absolute data.

Whilst all MS (except the UK) implemented at least one project in this field, 10 of them (BG, HR, CY, EL, IE, LV, MT, PT, SK and SI) put a specific emphasis it with more than 50% of their total number of operations.

In the national evaluation reports, all MS having clearly assessed the ERF contribution in this area stated that the ERF brought strong support in improving the reception conditions of asylum seekers or other persons applying for international protection.

As presented in section 6.1.4, this support was mainly dedicated to providing social assistance, counselling and legal aid and language/interpretation assistance (38% of operations), as well as bringing medical and psychological care (19%) and providing accommodation infrastructures and services (15%).

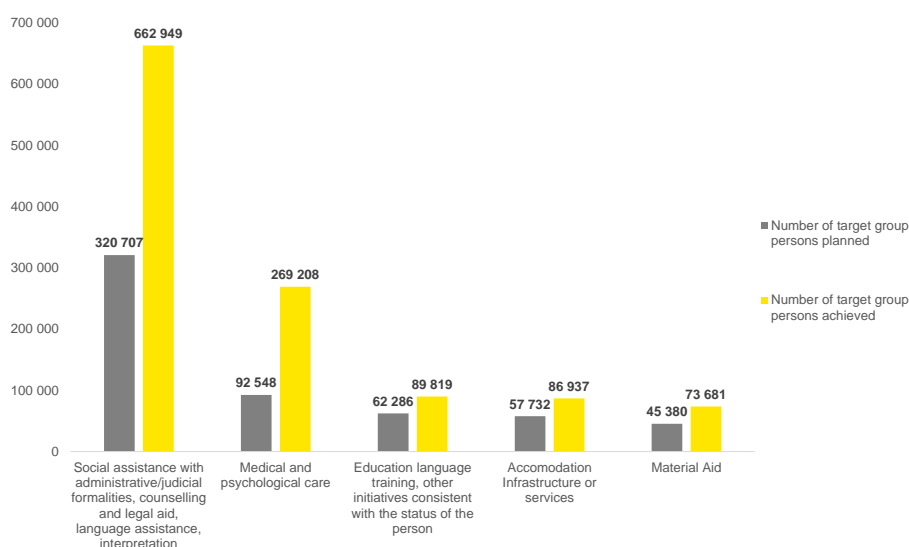
Results and impacts obtained from these actions were diverse.

- ▶ **Measures aiming at providing social assistance and improving and fastening legal procedures** were frequently quoted by national evaluators as well as interviewed stakeholders as successful actions under Priority 1. Having reached the highest number of beneficiaries (around 662,000), they directly benefit asylum seekers through social, administrative and legal counselling. They also included the enhancement of the administrative capacity of institutions, cooperation amongst authorities and development of IT systems, reduction of the backlog (EL) and fastening of procedures with the handling of additional files (5,004 in BE).
- ▶ **Medical and psychological care reached approximately 269,000 persons in total during the 2011-2013 period, including** 144,997 in Greece. 34,933 beneficiaries were assisted in Poland, 853 in Finland and 13,353 in Sweden. This medical and psychological support represented a significant supplement to the health insurance systems and addressed the specific needs of asylum seekers, with a particular focus on vulnerable persons.
- ▶ **Measures related to accommodation and to the enlargement or creation of reception centres** had particularly strong qualitative and visible impacts. With a total number of 87,000 beneficiaries Europe-wide, they more specifically allowed:
 - The creation or enlargement of reception centers in eight MS: In Greece, the ERF financed all but one accommodation centers. In Lithuania, the Red Cross Society opened the Refugee Day Centre in the second largest city of the country. In Romania, the ERF financed the setting up of an emergency reception center for vulnerable groups. The increase of the accommodation capacity was ensured in Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus and France. Finally, a reception center was financed and was opened in 2015 in Luxembourg;
 - The modernisation of accommodation centers: Renovation works were undertaken in all centres, as well as health and security services provided a healthier and safer place where residents could stay in (MT). The ERF allowed also increasing safety within the accommodation center and for transportation of the asylum seekers from one center to another (RO);
 - Provision of material aid: Direct assistance services (legal, medical and language assistance) were provided to asylum seekers both inside and outside the reception center in Romania.

For each topic, expected target outputs and results were generally achieved or over-achieved.

⁵⁵ Source: annual evaluation reports. This figure corresponds to the number of beneficiaries of social assistance with administrative/ judicial formalities, counseling and legal aid, language assistance and interpretation (topic 1 as per definition presented in section 6.1.1), which is the topic having reached the highest number of persons.

Figure 37: Number of persons planned and reached (achieved targets) by the different topics under Action 1⁵⁶



The number of final beneficiaries of Action 1 planned to be supported by the ERF was exceeded for each topic (global achievement rates amounted to 140%). Except Poland, Luxembourg and Portugal (which did not meet their set targets on topic 1), all MS overreached their set targets by 10% to 120%, and even up to 270% in the case of Italy.

The high rates of achievement are mainly explained by the sharp increase in asylum flows during the 2011-2013 period. Since projects received a higher number of persons, indicators related to the number of persons assisted were positively impacted. However, this factor could also be perceived as a constraint. First, with regards to project management, it made it harder to plan effectively and allocate adequate effort. Second, it might have negatively impacted qualitative indicators. This is, for example, the case of projects aiming at providing social counselling in Austria, where the number of asylum seekers was higher than expected: while the number of persons assisted increased, the number of hours of assistance delivered per person could not always be offered as planned. This was (is) also the case in the French “reception platforms”: some decided to restrict the access to higher added-value services (psychological support for instance) in order to be able to provide minimum service to the highest number of asylum seekers (first reception, orientation, and domiciliation).

Highlights from 8 MS regarding the effectiveness of reception measures

MS	Quantitative outputs & results	Qualitative results
AT	57 operations	Focus on legal advice, social assistance, psychological care and improved integration in the country through diverse projects including an awareness-raising dimension. Rather innovative and successful projects.
FR	185 operations	Focus on financing a network of “reception platforms” managed by NGOs that complement the national system of CADAs. ⁵⁷ Provided services varied from one platform to another, but comply with minimum standards and are generally of good quality. In addition, the ERF supported a few other and

⁵⁶ Source: national evaluation reports, chapter 4. The number of persons reached by the topic ‘Information to local communities, as well as training for the staff thereof, who will be interacting with those received in the host country’ was not registered in the evaluation report.

⁵⁷ Centres d’accueil des demandeurs d’asile

		more innovative projects that focus on vulnerable people.
HU	26 operations	Focus on the improvement of the day-to-day life of asylum seekers (social counselling, leisure and educational activities, support regarding asylum procedure), mainly in reception centres, and staff training.
IT	NA	Focus on information of the asylum procedure, legal assistance, language training and accommodation.
BG	34 operations	Focus on the increase of the capacity of accommodation (4,770 new places) and improvement of living conditions. The MS also developed social mediation to provide refugees with legal assistance and help with asylum procedures.
BE	17 operations	Focus on accommodation through the increase of the capacity of reception centres and the provision of help to find accommodation. Information, education and help desk on asylum procedures were also provided. Rather successful projects which answered basic needs, but some difficulties with accommodation support
SE	35 operations	Focus on accommodation support, with special attention to minors, health and psychological care, training activities and sharing of experience through the organisations. Rather successful projects partly due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers. However some organisations were unable to face the demand and fail to meet their targets
UK	0 operations	The UK considered that its reception conditions were sufficiently well developed and did not undertake actions in this field.

6.2.2.3.2 Effectiveness with regard to integration

The improvement of integration of persons being granted with a refugee status or enjoying a form of subsidiary protection (action 2 under priority 1) was the second main focus of the ERF contribution in the 27 MS. The ERF supported 904 operations in this field, 42% of all operations co-financed by the ERF in the MS from 2011 to 2013, which reached more than 95,000 persons in total⁵⁸ (to be compared with 73,000 new asylum applications accepted during 2011-2013. France, Greece, Germany, and Hungary were the MS having the higher number of beneficiaries in absolute data.

In national evaluation reports, the ERF contribution to changes and improvements in the field of integration was mostly positively assessed. Moreover, Austria quantified that 40% of the estimated 55,000 refugees benefited from integration actions.

'Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation' as well as 'Education language training and other initiatives consistent with the status of the person' were the main topics considered by the MS in terms of number of operations. With only 12% of the total number of operations, actions enabling recipients to adapt to the society of the MS and to promote meaningful contact and dialogue with the receiving society and participation in civil and cultural life supported a higher number of persons (approximately 79,000).

Positive concrete results were made possible by these projects in several MS:

- ▶ According to the national evaluation reports, social counseling was implemented in 21 MS in support of the integration of over 95,000 persons. Those measures assisted the largest number of people in Poland (19,276 final beneficiaries), France (19,418) and Austria (16,129 final beneficiaries). Positive outcomes were also highlighted during the interviews. According to the responsible authority in Ireland, cultural dialogue, language training, and information services helped people to navigate the state system (IE). The Cultrain pilot project was implemented since 2012 by the IOM in Austria; it developed 62 trainings to 582 participants from 2012 to 2016 and responded to the specific needs of the young population through adapted methods such as sport, cooking and cultural events which were publicised through a

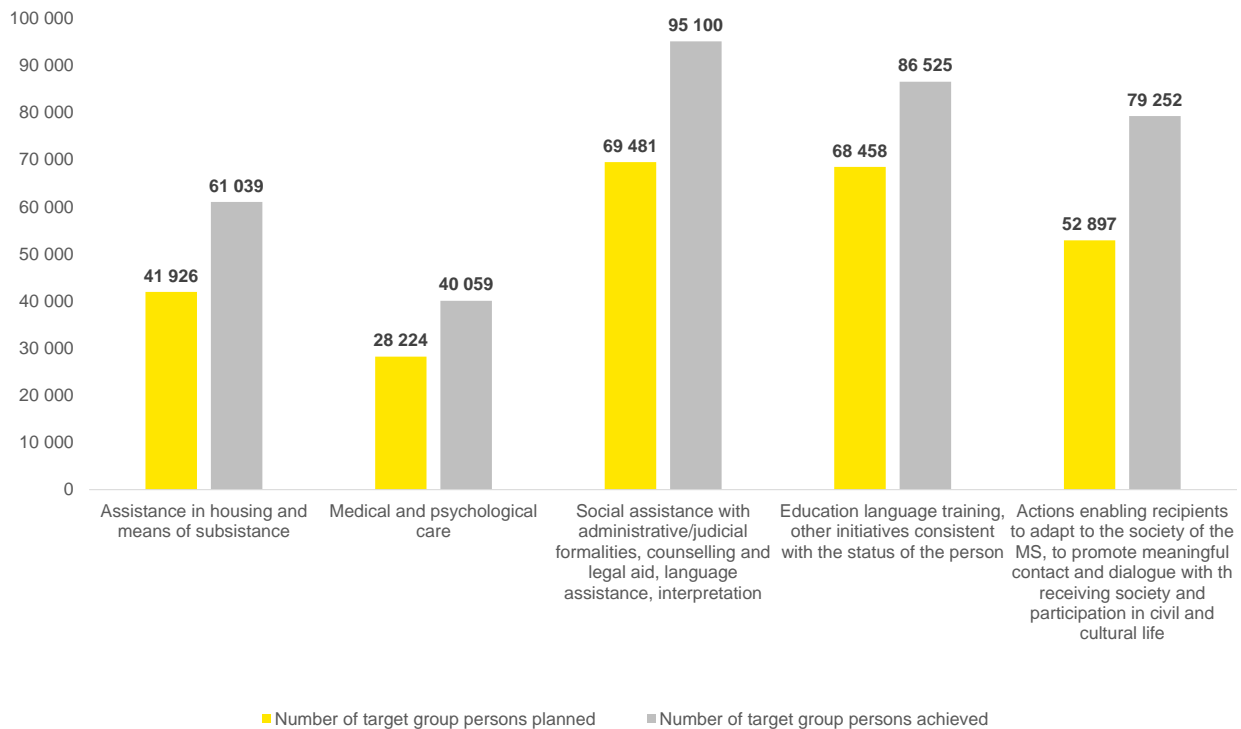
⁵⁸ This figure corresponds to the number of beneficiaries of education, language training and other initiatives consistent with the status of the person which is the topic having reached the highest number of persons.

Facebook page liked by around 560 people. Participating in those trainings reduced insecurities that might occur from the meeting of two cultures.

- ▶ Accommodation projects benefited more than 61,000 persons and their impact was very positive considering the difficulty to enter the housing market (AT, DE, LV, NL, SK). In Austria only, 5,000 accommodation places were arranged or provided, and housing became easier over time, once contractors overcame their apprehensions about working with refugees.
- ▶ In the same vein, projects aiming at informing the local population contributed to making the debate more objective (AT) and developed the dialogue with the civil society (HU).
- ▶ One Community Action aimed at facilitating integration in the 2011-2013 period: the Community Action HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2264 aimed at developing a UNHCR-developed on-line integration evaluation tool, containing refugee integration data, in order to exchange information and increase awareness, particularly in the areas of housing, education and employment. According to the project evaluation report, objectives were achieved and the project published useful data.

The number of final beneficiaries of Action 2 planned to be supported by the ERF was exceeded under each topic (global achievement rates amounted to 138%). With the exception of Finland, Poland, Luxembourg and the UK, all MS reached their targets.

Figure 38: Number of persons planned and reached by the different topics under Action 2



As with reception projects, the increase in the number of asylum seekers accounted for these results. The qualitative dimensions of projects, however, were also key to ensure the actual impact of ERF interventions, and to fill in the gaps and overcome obstacles that the target group faces to successfully integrate into MS' societies.

Several MS pointed out specific **obstacles linked to the external social and economic environment**, underlining the difficulty faced by refugees to enter the housing market (NL) and more commonly the labour market (AT, DE, LV, PT, SK). In this context, integration measures were particularly relevant and useful, even though they could not always meet their expected results and could not achieve a complete coverage of targeted persons needing some support. Some difficulties might have appeared in some cases: one MS, for instance, stated that it was not possible 'either to

learn one specific language or to complete specific training within one year and with a very limited number of course hours’.

Moreover, long term effects of those measures are hard to quantify and monitor due to the absence of statistics and solid data, as noted by several MS (DE, IE, AT, PT, RO, SE, SK). There is therefore a need to collect supplementary qualitative indicators in order to elaborate a veridical overview of the benefits.

Highlights from 8 MS regarding the effectiveness of integration measures

MS	Quantitative outputs & results	Qualitative results
AT	141 operations	Focus on supporting the integration through different projects: accommodation only or social and professional support. Rather innovative and successful projects that have a clear added-value.
FR	243 operations	Focus on supporting the integration through two dimensions: employment and/or accommodation. Innovative (and sometimes “pilot”) projects that are always relevant, although not always efficient and/or sustainable.
HU	48 operations	Focus on vocational and language training and accommodation support. Rather successful projects despite the lack of support at national level which avoid the full achievement of the planned objectives.
IT	NA	Focus on the test of models of integration, especially for vulnerable groups, for the housing and employment support. Successful and innovative projects in achieving the planned objectives but the impacts are limited and not durable.
BG	18 operations	Focus on the healthcare, psychological assistance, especially for vulnerable persons, and language training. Fully relevant in the context of a lack of public support, but the effectiveness decrease because of the tendency of refugees to leave the country.
BE	42 operations	Focus on the facilitation of the access to public services and psychological help, housing support, education and social integration in local communities. Specific attention was given to vulnerable people. Rather innovative projects, fully relevant, rather effective especially for vulnerable people.
SE	23 operations	Focus on the support of a platform for migration and health, training and educational activities, and accommodation support. Rather innovative projects with variable success.
UK	13 operations	Focus on assistance with housing (especially for vulnerable people), medical and psychological care, and social assistance. A specific project was provided in collaboration with Italy to facilitate the sensitive removal and care of unaccompanied children and families under the Dublin arrangements. Rather successful and innovative projects (pilot case for the collaboration with Italy not fully effective but served as a model).

6.2.2.3.3 Effectiveness with regard to enhancing Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies

Compared to Priority 1, relatively fewer operations were implemented within MS annual programmes to develop methodologies and procedures and to enhance practical cooperation (207 operations, which are 10% of total number operations). This is linked to the reduced focus given by the MS to Priority 2 which represented only 7% of total programming on average in 21 MS.

The focus was given to improving the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures (103 operations), evaluating asylum policies and procedures (40 operations), and collection/ sharing COI (32 operations).

The table below provides some examples of impacts of measures implemented for Priority 2: measures related to Development of standards and tools in domains other than Country of Origin Information were the ones most frequently mentioned.

Type of measures with an impact in Priority 2	Number of MS having reported an impact	MS having reported an impact
Development of standards and tools in other domains than COI	12	AT, BG, CY, DE, EE, FR, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SI
Trainings and seminars	9	AT, BG, CY, DE, FR, IE, LV, MT, PL
Collect and share of quality improved Country of Origin Information	8	AT, BG, FI, FR, IE, RO, SE, UK
Comparative research and studies	6	DE, FR, LT, NL, PL, SE

The impact of ERF projects in the development of standards and reference tools in domains other than the COI consisted in the production of new methodologies (DE, IT, LT, LU, NL, SI) and the monitoring and accelerating of procedures (MT, RO, PT). Those measures reinforced:

- ▶ **The capacity of Member States to evaluate their asylum policies and create new methodologies.** Amongst Member States having assessed a strong impact of the ERF in this area, Lithuania developed a new methodology for working with the most vulnerable asylum seekers and replaced individual practices. In the same country, the ERF financed a study to assess the level of EU asylum law transposition into the national law, to analyse the common errors encountered during the procedures, and to develop practical recommendations;
- ▶ **The capacity of Member States to align to their obligations under existing legislation.** Two Member States focused on the modernisation of EURODAC: a time-saving investment. Transferring the collected fingerprints to the Central Unit became possible (FR) or faster (EE). In detail, the project aimed at modernising the EURODAC system and implemented by the DPGSI, helped France to adapt with regard to the Dublin II regulations. As registered in the project's final report, 51,379 sets of fingerprints have been registered in 2013 and the project helped improving the productivity and stability of the national asylum system. In Germany, the harmonisation of European asylum procedures was supported through the translation into German of the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC) developed by the European Commission. In Slovenia, uniformity of practice was made possible through the establishment of a registry of case law in the field of procedures for granting international protection. Faster procedures were ensured as decision makers and institutions could have access to all cases from 2007 onwards contained in the registry;
- ▶ **The capacity and skills of employees through seminars and trainings.** The impacts of seminars and trainings were described in terms of **final beneficiaries and content** in the national evaluation reports. The variety of public for trainings was widened: officials (BG), interpreters (BE) and decision-makers (DE), and officers from legal courts (RO). Seminars were organised to draft the new Asylum Law in LV and to discuss on the evolution of procedures and the identification of best solutions in RO;
- ▶ **The improvement of the access, share and quality of information and measures aiming at developing evaluations and methods.** Four Member States implemented Country of Origin Information (COI) measures (AT, FI, FR, LT). In the case of LT, the ERF contributed to the translation of COI information into several languages and to its publication in a website. Access to information was also improved thanks to the establishment of new portals. In Austria, the ACCORD national project implemented by the Red Cross published a 'COI portal'⁵⁹ with information of 164 countries and developed research and training, addressed to all potential user groups. In France, a web system helped modernising the OFPRA documentary software on the

⁵⁹ <http://www.ecoi.net>

Country of Origin and testing its compatibility with the EU Common portal sponsored by the European COI Sponsorship (ECS) project;

- ▶ **The cooperation with other Member States.** Community Actions contributed to cooperation between Member States, although the responsibility for some of the Community Actions had been transferred to EASO as from 2010. When asked to suggest the main success factors in an online survey addressed to CAs beneficiaries, five out of 10 respondents outlined their contribution in enhancing MS cooperation. In spite of their limited number and reduced geographic coverage, several actions brought concrete results. For example, the MedCoi Community Action developed by the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium, shared a COI medical database whose sustainability is still ensured. Globally, according to the online survey to CA beneficiaries, 10 persons out of 13 respondents believe that the CA they implemented contributed to increasing MS cooperation through the development of tools to a large or very large extent. For the respondents, the biggest influence was obtained by providing recommendations towards a harmonised approach and by encouraging new forms of cooperation. National projects addressing this Priority also achieved their objectives. In Finland, the ERF support to the Tellus Country-of-origin database contributed (partially) to opening the COI portal of the EASO to all Member States. The portal is run by EASO.

Despite several positive examples, the overall impact that could have resulted from the ERF in terms of practical cooperation and tools/methodologies developed was not exploited sufficiently.

- ▶ According to all interviews, high and unpredicted inflows encouraged the majority of Member States to focus on operational activities that could immediately and directly support the final beneficiaries in the short term, which meant that they were unable to follow through on strategic developments with a long-term perspective.
- ▶ According to all interviews, there was not sufficient Member States cooperation to effectively contribute to the development of future legislation and developments with regard to the CEAS. National projects and Community Actions were perceived as a potentially strong but insufficiently exploited tool for cooperation and methodological advances. Four Member States (ES, IE, LT, LU) look forward to participating in an increased number of workshops and to exchanging best practices with other Member States in all sectors of asylum policies. Finally, Finland took the initiative to organise several meetings with other Member States in order to exchange best practices and discuss ERF issues. This shows that there is a will to increase Member States' cooperation and exchange of best practices.
- ▶ With particular regard to Community Actions, two reasons explain their diminished effectiveness. On the one hand, many national stakeholders are not aware of their existence. For example, when national projects' beneficiaries were asked in an online survey if they knew of any other projects financed by the ERF at the EU level, 31 out of 55 respondents answered negatively. On the other hand, beneficiaries that applied for the CAs claimed that the funding is relatively low if compared to the high level of competition and the investment in the organisation of projects.

Highlights from 8 MS regarding the effectiveness of the development of tools and improvement of the quality of asylum procedure measures

MS	Quantitative outputs & results	Qualitative results
AT	19 operations	Focus on the development of tools, the provision of reports and database to collect information, legal counselling training activities. Rather successful projects.
FR	16 operations	Focus on the development of EURODAC system to adapt with regard to Dublin II regulations and development of more specific projects such as the improvement of the quality of interviews of refugees. Effective and with long term impacts.
HU	9 operations	No action was implemented in this area because it was not considered a priority by Hungary.
IT	NA	Italy did not implement actions in this area.
BG	10 operations	Focus on the training of public servants, the exchange of best practices and the development of tools.

		⇒ High impact on raising the awareness of public servants and building capacity.
BE	16 operations	Focus on the analysis of the implementation of European Directives and the establishment of a computer database for the reception of asylum seekers. ⇒ Successful activities.
SE	16 operations	Focus on the development of country of origin information and the evaluation or development of policy and procedures relating to asylum reception. ⇒ Successful projects. However, the impacts depend on the capacity of the organisations to face the increase in asylum seekers and implement the results of these projects.
UK	3 operations	Focus on the consolidation and expansion of the medical country of origin database. ⇒ Very successful project which allow faster decision making and improve EU co-operation in this area.

6.2.2.3.4 Effectiveness with regard to resettlement of persons referred to in Article 6(e)

The ERF was overall effective with regard to resettlement:

- ▶ The number of resettled persons increased over time. As shown under section 6.1.2.2, 12 Member States (BE, CZ, DE, FR, FI, ES, HU, IE, NL, SE, PT, UK) organised operations of resettlement related to the fixed amount set out in article 13(3) of the ERF decision which allowed the resettlement of 9,058 people between 2011 and 2013 (2,463 in 2011, 2,786 in 2012 and 3,809 in 2013). This number doubled compared to the previous 2008-2010 period (4,378 persons were resettled from 2008 to 2010). In addition to this, seven MS (BE, BG, HU, NL, RO, SE and UK) implemented projects in the field of resettlement (Priority 3 projects): some projects aimed at preparing resettlement and consisted in actions prior to actual resettlement (in BE, BG, HU, NL, RO, SE and UK) and others aimed at the establishment and development of resettlement programmes (in BE, NL, RO, SE and UK). This increase can be partly explained by Decision 281/2012/EU, revising Decision 573/2007/EC, which increased the fixed amount from €4,000 to €6,000 per resettled person for those Member States which receive the fixed amount for resettlement from the Fund for the first time, and to €5,000 per resettled person for those Member States which have already received the fixed amount for resettlement from the Fund once in the course of the previous years of the Fund's operation. In particular, the United Kingdom and Finland underlined in their national evaluation reports a positive impact of this decision on the resettlement, with an increase in the number of persons resettled.
- ▶ Four new MS got involved in resettlement operations, compared to the 2008 baseline situation (as established in the 2009 impact assessment on resettlement): Belgium, Spain, Hungary and Germany.
- ▶ Out of the 12 MS which organised operations of resettlement with the support of the ERF fixed amount, four exclusively used the ERF to implement resettlement operations. For nine Member States out of these 12, the fixed amount set out in article 13(3) of ERF decision was used to resettle more than half of the total resettled persons between 2011 and 2013. For Member States with very high numbers of resettled persons (SE, UK, FI), the ERF contribution and incentive thus appeared significant.

Table 10: Share of persons resettled thanks to the ERF fixed amount in the total number of persons resettled between 2011 and 2013, per Member State

Member State	Share of persons resettled thanks to ERF contribution
Belgium	100,0%
Germany	100,0%
Hungary	100,0%
Portugal	100,0%
Sweden	81,0%
United Kingdom	66,0%
Ireland	64,0%
Finland	62,0%
France	55,0%
Netherlands	37,0%
Spain	29,0%
Czech Republic	13,6%

Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

- ▶ With regard to operations funded under Priority 3, the national evaluation reports draw rather positive conclusions. The ERF funded projects had two main impacts in the area of resettlement:
 - ▶ Reception and integration of the resettled group (CZ, FI, FR, NL, PT, RO): Romania reported a strong contribution in this area. The national quota of 40 people was accomplished 100% through ERF resources. France assessed a medium impact of the ERF contribution in this area, because it complemented previously existing measures. However, it allowed help to be extended to a further 500 people;
 - ▶ Improvement of procedures and programmes (BE, DE, NL, PT): Projects aiming at improving procedures and programmes had different outputs. For example, Germany developed a new database that could be deployed to develop future resettlement procedures. According to the interviews, the ERF in Portugal was mainly used in support of the National Resettlement Programme, in collaboration with the UNHCR. This programme ensured the management of the national reception system, the reception of people through national protection and the information of public opinion through awareness campaigns.

However, although the ERF served as a good incentive for some MS to engage in resettlement operations (for example, BE and HU) or to continue and increase their previous programmes (for example UK and FI), the focus put on resettlement remained too marginal at the EU level. Most MS still have not implement any projects (AT, CY, EE, EL, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SI, SK), and only one CA was specifically aimed at helping Belgium resettle and take care of the early integration of 26 refugees fleeing the situation in Libya under precarious conditions. In addition, FR, CZ and DE were three MS that decreased the number of resettled persons thanks to the ERF compared to 2008-2010. FR underlined that UNHCR-assisted departures did not fall into the categories defined by the ERF regulation.

Highlights from 8 MS regarding the effectiveness of the resettlement measures

MS	Quantitative outputs & results	Qualitative results
AT	0 operations	Austria did not participate in this activity
FR	0 operations	Focus on the support of the French resettlement strategy (139 persons resettled through Article 13(3) of Decision 573/2007/EC, representing 55% of persons resettled through the funding of the ERF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Good help of the funding to complete the overall strategy but difficult articulation between the criteria of the ERF and the criteria of the Ministry of Interior regarding target group.

HU	2 operations	Resettlement of 10 persons with an increase in their number over years. ⇒ Innovative action for the MS which tend to increase the number of persons resettled each year but with a government limitation of 10 persons per year.
IT	NA	Italy did not implement actions in this area.
BG	1 operation	Focus on the participation in two seminars. Resettlement actions were planned but were not achieved due to 'internal political factors'. ⇒ Limited effectiveness due to the lack of actions during the period but prepare the reception of 40 resettled refugees in the coming months through AMIF.
BE	2 operations	Reception and accommodation of 100 persons in about 50 municipalities (Priority 3). ⇒ Very effective with high positive impact on persons resettled and important increase in the experience in this field.
SE	4 operations	Focus on the preparation of resettlement activity through the development of methodologies and tools. Successful projects in meeting the objectives, however they did not have direct connection with the target group.
UK	6 operations	Focus on the implementation of the Gateway Protection Programme (collaboration between UK RA, UNHCR and IOM) conducted to the resettlement of 750 refugees per year. Successful projects and UK is considered as an example of resettlement activities in the EU.

6.2.2.3.5 Effectiveness with regards to transfer of persons falling under international protection

The ERF focus on transfer was clearly marginal and was not sufficiently developed by Member States. Only one Community Action aimed at supporting relocation. Despite the fact that the main objective was not reached, positive outcomes were observed and benefitted the general relocation framework EU-wide.

- ▶ Technically, the Community Action EUREMA II (HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2122) only partially achieved its planned outputs. While it aimed to relocate 91 persons to release the pressure on Malta, only 14 people were finally relocated. This is mainly explained by contextual factors, such as the dramatic increase of refugees and the fact that the MS participating in the project were essentially "new" MS with small migrant communities and little experience in the field of relocation.
- ▶ However, the project evaluation report underlines that the project was not a failure but instead 'very useful for relocation efforts outside the project'. It was considered to be innovative as a continuation of a previous pilot project and contributed globally to the relocation of 264 persons through bilateral efforts. In fact, positive unexpected results were observed and lessons learnt for the future: following the relocation of six persons, Poland reached family reunification for 23 persons; Romania changed its law to improve relocation in the future; and Lithuania established useful contacts to further develop relocation and trainings. Moreover, the fact that the documentation provided to the relocated persons was not sufficient will be taken into consideration for further developments in the MS.

6.2.2.4 Effectiveness of emergency measures

EQ2: To what extent did the ERF emergency measures contribute to the achievement of the Fund's objectives and priorities?

Methodological approach

This question focuses on the effectiveness of ERF actions related to emergency measures. In order to

answer this question, national evaluation reports in countries in which the EMs took place were firstly analysed and organised. Secondly, this point was raised during all interviews with Responsible Authorities and beneficiaries of national projects and Community Actions. The objective was to understand to what extent emergency measures have reached their objectives in responding to emergent needs, with regard to:

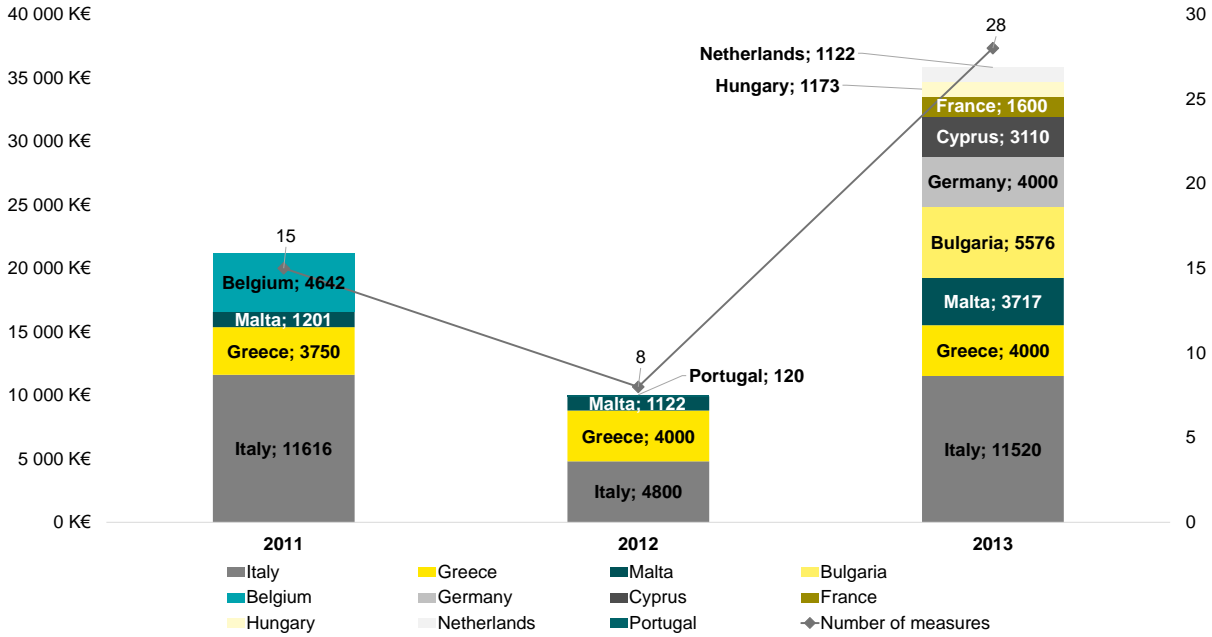
- ▶ Reception and accommodation;
- ▶ Provision of means of subsistence;
- ▶ Medical, psychological or other assistance;
- ▶ Staff and administration costs linked to the emergency;
- ▶ Logistical and transport costs;
- ▶ Legal aid and language assistance;
- ▶ Measures contributing to the rapid identification of persons who may be in need of international protection, and to a fair and efficient processing of asylum applications.

We identified the general level of effectiveness on a national level and on a European level, diagnosing the implementation issues for each of these levels.

The Emergency measures answered specific and urgent needs due to increase in the number of asylum seekers

11 Member States implemented 51 emergency measures between 2011 and 2013 for a programmed budget of €67.1 million (18% of the total programmed budget dedicated to annual programmes).

Figure 39: Distribution of the programmed budget between Member States per year



The implementation of emergency measures did not concern all the Member States but only those facing urgent needs. Indeed, Italy and Greece are the first countries for arrivals in the Mediterranean Sea and required assistance each year of the implementation. Malta and Cyprus are also in the front line for the reception of refugees and especially need emergency measures to complement their small ERF budget (71% of the 2013 Cyprus budget and 76% of the 2013 Malta budget).

The majority of emergency measures were implemented in 2013, distinguished as the beginning of the explosion of the number of asylum seekers in the European Union. France and Germany are the

Member States which registered the highest number of asylum seekers and requested specific help in 2013. Hungary and Bulgaria faced huge increases of refugee arrivals between 2012 and 2013 (8 times more than in 2012 in Hungary, and 5 times in Bulgaria).

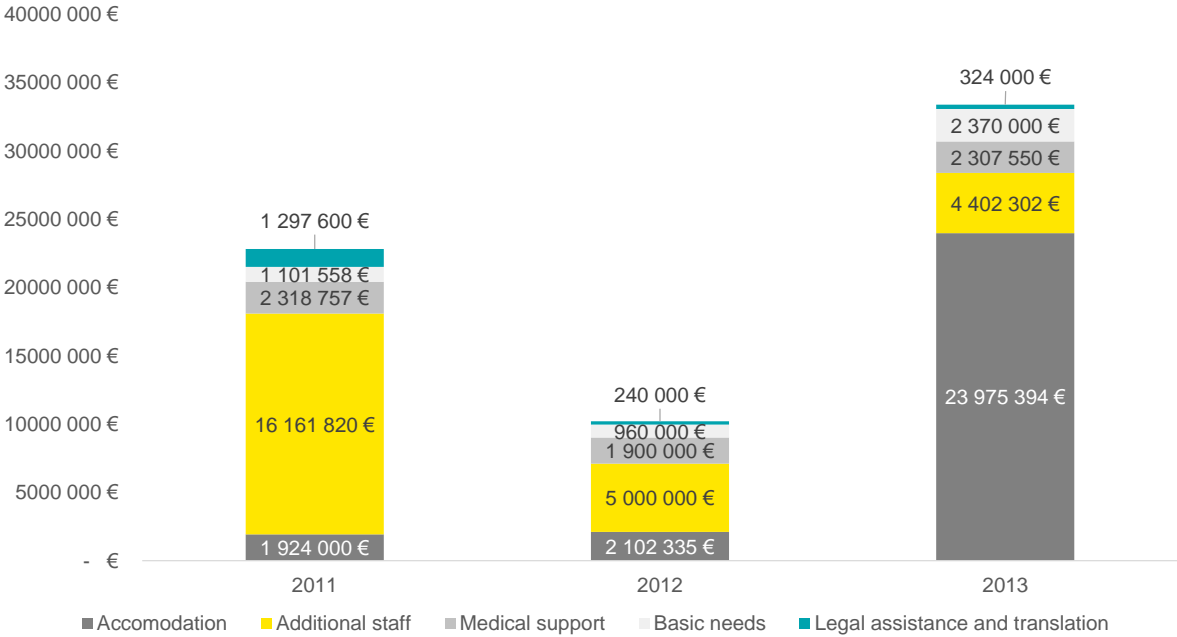
Except for the Netherlands, where, according to Eurostat data, the number of refugees tended to decrease in 2013, the needs for additional urgent help are more relevant in other Member States. All the interviewees, the Responsible Authorities as well as the beneficiaries, upheld the importance of the Emergency Measures to cover needs. They underlined the fact that the situation would have really been worse without this additional help. One interviewee in Bulgaria spoke about “disaster” without the emergency measures.

The main types of activity are also relevant corresponding to the needs of the Member States. The emergency measures focused mainly on:

- ▶ improvement of accommodation capacity, and renovation of reception centres;
- ▶ recruitment of additional staff in the main institutions dealing with reception of refugees and asylum procedures;
- ▶ provision of medical and psychological assistance;
- ▶ provision of basic needs as food or basic services;
- ▶ legal assistance and translation services.

The emergency measures were focused on the recruitment of additional staff in 2011 and 2012, but in 2013 the additional funding was concentrated on increasing accommodation capacity, corresponding directly to the increase in the number of asylum seekers.

Figure 40: Main types of activity under Emergency measures per year



The Emergency Measures were very useful despite some difficulties caused by the urgent situation and the short timeframe

Generally, all the Emergency Measures are recognised by all the interviewees as very efficient. They are sometimes considered to be more efficient than usual project implementation. This is for example the case of Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Malta, which described Emergency Measures as success stories in their evaluation reports. Several reasons explain this higher perceived efficiency.

- ▶ First, they are designed to answer specific and urgent needs and therefore the results achieved are described by the beneficiaries and the evaluation reports as meeting (and often exceeding) the planned objectives. They are easily quantifiable as the number of additional places in reception centres or the procurement of new medical tools/instruments/equipment.

- ▶ The second success factor is the rapid implementation of the measures. The European Commission is known for being very reactive in this type of difficult situation and furthermore, the Emergency Measures are designed for six months, thus obliging beneficiaries to implement available amounts within short timespans. Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany and Greece considered that the measure was delivered in a timely manner. In its evaluation report, Greece also mentioned the fact that Emergency Measures are generally large projects which allow economies of scale and higher effectiveness (and efficiency) of the project.

However, some difficulties have been raised in national reports and by interviewees. The short timeframe for the implementation of measures was considered by some countries (BG and GR) as a factor that could also reduce the effectiveness of implemented actions. This is the case of Hungary, where the beneficiaries specified that the need to spend a large amount of money within a short timeframe proved difficult. In Bulgaria, the reception centres were renovated with low quality materials and in Malta, the budget was dedicated to the purchase of Mobile-homes which are not sustainable over a long period (mainly because of the nature of investment made in a short timeframe and its frequent degradation).

6.2.2.5 Effectiveness of the ERF at impact level

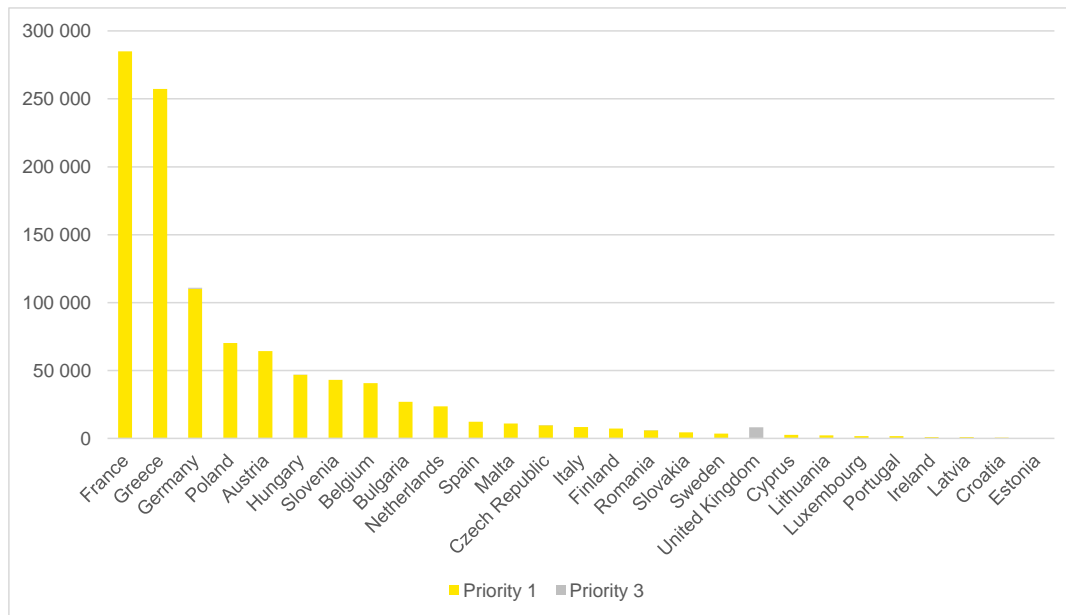
The ERF brought tangible support to Member States in the field of asylum and contributed to the improvement of reception conditions of asylum seekers and integration of beneficiaries of international protection

The main change generated by the ERF was the improvement of reception conditions and the positive consequences for refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection in terms of integration into the EU societies. Overall, the ERF allowed the support of more than 1 million final beneficiaries (target group persons)⁶⁰ through the implementation of more than 1,500 projects and 15 Community Actions in 2011-2013. This corresponds to an estimated coverage of 56% of all asylum seekers, refugees, and people in refugee-like situations in 2013.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The reliability of figures provided in the national evaluation reports may however be considered with caution: see limitations presented in section 6.1.1.

⁶¹ Approx. 1.7 million asylum-seekers (pending cases) and refugees and people in refugee-like situations in EU MS in 2013, according to the UNHCR.

Figure 41: Total number of ERF final beneficiaries (estimations according to national evaluation reports) – per Priority



The general improvement of reception and integration across EU MS did not necessarily lead to a greater convergence of standards and fairer treatment of asylum applications across Europe. The extent and the type of changes generated by the ERF depended on the MS, on the initial features of their reception and integration systems and types of projects that were funded. Key changes were as follows, in a sample of MS that are not representative of the diverse consequences of the ERF at EU level:

- ▶ For Member States from Central and Eastern Europe (SI, EE, HU, LT, CZ, SK, HR, CY, BG), the ERF was most often used to increase reception capacities and improve reception conditions, as there previously was little developed capacity due to the relatively low numbers of asylum-seekers;
- ▶ In France, the ERF was focused on the development of first entry reception services across a network of reception platforms (managed by NGOs) responsible for providing key services (orientation, domiciliation, social and/or legal advice, and material support) to asylum seekers before/until they enter an institutional reception centres (CADA). These platforms have developed with ERF I and III, and have since played a role in raising the reception standards in France and ensuring a fairer treatment to all asylum seekers, although CADAs remain the best solution for asylum seekers' accommodation and support. Next to these platforms, France has diversified its projects over time and raised its focus on integration of beneficiaries of international protection (through diverse approaches implemented at a local level, including "pilot" projects that tested specific working methods and assistance services to foster employment and housing of refugees);
- ▶ In Austria, the ERF was used to implement a wide range of activities. The originality of Austria was its specific focus on psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance as well as on public awareness and exchanges of values.

Although the role and the importance of the ERF differed from one MS to another according to their national situations and the specific use they made with the ERF to support and complement their respective national asylum systems, general trends can be drawn at the EU level:

- ▶ **The ERF made a strong contribution to support the efforts of the MS in financing operational and locally-based (mostly NGOs') projects aimed at improving the reception conditions and the integration of target group persons.** Through concrete actions directly targeted toward asylum seekers and/or refugees (Priority 1 projects), the ERF directly contributed to the implementation of the Asylum package and raised reception standards and living conditions

for asylum seekers. Complementary services (such as training and social counselling) also fostered the integration of refugees by helping them find jobs and accommodation. Although faced with rising challenges in terms of coverage of the target persons, projects proved overall successful and played a catalytic role in raising awareness of national authorities, civil servants, social workers and, more generally, civil society and EU citizens, on the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees, and in ensuring that their rights are guaranteed. The awareness raised by projects in different layers of society (schools, care centres, aid workers, and so forth) regarding the particularities of ERF target persons, including the psychological impact of trauma, migration and acculturation, was mentioned several times by respondents of the national beneficiaries' survey as the main success factor for projects;⁶²

- ▶ **The ERF made a weaker contribution to the development of exchange and practical cooperation between MS.** The ERF funded a few large transnational projects that brought clear results and from which strong impact could be expected in the longer term, but practical cooperation remained overall limited following the creation of EASO which was entrusted with some practical cooperation tasks from 2010 (leading to the reduction of the CAs' envelope in order to free up resources for funding the EASO), as well as by the emphasis put on emergency measures as from 2013. However, as confirmed during the interviews conducted during the case studies in Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Sweden, funded CAs and their results were not sufficiently disseminated and are not widely known amongst national stakeholders. Even though reception, integration and asylum procedures' standards could be raised in most MS, there is no evidence that the ERF did significantly contribute to harmonise the national asylum systems and ensure equality of treatment across MS;
- ▶ **The ERF brought some crucial support in situations requiring emergency measures.** The ERF played a role in the context of the asylum crisis that started as early as 2012 (see following section). In addition to emergency measures according to article 5 of Decision No. 573/2007/EC, two CAs provided Greece with support in a situation requiring urgent action. It provided new additional staff and training to reduce the backlog in Greece and reform the Greek asylum system by reducing pending cases by 50%. As confirmed by the interviews, the CA was a success, even if the initial objective was not achieved in the requested time, since training people requires time, and effects are mostly visible only in the long term. Between 2013 and 2015, Greece reduced its backlog of cases by 60%. Other positive results were mentioned during the interviews: a European approach was developed and Member States cooperation was enhanced, for example by developing constant dialogue amongst experts;
- ▶ **The ERF was a strong incentive to encourage decision-makers to involve the MS in resettlement operations as was confirmed by those which benefited from the fixed amount per resettled person defined in article 13 of ERF Decision;**
- ▶ **The ERF failed to involve the MS in actions relating to the transfer of beneficiaries of and applicants for international protection between MS, as no actions were implemented (except one CA on intra-relocation from Malta).**

The ERF clearly and successfully supported to the implementation of the *acquis* in the MS, although it did not focus clearly on harmonising standards and procedures or on convergence. The focus was mainly put on the reception directive, but ERF interventions also had more punctual and targeted results on improving asylum procedures and the Dublin system. It had no direct impact as regards responsibility-sharing.

⁶² Question 15: 'in your opinion, what have been the main success factors of the project(s)?'

6.2.3 Efficiency

EQ3: To what extent were the effects of the ERF achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources?

This question aims to analyse the necessary resources (financial and human) to implement the ERF actions and achieve its objectives, and compares these costs against the changes generated in terms of results and impact.

The efficiency question is divided into three subsections:

- *The efficiency at the programme level, which assesses the implementation costs incurred at the RA's level and their capacity to manage the programmes efficiently;*
- *The efficiency at the project level, which assesses the burden resulting from ERF transactional costs;*
- *The unit-costs analysis of ERF projects (the evaluation question does not go as far as estimating the cost-effectiveness or the cost-benefits of the intervention).*

The ERF costs measurement relies as much as possible on the methodologies defined in the Better Regulation guidelines.

Two types of direct costs are considered⁶³ to assess the efficiency of the ERF at the programme and at the project levels:

- **Implementation and enforcement costs incurred at the MS level:**⁶⁴ *the ex-post evaluation has tried to measure the costs of staff involved in managing and controlling the ERF at all levels (management, supervision, and so forth) in the MS. It relies on broad estimations provided by the Responsible Authorities (RA) and focuses on the human resources involved within each RA. The quantification expressed in terms of FTE has been converted into Euros (by using an average cost of wages) and the TA costs have also been considered. These costs allow the measurement of how many Euros are required to channel €100 of ERF funds (information-promotion, management, monitoring, accounting, and so on);*
- **Transactional costs incurred by the beneficiaries:** *consist in the estimates provided by the beneficiaries of the necessary investments to benefit from the ERF and comply with the ERF regulation requirements in terms of management, monitoring and information. These costs could measure how many Euros have been spent to access €100 of ERF funding by beneficiaries (cost of filling in the application form, costs of monitoring requirements, costs of credit for payment delays, and so on).*

Regarding the unit-cost analysis, *the evaluation has tried to establish quantitative ratio such as resources/outputs and resources/results (to reflect the average costs of actions implemented related to the number of estimated final beneficiaries). These quantitative analyses do not lead to any clear conclusions due to several reasons: (i) they relate to a large diversity of projects that cannot be compared; (ii) Available quantitative data on ERF APs achievements do not adequately reflect the actual performance of ERF actions in the MS (they do not give any clear indication of the quality of the services provided and of their actual results for the final beneficiaries), which makes it difficult to conclude; (iii) Finally, as neither cost estimation nor cost-benefit analysis have been provided by the SOLID (ERF) 2005 EIA, the efficiency measure will not be compared against any targets or ex-ante estimates. To overcome these limitations as much as possible, the evaluation has taken account of qualitative information (results of interviews and conclusions drawn by the national evaluators in the national evaluation reports) and considered "factors" of*

⁶³ It is considered that there is no compliance cost generated by legislation, i.e. no costs incurred in undertaking any actions necessary to comply with the (new) regulatory requirements. Likewise, no administrative costs, defined as the costs incurred in meeting legal obligations to provide information on action or production, will be measured.

⁶⁴ Implementation and enforcement costs are those costs directly borne by public authorities in implementing, administering and enforcing regulatory requirements.

Main conclusions

- ▶ **Despite scope for simplification** (with regard, for example, to the number of requested monitoring reports, to the complexity of rules for eligibility of expenditures, the volume of required supporting evidence and to the additional complexity and controls linked to the co-existence of three SOLID Funds), **the complexity required from MS to manage the ERF was necessary to ensure the robustness and reliability of the management and control systems.** The ERF administration required an average of 0.33 FTE per €1 million of ERF programmed within RAs, which is consistent with other EU Funds' averages during 2007-2013 and confirms that, despite complaints on the high administrative burden (mainly related to the financial control and monitoring requirements), the management and control of the ERF was not less efficient than other funds.
- ▶ **Experience gains over the course of the programming period (and the previous ones), as well as a simplification of monitoring and reporting procedures and application forms at MS level** contributed to a decrease in the administrative burden for both administrations and project implementers.
- ▶ **Efficiency gains could also be obtained** through a reduction in the number of projects, internal reorganisations and a clearer distribution of tasks within the administrations responsible for managing the Fund (such as a separation between administrative, control and strategic tasks), and greater mutualisation between the RAs responsible for the other SOLID funds (EIF and RF).
- ▶ However, the following weaknesses have been raised regarding the efficiency of the ERF 2011-2013:
 - **#1 Small MS (particularly the Baltic countries, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg and Hungary) had a high level of administrative costs compared to the size of their programmes;**
 - **# 2 The annual programming cycle and the complexity related to the separation of the three SOLID Funds contributed to increasing the level of administrative burden for the MS.** In addition, the focus on controls and financial implementation, rather than attempting to strategically steer the ERF, **contributed to increasing the general negative perception on the ERF administrative burden;**
 - **# 3 The lack of experience and insufficient technical and administrative capacities and resources explained the high administrative burden in some MS, as well as delay in programmes' execution (payments to beneficiaries, closure of programmes, and so on);**
 - **# 3 The lack and inconsistency of monitoring data makes it difficult to measure the cost-effectiveness of the ERF.**

6.2.3.1 Efficiency of ERF programme management

The ERF was considered costly to manage by Responsible Authorities, even if experienced Member States had found ways to reduce the administrative burden

According to data collected, it is estimated that the administration of ERF annual programmes at MS level (Responsible authorities and Delegated authorities only) required an average of 0.32 FTE per €1 million of total ERF budget. This result is consistent with the estimation reached for the administration

of Cohesion Policy (0.44),⁶⁵ whose scope is slightly different (the study on Cohesion Policy included the Audit and Certifying Authorities).

Differences from one MS to another are significant as shown by the very broad range of FTE per EUR million. Excluding Croatia and Portugal for which the estimation of FTE seems not to be relevant, the number of FTE per €1 million varies a lot among the MS: from 2.97 in Latvia to 0.06 in France. Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia are the Member States with the highest numbers of FTE per €1 million.

⁶⁵ A review of the governance and administrative structures and costs at national and regional levels for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) programmes over the 2007-2013 programming period was performed in 2010.

Figure 42: Assessment of the share of management costs compared to the programmed EU contribution per MS

	Number of FTE in Responsible and delegated Authorities necessary to manage the ERF	Estimation of the total spend for FTE (Responsible and delegated authorities)	Programmed technical assistance (including TA for Emergency measures)	Total FTE cost and technical assistance (including TA for Emergency Measures)	Programmed EU contribution (including EM)	Percentage of the Programmed EU contribution dedicated to FTE expenditure and technical assistance
Romania**	Not available	Not available	143 000 €	Not applicable	2 392 000 €	Not applicable
Ireland**	Not available	Not available	222 000 €	Not applicable	4 501 000 €	Not applicable
Poland**	Not available	Not available	413 000 €	Not applicable	8 046 000 €	Not applicable
Croatia***	1,0	100 000 €	Not available	Not applicable	86 000 €	Not applicable
Portugal*	10,7	1 070 000 €	43 000 €	1 113 000 €	1 447 000 €	76,9%
Latvia	4,7	466 667 €	154 000 €	620 667 €	1 573 000 €	39,5%
Lithuania	5,0	495 000 €	158 000 €	653 000 €	1 725 000 €	37,9%
Estonia	2,1	210 000 €	151 000 €	361 000 €	1 529 000 €	23,6%
Slovakia	3,0	300 000 €	175 000 €	475 000 €	2 125 000 €	22,4%
Czech Republic	2,5	250 000 €	177 000 €	427 000 €	2 514 000 €	17,0%
Luxembourg	1,0	100 000 €	150 000 €	250 000 €	1 512 000 €	16,5%
Slovenia	1,3	125 000 €	143 000 €	268 000 €	1 679 000 €	16,0%
Spain	6,0	600 000 €	203 000 €	803 000 €	5 078 000 €	15,8%
Hungary	3,8	375 000 €	237 000 €	612 000 €	4 907 000 €	12,5%
Austria	9,0	900 000 €	654 000 €	1 554 000 €	14 103 000 €	11,0%
Bulgaria	5,2	516 667 €	260 000 €	776 667 €	7 917 000 €	9,8%
United Kingdom	12,0	1 200 000 €	1 431 000 €	2 631 000 €	38 720 000 €	6,8%
Cyprus	2,0	200 000 €	271 000 €	471 000 €	7 631 000 €	6,2%
Sweden	17,2	1 716 000 €	1 330 000 €	3 046 000 €	50 244 000 €	6,1%
Malta	3,3	325 000 €	271 000 €	596 000 €	9 878 000 €	6,0%
Netherlands	4,3	425 000 €	651 000 €	1 076 000 €	18 032 000 €	6,0%
Belgium	4,0	400 000 €	852 000 €	1 252 000 €	21 719 000 €	5,8%
Germany	6,0	600 000 €	1 406 000 €	2 006 000 €	38 388 000 €	5,2%
France	2,5	250 000 €	1 492 000 €	1 742 000 €	42 710 000 €	4,1%
Finland	1,0	100 000 €	287 000 €	387 000 €	10 321 000 €	3,7%
Greece	3,0	300 000 €	580 000 €	880 000 €	23 970 000 €	3,7%
Italy	3,4	340 000 €	1 340 000 €	1 680 000 €	50 692 000 €	3,3%
EU Total/Average****	113,6	11 364 333 €	13 194 000 €	23 680 333 €	358 414 000 €	6,6%

Source: EY email survey (Responsible Authorities' estimations) and SFC 2007 database

* The percentage provided for Portugal seems not to be consistent with regard to the other figures.

**E, PL and RO did not answer the survey.

*** The amount programmed for Croatia is very small which explained this high number of FTE per € million of ERF programmed amount.

**** The EU Total/Average exclude the Member States with NA figures.

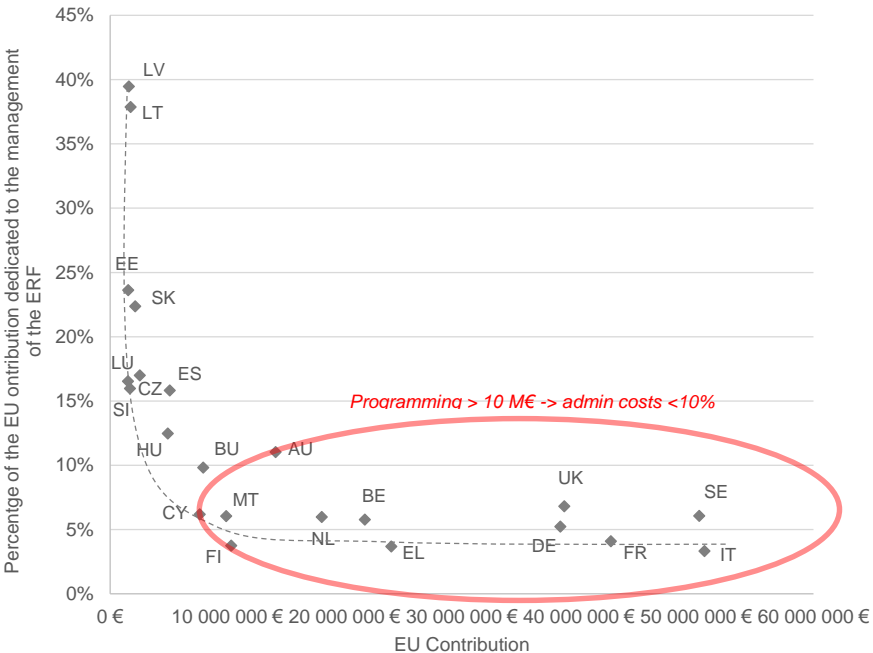
NB: FTEs have been monetised by applying a unique rate of €100,000/ FTE.

The analysis of amounts dedicated to technical assistance is also relevant to the assessment of the cost of the ERF implementation. The technical assistance represented on average 4% of the total EU contribution between 2011 and 2013 and varied from 2% in Greece⁶⁶ to 10% in ES, LV, and LU.

In order to have a global overview of the cost of the management of the ERF, an estimation of the cost of the FTEs has been done, and the total cost of the management was considered equal to the sum of technical assistance and the estimation of FTEs. The figures are provided in the table below.

On average, the cost of the management of the ERF (FTEs and technical assistance) represented around 7% of the total EU contribution. However, the cost of the management of the ERF varies a lot across Member States, from 3.3% of the national programmed EU contribution in Italy, to 40% in Latvia. These differences can be explained by potential variations in the effectiveness of the management of the ERF across the Member States depending on their experience with the management of the European funds or national organisations.

Figure 43: Percentage of the EU contribution dedicated to the management of the ERF depending on the total EU contribution



Source: EY email survey (Responsible Authorities' estimations) and SFC 2007 database

The figure shows that size of the EU contribution was a factor explaining the different shares of the ERF budget dedicated to the management. Indeed, the cost of management globally increases with the size of the EU contribution. However, the Member States with the larger ERF programmes were also those with the smallest percentage of the EU contribution dedicated to the Fund management. This can be considered to be the result of the critical mass effect. Indeed, except for Austria and Cyprus, the Member States with a programmed EU contribution higher than €10 million are the only ones for which the percentage of the EU contribution dedicated to the management of the ERF is equivalent or lower than the average of 7%. It can also be underlined that there seems to be a minimum threshold for the cost dedicated to the management of the ERF; the cost of the management of the ERF is not lower than 3% of the total EU contribution.

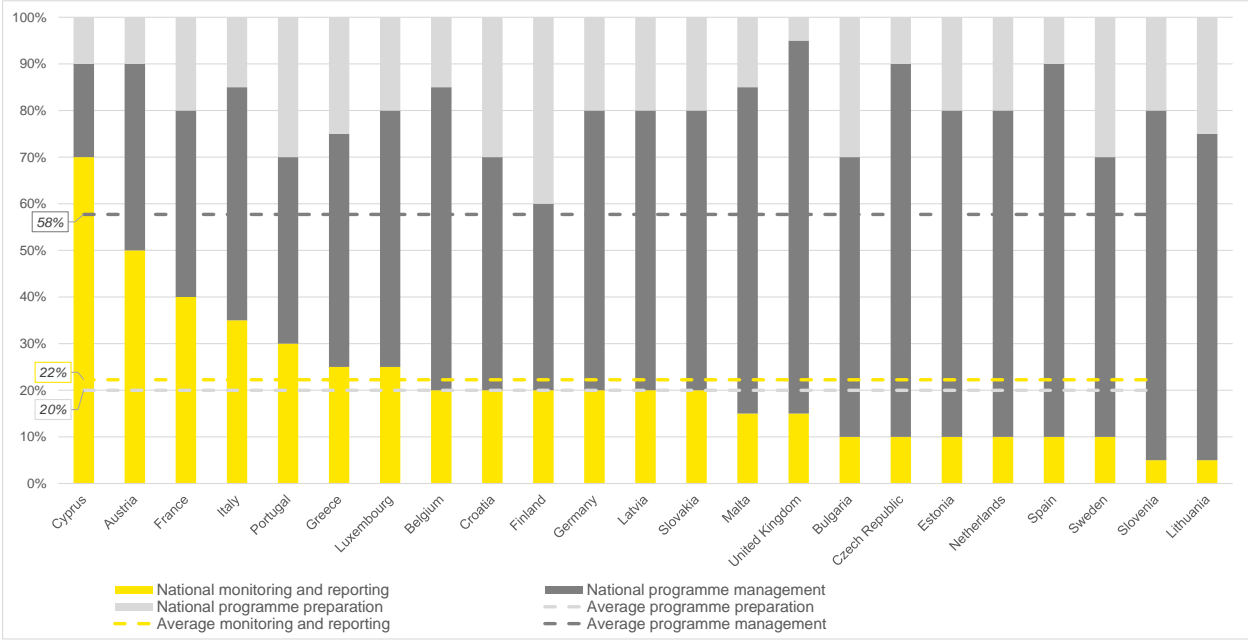
A significant workload share was dedicated to programme management - project

⁶⁶ The SFC 2007 database did not registered specific technical assistance for Emergency Measures, if relevant, they are not included in the current technical assistance. This is also the case of DE, CY, FR, HR; NL, and PT.

controls and verification of services and deliverables.

For Member States, the main time consuming tasks were related to ERF’s management (56% of the workload share of responsible authorities), meaning project selection, control, and verification of deliverable. Only seven Member States⁶⁷ (AT, CY, EI, FR, IT, LU, PT) dedicated more than 25% of their time to monitoring and reporting at programme level to comply with the European Commission’s requirements, which amounted to 22% of the total estimated workload share, whilst programme preparation amounted to only 20% of the total estimated workload share.

Figure 44: Workload distribution (as time spent) for different tasks relative to ERF management by Responsible Authorities*



Source: EY email survey (Responsible Authorities’ estimations)

* HU, IE, PL and RO did not answer the survey.

The ERF was considered costly to manage by Responsible Authorities, but most requirements were legitimate to ensure the robustness and reliability of the management and control systems.

Member States all claimed that the administrative burden related to the management of the ERF was high, yet justified to ensure reliable management. In the 13 national evaluation reports⁶⁸ (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, LT, PT, SE, SI, UK) that underlined difficulties in the implementation of the ERF programmes, most problems were also linked to administrative burden. As for most EU funds, the control related requirements were the main culprit for the high level of administrative costs, specifically the verifications by the RAs. Two other particular areas were pointed out by several MS as contributing to the administrative burden of the ERF:

- ▶ The burden linked to multi-annual and annual programming;

⁶⁷ Out of the 23 Member States that provide an answer (on 06.10.16)

⁶⁸ Source: National evaluation reports, section 2.6

- ▶ The burden linked to the division of asylum and migration issues into three separate funds which encouraged the multiplication of administrative requirements. The AMIF has solved these issues to a certain extent.

Apart from these two issues which were solved with the AMIF, the perception of a high administrative burden can be explained by internal reasons depending more on the MS themselves than on the EC's regulatory requirements:

- ▶ The experience gained allowed the development of more efficient procedures and clarification of EU rules and requirement. Many MS encountered temporary problems in implementing controls due to insufficient experience in conducting necessary verifications and audits, and complying with the ERF eligibility rules. In particular, as mentioned in their national evaluation reports,⁶⁹ France and Sweden faced financial difficulties with the **misunderstanding of eligible cost** leading to gaps in EU reimbursement. Some Member States (AT, BE, LT) underlined the difficulties linked with the necessity of the project pre-financing which **caused cash flow problems** for the beneficiaries waiting for the reimbursement from the European Commission, whilst Finland and Spain noticed the difficulty to fit administrative requirement and the confrontation with **administrative burden**, especially for small organisations;
- ▶ In less experienced MS (such as MS having acceded to the EU after 2004), many costs could be considered one-off costs linked to the need to build technical and administrative capacities;
- ▶ The internal organisation of RAs was also crucial for lowering the administrative burden. Several shifts occurred during the ERF III Funding period to mutualise human resources with the RAs of the other SOLID funds and thus lead to efficiency gains (this was for instance the case in France from 2011, as well as in SE, HU, and the UK);
- ▶ Clear distribution of responsibilities and adequate technical/administrative capacity to implement the different tasks. In Belgium, the low absorption rate is explained by the fact that only one FTE was in charge of all controls of expenditure at the closure of the annual programme which led to such delays that the MS could not meet the set deadlines for sending its final closure documents.

6.2.3.2 Efficiency of the ERF for projects implementers

The estimated cost attributed to administrative requirements of the European Commission is evaluated as high, but all in all reasonable

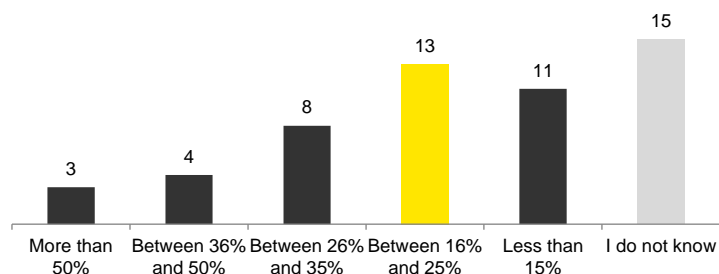
According to ERF's beneficiaries encountered during the country visits, the administrative burden generated by the ERF is qualified as high. According to the e-survey's respondents (national beneficiaries of the ERF in Member States where a case study was conducted),⁷⁰ the costs incurred by administrative requirements from the Commission are deemed to account for less than 25% of total costs by the majority of respondents.

⁶⁹ Source: National evaluation reports, section 2.6.

⁷⁰ 55 respondents.

Figure 45 : Costs of administrative requirements (in % of total costs)

'If possible, could you please provide a rough estimation of the average administrative cost of Commission-imposed monitoring and reporting requirements for the project(s) your organisation implemented?'



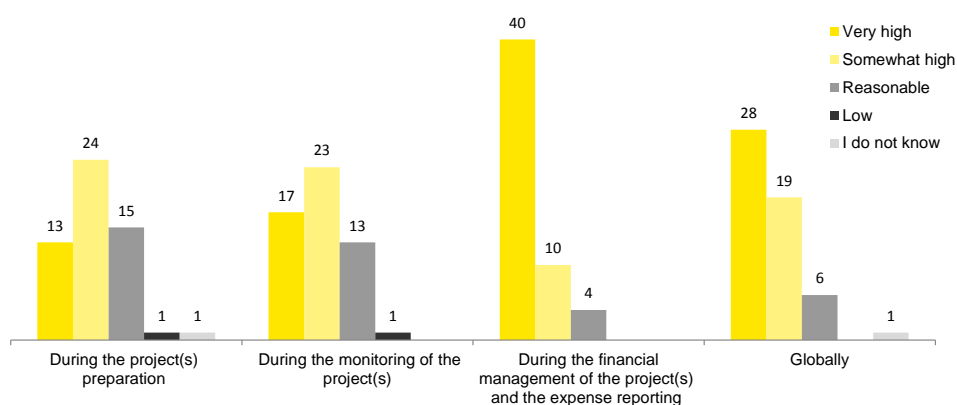
Source: EY e-survey targeting national beneficiaries of the ERF in 8 case study MS (Q21).

Out of the 24 respondents assessing the cost of the administrative requirements as less than 25%, seven operate in BE and nine operate in FR, which are both Member States where the ERF and, more generally European funds, have already been used for several years and where national beneficiaries are getting used to responding to the administrative requirements of the EC. This confirms the fact the administrative burden is important but can be efficiently managed with experience (see above: the experience gain allowed the development of more efficient procedures; clearer reporting and controlling processes, development of dedicated tools, clarification of EU rules and requirement and improved communication with projects implementers).

Most beneficiaries pointed out in particular the time-consuming aspect of **reporting** (especially since it occurs twice a year), urging them to deliver on the indicators continuously and to go through highly detailed audit exercise. The e-survey transmitted to national beneficiaries of the eight case studies' Member States and completed by 55 respondents confirms this statement.

Figure 46 : Assessment of the administrative burden at different stages of the projects

'How would you assess the administrative burden of the project(s) you participated in, at different stages of the project(s)?'



Source: EY e-survey targeting national beneficiaries of the ERF in 8 case study MS (Q20).

Significant delays in payments were also pointed out by national beneficiaries as highly problematic and costly. Indeed, the need for beneficiaries to have more liquidity for the execution of the projects was systematically expressed in Member States where the Responsible Authority had not implemented a compensating/pre-financing system and more specifically by small-sized beneficiaries. They explained that the delay in transferring the financial resources obliged them to ask for a bank

credit and the subsequent obligation to pay the interests, which are not eligible under the ERF and caused unnecessary money outflows).

Fulfilling the EC's mandatory requirements proved to be dependent on several factors that had **been mitigated with institutional learning gained from the ERF knowledge and experience** over time:

- ▶ The MS', and consequently RAs', maturity and experience in managing European funds, and specifically the ERF. From this derived the capacity to effectively deliver the Commission's requirements to national beneficiaries and building their capacity to properly respond to these requirements. Depending on Member State, the requirements and eligibility rules could not always be communicated effectively and in a timely manner to national beneficiaries;
- ▶ The size and nature of the beneficiary organisations and their previous practice of EU funding. Small-sized beneficiaries (such as small NGOs) often proved to be less structured, with fewer human resources and more difficulties to meet the ERF's requirements in terms of financial reporting. The administrative burden is often linked to institutional learning.

Despite a statement of the administrative burden by some national beneficiaries, some also recognised the need to conduct proper reporting of the use of the ERF and to undergo thorough auditing activities. Many beneficiaries increased capacities and effectiveness in complying with the EC's requirements along with experience (specifically in HU). In AT, structures having implemented sustainable projects for several years acknowledged that the transactional costs were reasonable and fair if compared to other public institutions.

With regard to the administrative burden, national beneficiaries of the ERF **expressed more satisfaction with the implementation of the AMIF**, which reduces the administrative requirements thanks to the merger of four different funds dealing with closely related issues.

6.2.3.3 Cost-effectiveness of projects

The cost-effectiveness of projects cannot be assessed in quantitative terms

As mentioned in the methodological introduction, the efficiency question shall aim to measure a unit-cost analysis as efficiency is appreciated in relation to finances and achieved outputs (the evaluation question does not go as far as estimating the cost-effectiveness or the cost-benefits of the intervention), with quantitative ratio such as resources/outputs or resources/results (which aim to reflect the average costs of actions implemented related to the number of estimated final beneficiaries). However, quantitative data on ERF APs' achievements as available in national evaluation reports do not adequately reflect the actual performance of ERF actions in the MS. It also has to be underlined that as neither cost estimation nor cost-benefits analysis have been provided by the SOLID (ERF) 2005 EIA, the efficiency measure will not be compared against any targets or ex-ante estimates.

Projects can hardly be compared. Yet the costs incurred to achieve the programmes' and projects' outputs are considered overall reasonable by interviewees and national evaluation reports

In most Member States (22), national evaluation reports assessed that the costs incurred to achieved projects' outputs seem reasonable, compared to observed results or to the costs engaged to implement the projects. This statement could be confirmed through the interviews: the various stakeholders did not notice any issue with regard to the efficiency of ERF-funded projects. Although these projects can hardly be compared (even within one single MS), they were overall implemented in an efficient way.

Investigations through a unit-cost analysis show the following:

- ▶ On average, each project targeting asylum seekers or persons benefiting from international protection allowed reaching around 700 final beneficiaries with an average budget of €150,000 (€210 per beneficiary, on average). The comparison across Member States of the average committed cost per beneficiary (which includes emergency measures budget and achieved target groups for emergency measures) shows high discrepancies between Member States and ranged from €9,065 in the UK to €37 in Slovenia. Some Member States with the highest number of

received asylum seekers and refugees, such as EL and FR which have each targeted more than 250,000 persons thanks to the ERF, happened to have relatively low budgets per beneficiary (only €44 for EL, for instance). These discrepancies question the reasonability of costs, as well as the relevance of the allocation system (cf. relevance section).

- The particular case of the UK, which has the highest committed budget per beneficiary is linked to the UK's policy: focusing on resettlement and integration, which results in a relatively small number of projects aimed at assisting the resource intensive resettlement/integration of a specific target group.
 - In FR on the other hand, although a significant committed budget, the committed cost per beneficiary is above the EU average; this can potentially be attributed to the use of the ERF in FR, which is widely dedicated to projects aiming at enhancing reception conditions and integration which reach more final beneficiaries than projects of Priority 3.
 - Finally, Hungary's case is also to be pointed out: only €73 were engaged by final beneficiary. The explanation is in link with the relevance of the allocation system of the ERF: HU experienced an unexpected rise in the number of asylum seekers (> +900% between 2011 and 2013) while its entitled envelope kept on being indexed on years when HU barely received them. At the same time, the Hungarian government reduced its involvement in asylum issues (due to political decisions) and consequently used the ERF as a primary budget line to fulfill asylum seekers' needs.
- ▶ As for priority 2, the average cost of a project was of €123,553. With regard to Priority 3, an average project amounted to €301,037 and allowed to reach 328 final beneficiaries.⁷¹

These quantitative analyses cannot support any clear conclusion given the lack of comparability across projects as well as the shortcomings of the available indicators to measure results and impact (the number of final beneficiaries does not give any indication of the quality of the services provided and their impact on the reception and integration of asylum seekers and/or refugees).

At the micro-level (through the analysis was carried out at project level), the evaluation found that some factors that may influence the efficiency of the activities financed by the ERF. This includes the support from volunteers (several NGOs resort to volunteers to implement their projects, which leads to potentially significant savings), as well as quality partnerships with other stakeholders to utilize synergies and avoid any duplication of work.

⁷¹ The figures regarding final beneficiaries are extracted from the number of reached target persons for each action in the national evaluation reports and are approximations.

6.2.4 Sustainability

EQ4: To what extent did the positive effects of the ERF actions last after the interventions were terminated?

Methodological introduction

This question focuses on the duration of the effects of the projects financed by the Fund and their broader impacts, to understand whether the ERF actions are sustainable or only generate immediate effects.

In order to answer this question, the answers of MS Responsible Authorities in the national evaluation reports were thoroughly re-structured and analysed to establish a typology of sustainability according to MS. This topic was raised during all interviews with Responsible Authorities (over the phone or during field visits), with a specific focus on the identification of the main factors affecting or supporting the sustainability of the funded projects – the idea being to understand the causal mechanisms behind replicable processes allowing long term effects of the projects. This question was also raised during interviews with beneficiaries of Annual Programmes and of Community Actions, in order to understand, from the different points of views, how the ERF sustainability is perceived.

The answer is structured in two main parts:

- *The analysis of the sustainability of the results and impacts obtained from ERF-funded projects;*
- *The analysis of the sustainability of the funded projects themselves.*

Main conclusions

- ▶ **The sustainability of ERF projects results and impacts depends on the type of actions implemented and/or outputs obtained** during their implementation. Structural effects on **MS reception capacities (through investments in accommodation and reception infrastructures)** were likely to be the most sustainable providing the MS invest the necessary money for upkeep after construction.
- ▶ Through the implementation of the ERF, **national authorities gained experience in managing European funds and developed sustainable relationships with stakeholders involved in asylum issues.**
- ▶ Regarding the other types of projects, the ERF contributed to sustainable effects under certain conditions:
 - **Innovative projects were not systematically mainstreamed by MS authorities, especially with regard to CAs;**
 - **Integration projects, and projects aimed empowering asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection (through language courses, for example) are considered less sustainable,** especially in transit MS where language courses proved useless for asylum seekers whose purpose was to reach another country. In some MS, no language course is proposed to asylum seekers until they obtain refugee status;
 - **Studies and development of tools and methods are sustainable, provided they were disseminated.** Staff turnover was a key factor that decreased the sustainability of training projects and capacity-building of national authorities and partners in the field of asylum;
 - **Above all, the evaluation pointed out that the beneficiaries highly relied on external funding,** particularly EU funds (according to 13 MS). It is not obvious that the projects would continue without EU funds (including projects supported since the ERF creation). The least sustainable projects were often services not funded by MS, and for which NGOs cannot find alternative sources after the ERF projects end.
- ▶ It is difficult to assign sustainable effects to ERF 2011-2013 without considering cumulative

effects of ERF 2007-2013 plus ERF 2011-2013. Sustainable effects are, in fact, in most cases “cumulative short term effects”: the ERF keeps supporting MS development capacity and instruments, thus contributing to long term effects in terms of policy development.

6.2.4.1 Sustainability of results and impacts

The sustainability of achieved results and impact depends on the type of actions implemented

The sustainability of the positive impacts of projects relates, to a large extent, to the nature of the projects and their results. According to the analysis of national evaluation reports, 14 Member States assessed the types of projects with the most sustainable effects. The table below details the types of projects/outputs cited as sustainable by the MS:

- Table 11 : Types of sustainable actions cited in the national evaluation reports

Sustainable projects / Outputs	Number of MS
Trainings/educational/empowerment activities to target groups	11 CY, CZ, DE, ES, HU, LT, MT, NL, RO, SK, UK
Integration of refugees and/or awareness raising amongst the host society	6 BE, CZ, DE, LT, NL, PL
Concrete outputs still used (websites, toolkits, manuals...)	6 BE, BG, HU, LT, MT, RO

More specifically and in the light of the interviews conducted with Responsible Authorities and beneficiaries, the most sustainable identified actions are:

- ▶ Actions resulting in the **increase of capacities to receive** asylum seekers. This is particularly the case of Member States which did not have substantial facilities beforehand and for which the ERF raised the issue of receiving asylum seekers. The case of BG is an example: interviews with the Responsible Authority and beneficiaries showed that the funds dedicated to increasing and improving reception capacities (such as building of new infrastructure and refurbishment of facilities) proved highly sustainable, since Bulgaria’s readiness for asylum-seeker reception had been durably improved for the subsequent years;
- ▶ Projects related to **Priority 2**, or whose objectives are to **elaborate studies**, to **develop platforms, websites, new tools** (IT mostly) **or methodologies** prove sustainable, as the outputs and materials can be used continuously, provided their dissemination or maintenance are ensured. In the national evaluation reports, seven Member States (BG, CZ, ES, FR, DE, NL, PL) showed the sustainability of ERF projects with the development and implementation of new approaches and methodologies to refine their responses to target groups’ needs (in terms of counselling, medical treatments offered, integration procedures, and so forth). BG details: *‘the collected information and the accumulated knowledge [...] provide the opportunity in the next programme period to [...] design social services in close correspondence with the needs’*. However, as identified and underlined by AT and BE, the update or maintenance of these tools have heavy implications on the durability of these types of action. This issue was also raised in SE, where interviewees acknowledged that the sustainability of projects which were focused on developing learning and knowledge (essentially the research projects) relied mostly on effective

dissemination and communication amongst stakeholders to ensure that the potential benefits are fully realised;

- **Illustration/focus:** With regard to the dissemination of outputs and methodologies, the successful case of CREDO2 project, a Community Action led by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, can be mentioned. The objectives of the project were to *'ensure that all relevant stakeholders across Europe have actual access to the know-how of structured, objective, high-quality and protection-oriented credibility assessment, in particular in child and gender-related claims'*. Credibility assessment is a key moment in the instruction of asylum-seeker cases, and harmonisation of practices across Europe appeared necessary to ensure fair and equal treatment of asylum applications. The Community Action also aimed at specifically targeting groups which have emerged recently (such as LGBTI asylum seekers and children). The CREDO2 project was very successful, reached – if not exceeded - all expected objectives in terms of material production and dissemination, and its positive effects proved sustainable: (i) A training manual was elaborated, translated into 10 languages and disseminated all over Europe (and beyond); (ii) Curricula are available online and are still being used; (iii) “Train-the-trainer” activities and ad-hoc training sessions with experts are still being organised to ensure dissemination and transfer of knowledge; (iv) The outputs were used by UNHCR, EASO and even some Member States (UK and NL) to design and refine their guidelines on credibility assessment. As previously mentioned, the sustainability of the positive effects of this action relied heavily on the design and implementation of a dissemination strategy, on the financial support necessary to carry on the actions, and on human resources issues;
- ▶ Actions aimed at **empowering target groups**, such as educational or language trainings, workshops or counselling sessions to help refugees to find jobs or accommodation. The Hungarian Responsible Authority, for instance, insisted on the sustainability of effects of actions such as vocational trainings, which led, in many cases, to refugees obtaining diplomas, finding jobs, accommodation, and being autonomous;
- ▶ Actions resulting in a **concrete change of practice** (improvement in asylum procedure, structural changes) as observed by PT, EE, DE or FI;
- ▶ Finally, the evaluation reveals that projects focused on the **integration** of refugees are those with the most fluctuating sustainability, which highly depends on Member States and on the socio-economic context. For DE, CZ or BE, integration actions are considered as the most sustainable because they provide services leading refugees to independence (language training, legal assistance, employment and accommodation access). AT, DE, LV, PT, SK and NL, however, raised the point that the sustainability of these actions is not systematically ensured because of the common challenge of entering and maintaining in the housing or labor markets. Lastly, implementing sustainable integration measures can present a challenge for “transit countries”, in which asylum-seekers or refugees do not intend to settle.

The implementation of ERF projects produced side-effects that added to the sustainability of projects' impacts

Capacity building amongst stakeholders working in the field of asylum was the most highly agreed upon factor of impact sustainability by interviewees. The analysis of the national evaluation reports confirmed this statement: 13 of them (AT, FR, DE, EL, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, ES, SE) cited the enhancement of capacities and expertise of national beneficiaries, and even the Responsible Authorities, thanks to ERF projects, as a factor of effects' durability. Indeed, progress in terms of internal procedures, project management and deepening of knowledge of target groups' stakes and needs of all stakeholders participated to delivering better services to target groups. The accumulated expertise favours long-term effectiveness of actions, allowing the implementation of projects which better fit the needs of the asylum seekers. LV and BG stated that this gain of experience is really sustainable when there is a small turnover in the staff dealing with the refugees.

The implementation of ERF-funded projects favoured a 'culture of cooperation among stakeholders' according to EL evaluation report, which is shared by nine other Member States (BG, DE, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, ES, UK). These countries insisted on the increased national cooperation between different local stakeholders (public institutions, private companies, NGOs). The creation of contacts and relationships through formal or informal networks contributed to the sustainability of the impacts of

projects. Community Actions therefore seem particularly appropriate and effective in favouring sustainable effects and in fostering long-lasting cooperation. The UK case study, which participated in the MedCOI2 project as a co-beneficiary, revealed a good example of sustainability of actions through cooperation: the levels of success achieved by the project were such that a number of participating Member States, including the UK, Netherlands and Belgium decided to continue the project (as MedCOI3), using national ERF funds, when the Community Action funding expired in 2014.

6.2.4.2 Sustainability of projects

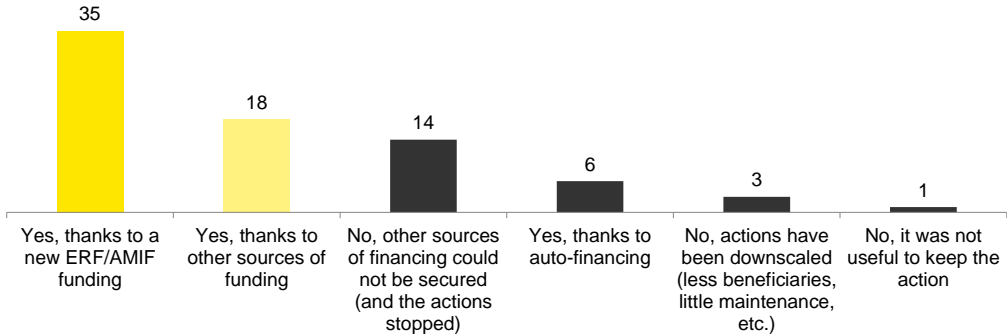
Nevertheless, the sustainability, understood as the capacity of projects to carry on after the end of ERF funding, is questioned.

Even if some effects are sustainable and produce long-term impacts, the capacity of beneficiaries to maintain them without the support of the ERF is not ensured.

In the national evaluation reports, 13 Member States indicated that national beneficiaries rely heavily on EU funds to implement projects (AT, CZ, EE, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, LV, LU, SK, ES, UK). As highlighted in the figure below, the majority of projects’ beneficiaries responding to the survey keep implementing the ERF project thanks to new ERF/AMIF funding and/or thanks to other sources of funding. Moreover, it is noticeable that only six persons saw auto-financing as a realistic alternative and 25% of the respondents put an end to the project given the impossibility to find other sources of funding.

Figure 47: Successive implementation of ERF action

“Are the actions financed by the ERF still being implemented?”



Source: EY survey; 54/55 answers

Source: EY e-survey to national projects beneficiaries, question 17

National public funding is generally not available for taking over the financing of projects previously funded by the ERF within the same scope. In some cases, some efforts were made by the projects’ implementers to look for sustainable co-financing sources and raise alternative funding (from national, local, or private sources), but this would not allow the implementation of the same scope of activities. **Only for some specific projects in a few MS (FR, IT) (see question 6.2.6), would the MS guarantee to continue funding the entirety of activities if EU funding (ERF, and now AMIF) ended:** this is the case of the reception platforms (plate-formes d’accueil) implemented in France as well as of the financial allocations given to support asylum seekers in Italy.

This dependence on the ERF shed light on the difficulties the beneficiaries would face without it and was raised by many Responsible Authorities during interviews: FI insisted on the fact that most implementing organisations had been unable to integrate project operations in their standard operating procedures mainly because of lack of funding, resulting in a loss of operations’ effects after the funding has ended; in IT, UNHCR also raised the issue of the non-systematisation of successful projects due to lack of initiative from implementing organisations; in HU, the sustainability of projects without the Fund is a very sensitive issue, acknowledged by the Responsible Authority, since UNHCR had to step in and Fund local NGOs during the “gap” year between the ERF and the AMIF.

In this context, RAs implemented different approaches: some countries, such as FR, AT, HU, CY allowed the replication of projects over years, to ensure a type of sustainability of their effects. Moreover, regarding the existence of multi-annual strategies in the Member States, there is a continuation of the actions over years even if they are not implemented by the same organisations. Some other countries decided to limit the duration of the funding period (LU, for example) in order to avoid any type of dependency.

6.2.5 Coherence and complementarity

EQ7: To what extent were the ERF actions coherent with and complementary to other actions related to asylum, financed by other EU financial instruments, including the activities of EASO, and/or from national resources of the Member States?

Methodological approach

This question is aimed at assessing the way the ERF-funded projects and measures are coherent and complementary to other actions implemented by relevant actors and instruments involved in asylum issues, both at national or EU level. With the migration and asylum landscape becoming more crowded, the need for creating and developing synergies between the ERF and other financial or non-financial instruments has increased.

Starting from an analysis of the landscape of financial instruments and organisations operating in the field of asylum, two different levels were considered for the evaluation of ERF's coherence and complementarity:

- *At **national level**, the evaluation assessed the complementarity of the ERF with other sources of funding as well as the internal coherence of ERF programmes (synergies between implemented projects), which involved analysing the quality of national coordination mechanisms set up to avoid overlapping;*
- *At **EU level**, the evaluation assessed the coherence between the ERF intervention and tasks implemented by other organisations (especially EASO) as well as the complementarity between ERF's Community Actions and national projects.*

Main conclusions

- ▶ **The coherence between the ERF and other sources of funding was ensured through active cooperation between the ERF Responsible Authorities and the government authorities responsible for managing other financial instruments.**
- ▶ **The coordination between the ERF and other SOLID funds was facilitated by the fact that, in most MS, they were managed by one single Responsible Authority.**
- ▶ **Progress was made in terms of the mutual knowledge and synergies amongst project implementers in the MS.**
- ▶ The internal consistency of national annual programmes was ensured by the complementarity of selected projects that covered different regions, proposed different services, or targeted different groups. No redundancy was noted by the evaluation.
- ▶ However, the following findings have been raised regarding the coherence of the ERF:
 - **# 1: Although no overlaps could occur in theory with the EIF, whose eligible beneficiaries excluded beneficiaries of international protection (final beneficiaries of the ERF), the co-existence of the ERF and the EIF was a source of additional complexity and administrative burden.** Integration projects that did not specifically focused on refugees required rigorous monitoring and auditing to avoid double-financing of actions and to check the status of the final beneficiaries;
 - **# 2: Community actions did not clearly complement national projects.**

6.2.5.1 Overview of existing financial instruments and organisations involved in the field of asylum

The ERF was the only instrument specifically focused on asylum at the EU level, but other sources of funding may have had overlaps in the domain of asylum

A significant number of entities operate in the field of migration and asylum at both EU and national levels. These can be either funding sources (just as the ERF) or organisations intervening in different ways in the field of asylum within Member States (production of studies or training material, data collection, field actions, and more).

In order to understand the positioning of the ERF within this context, the table below groups the main relevant EU and international funds and organisations active in the field of asylum which could interfere with the ERF, and provides a brief description of their mandate.

Table 12: Relevant stakeholders in the field of asylum

ORGANISATION / FUND	MANDATE & SCOPE	Potential overlap?
EU Funds		
<p>EIF – European Integration Fund (part of General Programme SOLID)</p>	<p><i>The general objective of the Fund is to support the efforts made by the Member States in enabling third-country nationals of different economic, social, cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to fulfil the conditions of residence and to facilitate their integration into the European societies.</i></p> <p><i>The Fund shall contribute to the development and implementation of national integration strategies for third-country nationals in all aspects of society, particularly taking into account the principle that integration is a two-way dynamic process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.</i></p> <p><i>As regards its scope: ‘Third-country nationals who are on the territory of a third country and who are complying with specific pre-departure measures and/or conditions set out in national law, including those relating to the ability to integrate in the society of this Member State fall under the scope of this Decision’. Article 3 states that: ‘Third-country nationals who have applied for asylum in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken, or enjoy refugee or subsidiary protection status, or qualify as refugees or are eligible for subsidiary protection in accordance with Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third-country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted (1), shall be excluded from the scope of this Decision’.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Council Decision of 25 June 2007 establishing the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007 to 2013 (2007/435/EC).</p>	<p><i>Theoretically not as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not the same target persons - Coordination mechanisms with the authorities designated for managing the implementation of the ERF is foreseen in the Decision
<p>ESF – European Social Fund</p>	<p><i>Among other missions, the ESF should promote social inclusion and prevent and combat poverty with a view to breaking the cycle of disadvantage across generations, which implies mobilising a range of policies, targeting the most disadvantaged people regardless of their age, including children, the working poor and older women. Attention should be paid to the participation asylum seekers and refugees. The ESF may be used to enhance access to affordable, sustainable and high quality services of general interest, in particular in the fields of health care, employment and training services, services for the homeless, out of school care, childcare and long-term care services.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Regulation (EU) No. 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013.</p>	<p><i>Theoretically yes as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a specific focus is made on asylum seekers and refugees - the objective of the ESF is to promote social inclusion, meaning integration when refugees are concerned
<p>ERDF – European Regional Development Fund</p>	<p><i>The support under the ERDF includes the following activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investment in infrastructure providing basic services to citizens in the areas of energy, environment, transport and ICT; - investment in social, health, research, innovation, business and educational infrastructure; - investment in the development of endogenous potential through fixed investment in equipment and small-scale 	<p><i>Theoretically yes as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - potential complementarities between the actions supported by the ERDF and the ERF in the

ORGANISATION / FUND	MANDATE & SCOPE	Potential overlap?
	<p><i>infrastructure, including small-scale cultural and sustainable tourism infrastructure, services to enterprises, support to research and innovation bodies and investment in technology and applied research in enterprise.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 December 2013.</p>	<p><i>field of infrastructure building</i></p>
EU Agencies and networks		
<p>EASO - European Asylum Support Office</p>	<p><i>The Support Office should, at the request of the Member States concerned, coordinate action to support those Member States inter alia through the deployment in their territories of asylum support teams made up of asylum experts. Those teams should, in particular, provide expertise relating to interpreting services, information on countries of origin and knowledge of the handling and management of asylum cases.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Regulation (EU) 439/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office.</p>	<p><i>Theoretically yes as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EASO mandate is overlapping Community Actions' one with regards to practical cooperation
<p>FRA - Fundamental Rights Agency</p>	<p><i>A European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights should accordingly be established, building upon the existing European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, to provide the relevant institutions and authorities of the Community and its Member States when implementing Community law with information, assistance and expertise on fundamental rights in order to support them when they take measures or formulate courses of action within their respective spheres of competence to fully respect fundamental rights.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Council Regulation (EC) No. 168/2007 of 15 February 2007 establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.</p>	<p><i>Theoretically not as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not project based (information and trainings) - Targets National institutions in charge of asylum and migration issues
<p>FRONTEX - EU Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the EU MS</p>	<p><i>The Agency shall proactively monitor and contribute to the developments in research relevant for the control and surveillance of the external borders and disseminate that information to the Commission and the Member States.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Council Regulation (EC) No. 2007/2004 ("FRONTEX Regulation"); Regulation (EU) No. 1168/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council (amending FRONTEX Regulation).</p>	<p><i>Theoretically not as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not project based - Focus is on control and surveillance and not persons as such
<p>EMN – European Migration Network</p>	<p><i>The objective of the EMN should be to meet the information needs of Community institutions and of Member States' authorities and institutions on migration and asylum, by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policymaking in the European Union in these areas.</i></p> <p>Legal Basis: Council Decision of 14 May 2008 establishing a European Migration Network (2008/381/EC).</p>	<p><i>Theoretically not as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Production and dissemination of data - Studies produced are static and not published to operational goals
Non-EU Organisations and entities		
<p>UNHCR - United</p>	<p><i>The General Assembly calls upon Governments to co-operate with the UNHCR in the performance of his functions</i></p>	<p><i>Theoretically yes as:</i></p>

ORGANISATION / FUND	MANDATE & SCOPE	Potential overlap?
Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	<p><i>concerning refugees falling under the competence of his Office, especially by: (a) Becoming parties to international conventions providing for the protection of refugees, and taking the necessary steps of implementation under such conventions; (b) Entering into special agreements with the High Commissioner for the execution of measures calculated to improve the situation of refugees and to reduce the number requiring protection; (c) Admitting refugees to their territories, not excluding those in the most destitute categories; (d) Assisting the High Commissioner in his efforts to promote the voluntary repatriation of refugees; (e) Promoting the assimilation of refugees, especially by facilitating their naturalisation; (f) Providing refugees with travel and other documents such as would normally be provided to other aliens by their national authorities, especially documents which would facilitate their resettlement; (g) Permitting refugees to transfer their assets and especially those necessary for their resettlement.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Statute of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) of 14 December 1950.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Same target group - Participate actively to resettlement and transfer activities
UNFVT - United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture	<p><i>The overarching objective of the work supported by the UN Torture Fund is to assist victims of torture and their family members to rebuild their lives, providing immediate and accessible remedies. This is implemented through the award of grants to a variety of channels of assistance, including, civil society organisations, associations of victims and their family members, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Awarded grants to national organisations under an annual call for proposal. A Board of Trustees determines the Fund's priorities every year.</p>	<p>Theoretically yes as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refugees and asylum seekers often fall into UNFVT's target groups - Some UNFVT's activities are similar with ERF's actions
ICMPD - International Centre for Migration Policy Development	<p><i>The agreement aims at promoting international co-operation in the area of migration policies as well as relevant research in these areas.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the Republic of Austria on the Establishment and Functioning of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), (1993).</p>	<p>Theoretically not as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research based institutes - Does not have target groups similar with the ERF
IOM - International Organisation for Migration	<p><i>The purposes and functions of the Organization shall be – among others – to provide a forum to States as well as international and other organisations for the exchange of views and experiences, and the promotion of cooperation and coordination of efforts on international migration issues, including studies on such issues in order to develop practical solutions.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Constitution of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration – former designation for the Organisation – (1953) and amendments (1987). Integrated as Constitution of the International Organisation for Migration.</p>	<p>Theoretically not as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -IOM's activities are more orientated to national cooperation - Activities of promotion
MPC - Migration Policy Centre	<p><i>The Migration Policy Centre (MPC) produces advanced policy-oriented research on global migration, asylum and mobility to serve migration governance needs at European and global levels, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.</i></p> <p>Source: Launching Event of the Migration Policy Centre (2012) and Brochure (2014).</p>	<p>Theoretically not as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research activities - Does not have target groups similar with the ERF

ORGANISATION / FUND	MANDATE & SCOPE	Potential overlap?
OECD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	<p><i>With a view to achieving the aims set out in Article 1 and to fulfilling the undertakings contained in Article 2, the Members agree that they will:</i></p> <p><i>(a) keep each other informed and furnish the Organisation with the information necessary for the accomplishment of its tasks;</i></p> <p><i>(b) consult together on a continuing basis, carry out studies and participate in agreed projects; and</i></p> <p><i>(c) cooperate closely and where appropriate take co-ordinated action.</i></p> <p>Legal basis: Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1960).</p>	<p><i>Theoretically not as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Research oriented activities</i> - <i>Activities of promotion</i>

In addition, Member States' national budget dedicated to asylum and integration issues could finance actions that would repeat ERF actions.

As financial instruments originating from the European Union, the EIF and the ESF were the mechanisms most likely to interfere with the ERF. Although the three funds pursued different objectives, they had their own specificities:

- ▶ The EIF dealt specifically with third-country nationals but excluded asylum seekers;
- ▶ The ESF decision clearly stated that specific attention is to be paid to asylum-seekers and refugees and that ESF's actions should facilitate their integration through employment and housing, whereas ERF's focus was on more immediate short-term needs at arrival and reception and through 'advice and assistance in areas such as housing, (...) and integration into the labour market'.

The other mentioned organisations or mechanisms can have financial incentives but mostly produce outputs such as information or training material which inevitably raised the risk of overlapping with some of the ERF's implemented actions. However, no occurrences of double implementation of projects, of overlaps between actions or of outputs production were ever mentioned by Responsible Authorities or national beneficiaries.

6.2.5.2 Coherence and coordination at national level

Responsible Authorities generally ensured a good level of coherence at national level through effective coordination and specific risk mitigation strategies

In most Member States, the ERF was implemented in coherence and complementarity with other actions and with what could be implemented at national level and/or financed through other financial programmes, either national or European. This statement is confirmed by the national evaluation reports: 26 Member States out of the 27⁷² stated that the ERF was used in coherence and complementarity with other mechanisms and actions implemented.

The ERF was the only financial tool used by beneficiaries to target asylum-seekers or refugees in many of the 27 MS. In HU, for instance, the Responsible Authority as well as national beneficiaries revealed that the ERF was the main Fund – if not the only one – they could apply to in this field, except for a few local funds with much less significant allocated amounts, which prevents from overlapping with other funds or financial instrument.

When considering more specifically the EIF and the ESF, a few Member States had identified upstream some risks of duplication and overlapping, and addressed them through organisational corrective actions:

- ▶ **Designing the national strategy regarding asylum, taking into consideration the ERF and other European sources of funding** so that overlapping was avoided and/or possibilities for synergies are already drawn in the State's strategy. In the UK, for instance, synergies were observed between different sources of funding thanks to active cooperation between the various governments' departments responsible for administering other international/EU financial instruments. Consequently, common views on priority areas, eligible actions, eligible target groups, the strategic programming of proposals, and management and control systems are shared and implemented in a cohesive understanding;
- ▶ **Close cooperation between stakeholders responsible for the management of different funds. 10 national evaluation reports (AT, ES, FR, MT, NL, PT, SE, SK, SI, UK)** mentioned that **coordination and controls** were ensured and contributed to the general level of coherence and complementarity. In Member States such as SE, FR, HU or the UK, all SOLID funds were (fully or partially) managed within the same department or even team of the Responsible Authority. Focusing on SE, the establishment of close cooperation between the Migration Agency and the

⁷² Austria did not properly answered the question in the written evaluation report, although the case study enables to conclude that complementarity was ensured.

Swedish European Social Fund Council which manages the EIF and the ESF was a key success factor for coherence, and the Migration Agency also established two partnerships in the form of a national consultation committee and an expert group, through which all aspects of ERF utilisation were tested on an on-going basis. In MT, as described in the evaluation report, the Responsible Authority ensured coherence through an Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on EU Human Capital Funding Programmes, aimed at sharing strategies for the different EU financial sources.

At project level, the Responsible Authorities could not completely eliminate the risk of overlapping and duplication between the actions of national beneficiaries of the Fund, or between these actions and those of international organisations, such as IOM. However the coordination set up by Member States as well as the demanding control requirements from the Commission, especially with regards to the eligibility of target groups, participated to a good level of coherence between projects. This was raised by 11 Member States in the national evaluation reports, whose analysis also revealed that the ERF enabled the creation of more contacts between national beneficiaries to help them better understand the landscape for asylum stakeholders. This networking effect of the ERF contributed to its external coherence, since synergies were favoured among beneficiaries, which was a new positive impact of the ERF compared to previous programming periods.

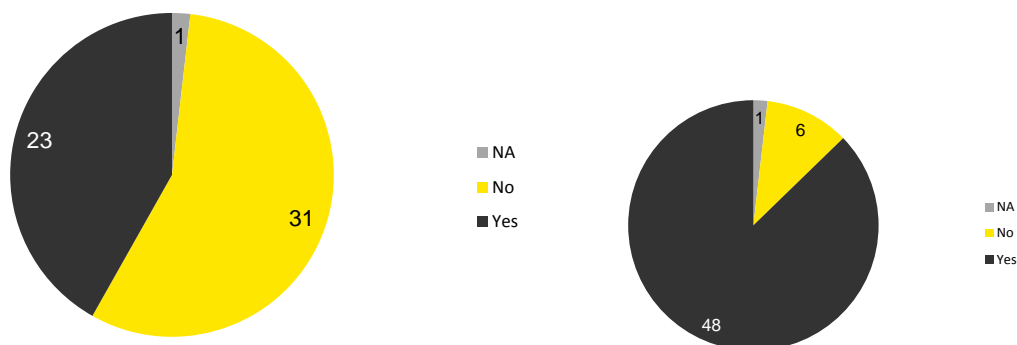
6.2.5.3 Coherence at EU level

At EU level, the ERF shows a lack of synergies between national projects funded by the ERF and Community Actions

Coherence between Community Actions and national actions was not raised as an issue, since they are not supposed to target the same objectives. A basic level of coherence is therefore ensured. However, the evaluation revealed through interviews that Community Actions outputs were largely unknown among national beneficiaries and Responsible Authorities, including when there were studies or database solutions on asylum seekers. This lack of knowledge of Community Actions amongst relevant stakeholders interacting with the ERF increases the risk of incoherence between Community Actions and national actions, and highly reduces possibilities for synergies or capitalisation of knowledge and measures.

Figure 48: Knowledge of CAs amongst national beneficiaries (left) (NB: right graphs shows the knowledge of other national projects)

“Do you know of any other projects financed through the ERF on the EU level (e.g. Community Actions)?”



Source: EY survey; 55/55 answers

Source: EY survey; 55/55 answers

Source: EY e-survey to national projects beneficiaries, question 24 (right) and 25 (left)

In the same way, the lack of knowledge diffusion from Community Actions’ outputs across Member States by the European Commission reduces the possibility for Responsible Authorities to create systematic transnational networks and to capitalise on outputs already produced when selecting national projects.

The complementarity between the ERF and EASO – which had taken over from the ERF on many Community Actions’ scope – is work in progress

Created by European Union Regulation 439/2010 in order to strengthen the cooperation of EU Member States on asylum, EASO is a European agency which specific objectives and actions are related to:⁷³

- ▶ **Permanent support:** supporting and stimulating the common quality of the asylum process through common training, common asylum training material, common quality and common Country of Origin Information (COI);
- ▶ **Special support:** tailor-made assistance, capacity building, relocation, specific support and special quality control tools;
- ▶ **Emergency support:** organising solidarity for Member States subject to particular pressures by providing temporary support and assistance to repair or rebuild asylum and reception systems;
- ▶ **Information and analysis support:** sharing and merging information and data, analyses and assessments at EU level, including EU-wide trend analyses and assessments;
- ▶ **Third-country (non-member country) support:** supporting the external dimension of the Common European Asylum System, supporting partnerships with third countries to reach common solutions, including by capacity building and regional protection programmes, and coordinating Member States’ actions on resettlement.

With regards to EASO’s mandate and the ERF’s eligible actions, risks of overlapping seemed high and should be considered. Notwithstanding this statement, it is interesting to note that very few Member States mentioned EASO during the interview and that none of them included EASO’s contact point in the update of the multi-annual or annual work programmes.

At EU level, EASO was neither involved in the design of multi-annual programmes setting up the priorities and eligible Community Actions,⁷⁴ yet EASO has taken over part of Community Actions’ scope. According to EASO, overlapping and duplication might have happened (regarding the publication of studies) and there are some actions clearly of EASO’s mandate that are still covered by Community Actions, but this is due to the agency’s youth and lack of time to take over all activities while it was still under structuration. However, as confirmed by the UNHCR, the risk of inconsistency in terms of mandate and actions is low, since EASO operates from a “continuous activity” perspective, while the ERF is project-based. Also, EASO focuses heavily on institutional training and capacity-building, which was not the case for ERF funded projects.

To a much lesser extent, the coherence between the ERF-funded project’s results and the EMN’s outputs (studies on migration and asylum mostly) is not specifically addressed by the European Commission when elaborating annual work programmes for Community Actions, which increased inevitably the risk of overlaps.

⁷³ From EASO’s website.

⁷⁴ It can be noted that EASO was more involved for the establishment of the AMIF and is now more closely – but not systematically – consulted in the design of the ERF transnational strategy.

6.2.6 EU Added Value

EQ8: What is the additional value of the ERF actions compared to what the Member States would have been able to carry out through investments necessary for the implementation of EU policies in the field of asylum without the support of the Fund?

Methodological approach

The EU added-value question aims to provide 'arguments about the value resulting from EU interventions that is additional to the value that would have resulted from interventions initiated at regional or national levels' (Better Regulation guidelines). As highlighted in the ERF Decision (introduction, paragraph 37), the *expected* added value of the Fund rested on the idea that promoting a 'balance of effort' between Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons cannot be adequately ensured by the Member States acting alone, and can be better ensured through concerted action at Community level.

Several other types of added value were considered as part of this question, some of which relate to expected added value, and some others relate to less anticipated added value:

- A **financial** added value (expected): it assesses whether, at national level, the ERF brought some additional value to actions and projects that would not have been financed solely by national budgets or other sources of funding. At EU level, the financial added value resulted from the actual contribution of the ERF to a balance of effort between Member States;
- **An added value resulting from greater cooperation and more effective practices** within EU Members States (expected), assuming that acting at EU level brings clear added value to national policies by linking efforts across MS;
- **Unexpected added value resulting from other factors**, some of which have been identified during the evaluation process and include the positive impact of EU funding on stakeholders' expertise and recognition.

Main conclusions

- ▶ **With regard to the financial added-value, the ERF was considered as additional funding by most national authorities, which used it to finance projects that would probably not have been implemented otherwise.** It allowed the implementation of pilot projects, the development of new services (such as psychological support, specific assistance in the areas of housing or employment), and the enlargement of existing activities to reach more target groups (especially vulnerable people). In a few MS (such as HU, LT, LV, BG), the ERF played a big part in the establishment of national asylum systems, which did not exist beforehand and which would have benefited from significantly less investment without any EU financial incentive.
- ▶ **The ERF also had a strong - yet not formally expected - added-value in terms of professionalisation and capacity-building of project holders (mostly non-State partners) in the field of asylum.** Apart from helping them to build new services, the European dimension of the ERF led them to develop their management skills in order to comply with Commission's obligations in terms of controls and reporting. It also brought them additional visibility and recognition.
- ▶ However, following findings have been identified regarding the EU added value of the ERF 2011-2013:
 - **# 1: The ERF partially lacked additionality in some MS, where some projects** (not all of them) corresponded to recurring activities that would probably have been funded by the national budget (FR, IT, UK).
 - **# 2: The ERF failed to provide any added value with regards to MS cooperation and**

exchange of best practices. Given the shortcomings of the allocation system and the lack of involvement of MS in responsibility-sharing actions, it did only **partially act as a real EU solidarity instrument.**

6.2.6.1 Financial added value

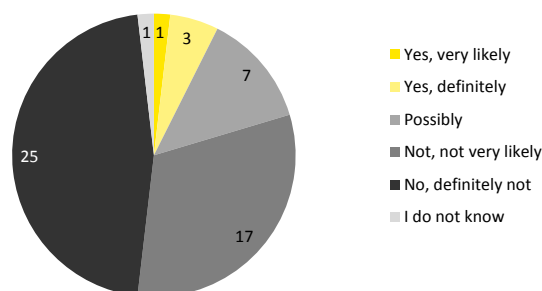
The value added by the ERF as an additional financial resource for national asylum systems and projects is widely recognised

In all MS, the ERF brought a more or less significant financial added value, as it enabled the implementation of additional projects, actions, or types of actions that would probably not have been financed by national public resources or other sources of financing.

This statement is confirmed by all 27 MS national evaluation reports and most interviews conducted at national level; the additional funding provided by the ERF to national beneficiaries was the most cited type of added value resulting from the EU intervention during interviews with Responsible Authorities and beneficiaries. According to the beneficiaries who have also responded to the survey conducted for the ex-post evaluation, the ERF clearly provided financial added value (see below): three quarters of them believe that their project(s) could not have been implemented without the ERF. The added value is strong also for beneficiaries of Community Actions, according to whose survey only one person out of 13 respondents believed the project could be implemented without the ERF.

Figure 49: assessment of the ERF financial added value by the ERF beneficiaries

'Do you believe that the project(s) could have been implemented without the support of the ERF (internal resources, alternative financial instruments...)?'



Source: EY survey; 54/55 answers

Source: EY e-survey analysis, question 22

The extent and type of financial added value differed from one MS to another, depending on their specific needs, the level of maturity of their asylum systems and historic asylum trends.

In many MS facing budget constraints and with relatively little experience with asylum issues, the ERF helped **compensate the lack of national resources**, either because of budget cuts and financial constraints, or because asylum issues remained at the bottom of the countries' list of priorities. This was the case in "new" MS, such as BG, HR, EE, HU, LV, and SK, where the ERF contributed extensively to the **development of an asylum system and corresponding facilities, where nothing was previously needed or foreseen.**

In most other cases, the ERF was used as an opportunity and useful additional funding for projects that would have probably not been funded otherwise or only to a smaller extent and with less reactivity (longer timeframes to set up the projects). In these cases, the added value relied on:

- ▶ The opportunity to **finance innovative/new projects** and test new methodologies or facilities. This was the case, for instance, in NL, which particularly emphasised the experimental aspect of ERF-funded projects in its evaluation report. Innovative projects targeting children in asylum centres, for example, were implemented successfully. One of these projects enhanced the participation of children in an asylum centre by involving them in decisions for the types of activities to conduct in the centre and by creating “Children’s Council”. This type of added value was also raised during the interviews in the UK (where the ERF enabled the development of new activities and supported a range of integration projects), and in IT (where beneficiaries at territorial level used the ERF to test models and innovative practices);
- ▶ **A larger scope of activities**, as well as the opportunity to finance additional services that do not directly fall into the state’s competencies. According to the national evaluation reports, 13 MS (CZ, DE, EL, ES, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, PL, RO, SE, and UK) declared that ERF was used to target types of services that go beyond what the state is competent for or able to deliver. In RO, for instance, where the basic services provided by the state are quite limited, the ERF provided funding for needs that could not be financed by public institutions alone, such as interpreters for rare languages, physicians in regional reception centres, and juridical counselling.
- ▶ The **opportunity to focus more on specific target groups**. In France, the ERF was used in particular to address the needs of unaccompanied minors and victims of torture. The national budget alone could not have financed this type of project, which requires specialised actions and knowledge.

The added value provided to national budgets was more or less significant and it did not fully contribute to a “balance” of effort between Member States

The analysis of the share of the ERF in the total budget dedicated to asylum policies in EU Member states⁷⁵ reveals that the actual contribution of the ERF to national budgets was very low in certain MS, especially in western and northern European countries with mature asylum systems (FI, FR, LU, NL, SE, where it could be less than 3%), and much higher in others (for instance in EE and LV where it may have reached 50%).⁷⁶

In this context, **the use of the financial instrument ranged from a simple “welcome” additional funding to a clear value adding instrument**. As raised during the evaluation process, the ERF may even have lacked additionality **in a few MS and under certain circumstances**, where it actually **replaced some parts of the national budgets**. The notion that all ERF actions would not have been funded by national funding if not by the ERF can be questioned and is overall difficult to prove. In these MS, including MS with mature asylum systems (such as FR and IT), examples can be found of projects financed by the ERF that should have fallen under the state’s responsibilities, and where the ERF appeared to act as a replacement source of financing for what the state should finance in the framework of its own asylum policies. However, the cases of countries facing acute asylum pressures whilst also lagging behind in terms of the implementation of the EU acquis on reception, integration and implementation of asylum procedures have to be considered separately. In these MS, the ERF had an upgrading and catalytic role: it brought structure to this policy in line with the EU acquis in the field and one may reasonably assume that nothing would have been implemented without the ERF.

6.2.6.2 Added value in terms of cooperation and exchange of best practices

The added value brought to national policies and practices in terms of cooperation

⁷⁵ Depending on the availability of data in EMN ad-hoc query on “expenditure of asylum system”, launched in 2012 (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/ad-hoc-queries/protection/424_emn_ad-hoc_query_on_expenditure_of_asylum_system_26sept2012%28widiers%29_.pdf).

⁷⁶ Exact figures to be confirmed.

and exchange of best practices was not as high as expected

18 Member States declared in their national evaluation reports that ERF gave the opportunity to develop deeper cooperation between the different stakeholders working in the field of asylum. In contrast, according to the interviews conducted with Responsible Authorities, only a few networks were created or sustained through ERF funding, and the sharing of best practices was not as developed or intense as it could have been. As observed in BG and HU through the case studies, the ERF was not used as a tool to foster cooperation and responsibility sharing, and was not suitable to participate in the implementation of the CEAS.

Nevertheless, it can be noted that for some Member States (including EE, ES, CY, MY, HU, BE and IT), the ERF has influenced the design of national policies. In CY, the Responsible Authority clearly stated that the ERF shed light on the need to include integration aspects in national policy. In EE, the Responsible Authority declared that the ERF provided them with the necessary framework to design their own priorities. Lastly, in FR, a project targeting female victims of human trafficking contributed to the recognition of human trafficking as persecution, as defined by the Geneva Convention.

The ERF proved a strong incentive for the development of resettlement programmes in some Member States

With regard to Priority 3, the ERF highly favoured the design and implementation of resettlement policies. It was particularly the case with HU, UK and PT, where, according to interviews, proper and structured resettlement programs were developed under the ERF guidelines.

The ERF brought some unexpected “soft” added value to both international organisations and beneficiaries in terms of professionalisation, expertise and recognition

In addition to being an extra financial resource for national beneficiaries, the ERF had impacts on the implementing organisations themselves, mainly by building up their capacities in terms of management, but also on expertise in the subjects covered.

The table below provides, on the basis of the analysis of the 27 national evaluation reports, the different types of benefits identified for implementing organisations and the number of Member States that reported these effects. Specifically, the table below is based on the answers provided to question 5.4.2 of the report template, enquiring as to the additional effects of the ERF on implementing organisations. The answers provided by Member States allowed the evaluation team to build a typology of effects. All Member States have observed at least one of the following benefits, but many Member States reported several.

Table 13: Typology of benefits produced by the ERF, and number of occurrences

<i>Types of benefits</i>	<i>Number of MS</i>
Professionalisation of organisations through skills improvement and enhanced internal organisation (processes, applications to funds, project management, follow-up and evaluation)	19
Reinforcement of knowledge related to asylum issues (target groups' needs, specific target groups) leading to project refinements	14
Recognition of implementing organisations and their actions from the National Authority or other public institutions	10

- ▶ The most cited benefit for national beneficiaries related to their **professionalisation**, which was also confirmed by interviews with Responsible Authorities, as well as national beneficiaries in the context of the case studies. Indeed, the implementation of EU-funded projects requires internal capacities, such as project management skills and rigor to respond to the Commission obligations in terms of reporting. By providing national beneficiaries the opportunity to build their capacities, the ERF led them, according to 19 Member States (AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL, ES) to improve their internal processes, to enhance their project and budget management skills and to develop and implement new evaluation methodologies to ensure the sustainability of their actions. In MT for instance, 63% of beneficiaries declared that the ERF contributed to improvements in the internal functioning of their organisation. In IT, BG, FR and HU, where case studies were conducted, this added value of the ERF was widely cited by stakeholders; in HU, all interviewed national beneficiaries agreed that the European framework and standards provided by the Fund, as well as its requirements, have helped improve and professionalise their operations.
- ▶ The professionalisation of beneficiaries is also a real ERF benefit. Through ERF-funded projects, and as stated by 14 Member States (BE, BG, CZ, HU, IE, LV, LU, PL, PT, SK, SI, ES, SE, UK) in the national evaluation reports, beneficiaries could increase and deepen their knowledge related to asylum-seekers and refugees and, for instance, capitalise on the opportunity provided by the ERF to deepen their understanding of the needs of specific target groups (minors, victims of torture as in FR, LGBTI) or to develop new expertise and service offerings (as observed in the UK, for instance).
- ▶ The recognition and **legitimacy** conferred by participation in ERF projects, and specifically due to their European dimension, are an added value recognised by Member States and, in particular, national beneficiaries of the ERF. Responsible Authorities reported that the implementation of the ERF within their country contributed to a better awareness and mapping of the different organisations working in the field of asylum. BG reported that the Responsible Authority reinforced its image due to the implementation of ERF projects. Furthermore, the ERF also helped beneficiaries to increase their legitimacy vis-à-vis other donors, for example. This type of added value was mentioned in 14 national evaluation reports, including EE, DE, EL, IE, LV, LU, MT, PT, RO and SK. Interviews with national beneficiaries revealed that the added value of the ERF with regard to this topic could go further: in FR, the “EU-funded” label was perceived as playing a role in the success of beneficiary applications to other local funds, while in HU, the ERF - and more generally EU financial instruments - were deemed “neutral” and turned out consequently to be an extra argument for local beneficiaries (mostly NGOs) to prove the benefits and legitimacy of their actions vis-à-vis the government (which is important, given the socio-political context regarding asylum since 2010).

7 PART II: ex-post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund Community Actions 2008-2010

7.1 Implementation of the ERF 2008-2010 Community Actions

7.1.1 Objectives and Priorities of the Community Actions

The EC's strategy for transnational actions or actions of interest to the Community (CAs) between 2008 and 2010 was defined in the successive annual work programmes (AWPs) which set out objectives, priorities and foreseen results for each year.

This strategy kept a flexible approach during the three-year period and aimed at promoting a harmonised framework, through which transnational laws and actions could meet European and national exigencies.

During the three-year period, continuity was ensured and the focus was put on four main pillars:⁷⁷

- ▶ **A. The correct implementation of the Community legislation of the first stage of the Common European Asylum System** (defined as a key Priority of the 2008 and 2009 AWP). The improvement of the **quality of asylum decision-making** as well as of the **efficiency of the Dublin system** were specifically emphasised in the 2010 AWP where both were considered as separate Priorities. The development, implementation and dissemination of best practices in all areas related to the CEAS was also highlighted as one of the eight priorities defined for 2008;
- ▶ **B. The support to solidarity mechanisms**, in particular the assistance to MS faced with particular pressure on their national asylum systems as well as the facilitation of intra-EU relocation (especially from 2009);
- ▶ **C. The promotion of good practices and new developments in the field of resettlement;**
- ▶ **D. The support to vulnerable people** ensured through the development of common measures to address their specific needs.

Other Priorities were defined on an ad-hoc basis. These included:

- ▶ **E. Activities facilitating the practical and collaborative cooperation**, especially with regard to actions aimed at jointly compiling and applying **COI and common trainings** of asylum officials (pointed out as a Priority as from 2009);
- ▶ **F. The facilitation of access to the asylum procedure** for the persons seeking protection, in particular **at borders and in maritime areas** (pointed out as a Priority until 2009);
- ▶ **G. The integration and empowerment of persons** benefitting from international protection (considered as a Priority in 2008, it was no longer highlighted in the 2009 and 2010 AWP);
- ▶ **H. Finally, one Priority aimed to support conferences on presidency**: the Conference of the EU Swedish Presidency in 2009 and the Ministerial Conference on asylum of the Belgian Presidency in 2010.

7.1.2 Available resources

- ▶ According to the annual work programmes, €20.8 million were made available to finance ERF Community Actions from 2008 to 2010, with €7.1 million in 2008, €9.9 million in 2009 and €3.8 million in 2010. The 60% decrease between 2009 and 2010 is explained by the creation of the EASO in 2010, which was entrusted with some of the tasks previously financed under the ERF as regards strengthening practical cooperation on asylum matters.
- ▶ Respectively 8.5 % and 9.4% of total ERF's available resources were used to CAs in 2008 and 2009, which was slightly below the maximum limit of 10% defined in article 4.1 of the ERF

⁷⁷ The capital letters have been defined by the evaluator based on the priorities defined in the AWP.

Decision No. 537/2007/EC. This ratio was only 3.6% in 2010, after the limit had been reduced to 4% as per article 1 of Decision No 458/2010/EU.⁷⁸

- ▶ Resources were budgeted to finance CAs through both grants (€19.2 million) and procurements (€1.6 million).
- ▶ The following table shows related commitments and payments that were collected by the Commission for the evaluation. As mentioned in the methodological introduction, only partial information has been received regarding procurements:

Table 14 : CAs budget implementation in M€ per year through grants and procurements

	2008			2009			2010		
	Available (1)	Commitments (2)	Payments (2)	Available (1)	Commitments (2)	Payments (2)	Available (1)	Commitments (2)	Payments (2)
Grants	6,43	6,62	5,40	9,17	9,05	7,05	3,57	3,71	3,42
Procurements	0,68	NA	0,15	0,70	NA	0,71	0,20	NA	0,12
Total CAs	7,11	NA	NA	9,87	NA	NA	3,77	NA	NA

	2008		2009		2010	
	Commitment rate	Absorption rate	Commitment rate	Absorption rate	Commitment rate	Absorption rate
Grants	103%	84%	99%	77%	104%	96%
Procurements	NA	22%	NA	101%	NA	60%

(1) Source: CA's annual work programmes

(2) Source: CA database (European Commission).

	2008 - 2010				
	Available (1)	Commitments (2)	Payments (2)	Commitment rate	Absorption rate
Grants	19,17	19,38	15,97	101%	83%
Procurements	1,58	NA	0,98	NA	62%
Total CAs	20,75	NA	NA	NA	NA

(1) Source: CA's annual work programmes

(2) Source: CA database (European Commission).

Table 15: Total budget for 2008–2010 (in M€)

7.1.3 Implemented Community Actions through procurements

€1.58 million were made available for procurements in the 2008-2010 AWP's and resulted in four contractings. These related to the development and maintenance of the EU-wide COI common portal and the conduct of two studies, the first one on relocation (2009) and the second one on the feasibility and legal implications of establishing joint processing of asylum applications in the EU.

Table 16: List of 2008-2010 procurements

Year	Study/Action	Collected information on the study's implementation
2008	Development and maintenance of the EU-wide COI common portal	The action took place and consisted in a pilot project for developing a common portal for COI. The objective was the facilitation of Member States' access to COI information.

⁷⁸ Article 1 of Decision No. 458/2010/EU amended article 4.1 of the ERF Decision No. 537/2007/EC. The amendment decreased the percentage of ERF budget available for the implementation of Community Actions from 10% to 4% following the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office in 2010, in order to free up resources for funding the Support Office and to take account of the reduced scope of the Community Actions.

	Study on measures taken to facilitate internal reallocation	The study did not take place and was replaced by the below mentioned project in 2009.
2009	Study on relocation of beneficiaries international protection	The study took place and provided information about the financial, political and legal implications of relocation of beneficiaries of international protection. The study also examined other options possible to foster solidarity between Member States.
	Further development and maintenance of the EU-wide COI common portal	The action consisted in the further development of the COI common portal.
2010	Study on the feasibility and legal and practical implications to establish joint processing of asylum applications on the territory of the EU	The study took place and targeted an assessment of the potential for joint processing of asylum claims within the EU, as a possible solidarity mechanism in support of Member States' needs.

Sources: Annual Work Programme, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/asylum/common-procedures/docs/jp_final_report_final_en.pdf

7.1.4 Implemented Community Actions through grants

- ▶ Between 2008 and 2010, 41 Community Actions were funded through grants, with 10 projects in 2008, 20 in 2009 and 11 in 2010. Two grants were directly awarded (one in 2009 and one in 2010) and 39 grants were awarded through open calls for proposals organized each year.

Table 17: **Proposals selected per year**

Year	No of Calls	Proposals Received	Proposals ineligible	Proposals not selected	Proposals rejected	Reserve	Proposals selected
2008	1	43	6	17	8	3	10
2009	1	52	3	12	16	3	19
2010	1	35	12	0	12	2	10

- ▶ Commitments amounted to €19.3 million during the three-year period. The average committed budget per project was of around €0.18 million for directly awarded Community Actions and of €0.48 million for the Community Actions awarded through three calls for proposals, organised once a year.
- ▶ Based on collected data, the commitment and absorption rates for the three-year period were respectively of 101% and 83%.

7.1.5 Implemented priorities

All priorities except the integration and empowerment of persons benefiting from international protection were implemented during the period 2008-2010.

The most commonly implemented Priority consisted of the correct implementation of the Community legislation of the first stage of Common European Asylum System with around € 6 million and 12 actions.

Table 18 : Committed budget per priority during 2008 2010 (in M€)

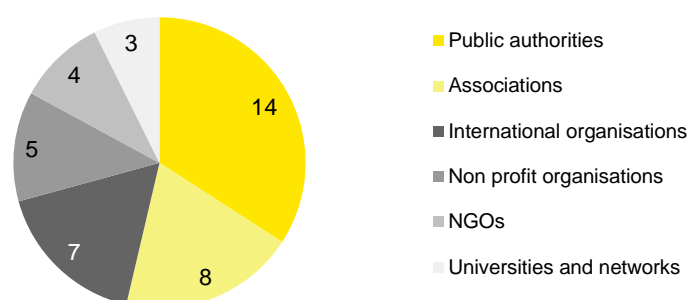
	2008	2009	2010	2008-2010
Correct implementation of the Community legislation of the first stage of the Common European Asylum System	2,43	2,33	1,23	5,99
Solidarity mechanisms	1,12	2,88		4
Resettlement	2,28		0,82	3,1
Projects targeting vulnerable people		3,32	1,21	4,53
Activities facilitating the practical and collaborative cooperation (especially COI)	0,56	0,41	0,2	1,17
Facilitation of access to the asylum procedure for the persons seeking protection, in particular at borders and in maritime areas	0,22			0,22
Integration and empowerment of persons benefitting from international protection				0
Support conferences on presidency		0,12	0,25	0,37

Source: EY analysis from EU Commission data
(More than one priority possible)

7.1.6 Beneficiaries of ERF Community Actions

Most commonly, lead beneficiaries that implemented Community Actions between 2008 and 2010 were public authorities and associations.

Figure 50 : Profile of lead beneficiaries

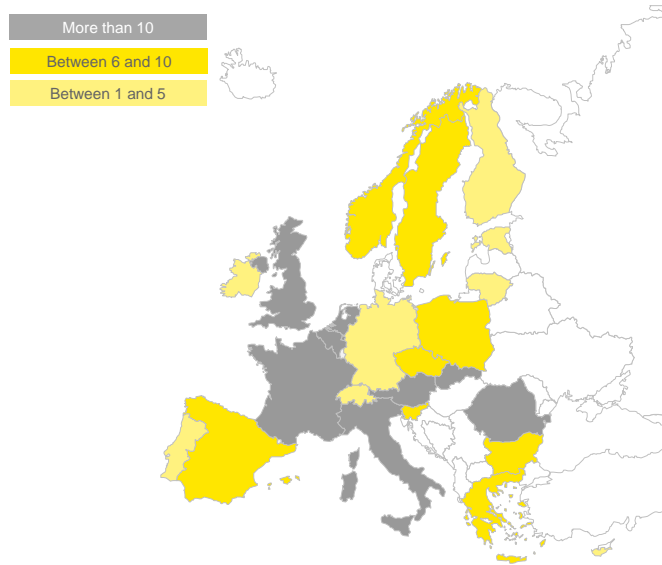


Source : Analysis EY on the basis of the EU Commission data

The majority of implemented Community Actions involved partnerships. The information is missing with regard to the direct awards implemented in 2009 and 2010. Only three Community Actions did not involve any co-beneficiaries and were led by an international organization (IOM and UNHCR) or a national structure (the Hungarian Helsinki Committee).

Partners involved in CAs were based in 25 Member States. They were mainly focused in France (25 projects), Belgium (19 projects), Italy (16 projects) and the United Kingdom (13 projects).

Figure 51: Geographical distribution of partners



Source: EY quantitative database based on the EU Commission data

7.2 Answers to the Evaluation questions

7.2.1 Relevance

(EQ5): To what extent did the ERF objectives set out for 2008-2010 Community actions correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?

(EQ6): To what extent did the 2008-2010 ERF Community actions correspond to the needs related to receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons?

Main conclusions

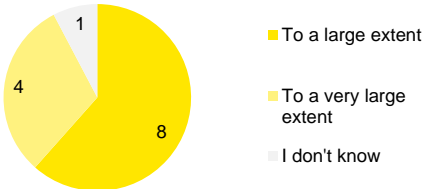
- ▶ The objectives and priorities set out for CAs from 2008 to 2010 were relevant to existing needs. Their wide coverage was highly appreciated by beneficiaries although they did not allow any concentration of resources on a few key priority needs.
- ▶ At the operational level, the ERF was able to finance a wide set of actions that were all relevant. However, the way projects were selected was not fully transparent according to the beneficiaries

All Priorities set out for 2008-2010 CAs were relevant to meeting existing challenges at EU and MS level

Community actions were the best tool to contribute to the harmonisation of asylum systems and the implementation of common standards. According to all respondents to the CA survey, the ERF priorities that were specified in the annual calls for proposals **adequately matched the needs in the field of asylum between 2008 and 2010 and onwards**. International/European stakeholders and CAs' beneficiaries that have been interviewed and surveyed highlighted the importance of developing common approaches, thus confirming the relevance of implementing transnational projects that foster international practical cooperation.

The need to share best practices for the improvement of the national asylum systems was specifically highlighted. A few interviewees also underlined the need to respond to the groups of victims of torture and most vulnerable refugees which were mostly not considered by other calls and donors.

Figure 52: Question 8: 'To what extent do you think the ERF priorities specified in the calls for proposals "Community Actions" responded to the European and national needs in the field of asylum between 2008 and 2013?'



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 13/13 answers

Priorities set out for 2008-2010 CAs had a particularly wide coverage which allowed in theory to target all key needs at the EU level, from the most general needs – such as support to the implementation of Community law – to more specific and operational needs – such as the support to COI, to common trainings, and to the organisation of a conference of the EU Presidency. Interviews and surveys showed diverse interests depending on the organisations, which resulted in an overall high level of satisfaction from surveyed and interviewed beneficiary organisations. Interviewees noted that the calls respond to very different interests: sometimes the priorities really helped the interest of the asylum seekers and refugees to increase the standards and compare the different treatment provided by the EU MS, whilst some others directly addressed the benefit of MS for better control.

However this wide coverage was also a weakness as it resulted in some resource dispersion and lack of hierarchy in the needs to address, which did not allow to focus on a few priority needs. When analysing set priorities and objectives, one can note a slight attempt of the EC to adapt to the evolution of the context, to concentrate and be more specific, but it might have not been sufficient.

- ▶ the number of annual priorities and objectives was reduced from eight to six from 2009 to 2010, with a greater effort in providing more detailed objectives;
- ▶ the implementation of the Community law was focused on the support to the Dublin system on the one hand, and on the decision-making process on the other hand (whilst these elements were mixed in various potential objectives in 2008 and 2009, they were promoted as Priorities in 2010).

Funded CAs were relevant to addressing AWP's priorities potential actions including a wide range of initiatives eligible for ERF funding provided they have a transnational dimension: Community cooperation activities (such as interpretation and translation services), the setting up of transnational networks, pilot projects based on transnational partnerships, awareness-raising campaigns, studies, exchange of information or best practices, the development of common tools, methods and indicators, support to existing networks). They also include the provision of support services to MS in the event of emergency situations.

Overall actions were relevant to addressing one or more needs, and no project was pointed as being irrelevant. The analyses performed on the types of actions confirm the large dispersion of projects in terms of objectives and types of activities.

Activities aimed at sharing Information on countries of origin were highlighted as particularly useful by most stakeholders. By sharing such information among a number of MS, synergies and existing experiences of some MS were used to the benefit of all Project Partner Administrations.

7.2.2 Effectiveness

(EQ1): To what extent did the 2008-2010 ERF Community actions contribute to the achievement of the objectives defined in Articles 2 and 3 of Decision No. 2007/573/EC and to the priorities defined by the Strategic guidelines (Decision No. 2007/815/EC)?

Main conclusions

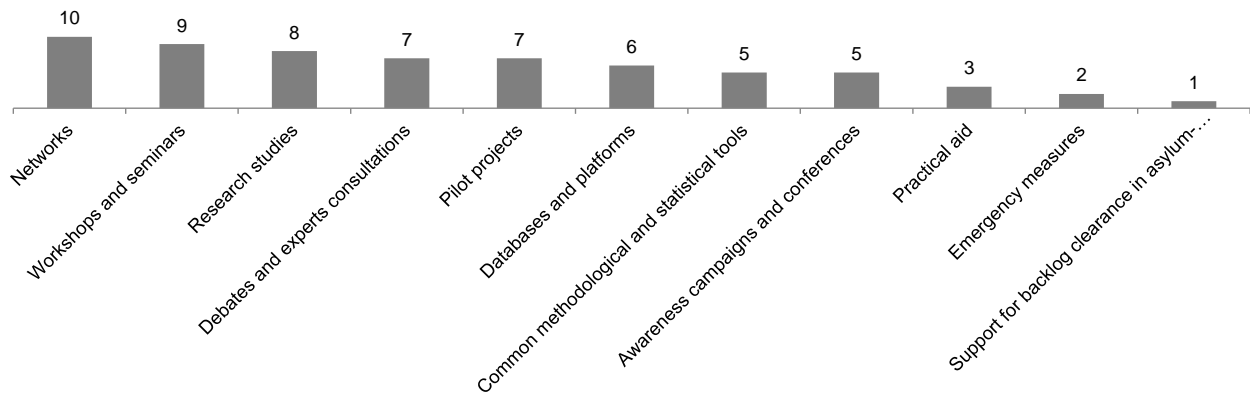
- ▶ Despite receiving less than 10% (4% since 2010) of ERF envelope, CAs generated positive, though still insufficient changes towards the implementation of the CEAS and the increase of solidarity between MS.

The ERF 2008-2010 allowed the funding of a large range of activities.

Networks were developed in all sectors of intervention. In the same vein, workshops and seminars were organised in order to reunite and exchange points of view. Mutual learning and knowledge sharing was ensured through the organisation of experts meetings and the exchange of best practices

on the transnational level. Moreover, Community Actions funding was the possibility to finance research studies and pilot projects.

Figure 53: Question 10: 'What were the main activities implemented through the Community Action(s) you participated in?'



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 13/13 answers

The implementation of the CA priorities varied from year to year with some annual focus on specific actions.

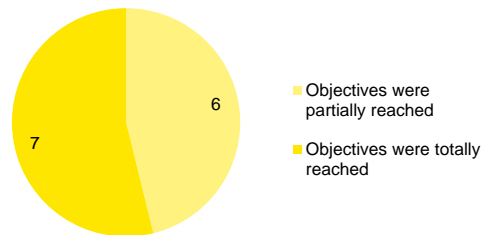
- ▶ The Priority concerning 'implementation of the Community legislation of the first stage of the Common European Asylum System' was the only one implemented each year between 2008 and 2010. It is also the Priority with the highest budget. The projects mainly concern the harmonisation of the asylum system in Europe and the improvement of the quality of the asylum procedures. The projects consisted in meetings and workshops to involve the main stakeholders in this field and invite them to share their experience and identify best practices. Several guides and training sessions were also implemented. One of the largest project in 2008 and 2009 was the implementation of the European Asylum Curriculum to provide a vocational training system for employees of the immigration and asylum services in Europe. Three projects between 2008 and 2010 focused on the implementation of the Dublin procedure.
- ▶ The projects targeting solidarity mechanisms were developed in 2008 and 2009. Most of the projects were designed to support Malta to face the increase of asylum seeker arrivals in this Member State.
- ▶ The projects dedicated to resettlement were implemented in 2008 and 2010. They aimed to promote resettlement practices in Europe through the development of networks and the provision of studies on the feasibility of the resettlement.
- ▶ The projects focusing on vulnerable persons were mostly implemented in 2009 and some in 2010. They were generally designed to answer the needs of a specific target group: unaccompanied minors, victims of torture and violence, children and take into account specific issues as the fight against homophobia, the harmonisation of the guardianship, key to identify specific target groups. Some outputs were very concrete with the development of guides and tools to help staff to support vulnerable people, whilst some consisted of studies or conferences to transfer knowledge and share good practices.
- ▶ At least one project was developed each year to support the implementation of the COI. One of the most important projects (in 2009 and 2010) was the support to the MedCOI tool. One project in 2008 focused on the specific assistance to refugees arriving by boat in Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain.

- ▶ Finally, in 2009 and 2010, two conferences were organised by the Belgium and Swedish presidencies.

Community Actions were effective in the realisation of their outputs.

According to the interviews, CAs beneficiaries of Community Actions were satisfied about their level of effectiveness. As the image below shows, this was also confirmed by the survey, where none of the respondents negatively assessed the CAs effectiveness.

Figure 54: Question 11: ‘To what extent did the Community Action(s) your organisation participated in reach the objectives that had been defined in the project proposal?’



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 13/13 answers

However, according to the project evaluation reports, implementation issues were identified in five CAs. Difficulties were mainly related to management issues and were of different natures:

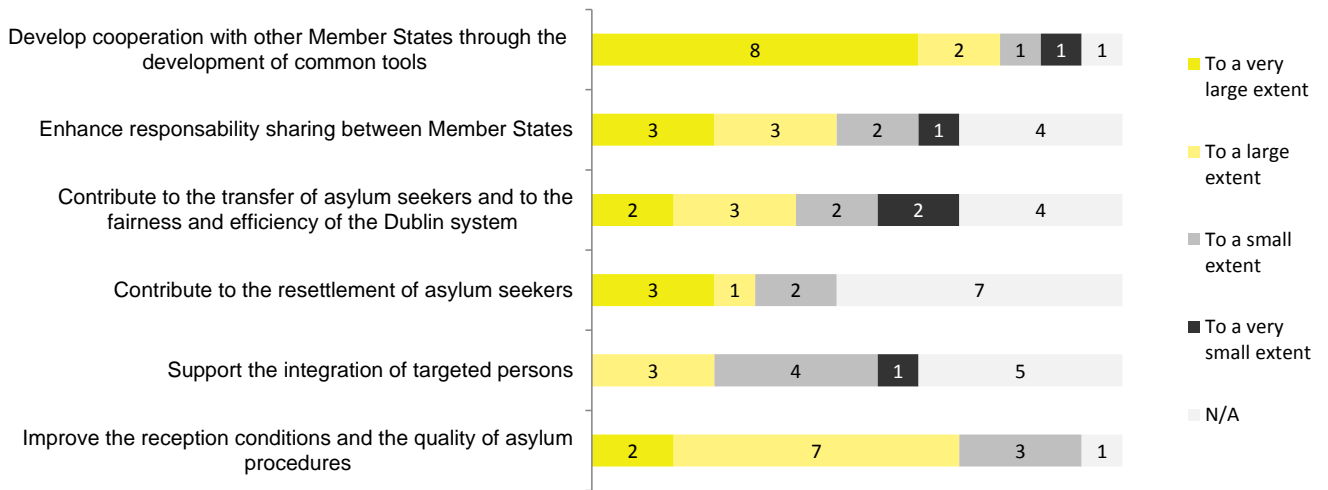
- ▶ **Context issues were observed in two CAs:** in one CA, the decrease in the number of maritime arrivals made difficult to fill in the surveys addressed to the migrants and whose results were supposed to complete the desk research regarding the situation and challenges of irregular maritime arrivals in Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain. In another, the implementation was hardened by the diversity in the national will;
- ▶ **Internal management has been an issue in three CAs:** timetable issues such as difficulties were observed in collecting inputs and deliverables of quality in time, delayed start owing to slow recruitment, protracted discussions with IOM over payments, and a shift of location, low motivation of the trainees, and so forth.

Moreover, evaluations of project reports also revealed that many Community Actions required longer time in order to comply with their programmed outputs and to achieve the expected results. Community Actions more specifically analysed during the evaluation process also required more time to deliver their programmed results:

- ▶ The CA ‘European network for technical cooperation on the application of the Dublin II regulation’ (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721) implemented by the Forum Refugiés Cosi was granted two extension authorisations. The project, initially programmed for December 2012, was concluded two months later.
- ▶ The CA ‘European Asylum Curriculum, Phase III – Temporary implementation Unit’ (HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016) was supposed to run for 18 months and was granted a four-month extension, and ended in December 2011.

With regard to results and impact, according to the survey addressed to Community Actions’ beneficiaries, Community Actions mainly contributed to the cooperation with other Member States through the development of common tools as well as to the reception conditions and the quality of asylum seekers. From the results, it is arguable that further focus on resettlement could be encouraged. Finally, if we look at the priorities’ implementation, it is clear that stronger attention should also be addressed to relocation.

Figure 55: Question 15: ‘To what extent did the Community Action(s) you participated in contribute to the following objectives?’



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 13/13 answers

7.2.3 Efficiency

EQ3: To what extent were the effects of the 2008-2010 ERF Community actions achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources?

Main conclusions

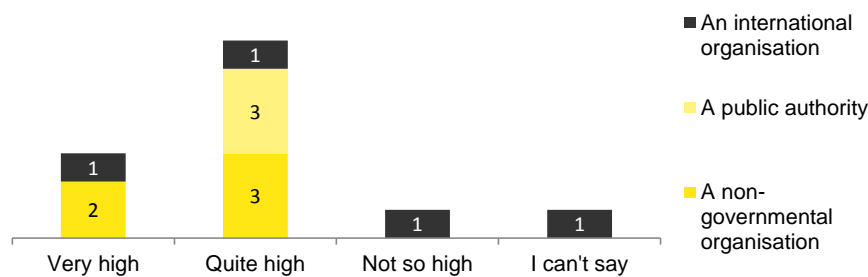
- ▶ It is not possible to measure the cost-effectiveness of CAs given their diversity and the lack of sufficient data on the actual changes they generated in the long term. Several factors enhancing (or reducing) the efficiency of CAs could, however, be identified and these are directly linked to the effectiveness of the funded actions. These entail efficient dissemination activities through sustainable tools (such as a dedicated website, and/or links in other internet pages). They also relied on the actual use of the tools and outputs produced, and an actual capitalisation on lessons learnt from past actions.
- ▶ The administrative tasks involved to apply and implement EU projects are perceived as high by most CAs' beneficiaries that have been interviewed and surveyed during the evaluation process. They are, however, deemed necessary and legitimate, despite room for simplifications. This burden is estimated to be between 5-20% of each project's overall costs.

Although the cost-effectiveness of CAs cannot be measured overall, CAs brought benefits in terms of exchange of experience and cooperation in implementing the CEAS despite their limited part in the ERF total envelope (less than 10% in 2008 and 2009, and less than 4% from 2010). CAs played a key role in developing tools and projects that generated concrete changes in line with the ERF objectives. Their benefits could have been more important if they had been better monitored and disseminated so as to reach **a wider audience amongst all types of stakeholders, and more sustainable impact**

The average cost of CAs was €390,000 during 2008-2010 and projects' costs ranged from €86,000 to €1 million (intra-EU relocation activities from Malta). It is not possible to conclude on the efficiency of CAs overall as these are very diverse and can hardly be compared.

The administrative burden to implement CAs is perceived as high. Most beneficiaries of CAs consider that the costs and capacity related to the administrative burden were quite high, especially with regard to the project preparation and to the costs of monitoring expenditure, writing time-sheets, and managing underlying contracts. A rough estimate of the ERF transactional cost (the cost of filling in the application form, monitoring the expenditure, and so on) amounts to 5-20% depending on the project and the partners. As the survey results below show, 10 CA beneficiaries (out of 13 respondents) estimated a high or quite high administrative burden, particularly non-governmental organisations and public authorities.

Figure 56: Question 22: 'How would you assess the administrative burden of the Community Action(s) you participated in?'



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 12/13 answers

7.2.4 Sustainability

EQ4: To what extent have the positive effects of the 2008 2010 ERF Community actions lasted after the interventions were terminated?

Main conclusions

- ▶ The sustainability of Community Actions depended on their capacity to disseminate lessons learnt outside the established network of project partners and to foster the actual use of their results and best practices amongst relevant actors (including policy makers, legal actors, practitioners, NGOs). However, the weak awareness of what was implemented under Community Actions amongst the different stakeholders of the asylum sector in the MS, as it was investigated during the interviews and surveys, might have lowered their impact.
- ▶ Moreover, it is questioned whether CAs' high financial dependence on EU funding might have also threatened their sustainability, although some CAs have been able to continue their action after they had been taken over by EASO from 2010.

According to project evaluation reports, Community Actions are by nature sustainable.

Their outputs are visible, and an attempt of dissemination is observed. According to the evaluation of the project report of the two Community Actions that were in the scope of our evaluation, their sustainability is evident and emphasised by their dissemination.

- ▶ The 'European Asylum Curriculum, Phase III – Temporary implementation Unit' (HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016) was successful in the development of a three new modules of a Curriculum aiming at providing common vocational training for officials dealing with asylum issues in the EU. The sustainability of this project was visible thanks to its dissemination and

further use. In fact, the EAC concept has been widely reported in the media, mentioned by newspapers, in books and on several official websites and blogs. Furthermore, the EAC concept has been specifically taken into account in the proposal for the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office and the Stockholm Programme 2009. Furthermore, the project developed a feasibility study on transition of EAC to the EASO. This valorises the possibility of synergies and shows a long-term perspective.

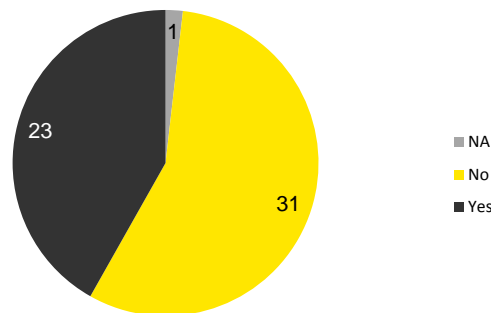
- ▶ During the 'European network for technical cooperation on the application of the Dublin II regulation' (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721) a network was amplified, a website and a database on the jurisprudence improved, a training session delivered and a training CD developed, a conference organised, and a final report with comparative study of national practices of Dublin regulation written.

However, interviews investigation revealed their weak dissemination.

This is confirmed by the interviews provided for the case studies. As it was underlined in the French case study, Community Actions are barely known by the interviewees. One interviewee does not clearly understand the distinction between national ERF and communitarian funds. For another one, Community Actions are unknown. Finally, another interviewee mentioned that transnational projects supported by the ERF are not enough. In Hungary, interviewees mentioned that Community Actions suffer from a weak qualitative follow-up by the Commission (that mainly focus on the budgetary aspects) and questioned the fact that evaluation reports are used in a fruitful way. Finally, during the Bulgarian and Sweden case studies, information on Community Actions could not be provided.

As the graph below shows, this was also confirmed by the survey where only 23 out of 55 beneficiaries of national projects affirmed knowing the Community Actions.

Figure 57: Question: 'Do you know of any other projects financed through the ERF on the EU level (e.g. Community Actions)?'



Source: EY survey; 55/55 answers

In response to this, Community Actions are all submitted to a project report which is evaluated by the Commission. While evaluations are constant and clear, a greater follow up could be achieved through workshops and reunions, and the inclusion of standardised quantitative indicators in the evaluation reports to ensure easier dissemination of results.

Finally it is questioned whether the high dependence of Community Actions from EU funding highly threatens their sustainability.

Only one interviewee mentioned that after having stopped receiving the funds the produced material could no longer be updated.

In support of this, it can be argued that longer projects increase the sustainability of Community Action outcomes, positively impacting their effectiveness.

An example is given by the MedCoi project, which started in 2009 and was financed until 2012. The project is sustainable and still provides today medical COI information to medical users to an increased number of Member States.⁷⁹

7.2.5 Coherence and complementarity

EQ7: To what extent were the 2008-2010 ERF Community actions coherent with and complementary to other actions related to asylum, financed by other EU financial instruments – including the activities of EASO – and from national resources of the Member States?

Main conclusions

- ▶ At the EU level, some selected Community Actions were particularly aligned with the EU Agenda regarding asylum issues.
- ▶ **No specific inconsistencies could be noted between the 2008-2010 Community Actions and between the funded CAs and projects implemented at the national level.**
- ▶ However, Community Actions faced weak dissemination of their outputs which lowered the possibility of synergies with other existing actions or projects.

At the EU level, a high level of coherence is observed between Community Actions' objectives and the European agenda on European issues. Three examples represent the evidence for this observation:

- ▶ A Community Action funded in 2010 was particularly relevant to feed into the EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors;
- ▶ The implementation of Community Actions was coherent with regard to the EU agenda in terms of definition of Asylum System rules and standards. For instance, following a critical moment in terms of asylum flows that increased the discrepancy between Member States, the Commission published the policy plan on asylum in 2008. The plan determined the objectives for the second phase of the Common European Asylum System. The deadline for its implementation was initially 2010, and was postponed for 2012. Meaningfully, the percentage of budget dedicated to the ECAS was 30% in the three years period: 16% related to its correct implementation and 14% to the development of best practices. It is arguable that this focus stopped being a priority in 2010. However, the introduction of a new priority aiming at improving the efficiency and fairness of the Dublin system (16% of the annual budget) in the perspective of the new Dublin III Regulation shows the coherence of the policy objectives and respond to the European needs in the given period.

There was no inconsistency between Community Actions and actions implemented at the national level as their respective scopes are different: whilst Community Actions address the transnational dimension of asylum issues, national actions target needs specific to each Member State. However, as specified in the evaluative questions above, Community Actions face a weak dissemination of their outputs which lowers the possibility of synergies amongst Member States.

The overall coherence between Community actions is good. Indeed, even if some actions covered the same topic (two projects on the implementation of Dublin system in 2010, or the numerous projects targeting vulnerable people in 2009), their objective or the people targeted were not the same. However, the development of complementary projects could only be effective with good coordination and diffusion of the project results, which was not always ensured.

- ▶ For example, two 2010 projects focusing on resettlement showed a certain complementarity. The project Building knowledge for a concerted and sustainable approach of resettlement in the EU and its Member States (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1696) aimed at the development of a systematic and comparative inventory of legal frameworks and actual practices related to

⁷⁹ <https://www.medcoi.eu>

resettlement, as well as the definition of evaluation criteria. The project 'A joint IOM, UNHCR and ICMC project: Linking in EU resettlement – linking the resettlement phases and connection (local) resettlement practitioners' (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1705) acted on a practical dimension, through training and information delivery.

7.2.6 EU added-value

EQ8: What is the additional value of the 2008-2010 ERF Community actions compared to what the Member States would have been able to carry out through investments necessary for the implementation of EU policies in the field of asylum without the support of the Fund?

Main conclusions

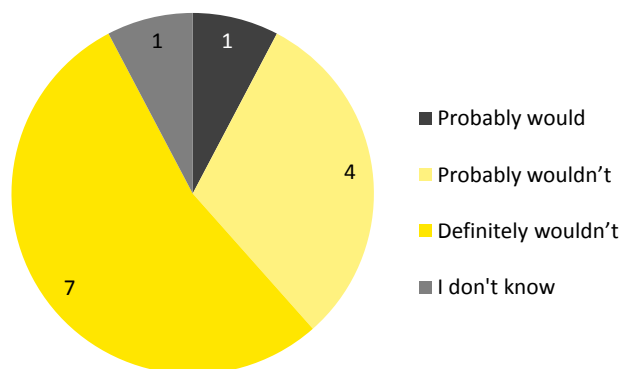
- ▶ Through Community Actions, it was clear that acting at an EU and/or transnational level brought additional value to what would have resulted from interventions at national level. During the 2008-2010 period, no other financial source would have funded practical cooperation and actions of interest of the Community or several Member States in the field of asylum.
- ▶ Community actions were adequately designed to contribute to the objective of fostering solidarity amongst MS and building a common European asylum policy, which are community objectives by nature.

Community Actions have a strong EU added value on a financial and qualitative level.

On a financial level, Community Actions were often used to address transnational needs that would not have been financed by national funding.

This was mentioned by all Community Actions' beneficiaries that have been interviewed and was confirmed by the survey, where only one respondent thought that other funding would have probably financed the CA.

Figure 58: Question: 'Do you believe that this project would have been implemented even without the support of the ERF (internal resources, alternative financial instruments...)?'



Source: Community Actions Survey Report- 13/13 answers

On a qualitative level, Community Actions are by definition meant to address Community issues. It is clear that all Community Actions acted at an EU and/or transnational level bring additional value to what would have resulted from national interventions.

All Community Actions involved more than one Member State and contributed to facing transnational issues.

If we take the example of the two Community Actions in the scope of our evaluation, the EU added value is clear. The Curriculum developed by the CA 'European Asylum Curriculum, Phase III – Temporary implementation Unit' (HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016) contributed to the development of the European Common Asylum System through EAC training modules on exclusion, end of protection and interviewing traumatised people, the strengthening of the national contact points network, and the development of an IT platform for operational use. Mutual learning and knowledge sharing through experts networking activities allowed injecting a transnational point of view to national actors involved in the asylum system.

Similarly, in the case of the 'European network for technical cooperation on the application of the Dublin II regulation' (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721), a final report with a comparative study of national practices of the Dublin regulation was written, in relevance to the priority issues in the EU agenda. According to the evaluation of the project report, the CA enhanced the possibility of enlarging a solid network of associations specialised on Dublin issues. The large number of partners also contributed to the success of the project by providing a large panorama of the European framework in this matter.

However, according to the interviews and as specified in the previous questions, Community Actions funding is not enough and their outputs are not disseminated sufficiently. For these reasons, their potential EU added value is not optimal.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

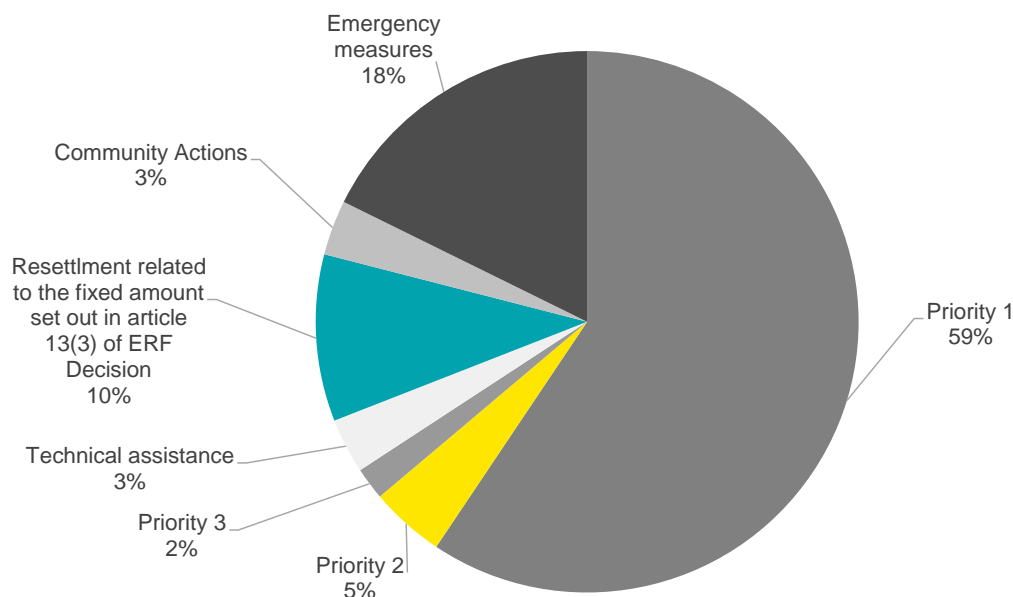
8.1 Main conclusions

- ▶ The ERF 2011-2013 amounted to €386 million in programmed financing and €315 million in payments.⁸⁰ Overall, it supported the implementation of more than 1,500 projects through MS annual programmes (shared management mode), 15 Community Actions (direct management mode) and emergency measures in 11 MS.
 - Projects focused principally on **reception and integration** (Priority 1, 90% of the shared management portion of the ERF, excluding technical assistance,⁸¹ and 59% of total ERF envelope) and generally directly benefitted asylum seekers and refugees, or beneficiaries of international protection.
 - Some **resettlement projects** were implemented (Priority 3 and fixed amount per resettled person according to article 13(3) of the ERF Decisions, which both represented 10% of the total ERF envelope) in the MS (mainly UK, IE, SE, FI, DE, ND, CZ, ES and PT) which chose a more specific and targeted approach.
 - A different strategy was also adopted by some MS having acceded to the EU after 2004 (such as the Baltic states), which applied a more mixed approach that included a larger part of projects aimed at developing their **asylum policies, tools and methodologies, and improving their capacities to process asylum applications** (Priority 2, 5% of total ERF envelope).
 - IT, EL, BE, MT, BG, CY and HU benefitted from **emergency measures** (18% of ERF programming) to a large extent (they represented more than half of the total budget in IT, EL, MT and BG).
 - Community actions were implemented for a total budget of approximately €11 million, which included €5.6 million to support emergency situations related to the Greek asylum system through two directly awarded grants in 2012 and 2013.

⁸⁰ As 20 programmes are not closed at the date of the evaluation, the payment amount cannot be considered as definitive.

⁸¹ When considering EM and AT, Priority 1's share is 61.4% of total ERF programmed under shared management mode.

Figure 59: distribution of ERF programmed amount 2011-2013



- ▶ The evaluation found that the objectives set forth in the ERF Decision No. 573/2007/EC were focused on supporting MS in the implementation of their asylum policies and formulated in such a manner as to cover all types of specific MS needs. The long list of potential eligible actions and the latitude afforded to authorities for the management of the Fund would have allowed them to address practically any need. In the context of the refugee crisis, the augmentation of the emergency envelopes also allowed the ERF to respond to urgent situations in several MS. The programmes defined by the MS were also consistent with the national strategies. However, the **regulation lacked streamlined specific Objectives and Priorities in coherence with the general objectives**; Priority 1 is very large and potentially covers all types of needs. This led to poor coverage of some needs arising from the implementation of the CEAS by MS programmes (especially regarding the concrete implementation of the solidarity mechanism).
- ▶ At national level, **although ultimately relevant to national needs, the programmes were rarely based on a large consultation of stakeholders or a needs assessment (baseline definition). The MS also lacked a proactive, strategic vision for the use the ERF focused on maximising its benefits.** Instead, authorities often chose the easiest path to committing available funding by favouring calls for proposals and aligning their strategies to the submitted (relevant and useful) projects.
- ▶ The **allocation system was also not relevant to the EU needs of convergence, solidarity and development of the CEAS.** It relied on historical flows of asylum seekers (with an additional €200,000 envelope for MS having entered the EU after 2004), and did not take into account the maturity level of asylum policies or current trends in flows of asylum seekers.
- ▶ On the results' side and according to broad estimates based on MS' figures, around 1 million asylum seekers and refugees in one way or another benefited from the ERF 2011-2013. The ERF has been effective at **MS level** in so far as the programmes led to structural changes and to the development of innovative projects:
 - Projects brought about tangible and positive effects for the final beneficiaries: outputs ranged from services aimed to cover basic needs to more technical support on legal aid or psychological or medical support. They also included pilot projects aimed at testing different methods to improve the integration through access to housing or employment (strong EU added value);

- Notable increases in MS capacities and additional infrastructure can also be attributed to the ERF, especially in the eastern European countries, which lagged behind in terms of asylum policy development. Here as well, the ERF was of strong added value.
 - Emergency measures played a key role in supporting the MS faced with particular pressures, thus allowing the Fund to adapt effectively to emergency situations and emerging urgent needs (IT, GR, BG, for example).
- ▶ At **EU level**, there was some contribution to the convergence objectives thanks to the upgrading/development of some MS asylum policies through the development of tools and methods and the construction of infrastructures in several MS (such as BG and HU). However, the ERF 2011-2013 did not contribute to effectively favouring the harmonisation of norms and standards and actual solidarity between MS. Apart from the CAs, which were limited in number (less than 10% of the ERF programming, including emergency envelope) and scope, few projects targeted this objective.
 - ▶ The ERF did not contribute significantly to enhancing practical cooperation and the exchange of best practices between the MS, prior to this role being given to EASO from 2010 onwards. The MS authorities did not have opportunities to hold strategic discussions and exchange on the contents of their respective programmes or, a posteriori, on their results, best practices and lessons learnt. **CAs had positive results with regard to the development of tools and methodologies** that could be disseminated and used by several MS. Tools such as the COI portal and MedCOI are now widely used (and are being progressively taken over by EASO) and may contribute to increased uniformisation of asylum decisions. **However, most national stakeholders had little knowledge of CAs, which, in turn also lacked an adequate dissemination component.**
 - ▶ **In addition, very few actions were aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Dublin Directive, whilst relocation was covered by only one CA.** Finally, resettlement incentives proved successful in convincing some MS to become involved or to expand their activities, but this ultimately remained restricted to few MS.
 - ▶ **The ERF lacked effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.** EU-level indicators requested by the EC in the national evaluation report are not linked to the objectives targeted by ERF Decision and no clear quantitative or qualitative expected results and impacts were defined, which makes it difficult to draw clear judgments on the success or failure of the Fund at EU and MS levels.
 - ▶ **The administrative burden of the Fund for both responsible authorities and project beneficiaries was perceived as high, yet variable, according to the MS.** The evaluation found some clear scope for simplification with regard, for example, to the number of requested monitoring reports, to the complexity of rules for eligibility of expenditures, the volume of required supporting evidence and the additional complexity and controls linked to the co-existence of three SOLID funds. However, most rules can ultimately be judged as legitimate in the sense that they were necessary to ensure sufficient monitoring and controls and respond to demands emanating from the MS themselves to provide accountability for EU spending. As MS were required to establish the same structures and systems whatever the size of their national ERF envelope was, important differences in the average management cost per ERF € could be observed. Economies of scale have been reached through the merging of SOLID fund's management structures, confirmed with the merging of all funds as from 2014 with the AMIF. Finally, the perceived administrative burden also appeared to be linked to lack of experience, inadequate capacity and insufficient support from RAs to final beneficiaries at certain times. Experience was gained over time and allowed for increased capacities within the RAs, and improved communication between RAs and project implementers on administrative issues.

8.2 Recommendations

The ex-post evaluation of the ERF implementation is both a legal obligation and an opportunity to make the future implementation of EU financial instruments in the field of asylum more relevant, effective, efficient, coherent and sustainable.

In spite of the long period since the 2008-2013 ERF programming period and the setting up of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the results of the ex-post evaluation should contribute

to the reflections on the mid-term review of the AMIF; it should also be considered an opportunity to shed light on the possible improvements for the 2014-2020 programming period and even after 2020.

The following table presents key recommendations from the ex-post evaluation. These provisional recommendations will be discussed and amended based on the discussions with the ISSG.

Some of them have already been implemented within the framework of the AMIF and are identified in the right-hand column. Some other could be implemented during the second half of the programming period. Finally, others shall be considered for the next programming period.

Finding	Related evaluation criteria (1)	Recommendations	Follow up of these recommendations under the AMIF 2014-2020 (2) & other comments from the EC
Improve the contribution of the Fund to harmonisation of standards and development of the CEAS			
<p>– The ERF allowed for the development of asylum policies and a partial convergence of MS having recently joined the EU; however, it did not sufficiently contribute to a convergence of standards and processes. Too few projects brought concrete and sustainable results in this sense, apart from a small number of CAs, such as the COI portal and the MedCOI project, and MS did not have opportunities to meet and exchange on their ERF programmes and share best practices.</p>	A, B, E, F	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Foster strategic programming that takes account of and focuses more particularly on how to raise minimum (and harmonised) standards, and assess the performance of the Fund according to this. – Create opportunities for more informal and frequent exchanges between the EC and MS, as well as between all MS so as to developing networking, the exchange of views and good practices between MS. Better leverage EASO’s expertise and capacity to develop opportunities for exchanges on good practices. – Develop synergies between CAs (and EASO’s practical cooperation activities) and national projects to ensure that the results of practical cooperation and development of common tools and methods contribute to harmonised asylum systems upgrades. This could be done through dedicated fora and greater communication about CAs to Responsible Authorities. <p>At MS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better identify needs related to the implementation of the standards required as part of the CEAS and more clearly demonstrate how planned/selected projects contribute to these standards and share of best practices with other MS. – Based on the needs, allocate the funds between types of projects/priorities for the whole programming period on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (i) either investments and institutional capacity-building projects that lead to heavy structural changes (in MS with low financial capacity and less mature asylum systems), – or (ii) innovative projects to better address asylum seekers needs or improve the tools and methodologies used by administrative structures to process claims for international protection (in MS with mature asylum systems), – and/or (iii) exchanges of good practices. 	<p><i>Most of these recommendations are now included under the AMIF.</i></p>
Strengthen the solidarity dimension of the Fund			
<p>– The allocation mechanism partially</p>	A, B, F	<p>At EC level:</p>	

Finding	Related evaluation criteria (1)	Recommendations	Follow up of these recommendations under the AMIF 2014-2020 (2) & other comments from the EC
<p>took account of the need to support MS that lagged behind. However, allocations were not consistent with the changing needs resulting from the increase in asylum flows from 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency measures played a key role in supporting most affected MS, but were not optimal to fully compensate the lack of funding in some MS. - The asylum package defines legal obligations, but is no solidarity tool, and there is little incentive for MS to engage in responsibility-sharing initiatives. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better formulate the objectives of the ERF to take into account the need to support a “balanced” effort between MS, as well as the need for greater solidarity between MS and support to the implementation of the Dublin Regulation. - If possible, find ways to adjust the actual allocation based on actual needs and the level of asylum system development. This would involve partial revision of the allocation rules so that they would include a gap assessment with regards to the alignment of each MS with the asylum package (for example, based on the results of Commission’s monitoring of implementation of Directives). They shall also take account of the quality of actual planning of the MS (and the extent to which it aims to improve the implementation of the CEAS), and results achieved in the previous period. - If not possible, find ways to compensate by providing more guidance and directions for MS to catch up and implement the asylum package based on a more focused approach on specific needs. - Find a way to integrate the most updated data on asylum flow. - Keep emergency measures mechanism. 	<p><i>This recommendation is considered not realistic as it would be difficult to agree on a single needs assessment for all MS. It might also lead to inequities as more funding would be allocated to MS that do not comply with the legal obligations.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ERF lacked incentives to encourage MS to engage in relocation activities and, to a smaller extent, in resettlement projects. 	A, B	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restructure incentives to increase the intra-EU transfers. - Dedicate a specific budget for the implementation of resettlement projects and EU resettlement programmes as well as intra-EU transfers of beneficiaries of international protection. 	<p><i>These recommendations are now included under the AMIF.</i></p>
Improve the strategic programming, notably through dialogue with national stakeholders			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme lacked a strategic approach. - Partnership between EC and MS was satisfactory, but it lacks high level strategic discussions and exchanges on the contents, results and impacts of programmes. 	A, B	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the strategic dialogue between the EC and the MS when defining multiannual programmes as well as during the implementation of the programmes. - Streamline the template of the national multi-annual programme to better focus on demonstrating the added value of ERF (AMIF) funding and contribution to the implementation of the CEAS. In addition, create a requirement to conduct a baseline needs assessment (* - the quality would need to be checked). 	<p><i>This recommendation is now included under the AMIF.</i></p>

Finding	Related evaluation criteria (1)	Recommendations	Follow up of these recommendations under the AMIF 2014-2020 (2) & other comments from the EC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National stakeholders were not sufficiently involved in the programme's monitoring and did not benefit from sufficient share of best practices in the MS. Programme preparation did not involve consultation of a broad range of actors. 	A, B	<p>At MS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve all types of stakeholders in the definition of national strategies and programmes, for instance through online consultations or programming meetings. Ensure the representation of key groups in the programming, monitoring and implementation of programmes (authorities, NGOs, legal actors, etc.). Develop networking between national projects implementers so that they share best practices. This could be done through online interactive platforms, regular meetings with all project implementers, thematic workshops on various topics (integration, reception, etc.). 	<p><i>This recommendation is now included under the AMIF.</i></p>
Improve the monitoring and evaluation tools and capacities at EU, MS and project level			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EC did not have any common framework for monitoring indicators on results and impacts of the ERF. EC's Requested indicators did not reflect objectives to be reached. At MS level, existing systems of indicators did not allow adequate monitoring of the annual programmes. Indicators are not reported upon systematically nor verified, so they may be incomplete and contain errors. 	B, C	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a common framework for a set of monitoring indicators on outputs, results and impacts together with MS in order to achieve a degree of homogeneity with regard to set indicators. These indicators should be limited in number and include both mandatory and non-compulsory indicators. Ensure that indicators are RACER, i.e.: "Relevant", i.e. closely linked to the objectives to be reached; "Accepted" (e.g. by staff, stakeholders); "Credible" for non-experts, unambiguous and easy to interpret; "Easy to monitor" (e.g. data collection should be possible at low cost); and "Robust" against manipulation. Make sure that these indicators reflect the objectives of the Fund and ensure they have baseline data and clear targets. The objectives have to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). <p>At MS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement the EU common framework with additional indicators and monitoring arrangements, where relevant and develop the capacity of project implementers to monitor their activities effectively. 	<p><i>This recommendation is now included under the AMIF.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of the National evaluation reports was not homogeneous. The extensive data required in the NER was not relevant, and they did not fully meet evaluation and 	B, C	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align the evaluation requirements with the Better regulation guidelines and support MS in improving the quality of their evaluation practice: improve evaluation questions and suggest both relevant and realistic methodologies to be implemented at national level. Revise the format of the National evaluation reports to foster clear evidence-based 	<p><i>This recommendation is now included under the AMIF.</i></p>

Finding	Related evaluation criteria (1)	Recommendations	Follow up of these recommendations under the AMIF 2014-2020 (2) & other comments from the EC
monitoring needs.		conclusions and recommendations.	
Improve the efficiency of the Fund			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The administration of the ERF was costlier in MS which lacked experience in managing EU Funds as well as in MS whose RAs lacked sufficient technical and administrative resources. - For smaller MS, it was noted that the administrative effort required in managing the ERF programmes is higher in proportion compared to larger MS. 	C, E	<p>At EC level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assist the less experienced MS or those having specific difficulties in the smooth implementation of their management and control systems - Ensure that MS with smaller programmes are not disadvantaged by the high administrative and set up costs. This might be done by revising the requirements for smaller MS. <p>At MS level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that resources and expertise are adequate to implement the tasks as required under the MCS, even during busy periods. This might involve hiring new people or using external teams to work with the RA when needed (for instance during controls and at the closure of the programmes). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative burden for the project implementers was higher in MS where processes required more paperwork, as well as in MS that had less experience in providing assistance to the beneficiaries with regards to abiding with EC's eligibility rules. 	C	<p>At MS level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to identify opportunities to reduce the administrative burden of the project implementers: e.g. number of attachments required, length of application forms, reduction in number of questions, use on online application functionality, streamline use of electronic systems, etc. - More specifically, limit the reporting requirements to minimise the administrative tasks for project implementers: streamline the reporting format, focus on reporting on results and impacts, and limit the reporting frequency - Develop guidelines and trainings to support project implementers in abiding with RA's (and EC's) implementation rules, especially with regards to financial management (eligibility rules, financial reporting) and indicators' follow up (improvement of monitoring systems, interpretation of indicators, etc.) 	
Improve the sustainability, the impacts and the added-value of funded projects			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sustainability of projects depended on different success factors according to the types of projects and activities. 	D, F	<p>At EC (CAs) and MS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When selecting pilot/innovative projects, ensure actual learning from the experience and disseminate of results at national and EU levels. 	

Finding	Related evaluation criteria (1)	Recommendations	Follow up of these recommendations under the AMIF 2014-2020 (2) & other comments from the EC
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Include sustainability as a criterion for selecting projects. Attention should be paid to: (i) the capacity to find alternative funding after the project ends, (ii) the capacity to disseminate the results widely (studies, tools...), (iii) the choice of relevant target persons that would allow multiplying effects (trainings, conferences...), (iv) the capacity to maintain/upkeep equipment in the longer term (infrastructure), etc. Assist the projects implementers as much as possible in the implementation of these criteria. – More specifically, increase the awareness and knowledge of CAs amongst national stakeholders and increase the dissemination of their results to ensure their actual use in the long term (use of produced methods, tools, curricula, etc. or use on lessons learnt to build upon previous experiences and multiply the impact). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some activities (especially services) could not be sustained if not funded by the ERF. Some NGOs highly depended on the ERF to pursue their activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 	<p>At MS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Avoid recurring financing of the same (less innovative) projects (more than 3 years for instance). These should either be funded by the national budget as part of the national asylum policy, or taken over by alternative funding. 	

(1): A. Relevance, B. Effectiveness, C. Efficiency, D. Sustainability, E. Coherence and complementarity, F. EU added-value

(2) Source: discussion with the EC during the ISSG meetings

9 Annexes

9.1 Annex 1: Statistical annex

9.1.1 Statistics on the ERF financial implementation (programming, commitments and payments) under the Annual programmes 2011-2013

Table 19: ERF programmed, committed and paid amounts by year (2011-2013) and by MS

Member States	2011						2012						2013						Total programmed amount	Total committed amount	Total paid amount	Absorption rate
	Programmed amount (K€)	Committed amount (K€)	Paid amount (K€)	Commitment rate	Payment rate	Absorption rate	Programmed amount (K€)	Committed amount (K€)	Paid amount (K€)	Commitment rate	Payment rate	Absorption rate	Programmed amount (K€)	Committed amount (K€)	Paid amount (K€)	Commitment rate	Payment rate	Absorption rate				
Austria	4 831	4 823	4 639	99,8%	96,2%	96,0%	4 543	4 538	4 390	99,9%	96,7%	96,6%	4 729	4 723	4 570	99,9%	96,8%	96,6%	14 103	14 084	13 599	96%
Belgium	8 969	8 932	3 761	99,6%	42,1%	41,9%	5 421	5 409	4 767	99,8%	88,1%	87,9%	7 329	2 822	2 655	38,5%	94,1%	36,2%	21 719	17 163	11 183	51%
Bulgaria	756	687	664	90,9%	96,7%	87,8%	753	721	519	95,8%	72,0%	68,9%	6 408	6 059	5 547	94,6%	91,5%	86,6%	7 917	7 467	6 730	85%
Croatia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86	77	77	89,5%	100,0%	89,5%	86	77	77	90%
Cyprus	1 731	1 321	1 312	76,3%	99,3%	75,8%	1 491	1 486	1 331	99,7%	89,6%	89,3%	4 409	4 245	3 705	96,3%	87,3%	84,0%	7 631	7 052	6 348	83%
Czech Republic	866	674	584	77,8%	86,6%	67,4%	763	508	436	66,6%	85,8%	57,1%	885	737	508	83,3%	68,9%	57,4%	2 514	1 919	1 528	61%
Estonia	506	490	372	96,8%	75,9%	73,5%	509	403	332	79,2%	82,4%	65,2%	514	512	456	99,6%	89,1%	88,7%	1 529	1 405	1 160	76%
Finland	2 558	2 457	2 276	96,1%	92,6%	89,0%	3 053	3 054	2 950	100,0%	96,6%	96,6%	4 710	3 974	3 912	84,4%	98,4%	83,1%	10 321	9 485	9 138	89%
France	11 727	11 515	9 110	98,2%	79,1%	77,7%	13 973	11 482	9 341	82,2%	81,4%	66,9%	17 010	16 958	13 906	99,7%	82,0%	81,8%	42 710	39 955	32 357	76%
Germany	8 895	9 123	8 438	102,6%	92,5%	94,9%	10 972	11 112	10 327	101,3%	92,9%	94,1%	18 521	18 688	17 987	100,9%	96,2%	97,1%	38 388	38 923	36 752	96%
Greece	8 792	8 723	7 088	99,2%	81,3%	80,6%	8 015	7 417	5 416	92,5%	73,0%	67,6%	7 163	6 931	6 357	96,8%	91,7%	88,7%	23 970	23 071	18 861	79%
Hungary	1 268	1 268	1 141	100,0%	90,0%	90,0%	1 284	1 268	1 232	98,8%	97,2%	96,0%	2 355	2 355	2 930	100,0%	124,4%	124,4%	4 907	4 891	5 303	108%
Ireland	2 100	1 387	1 050	66,0%	75,7%	50,0%	1 329	392	664	29,5%	169,4%	50,0%	1 072	997	894	93,0%	89,7%	83,4%	4 501	2 776	2 608	58%
Italy	19 841	19 747	6 551	99,5%	33,2%	33,0%	11 992	11 992	6 479	100,0%	54,0%	54,0%	18 859	18 674	15 654	99,0%	83,8%	83,0%	50 692	50 413	28 684	57%
Latvia	513	511	449	99,6%	87,9%	87,5%	517	517	480	100,0%	92,8%	92,8%	543	542	271	99,8%	50,0%	49,9%	1 573	1 570	1 200	76%
Lithuania	560	558	518	99,6%	92,8%	92,5%	578	577	523	99,8%	90,6%	90,5%	587	571	548	97,3%	96,0%	93,4%	1 725	1 706	1 589	92%
Luxembourg	470	324	282	68,9%	87,0%	60,0%	458	458	414	100,0%	90,4%	90,4%	584	576	292	98,6%	50,7%	50,0%	1 512	1 358	988	65%
Malta	2 619	2 605	1 215	99,5%	46,6%	46,4%	2 395	2 219	1 118	92,7%	50,4%	46,7%	4 864	4 667	3 494	95,9%	74,9%	71,8%	9 878	9 491	5 827	59%
Netherlands	4 595	4 589	4 113	99,9%	89,6%	89,5%	5 916	6 147	4 804	103,9%	78,2%	81,2%	7 521	7 925	6 716	105,4%	84,7%	89,3%	18 032	18 661	15 633	87%
Poland	3 043	2 986	2 716	98,1%	91,0%	89,3%	2 641	2 490	2 311	94,3%	92,8%	87,5%	2 362	2 262	2 026	95,8%	89,6%	85,8%	8 046	7 738	7 053	88%
Portugal	476	476	416	100,0%	87,4%	87,4%	481	361	300	75,1%	83,1%	62,4%	490	422	417	86,1%	98,8%	85,1%	1 447	1 259	1 133	78%
Romania	744	714	554	96,0%	77,6%	74,5%	775	764	600	98,6%	78,5%	77,4%	873	822	668	94,2%	81,3%	76,5%	2 392	2 300	1 822	76%
Slovakia	832	832	788	100,0%	94,7%	94,7%	668	668	637	100,0%	95,4%	95,4%	625	625	313	100,0%	50,1%	50,1%	2 125	2 125	1 738	82%
Slovenia	564	600	563	106,4%	93,8%	99,8%	554	566	549	102,2%	97,0%	99,1%	561	578	544	103,0%	94,1%	97,0%	1 679	1 744	1 656	99%
Spain	1 872	1 572	1 532	84,0%	97,5%	81,8%	1 621	1 621	1 512	100,0%	93,3%	93,3%	1 585	1 585	1 185	100,0%	74,8%	74,8%	5 078	4 778	4 229	83%
Sweden	16 055	15 088	10 805	94,0%	71,6%	67,3%	17 016	14 101	11 921	82,9%	84,5%	70,1%	17 173	12 972	11 934	75,5%	92,0%	69,5%	50 244	42 161	34 660	69%
United Kingdom	11 537	11 329	9 756	98,2%	86,1%	84,6%	13 540	11 939	10 793	88,2%	90,4%	79,7%	13 643	13 776	11 372	101,0%	82,5%	83,4%	38 720	37 044	31 921	82%
EU Total	116 720	113 331	80 693	97,1%	71,2%	69,1%	111 258	102 210	84 146	91,9%	82,3%	75,6%	145 461	135 075	118 938	92,9%	88,1%	81,8%	373 439	350 616	283 777	76,0%

Source: SFC 2007 and ABAC (see 6.1.1)

Table 20: Distribution of ERF programmed budget, per Priority and Member States (in thousands of €)

Member State	Total ERF budget programmed 2011-2013	Share of priority 1	Share of priority 2	Share of priority 3	Share of technical assistance	Share of emergency measures (including specific technical assistance)	Share of resettlement and relocation related to the fixed amount set out in article 13(3) of decision 573/2007/EC
Italy	50 692	41%	0%	0%	2%	57%	0%
Sweden	50 244	45%	13%	2%	3%	0%	38%
France	42 710	86%	5%	0%	3%	4%	2%
United Kingdom	38 720	71%	2%	10%	4%	0%	13%
Germany	38 388	77%	3%	3%	4%	10%	4%
Greece	23 970	48%	0%	0%	2%	49%	0%
Belgium	21 719	62%	8%	1%	3%	22%	3%
Netherlands	18 032	69%	2%	3%	4%	6%	16%
Austria	14 103	84%	11%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Finland	10 321	37%	8%	0%	3%	0%	52%
Malta	9 878	34%	2%	0%	2%	62%	0%
Poland	8 046	89%	6%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Bulgaria	7 917	24%	2%	0%	2%	71%	0%
Cyprus	7 631	55%	1%	0%	4%	41%	0%
Spain	5 078	69%	4%	2%	4%	0%	22%
Hungary	4 907	69%	0%	0%	5%	24%	1%
Ireland	4 501	58%	6%	4%	5%	0%	27%
Czech Republic	2 514	76%	0%	7%	7%	0%	10%
Romania	2 392	84%	4%	4%	6%	0%	2%
Slovakia	2 125	92%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%
Lithuania	1 725	82%	9%	0%	9%	0%	0%
Slovenia	1 679	91%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%
Latvia	1 573	72%	18%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Estonia	1 529	81%	9%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Luxembourg	1 512	87%	3%	1%	10%	0%	0%
Portugal	1 447	63%	9%	8%	3%	8%	8%
Croatia	86	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	373 439	61,4%	4,6%	2,0%	3,4%	18,3%	10,3%

Source: Financial reports available on SFC 2007 for 2011-2013

Table 21: ERF commitment, absorption and payment rates per Member States for 2011-2013

Member State	(1) EU programmed contribution for annual programmes (K€)	(2) EU committed contribution for annual programmes (K€)	(3) EU payments for annual programmes (K€)	Committed rate (2)/(1)	Payment rate (3)/(2)	Absorption rate (3)/(1)
Slovenia	1 679	1 744	1 656	103,9%	95%	98,6%
Austria	14 103	14 084	13 591	99,9%	96%	96,4%
Slovakia	2 125	2 125	2 037	100,0%	96%	95,9%
Hungary	4 907	4 891	4 645	99,7%	95%	94,7%
Germany	38 388	38 923	35 799	101,4%	92%	93,3%
Latvia	1 573	1 570	1 454	99,8%	93%	92,4%
Lithuania	1 725	1 706	1 589	98,9%	93%	92,1%
Croatia	86	77	77	89,5%	100%	89,5%
Italy	50 692	50 413	45 216	99,4%	90%	89,2%
Finland	10 321	9 485	9 138	91,9%	96%	88,5%
Poland	8 046	7 738	7 053	96,2%	91%	87,7%
Netherlands	18 032	18 661	15 633	103,5%	84%	86,7%
Luxembourg	1 512	1 358	1 269	89,8%	93%	83,9%
Spain	5 078	4 778	4 229	94,1%	89%	83,3%
Cyprus	7 631	7 052	6 348	92,4%	90%	83,2%
United Kingdom	38 720	37 044	31 921	95,7%	86%	82,4%
Malta	9 878	9 491	8 038	96,1%	85%	81,4%
Bulgaria	7 917	7 467	6 294	94,3%	84%	79,5%
Portugal	1 447	1 259	1 133	87,0%	90%	78,3%
Romania	2 392	2 300	1 822	96,2%	79%	76,2%
Estonia	1 529	1 405	1 160	91,9%	83%	75,9%
France	42 710	39 955	32 357	93,5%	81%	75,8%
Greece	23 970	23 071	18 125	96,2%	79%	75,6%
Belgium	21 719	21 489	15 530	98,9%	72%	71,5%
Sweden	50 244	42 161	34 660	83,9%	82%	69,0%
Czech Republic	2 514	1 919	1 520	76,3%	79%	60,5%
Ireland	4 501	2 776	1 855	61,7%	67%	41,2%
Total / Average	373 439	354 942	304 149	95,0%	85,7%	81,4%

Sources: Programming and commitments: SFC 2007 for all programmes; Payments: SFC 2007 for opened programmes and ABAC for closed programmes

The Member States in bold are those with a least one still open programme

9.1.2 Statistics on projects funded under the Annual programmes 2011-2013

► By implementation mode

Table 22: Total number of projects by MS and by Implementation mode from 2011 to 2013

Member State	TOTAL number of projects funded in the "awarding body" method in 2011-2013				TOTAL number of projects funded in the "executing body" method in 2011-2013				GRAND TOTAL - Total number of projects funded under each annual programme			
	2011	2012	2013	Total	2011	2012	2013	Total	2011	2012	2013	Total
Austria	56	51	52	159	0	0	0	0	56	51	52	159
Belgium	23	14	4	41	4	1	1	6	27	15	5	47
Bulgaria	15	7	6	28	7	6	9	22	22	13	15	50
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2
Cyprus	3	7	1	11	2	6	12	20	5	13	13	31
Czech Republic	16	14	12	42	1	0	0	1	17	14	12	43
Estonia	6	7	7	20	0	1	1	2	6	8	8	22
Finland	15	22	19	56	4	0	0	4	19	22	19	60
France	68	66	80	214	0	1	1	2	68	67	81	216
Germany	105	57	40	202	0	2	2	4	105	59	42	206
Greece	41	41	40	122	0	0	0	0	41	41	40	122
Hungary	22	19	24	65	0	0	0	0	22	19	24	65
Ireland	8	0	6	14	0	0	1	1	8	0	7	15
Italy	23	29	26	78	5	1	4	10	28	30	30	88
Latvia	4	2	2	8	4	4	4	12	8	6	6	20
Lithuania	8	6	5	19	0	0	0	0	8	6	5	19
Luxembourg	5	5	3	13	0	0	0	0	5	5	3	13
Malta	9	11	7	27	3	2	9	14	12	13	16	41
Netherlands	8	11	16	35	5	2	3	10	13	13	19	45
Poland	37	0	2	39	5	6	8	19	42	6	10	58
Portugal	3	2	4	9	0	0	0	0	3	2	4	9
Romania	5	2	7	14	2	3	2	7	7	5	9	21
Slovakia	3	4	4	11	0	0	0	0	3	4	4	11
Slovenia	3	7	5	15	3	8	5	16	6	15	10	31
Spain	15	16	12	43	0	0	0	0	15	16	12	43
Sweden	14	15	16	45	7	4	4	15	21	19	20	60
United Kingdom	10	0	0	10	3	0	1	4	13	0	1	14
Total	525	415	400	1340	55	47	69	171	580	462	469	1511

Source: National Evaluation Reports

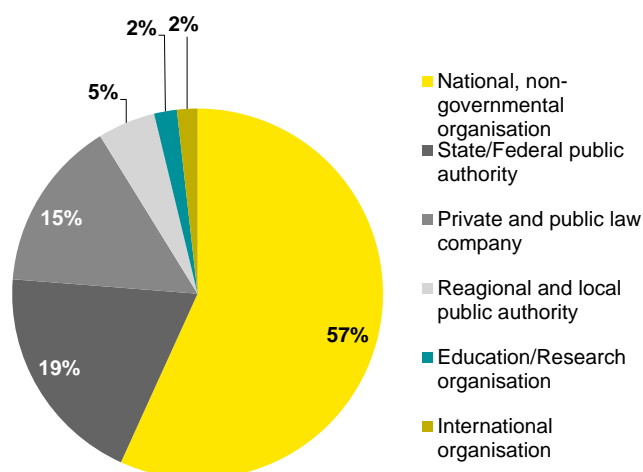
► By type of beneficiary

Table 23: Distribution of all projects funded under the annual programmes by Type of beneficiary from 2011 to 2013

Member States	National, non-governmental organisation	State/Federal public authority	Regional public authority	Local public authority	Education/Research organisation	Social partners (employers or employees)	Private and public law company	International public organisation	Other international organisation	Total
Austria	124	6	0	0	0	0	20	0	9	159
Belgium	32	8	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	47
Bulgaria	28	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50
Croatia	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cyprus	5	20	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	31
Czech Republic	39	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	43
Estonia	8	3	0	0	4	0	0	7	0	22
Finland	28	12	0	12	7	0	1	0	0	60
France	188	23	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	216
Germany	14	4	0	9	6	0	173	0	0	206
Greece	109	6	3	1	0	0	1	0	2	122
Hungary	23	36	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	65
Ireland	12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Italy	54	11	6	13	2	0	0	0	2	88
Latvia	7	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	20
Lithuania	8	10	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	19
Luxembourg	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
Malta	11	28	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	41
Netherlands	24	15	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	45
Poland	37	19	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	58
Portugal	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Romania	13	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	21
Slovakia	9	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	11
Slovenia	9	3	0	0	4	0	15	0	0	31
Spain	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Sweden	8	34	3	13	0	0	2	0	0	60
United Kingdom	6	4	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	14
EU Total	858	294	12	64	30	0	226	12	15	1511

Source: National Evaluation Reports

Figure 60: Distribution of projects per type of beneficiaries



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

► By Priority and Specific Priority

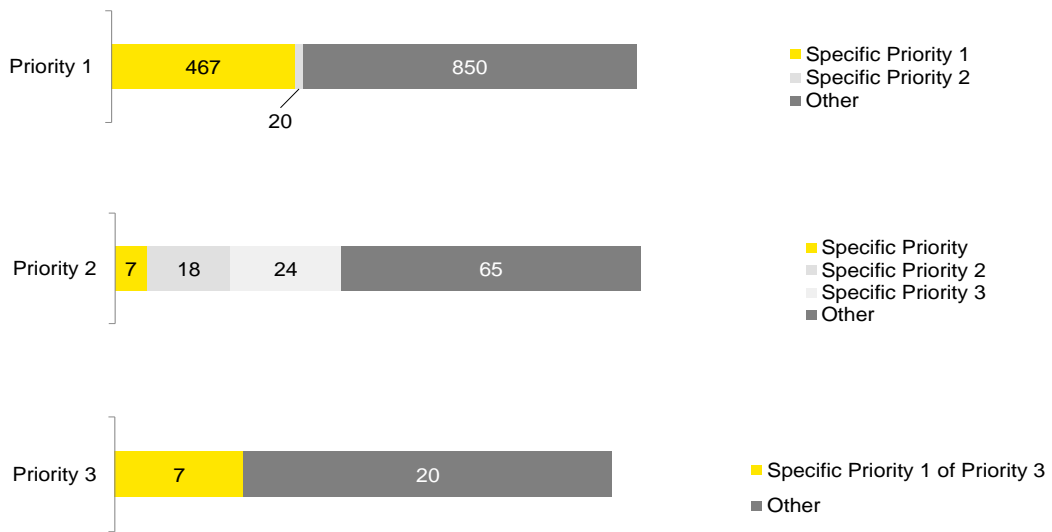
Table 24: Distribution of all projects funded under the annual programmes by Priority from 2011 to 2013

Member State	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3 (Optional)	Total
Austria	145	14	0	159
Belgium*	38	6	1	45
Bulgaria	38	11	1	50
Croatia	2	0	0	2
Cyprus*	26	1	0	27
Czech Republic	41	0	2	43
Estonia	18	4	0	22
Finland	53	7	0	60
France	202	14	0	216
Germany	198	6	2	206
Greece	122	0	0	122
Hungary*	58	1	2	61
Ireland	14	1	0	15
Italy*	78	0	0	78
Latvia	14	6	0	20
Lithuania	14	5	0	19
Luxembourg	13	0	0	13
Malta*	28	2	0	30
Netherlands	36	2	7	45
Poland	52	6	0	58
Portugal**	3	4	0	7
Romania	14	5	2	21
Slovakia	11	0	0	11
Slovenia	30	1	0	31
Spain	40	3	0	43
Sweden	42	14	4	60
United Kingdom	7	1	6	14
EU Total	1337	114	27	1478

* information not complete for these MS

Source: National Evaluation Reports

Figure 61: Distribution of projects per Priority and Specific Priority



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

9.1.3 Statistics on Operations: number of operations by type of action and by topic⁸² 2011-2013

Focus on Action 1: improvement of reception conditions

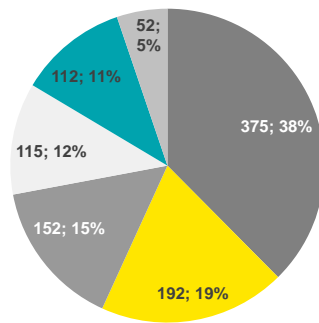
Table 25: Distribution of the number of operations under Action 1 (Total of 998 operations under Action 1)

Improvement of reception condition						
Member States	Accommodation Infrastructure or services	Material Aid	Medical and psychological care	Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation	Education language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person	Information to local communities, as well as training for the staff thereof, who will be interacting with those received in the host country
	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved
Austria	0	0	33	12	0	12
Belgium	6	NA	NA	8	NA	3
Bulgaria	12	2	3	9	6	2
Croatia	0	0	0	2	0	0
Cyprus	8	1	4	3	3	2
Czech Republic	3	6	17	18	6	5
Estonia	0	0	1	6	3	15
Finland	*4	*0	*748	*17	*304	*395
France	17	5	30	115	14	4
Germany	3	0	44	76	31	12
Greece	46	3	16	45	NA	1
Hungary	5	1	3	9	8	0
Ireland	0	0	0	6	2	6
Italy	*48472	*48472	*48472	*48472	*48472	NA
Latvia	6	3	6	5	3	6
Lithuania	1	3	3	6	3	3
Luxembourg	2	NA	1	1	NA	1
Malta	17	9	5	3	4	1
Netherlands	4	1	2	2	7	6
Poland	*9	*18	*55	*132	*199	*143
Portugal	3	3	3	3	3	3
Romania	2	2	1	2	1	3
Slovakia	9	10	10	19	16	1
Slovenia	3	0	2	6	2	0
Spain	0	3	3	14	1	8
Sweden	5	0	5	5	2	18
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU Total	152	52	192	375	115	112

Source: National Evaluation Reports

NB: The line in pale yellow are not consistent regarding the number of operations compared to the number of projects and have not been integrated in the analysis (see limitations under 6.1.1)

⁸² See definitions in section 6.1.1



- Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation
- Medical and psychological care
- Accommodation Infrastructure or services
- Education language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person
- Information to local communities, as well as training for the staff thereof, who will be interacting with those received in the host country
- Material Aid

- ▶ The most important topic is ‘Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation’ with one third of the operations relating to the improvement of reception condition (375 operations). All Member States, except the United Kingdom, reported activities under this topic. The France and Germany are the most involved in this topic with respectively 11% and 7.5% of the total number of operations.
- ▶ The ‘Medical and psychological care’ and the ‘Accommodation infrastructures or services’ topics have also been highly implemented by the Members States. They respectively represent 15% and 19% of the total operations. 18 Member States (BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, FR, EL, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, SE) are involved in ‘Medical and psychological care’ operations and 21 Member States (AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, EL, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, SE) in ‘Accommodation infrastructures or services’.
- ▶ The ‘Material aid’ topic has been the less implemented topic with 5% of the total operations.
- ▶ However, the Member States diversified their activities: 12 Member States (BG, CY, CZ, DE, FR, LV, LT, MT, NL, PT, RO, SK) implemented at least one operation under each topic.

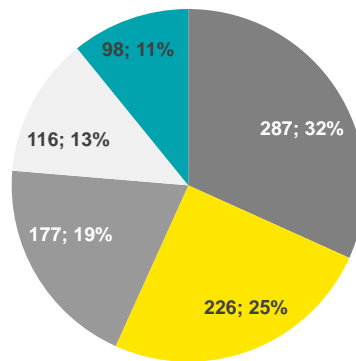
Focus on Action 2: integration of target group persons

Table 26: Distribution of the number of operations under Action 2 (Total of 904 operations under Action 2)

Integration of target group persons					
Member States	Assistance in housing and means of subsistence	Medical and psychological care	Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation	Education language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person	Actions enabling recipients to adapt to the society of the MS, to promote meaningful contact and dialogue with the receiving society and participation in civil and cultural life
	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved
Austria	34	0	37	63	7
Belgium	13	5	7	6	11
Bulgaria	1	2	1	9	5
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0
Cyprus	0	1	0	2	1
Czech Republic	9	5	20	20	6
Estonia	0	1	6	2	6
Finland	*0	*77	*0	*649	*896
France	65	33	70	70	5
Germany	1	1	16	7	7
Greece	3	NA	10	6	1
Hungary	7	3	7	16	15
Ireland	0	0	1	2	1
Italy	*48472	*48472	*48472	*48472	*48472
Latvia	2	2	2	2	2
Lithuania	3	6	6	8	6
Luxembourg	NA	1	NA	4	3
Malta	0	0	0	21	9
Netherlands	2	0	3	10	3
Poland	*15	*55	*119	*230	*385
Portugal	3	3	3	3	4
Romania	5	4	3	2	3
Slovakia	11	8	11	10	3
Slovenia	1	1	4	5	2
Spain	15	18	18	6	0
Sweden	0	3	0	9	11
United Kingdom	2	1	1	4	5
EU Total	177	98	226	287	116

Source: National Evaluation Reports

NB: The line in pale yellow are not consistent regarding the number of operations compared to the number of projects and have not been integrated in the analysis (see limitations under 6.1.1)



- Education language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person
- Social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation
- Assistance in housing and means of subsistence
- Actions enabling recipients to adapt to the society of the MS, to promote meaningful contact and dialogue with the receiving society and participation in civil and cultural life
- Medical and psychological care

- ▶ The most important topic in this activity is 'Education, language training and other initiative consistent with the status of person' with 287 operations (more than 30% of the operations). All Member States, except Croatia⁸³, implemented operations under this topic.
- ▶ The 'social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance and interpretation' is also a high topic of interest for the Member States with 226 operations implemented by 19 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, EL, HU, IE, LV, LT, NL, PT, RO, SK, SI, UK).
- ▶ The 'Assistance in housing and means of subsistence' gathered 177 operations (19% of the total number of operations), the 'actions enabling recipients to adapt to the society of the MS, to promote meaningful contact and dialogue with the receiving society and participation in civil and cultural life' 116 operations (12% of the total number of operations) and 'Medical and psychological care' 98 operations (10% of the total number of operations).
- ▶ The Member States tend to diversify their operation topic with 14 Member States (BE, BG, CZ, DE, ES FR, HU, LV, LT, PT, RO, SK, SI, UK) implemented at least one operation in each topic.

⁸³ Croatia only participated in 2013 and only implemented operations to improve the reception conditions.

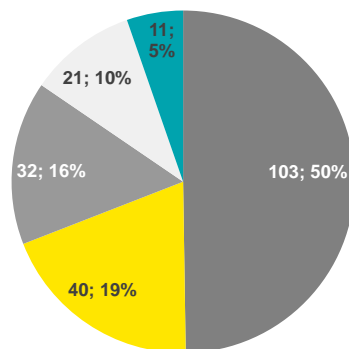
Focus on Action 3: development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies, Improvement of the quality of asylum procedures, enhancing practical cooperation with other MS on asylum policy

Table 27: Distribution of the number of operations and procedures under Action 3 (Total of 207 operations under Action 3)

Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies, Improvement of the quality of asylum procedures,						
Member States	Actions related to country of origin information, including translation	Actions related to statistics on asylum and asylum related topics	Actions contributing to the evaluation of asylum policy and procedures	Actions enhancing cooperation with other MS on asylum policy	Actions enhancing cooperation with other MS on asylum policy	Improvement of the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures
	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of Member States achieved	Number of procedures improved (achieved)
Austria	4	0	5	0	NA	10
Belgium	1	1	7	NA	NA	7
Bulgaria	1	0	0	1	NA	8
Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0	3
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	4	2	11	6	8	25
Finland	*4	*0	*0	*10	*6	*24
France	5	1	1	2	8	7
Germany	0	2	0	0	0	4
Greece	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hungary	3	NA	0	2	10	4
Ireland	1	1	0	1	0	0
Italy	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA
Latvia	3	1	0	5	7	5
Lithuania	3	0	2	1	2	10
Luxembourg	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA
Malta	1	0	1	0	0	2
Netherlands	1	0	0	2	4	8
Poland	*23	*0	*0	*13	*11	*47
Portugal	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Romania	3	0	2	0	0	0
Slovakia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	0	3	0	0	0	4
Sweden	1	0	10	0	0	5
United Kingdom	1	0	0	1	15	1
EU Total	32	11	40	21	54	103

Source: National Evaluation Reports

NB: The line in pale yellow are not consistent regarding the number of operations compared to the number of projects and have not been integrated in the analysis (see limitations under 6.1.1)



- Improvement of the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures
- Actions contributing to the evaluation of asylum policy and procedures
- Actions related to country of origin information, including translation
- Actions enhancing cooperation with other MS on asylum policy
- Actions related to statistics on asylum and asylum related topics

- ▶ The topic Improvement of the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures is counted as a number of procedures. It will be integrated in the total number of operations in the following analysis.
- ▶ The main topic of operations is the 'improvement of the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures' with a total of 103 operations representing almost 50% of the total number of operations. 15 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, LV, LT, MT, NL, SE, UK) implemented operations under this topic.
- ▶ 19% of the total number of operations (40 operations) contributed to 'the evaluation of asylum policy and procedures'. 9 Member States (AT, BE, EE, FR, LT, LU, MT, RO, SE) implemented operations under this topic.
- ▶ The topic 'actions related to country of origin information, including translation' resulted in 32 operations (15% of the total number of operations) and the topic 'actions enhancing the cooperation with other MS on asylum policy' in 21 (10%).
- ▶ The smaller topic in term of number of operations was 'operations related to statistics on asylum and asylum related topics) with 5% of the total number of operations (11 operations). 7 Member States (BE, EE, FR, LT, LU, MT, RO, SE) participated in operations under this topic.
- ▶ Only France and Estonia provided operations under each topic.

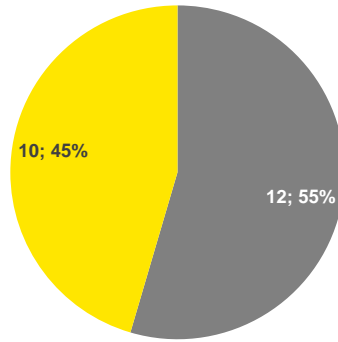
Focus on Action 4: resettlement and relocation

Table 28: Distribution of the number of operations and procedures under Action 4 (Total of 22 operations under Action 4)

Resettlement and relocation					
Member States	Establishment and development of resettlement programmes	Actions related to resettlement, but prior to the actual resettlement operations	Actual resettlement operations	Actions related to relocation, but prior to the actual relocation operations	Actual relocation operations from another MS which granted international protection
	Number of programmes achieved	Number of operations achieved	Number of persons resettled (achieved)	Number of operations achieved	Number of persons relocated (achieved)
Austria	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Belgium	1	1	NA	NA	NA
Bulgaria	0	1	0	0	0
Croatia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cyprus	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Czech Republic	0	NA	25	0	0
Estonia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Finland	*0	*0	*0	*0	*0
France	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Germany	0	0	600	0	0
Greece	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hungary	NA	2	10	NA	NA
Ireland	0	0	0	0	0
Italy	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA
Latvia	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lithuania	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Luxembourg	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Malta	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Netherlands	2	3	NA	0	0
Poland	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA	*NA
Portugal	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Romania	1	1	40	0	0
Slovakia	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Slovenia	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	0	0	0	0	0
Sweden	3	1	0	NA	0
United Kingdom	3	3	8178	0	0
EU Total	10	12	8853	0	0

Source: National Evaluation Reports

NB: The line in pale yellow are not consistent regarding the number of operations compared to the number of projects and have not been integrated in the analysis (see limitations under 6.1.1)



■ Actions related to resettlement, but prior to the actual resettlement operations

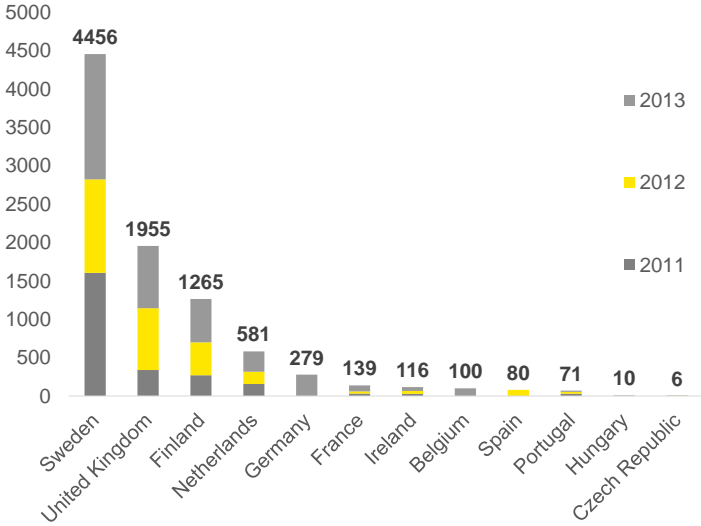
■ Establishment and development of resettlement programmes

■ Actions related to relocation, but prior to the actual relocation operations

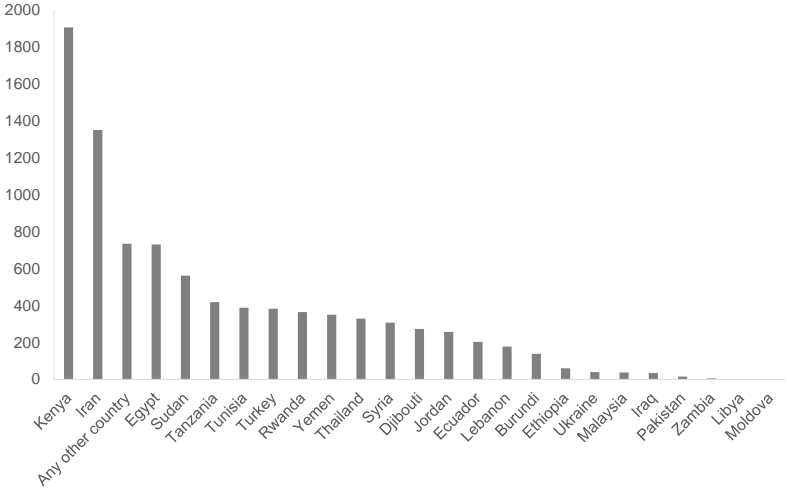
- ▶ 12 operations have been implemented under the topic 'actions related to resettlement, but prior to the actual resettlement operations'. 7 Member States (BE, BG, HU, NL, RO, SE, UK) implemented operations under this subject.
- ▶ The topic 'establishment and development of resettlement programmes' provided 10 programmes through the contribution of 5 Member States (BE, NL, RO, SE, UK).
- ▶ No operations were registered under the topic 'actions related to relocation, but prior to the actual relocation operations'.

9.1.4 Statistics on resettlement operations related to the fixed amount set out in article 13(3) of ERF decision

Figure 62: Distribution of number of persons resettled per Member State between 2011 and 2013 through the assistance of the ERF & Distribution of persons resettled between 2011 and 2013 per country of asylum



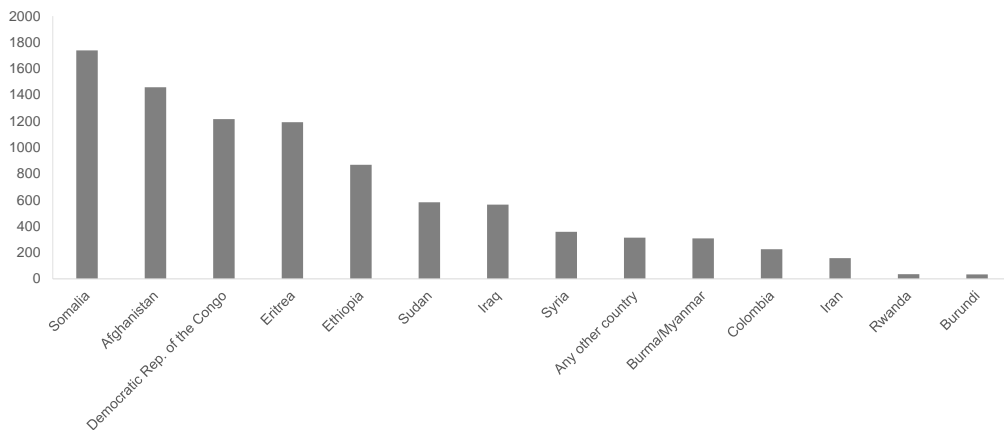
Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

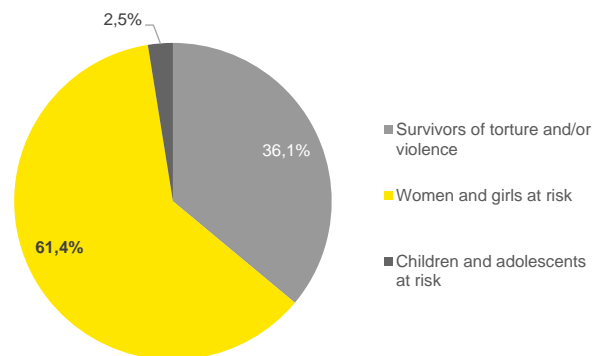
- ▶ A third of resettled persons between 2011 and 2013 came via Kenya (20%) and Iran (15%) as countries of asylum, mostly originating from Somalia and Afghanistan.

Figure 63: Distribution of the resettled persons between 2011 and 2013 per country of origin



Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

Figure 64: Distribution of vulnerable resettled persons according to the three categories from the UNHCR Resettlement Submission Categories

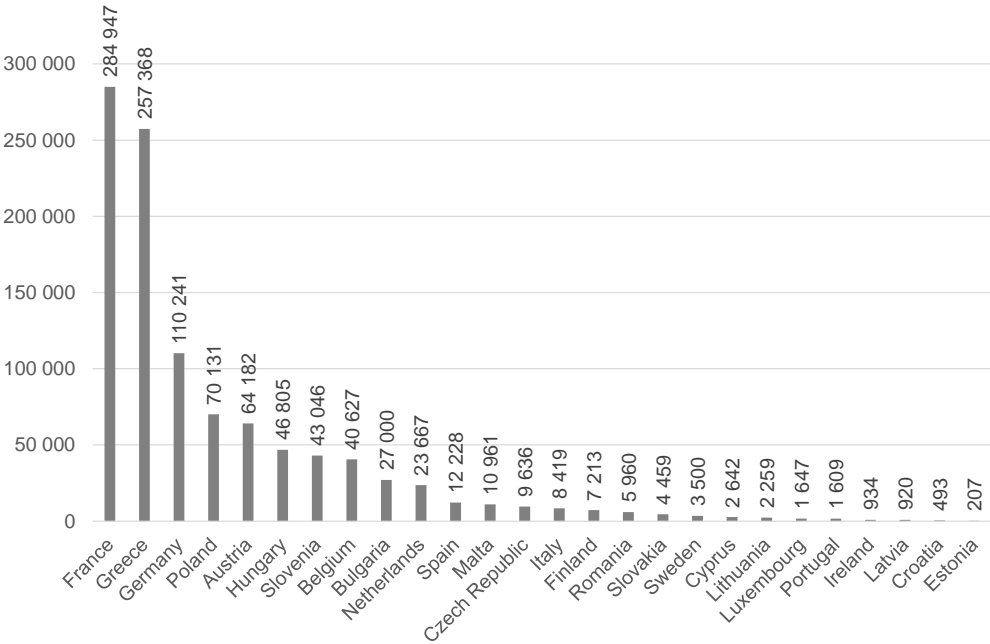


Source: EY quantitative database based on MS evaluation reports

- ▶ During the 2011-2013 period, specific attention was brought to resettlement applicants belonging to particularly vulnerable groups. A total of 5 133 resettled persons were recorded as belonging to at least one of the three categories from the UNHCR Resettlement Submission Categories: survivors of torture and/or violence, women and girls at risk, children and adolescents at risk.
- ▶ In proportion of the number of persons resettled and falling into one of these three categories, FI, DE, NL and UK particularly favoured the resettlement of women and girls at risk.

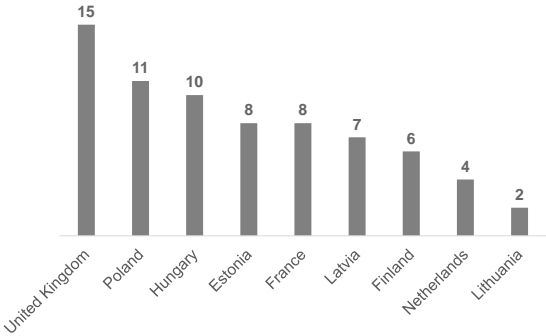
9.1.5 Statistics on the number of beneficiaries (actions 1 & 2) and number of cooperation with other Member States (action 3)

Figure 65: Approximation of the number of beneficiaries of Actions 1 & 2 by MS (Priority 1) ⁸⁴



Source: National evaluation reports, Difference between the total number of beneficiaries and the number of persons resettled under Action 4

Figure 66: Number of Member States which whom cooperation was enhanced through ERF projects



⁸⁴ The United Kingdom has been excluded because of the inconsistent figure obtained after the calculation of the difference between the total number of beneficiaries and the number of persons resettled registered under action 4

9.2 Annex 2: List of interviews

Organisation		Position	Name	Date
European Commission				
DG Migration & Home Affairs - Unit		Coordinator	Patrick LEFEVRE	25/04
DG Migration & Home Affairs – Unit C3		Policy officer	Vincent CATOT	26/04 and 07/9
DG Migration & Home Affairs – Unit E1		Desk officer	Gaëtan MIONI	13/05
DG Regio		Policy Analyst	Andor URMOS	05/09
EU Agencies/Institutions				
European Asylum Support Office (EASO)		Policy and Inter-Institutional relations Coordinator	Mark Camilleri	29/09
Other international stakeholders				
UNHCR		Senior external relations officer	Annabelle Roig Granjon	22/09
International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)		Programme manager	Martin Wagner	07/07
ERF National Responsible Authority				
Austria	Federal Ministry of the Interior, Department III/5/b ("Integration, European Refugee and Integration Fund")	Head of the Department of Asylum and Aliens Matters	Thomas Muhlans Hilbert Karl	07/07
Belgium	Agence Fédérale pour les demandeurs d'Asile (FEDASIL)	Director	Fanny François	07/09
Bulgaria	State Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers (SAR)	Director, Intl Relations Directorate	Ivan MILANOV	15/07
Croatia	Ministry of Interior	Police Officer, Acting Head of Service	Drajen Vuleta	21/06
Cyprus	Ministry of Interior, Solidarity Funds Sector	Administrative Officer	Doris Constantinou	05/07
Czech Republic	Ministry of Interior - Department for Asylum and Migration Policy	Department for Home Affairs EU Funds	Šárka Hylmarová	28/07
Germany	Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) EU-Fonds Zuständige Behörde Department 5 NZV- EFF	Speaker	Bettina Scheer	30/06
Estonia	Ministry of Interior	Foreign policy department, Advisor	Kristi Lillemägi	28/06
Spain	Subdirección General de Intervención Social -	European funds coordinator	Lucia Cobo	06/07

Organisation		Position	Name	Date
Finland	Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración			
	Ministry of Interior - International Affairs Unit	Director General	Laura Yli-Vakkuri	23/06
France	Ministère de l'immigration, de l'intégration, de l'identité nationale et du développement solidaire Service de l'asile	Responsible of the mission "European Funds"	Yildiz Atis	01/07
Greece	Social Perception & Solidarity Directorate, General Directorate of Welfare, Ministry of Health & Social Solidarity	Head of the directorate	Vagia Tsakatara	15/09
Hungary	Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement	Head of Department of Support and coordination	Dr. Szilvia Szedo	05/07
Ireland	Office of the Minister for Integration	Office of the Minister for Integration (part of the Department of Justice and Equality)	John Hurley	02/09
Italy	Ministero dell'Interno - Dipartimento per le Libertà civili e l'Immigrazione - Direzione Centrale dei servizi civili per l'Immigrazione e l'Asilo	Home Affairs Minister- Central Direction for Asylum services	MS Rosetta Scotto Lavina	16/09
Lithuania	Ministry of Social Security and Labour	Head	Violeta Plotnikoviene	24/08
Luxembourg	Office luxembourgeois de l'accueil des étrangers	Head of the strategy and programme department	Conny Heuertz	13/07
Latvia	Ministry of Interior	Head of RA	Ilze Petersons-Godmane	20/09
Malta	Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs - Programme Implementation Directorate	Director General	Raphael Scerri	13/07 ⁸⁵
Netherlands	Ministerie van Justitie Directie Financieel-Economische Zaken Afdeling Financiële Infrastructuur en Administratie Programmasecretariaat Europese Fondsen	National expert	Hein Koller	18/07
Poland	Ministry of Interior and	Director, Head of	Piotr	30/09

⁸⁵ Written answer

Organisation		Position	Name	Date
Portugal	Administration, Department of European Union and International Co-operation	RA	Zuzankiewicz	
	Estrutura de Missão para a Gestão de Fundos Comunitários - Ministério da Administração Interna	Deputy Secretary General	Ricardo Carrilho	06/07
Romania	Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform	Programme Responsible Authority	Gabriel BARBATEI	18/07
Sweden	Swedish Migration Board	Head, Responsible Authority for EU Funds	Mikael J Zaar	23/08
Slovenia	Ministry of the Interior - Project Unit for European Funds	Internal Administrative Affairs, Migration and Naturalization Directorate	Pina Stepan	30/06
Slovakia	Ministry of Interior - Foreign Aid Department	Director, Foreign Aid Department	Katarina Nad'ova	25/07
United Kingdom	EU funding team	Acting Head of the UK Responsible Authority	Claire Rainey	01/07
Case study interviews – non exhaustive				
Austria	Ministry of Interior	Responsible Authority of the ERF	Thomas Muhlans	07/07
	Ministry of Interior	Head of the Department of Asylum and Aliens Matters	Hibert Karl	07/07
	ICMPD	Co-beneficiary of the Community Action “MedCoi2”	Martin Wagner	07/07
	Caritas	Head of department	Karin Abram	07/07
	Austrian Red Cross	Leader of project “ACCORD”	Andrea Jakober	07/07
	Caritas Education Centre	Leader project “Treffpunkt Österreich”	David Himler	08/07
	Interface	Leader project of “MoWien”	Susanne Schaidinger	08/07
	IOM Austria	Manager of the project CulTrain	Katharina Benetter	08/07
	Verein Zebra	Involved in the project ‘Intercultural psychotherapeutic care of asylum seekers, those entitled to	Alexandra Koeck	11/07

Organisation	Position	Name	Date	
Belgium		subsidiary protection and recognized refugees in Styria'		
	UNHCR	Head of UNHCR Austria	Christoph Pinter	11/07
	Coordination et Initiatives pour Réfugiés et Étrangers (CIRE)	Director Human Resources and Finance	Joelle Van Pe	05/09
	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Officer in Charge, Head of Migrant Assistance Unit. Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg	Valon Halimi	06/09
	Minor-ndako	Director	David Lowyck	06/09
	Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons	Head of the Knowledge and Learning centre	Muriel Frémal	07/09
	Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons	Coordinator of ERF and AMIF projects	Geert Beirnaert	07/09
	Fedasil's Head Office	Director – Management and Control	Ms Els Van Obberghem	07/09
	Fedasil's Head Office	Directeur	Ms Fanny François	07/09
	ECRE	Coordinator	Ms Claire Rimmer Quaid	07/09
	Belgian Refugee Council (CBAR-BCHV)	Legal Officer Asylum Services	Evelien Vandeven	Refused
	Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office	Team manager at the Belgian Desk on Accessibility	Ms Ynske de Bruyne	07/09
	Immigration Office	General Director	Freddy Roosemont	Refused
	Bulgaria	Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office	Head of Mid-COI team	Ms Elfriede Dewallef
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers		Financial Controller	Slava Zaharieva	14/07
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers		Senior Jurisconsult	Plamenka Vassileva	14/07
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers		Jurisconsult	Vassil Penov	14/07
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers		Chief specialist	Lilyana Shopova	14/07
State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers		State Expert	Emilia Georgieva	14/07
State Agency for Refugees		Director, Intl	Ivan Milanov	15/07

Organisation	Position	Name	Date		
France	with the Council of Ministers	Relations Directorate			
	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Programme Director	Tatyana Valchanova	13/07	
	International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	Head of Office	Radoslav Stamenkov	13/07	
	Bulgarian Red Cross	Programme manager, Refugee services	Mariana Stoyanova	12/07	
	Caritas Bulgaria	Director, Intl. cooperation	Angel Gyorev	13/07	
	Forum Association	Chairman	Mariya Karagoyzova	13/07	
	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee	Manager, Refugee Programme	Iliana Savova	13/07	
	Ministère de l'intérieur	European fund Officer	Yildiz ATIS	01/07	
	Ministère de l'intérieur	European Fund Management	M. Yassine Diouri	19/07	
	Ministère de l'intérieur	Chef du pôle pilotage, finances et achats, DPGSI	M.Issim Fartout	19/07	
	Association Croix Rouge Française	Director	Mme Aline Clavellier	23/09	
	Association Forum réfugiés Cosi	Finance manager	M.Sébastien Minaut	13/07	
	Association Comede	Administrative and financial director	Mme Yasmine Flitti	12/07	
	France Terre d'asile	Responsible of the general administrative secretariat	Christophe Harrison	28/09	
	France Terre d'asile	European Officer	Hélène Soupios-David	28/09	
	OFII	Responsable du Pôle coordination des fonds européens	Mario MORALI	05/07	
	OFPRA	Chef de la mission des affaires européennes et internationales	Rachel Morin	01/07	
	Hungary	Ministry of Interior	Head of project Department of support and communication	Dr. Szilvia Szedo	05/07
		Ministry of Interior	Project Supervisor	Robert Ronto	05/07
Ministry of Interior		Project Manager	Amarilla Radnayné	05/07	

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Office of Immigration and Nationality, Department of International Affairs	Head of International Relations and Funds Unit	Tamas Lestak	06/07
Reformed Mission Centre	Project Manager	Dora Kanizsai-Nagy	06/07
National Judicial Office	Group leader	Petra Tobik	06/07
Menedek-Hungarian association for migrants	Project manager	Dóra Lippényi	06/07
UNHCR - Regional Representation for Central Europe	Integration Associate	Zsuzsanna Puskas	05/07
Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Refugee Programme Director, trainer and President of the European Network on Statelessness	Gabor Gyulai	06/07
Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Project coordinator (for the analysed Community Action)	Tudor Rosu	06/07
International Organization for Migration	Programme coordinator	Balazs Lehel	12/07
ANCI – Central Service	ERF Office coordinator in Central Service - DA	Ms Antonella Romanelli	19/07
Home Affairs Minister-Central Direction for Asylum services - ERF Responsible Authority	Officer	Ms Martha Matscher	21/07
Coop. Camelot	Project office representative	Ms Anna Occhi	21/07
ILO Italy	Senior program manager	Ms Monica Rossi Rizzi	26/07
CRS	Project office representative	Ms Annaclara De Martino	26/07
CIR – Italian Council for Refugees	Project office representative	Ms Martina Socci	27/07
Friuli Venezia Giulia Region	Administrative officer	Mr Paolo Zuccaro	31/08
Home Affairs Minister-Central Direction for Asylum services - ERF Responsible Authority	2011-2013 ERF Responsible Authority	MS Rosetta Scotto Lavina	16/09
UNHCR	Officer for Protection	Mr Maurizio Molina	19/09
UNHCR	Legal Protection Officer	Mr Riccardo Clerici	19/09
UNHCR	Officer	Mr Andrea De	10/09

Organisation	Position	Name	Date	
Sweden		Bonis		
	Swedish Migration Agency	Head, Responsible Authority for EU Funds	Mikael J Zaar	23/08
	Swedish Migration Agency	Program Specialist	Dimitrios Karampelas	23/08
	Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, External Funding	John Gunnarsson	23/08
	Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, Project Funding	Izabela Lindsjo	23/08
	Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, Project Funding	Christer Lindgoen	23/08
	Swedish Red Cross	Christer Lindgoen	Ewa Jonsson	24/08
	Municipality of Eskilstuna	Head of Social Services	Anna Westberg	24/08
	Swedish Police	Former Principal Administrative Officer (now retired)	Hans Rosenqvist	24/08
	Municipality of Uppsala	Project Manager	Tove Osterling Wallner	25/08
United Kingdom	UK Home Office	Director of Finance, HM Passport Office and UK Visas and Immigration	Paul Darling	11/07
	UK Home Office	Acting Head of the UK Responsible Authority	Claire Rainey	01/07
	UK Home Office	Senior Finance Business Partner, Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme (former Head of UKRA)	Stepehn Sykes	19/07
	UK Home Office	UKRA Account manager	Anthony Ball	01/07
	UK Home Office	Operational Head, Refugee Resettlement Programme	Tracey Raw	01/07
	UK Home Office	Project Manager, Country Policy Research, Country policy Information Team	Amanda Wood	01/07 ⁸⁶
	UK Home Office	Head of non-detention casework team, Third country	Luke Fenning	01/07

⁸⁶ Written answer

Organisation	Position	Name	Date	
	unit			
Home Office	AMIF Programme manager, UKRA	Steve Blackmore	01/07	
Asylum Aid	Policy and Research Manager	Deborah Singer	12/07	
Horton Housing Association	Head of service, New Communities	Jayne Higgins	12/07	
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	Head of Operations, Resettlement Programmes	Brian Quaipe	12/07	
5 Community Actions – non exhaustive				
Member State	Number of community action	Organisation	Leader/Co-beneficiary	Status
Austria	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	Co-beneficiary	Completed
Belgium	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	Réseau Odysseus Network ULB	Co-beneficiary	Refused
	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	European Council for Refugees and Exiles	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4001	ECRE	Co-beneficiary	Completed
France	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	FORUM RÉFUGIÉS	Leader	Completed
	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	France Terre d'Asile	Co-beneficiary	Completed
Hungary	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4001	Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Leader	Completed
International	HOME/2013/ERFX/CA/1001	UNHCR	Leader	Completed
Italy	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati	Co-beneficiary	Completed
Sweden	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	Swedish Migration Board	Co-beneficiary	Completed
	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	Swedish Migration Board	Co-beneficiary	Completed

Organisation		Position	Name	Date
Netherlands	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	The Immigration and Naturalization Service	Leader	Completed
	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	UK Border Agency	Leader	Refused
United Kingdom	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	UK Border Agency	Co-beneficiary	Refused
	HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4001	Asylum Aid	Co-beneficiary	Completed

9.3 Annex 3: Online survey to beneficiaries of national projects



Dear respondent,

The consulting firm EY (ex-Ernst & Young) has been mandated by the European Commission to conduct an ex-post evaluation of the **European Refugee Fund (ERF)** from **2011 to 2013**.

Based on an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and added value of the Fund, the evaluation shall draw lessons for the future management of EU funds and contribute to on-going reflections within the context of the mid-term review of the AMIF.

In this context, the evaluation team is launching an e-survey targeted at organisations at national level having participated in one or several projects financed by the ERF.

The objective is to collect feedback on beneficiaries' experience and general perception of the ERF and to measure the results and impacts of the actions financed.

As a beneficiary of ERF funded project(s) - and as an active stakeholder within the field of asylum more generally - your participation is essential to the success of the evaluation and to the continuous improvement of EU asylum policies.

Please note that your answers are strictly confidential and will only be communicated anonymously to the European Commission.

The online questionnaire is very short and should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. We thank you in advance for taking time out of your schedule to fill it out **before October 7th**.

If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following address: giulia.mocci@fr.ey.com .

Thank you for your cooperation, which is a crucial element for the success of this evaluation.

The Evaluation team

1. Which of the following best describes your organisation?

- ▶ A non-governmental organisation/ Association
- ▶ A public structure
- ▶ An international organisation
- ▶ A research organisation
- ▶ A private company
- ▶ Other/ please specify

2. In which of the following countries does your organisation operate?

[Drop Menu]

3. Approximatively, how many people work in your organisation?

4. How did you find out about the ERF in the first place?

- ▶ Responsible Authority website
- ▶ Contacts with the Responsible Authority
- ▶ European Commission website
- ▶ Contacts with the European Commission
- ▶ Another organisation
- ▶ Press
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Word of mouth
- ▶ I cannot remember
- ▶ Other/please specify

5. How many ERF funded projects did you implement every year between 2011 and 2013?

	0	1	2	More than 2
2011				
2012				
2013				

6. Could you please indicate, approximatively, the average budget of the projects that were implemented between 2011 and 2013?

- ▶ 0 € - 50 000 €
- ▶ 51 000 € - 200 000 €
- ▶ 201 000 € - 500 000 €
- ▶ 501 000 € - 1Million €
- ▶ > 1Million €
- ▶ I do not know
- ▶ Not applicable (There was too much variation to provide a meaningful average)

7. What types of actions were undertaken in the projects your organisation implemented?

- ▶ Actions aiming at improving reception conditions of asylum seekers and asylum procedures
- ▶ Actions aiming at supporting the integration of refugees
- ▶ Actions aiming at developing reference tools and evaluation methodologies
- ▶ Actions aiming at reinforcing responsibility sharing (transfer, resettlement)
- ▶ Other / please specify

8. What were the principal target groups of the project(s) implemented?

- ▶ Asylum seekers
- ▶ Refugees
- ▶ Specific group (minors, victims of torture, etc.) - Specify

9. Regarding actions aiming at improving reception conditions of asylum seekers and asylum procedures, to what extent did your project(s) manage to reach the following outputs?

	To a large extent	Yes, somewhat	To a small extent	Not at all	I do not know	Not applicable
Increasing the reception capacity						
Improving first reception conditions						
Social, medical, juridical and administrative counselling						
Improving asylum procedures						
Training stakeholders working in the field of asylum						

10. If other, please specify:

11. Regarding actions aiming at developing reference tools and evaluation methodologies, to what extent did your project(s) manage to reach the following outputs?

	To a large extent	Yes, somewhat	To a small extent	Not at all	I do not know	Not applicable
Development of studies						
Development of new tools						
Development of methodologies						
Development of evaluations						
Collection and share of information						
Improvement of the quality of existing information						

12. If other, please specify:

13. Regarding actions aiming at supporting the integration of refugees, to what extent did your project(s) manage to reach the following outputs?

	To a large extent	Yes, somewhat	To a small extent	Not at all	I do not know	Not applicable
Integration through accommodation						
Integration through job insertion						
Improvement of refugees' image for the civil society						

14. If other, please specify:

15. In your opinion, what have been the main success factors of the project(s)?

16. Did you encounter any difficulties in the implementation of your project(s)?

17. Are the actions financed by the ERF still being implemented?

- ▶ Yes, thanks to a new ERF/AMIF funding
- ▶ Yes, thanks to other sources of funding
- ▶ Yes, thanks to auto-financing
- ▶ No, actions have been downscaled (less beneficiaries, little maintenance, etc.)
- ▶ No, other sources of financing could not be secured (and the actions stopped)
- ▶ No, there is no longer a need for the actions
- ▶ Other / please specify

18. Overall, do you believe that the resources provided by the ERF to implement your project(s) were sufficient?

- ▶ Yes, very much
- ▶ Yes, somewhat
- ▶ No, not much
- ▶ No, not at all
- ▶ I cannot say

19. Why?

20. How would you assess the administrative burden of the project(s) you participated in, at different stages of the project(s)?

	Very high	Somewhat high	Reasonable	Low	Very low	I cannot say
During the project(s) preparation						
During the monitoring of the project(s)						
During the financial management of the project(s) and the expense reporting						
Globally						

21. If possible, could you please provide a rough estimation of the average administrative cost of Commission-imposed monitoring and reporting requirements for the project(s) your organisation implemented?

- ▶ Less than 15%
- ▶ Between 16% and 25%
- ▶ Between 26% and 35%
- ▶ Between 36% and 50%
- ▶ More than 50%
- ▶ I do not know

22. Do you believe that the project(s) could have been implemented without the support of the ERF (internal resources, alternative financial instruments...)?

- ▶ Yes, definitely
- ▶ Yes, very likely

- ▶ Possibly
- ▶ Not, not very likely
- ▶ No, definitely not
- ▶ I do not know

23. If so, what would have been the other funding sources?

- ▶ Internal resources
- ▶ Other EU funds
- ▶ Other international funds
- ▶ Public national funds
- ▶ Private funding
- ▶ I do not know
- ▶ NA

5

Relevance of the ERF

24. Do you know of any other projects financed through the ERF in your country?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

25. Do you know of any other projects financed through the ERF on the EU level (e.g. Community Actions)?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

26. Which one(s) seemed to you the most useful and/or effective?

27. Do you think the ERF responded to your country's needs in the field of asylum between 2011 and 2013?

- ▶ Yes, very much so
- ▶ Yes, somewhat
- ▶ No, not much
- ▶ No, not at all
- ▶ I do not know

29. In your opinion, to what extent did the ERF contribute to the following objectives in your country and/or at the EU level?

	To a large extent	Yes, somewhat	To a small extent	Not at all	I do not know	Not applicable
Improve the reception conditions and the quality of asylum procedures						
Support the integration of targeted persons						
Contribute to the resettlement of asylum seekers						
Contribute to the fairness and efficiency of the Dublin system						
Enhance responsibility sharing between Member States						
Develop cooperation with other Member States						

6

Conclusion

30. Do you think the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) works better than the ERF?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ I do not know

31. Can you please explain why?

32. Do you have any recommendations for the future of the AMIF ?

33. Please provide us with the name of your structure and your contact details.

34. May we contact you to follow up concerning any points relevant to the evaluation?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

9.4 Annex 4: Synthesis of Open Public Consultations

9.4.1 Introduction

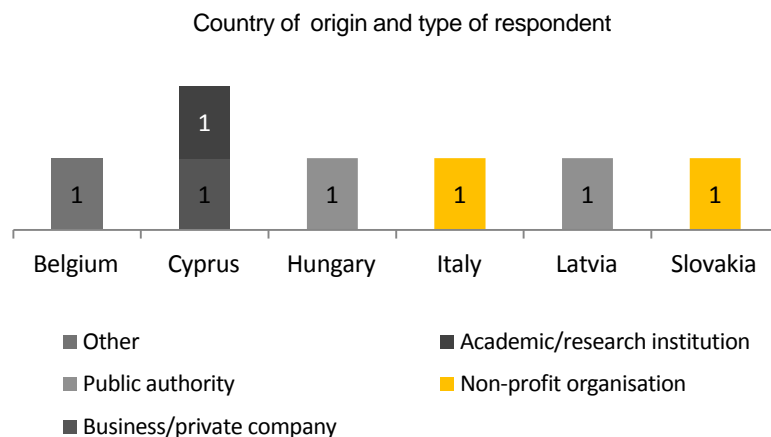
The Public Consultations on the European Refugee Fund (ERF) actions for 2008-2010 and for 2011-2013 were published on 11 May 2016 and remained open online until 9 August 2016 (i.e. 12 weeks, as required by the Better Regulation guidelines). The questionnaires were developed by DG HOME. The questions were the same for both periods 2008-2010 and 2011-2013. The results were sent to EY so that they can be taken into consideration in the ex-post evaluation of the ERF.

This document provides a synthesis of received contributions. In total, 7 contributions were received for 2008-2010 and 12 for 2011-2013. Out of these 19 contributions, 5 contributors (from CY, SK, HU and LV) responded to both consultations. They provided different answers, which justifies separate analyses for each period 2008-10 and 2011-13.

9.4.2 Results of the open public consultation 2008-2010

9.4.2.1 Respondents' profiles: identification of stakeholders and experts (PART I)

- ▶ 7 contributions were received in total. (NB: 5 of them (all except BE and IT) also responded to the 2011-2013 online consultation).
- ▶ 2 were from public authorities, 2 were from non-profit organisations, 1 was from an academic or research institution and 1 was from a business/private company; 1 contributor did not specify its profile. As the graph below shows, responses were collected from 6 different Member States.



Source: public consultation 2008 2010

- ▶ The Italian contributor organisation (non-profit organisation) declared being included in the Transparency register.

9.4.2.2 Answers to questions (PART II)

▶ Effectiveness and impact of the ERF

- Questions 1 & 2:

- The Belgian respondent was the only contributor who thought that the implementation of the ERF 2008-2010 did not affect positively the work of public administrations dealing with asylum and the beneficiaries of EU asylum policy in Belgium (and was an obstacle to the implementation of the national policy on integration). He was also the only one to consider that the ERF did not support the MS efforts in receiving, and in

bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons either.

- The ERF's contribution was considered as partial by the Italian and Cyprus respondents and more significant by the Slovakian, Latvian and Hungarian respondents. A Cyprus respondent mentioned that "changing culture on the public administration takes time and a lot of effort", and although "attitudes, legislation and professionalism" improved amongst stakeholders, "a negative point was the limited period of projects' implementation".

► Implementation of the ERF

- *Question 3 on eligible actions implemented in the MS:* eligible actions that were the most frequently quoted as achieved based on respondents' experience were: Reception conditions and asylum procedures (quoted 7 times), Integration of stateless persons or third country nationals in need of international protection whose stay is of a stable nature (quoted 4 times), Enhancement of MS's capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in line with the principles established by the CEAS (quoted 3 times). Resettlement and transfer activities as well as practical cooperation activities among MS have been quoted only once (by the Belgian respondent).
- *Question 4 on political priorities in the MS:* main priorities were the CEAS implemented in a consistent way and uniformly applied (4 quotes), the management of legal migration flows in line with the labour market needs (4 quotes) and the promotion of integration activities (4 quotes). The sharing of responsibility between MS and third Countries was not quoted by any respondent.
- *Question 5: Apart from the Italian contributor,* all respondents considered that the financed projects were consistent with the priorities and actions in their respective countries. One of the Cyprus respondent underlined that "there was no clear cross-relativeness between the different actions, in addition to the limited period of projects' implementation".
- *Question 6 on activities funded by the ERF implemented in the MS:* All types of measures were quoted at least once, with no specific trend worth being mentioned.
- *Question 7 on the cooperation between MS:* **most respondents (6) did not notice any intensification of their country's cooperation with other EU States.** Only one of the Cyprus contributor noticed such an intensification, but with problems (no further explanation provided)

► Compliance of ERF activities with the Charter of Fundamental Rights

- *Question 8:* contrary to the other respondents, the Belgian and Italian contributors (2) considered the ERF activities were not implemented in compliance with this Charter as well as Community legislation in this field (no further explanation provided)

► Implementation of common principles and measures by MS

- *Question 9:* contributors from Latvia, Slovakia and Cyprus did not know (1) or did not notice (2) or noticed only small (1) difference in the way the MS apply the EU asylum/ integration policy standards. On the contrary, **the Belgian, Italian and Hungarian (3) contributors considered these differences were very large.** The Italian contributor specified that the (probably reception and integration?) measures were better supported by the public body in some other MS (than in IT)

► Relevance of the ERF

- *Question 10:* Apart from the Italian contributor, all respondents considered that the ERF projects and activities addressed the needs of the potential beneficiaries in their countries. **The Italian contributor underlined that too many people were unsatisfied with the quality of the services. The Cyprus contributor wished some areas such as health had been included in the initial multiannual programme.**

► Efficiency of the ERF

- *Question 11:* Apart from the Italian contributor, all respondents considered that the expected results of the actions supported by the ERF were achieved at a reasonable costs. **The Italian contributor underlined that the funding were not distributed adequately across Member**

States.

▶ Coherence of the ERF

- *Question 12:* Slovakian and Latvian contributors (2) considered ERF's projects and actions were coherent with and complementary to other actions in the same field funded by the EU financial instruments and national resources. This was less the case for the Belgian contributor and one of the Cyprus one (2) who considered only a few actions were coherent, whilst the second Cyprus contributor along with the Italian one considered ERF's projects and actions were generally not coherent with other actions. **The Italian contributor underlined that the funding was concentrated on emergency.**

▶ Added-value of the ERF

- *Question 13:* all respondents acknowledged that ERF contribution was **crucial to implement the EU policies** in the field of asylum in their respective countries, where it made either a huge (4) or a limited (3) difference. The Cyprus contributor underlined that the ERF "was a starting point for investing on the specific area and attempt to introduce new management culture and provide a coherent public administration and policy" in the field of asylum.
- *Question 17:* contributors from Cyprus, Latvia, Slovakia and Hungary considered that the ERF **promoted new type of service/ assistance** for asylum applicants that was not delivered before. This was not the case according to the Belgian and Italian contributors in their countries.

▶ Questions specific for projects' implementers

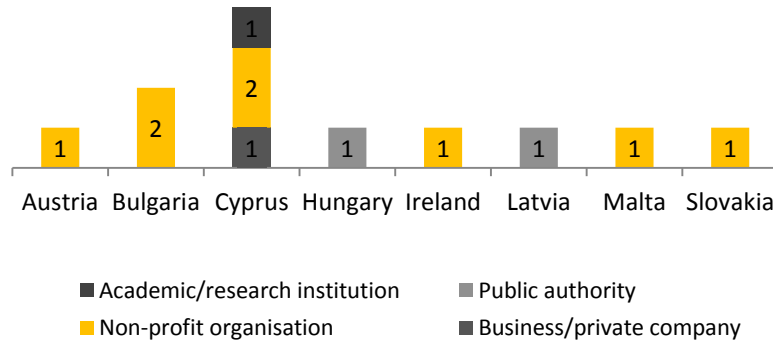
- Three respondents were beneficiaries of activities funded by the ERF in Slovakia, Latvia and Hungary (*question 14*). Their activities consisted in accommodation facilities, services and training courses related to asylum procedures, legal and social assistance and language courses (SK and LV only). These services responded to the needs of the respondents (*question 15*), and remained available after the end of the project (*question 16*).

9.4.3 Results of the public consultation 2011-2013

9.4.3.1 Respondents' profiles: identification of stakeholders and experts (PART I)

- ▶ 12 contributions were received in total. (NB: 5 of them (from CY (2), HU, LV and SK) also responded to the 2008-2010 consultation).
- ▶ 8 were from non-profit organisations, 2 were from public authorities, 1 was from an academic or research institution and 1 was from a business/private company;
- ▶ As the graph below shows, responses were collected from 8 Member States, including 4 contributions received from Cyprus:

Country of origin and type of respondent



Source: public consultation 2011 2013

- ▶ The Austrian and Irish contributor organisations (non-profit organisations) declared being included in the Transparency register.

9.4.3.2 Answers to questions (PART II)

▶ Implementation of the ERF

- *Question 3 on eligible actions implemented in the MS:* eligible actions that were the most frequently quoted as achieved based on respondents' experience were: Reception conditions and asylum procedures (quoted 9 times), Integration of stateless persons or third country nationals in need of international protection whose stay is of a stable nature (quoted 7 times), Enhancement of MS's capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in line with the principles established by the CEAS (quoted 5 times). Practical cooperation activities were quoted only twice. Resettlement and transfer activities were not quoted at all.
- *Question 4 on political priorities in the MS:* main priorities were the promotion of integration activities (7 quotes), the management of legal migration flows in line with the labour market needs (5 quotes), the CEAS implemented in a consistent way and uniformly applied (4 quotes), and the improvement of cooperation among MS (4 quotes).
- *Question 5: Apart from one Cyprus contributor,* all respondents (11) considered that the financed projects were consistent with the MS priorities and actions in their respective countries, although only to a limited extent for 5 of them. For the Irish contributor (the only one to have provided additional comment), the limited contribution was explained by the fact that the funded actions were mainly focused on reception and integration measures.
- *Question 6 on activities funded by the ERF implemented in the MS:* All types of measures were quoted at least once.

▶ Effectiveness and impact of the ERF

- *Questions 1 & 2:*
 - All respondents thought that the ERF during 2011-2013 affected positively the work of the public administrations dealing with asylum and the beneficiaries of EU asylum policy in their respective countries, either partially (6 from BG, MT and CY) or to a great extent (6 from CY, AT, LV, IE and HU)
 - They also all considered that the ERF supported the MS efforts in receiving, and in bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons (partially for 7 of them and mostly for 5 of them). The Austrian contributor explained this positive assessment by highlighting the "co-funding on local, regional and national level as an expression for the common interests on solid integration of the target group in good cooperation with NGOs" as well as the fact that the ERF raised "awareness of different aspects of integration".
- *Question 7: Most respondents (7) did not know about or did not notice any*

intensification of their country's cooperation with other EU States. 5 (CY and AT) noticed such an intensification, but with problems for most of them. A Cyprus contributor underlined that the collection of best practices was not followed by sufficient implementation.

▶ **Compliance of ERF activities with the Charter of Fundamental Rights**

- *Question 8:* All respondents (except one "I do not know" answer) considered the ERF activities were implemented in compliance with this Charter as well as Community legislation in this field

▶ **Implementation of common principles and measures by MS**

- *Question 9:* Contributors from Cyprus, Bulgaria, Malta, Latvia, and Ireland either did not know (4) or did not notice (2) or noticed only small (3) difference in the way the MS apply the EU asylum/ integration policy standards. On the contrary, **the Austrian, Slovakian and Hungarian (3) contributors considered these differences were very large.** The Austrian contributor put the emphasis on the differences "between east and west according to numbers, experience, cooperation between official authorities and NGOs, access to integration programmes and individual support".

▶ **Relevance of the ERF**

- *Question 10:* All respondents considered that the ERF projects and activities addressed the needs of the potential beneficiaries in their countries. A Cyprus contributor mentioned that "the limited implementation period in relation to a large gap time period resulted to the development of a belief from the side of target group that the projects did not make any difference to their lives".

▶ **Efficiency of the ERF**

- *Question 11:* All respondents (except one "I do not know" answer) considered that the expected results of the actions supported by the ERF were achieved at a reasonable costs.

▶ **Coherence of the ERF**

- *Question 12:* Most contributors (9) considered ERF's projects and actions were coherent with and complementary to other actions in the same field funded by the EU financial instruments and national resources. Only a Cyprus contributor considered ERF's projects and actions were generally not coherent with and complementary to other actions.

▶ **Added-value of the ERF**

- *Question 13:* all respondents (except two "I do not know" answers) acknowledged that ERF contribution was **crucial to implement the EU policies** in the field of asylum in their respective countries, where it made either a huge (6) or a limited (4) difference. A Cyprus contributor underlined that "changes happened, new ideas were implemented, but the results and the level of change occurred was never assessed at national level".
- *Question 17:* 7 contributors believed that the ERF **promoted new type of service/ assistance** for asylum applicants that was not delivered before. This was not the case for 3 contributors from Cyprus and Ireland.

▶ **Questions specific for projects' implementers**

- Eight respondents were beneficiaries of activities funded by the ERF in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta, Slovakia, Latvia and Hungary (*question 14*). Their activities mainly consisted in accommodation facilities, services and training courses related to asylum procedures, legal and social assistance and language courses, but also included courses for the acquisition of technical skills (BG) and resettlement and relocation operations (CY). Few contributors responded whether these services responded to the needs of the respondents (*question 15*). According to 5 respondents, these services ended after the end of the project (*question 16*).

9.4.4 General trends

It is not possible to draw general conclusions based on few responses. However these responses bring some interesting highlights based on the experience of contributor organisations, and confirm some of the main results of the evaluation, e.g.:

- ▶ Little prioritisation of responsibility-sharing activities, and little focus on intensifying cooperation between MS;
- ▶ Positive changes perceived by contributors, although these changes were not measured at MS level;
- ▶ Clear added-value in some MS (especially the ones having acceded to the EU since 2004), where the ERF promoted new types of service and assistance and where the ERF acted as a potential “starting point” for further investment;

9.5 Annex 5: Case studies reports

9.5.1 Case study report: Austria

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy

<p>Asylum trend figures : evolution of first time asylum applicants ⁸⁷⁸⁸</p>	<p>According to Eurostat data, in the first quarter of 2016, Austria was the 4th country with the highest number of first time asylum applicants (13 900 in total). It came after Germany (almost 175 000), Italy (22 300) and France (18 000). Austria was also the 3rd country with the largest absolute increase of asylum applicants, after Germany and Italy.</p> <p>According to Eurostat data, asylum applicants have highly increased in Austria since 2011 and particularly in the last two years. Austria has also experienced a specific growth of the number of unaccompanied minors. On the other hand, the number of asylum decisions remained quite stable between 2011 and 2015 (despite a slight increase in 2014). Pending asylum applications increased from around 46 000 in 2015 to around 84 000 in March 2016.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evolution in the number of asylum seekers and first time applicants</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of asylum seekers and first time applicants</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>14 420</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>17 415</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>17 500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>28 035</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015</td> <td>88 160</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of asylum seekers and first time applicants	2011	14 420	2012	17 415	2013	17 500	2014	28 035	2015	88 160
Year	Number of asylum seekers and first time applicants												
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2012	17 415												
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2014	28 035												
2015	88 160												

According to the Asylum Information Database (aida), asylum law in Austria is based on the Aliens Law Package 2005, which involved a reform of the Asylum Act and split the former Aliens Act into the Aliens Police Act and the Settlement and Residence Act. Stays of less than 6 months are regulated by the Aliens Police Act; stays for longer than 6 months are regulated by the Settlement and Residence Act; the asylum status and subsidiary protection are regulated by the Asylum Act. Those Acts were revised with the Act Amending the Aliens Law in 2015. The revision mainly consisted of legislative adaptations with regards to the Reception Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU) and the Procedures Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU).

As regards the institutional framework, a reform took place in the Austrian system of administrative justice in 2014 and involved some changes in the Austrian asylum system, where the Federal State and provinces share competences. The main responsibility in the area of asylum is held by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA), a specific department of the

⁸⁷ Eurostat - http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report#Main_destination_countries

⁸⁸ Aida – Asylum Information Database - <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/austria/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure>

Ministry, is responsible for first instance decisions in asylum procedures. It replaced in 2014 the Federal Asylum Office and enlarged its responsibility (to asylum applications, residence permits on exceptional humanitarian grounds and certain Aliens' Police proceedings). The Federal Administrative Court (BVwG), which replaced the Federal Asylum Court in 2014, is involved in the appeals against the decisions of BFA as the second instance authority.

The asylum system and regular procedure involve the Migration Council for Austria. This body reunites experts whose main role is to help the Federal Ministry of Interior with the development of a migration strategy.

According to the interview with the Responsible Authority, the federal center opened 5 new centers in 2014 and now counts 40 centers. They are however largely managed by the landers. The Responsible Authority for the ERF in Austria is the Ministry of the Interior (BMI). In 2013, the management of asylum matters has been centralized under the Responsible Authority and disposes of a unique department for all AMIF measures. The BMI is supported by the Delegated Authority, the Audit Authority and the Certifying Authority. The same organization was kept under the AMIF.

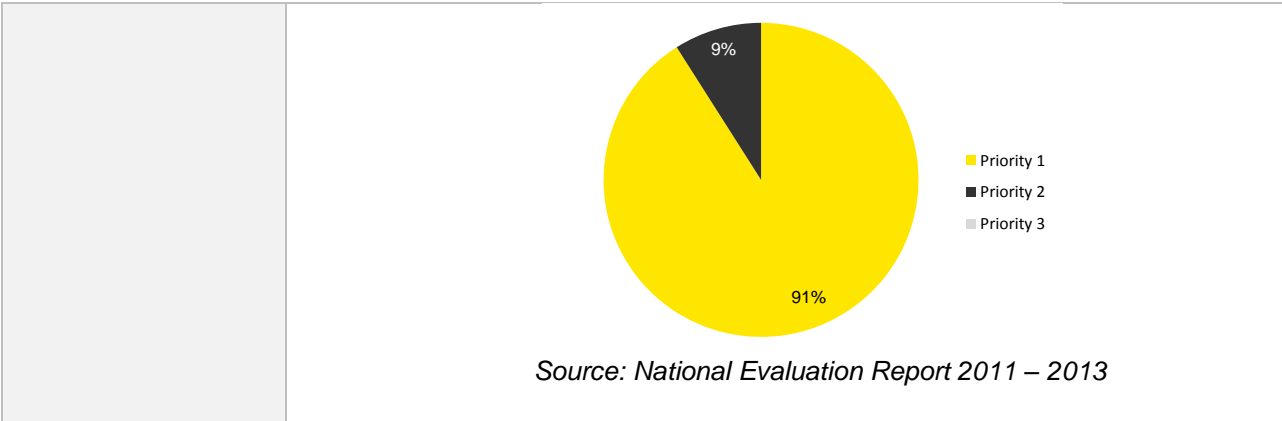
ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum⁸⁹</p>	<p>The ERF strategy aims at financing activities that complete the services implemented by the national state. According to the interview conducted with the Ministry of the Interior, the ERF strategy at the national level mainly focused on the integration of refugees. In particular, since the reception system was a national competence with regards to the basic welfare support system, a strong focus has been put on “Psychological and psychotherapeutic care”.</p> <p>More generally speaking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The programmes focused on Priority 1 and aimed at providing both legal advice on the procedures and on the transfers under the Dublin Regulation, as well as psychological care and information to the population. They also focused on integration, through advices on social issues, job issues and education, as well as through assistance in finding accommodation. ▶ The strategy also included, on a minor scale, projects of Priority 2. Those projects aimed at helping the authorities to improve the quality of asylum management.
<p>Number of ERF funded actions⁹⁰</p>	<p>The number of ERF funded actions in Austria slightly varied across the years. As the graph shows below, 56 actions were financed in 2011, 51 actions in 2012 and 52 actions in 2013.</p>
<p>Breakdown of actions per priority⁹¹</p>	<p>91% of the ERF funded projects in Austria between 2011 and 2013 focused on Priority 1, which includes measures related to reception conditions and integration. The 9% left focused on Priority 2, related to the development of reference tools.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Repartition per priorities</p>

⁸⁹ National Evaluation Report 2011 - 2013

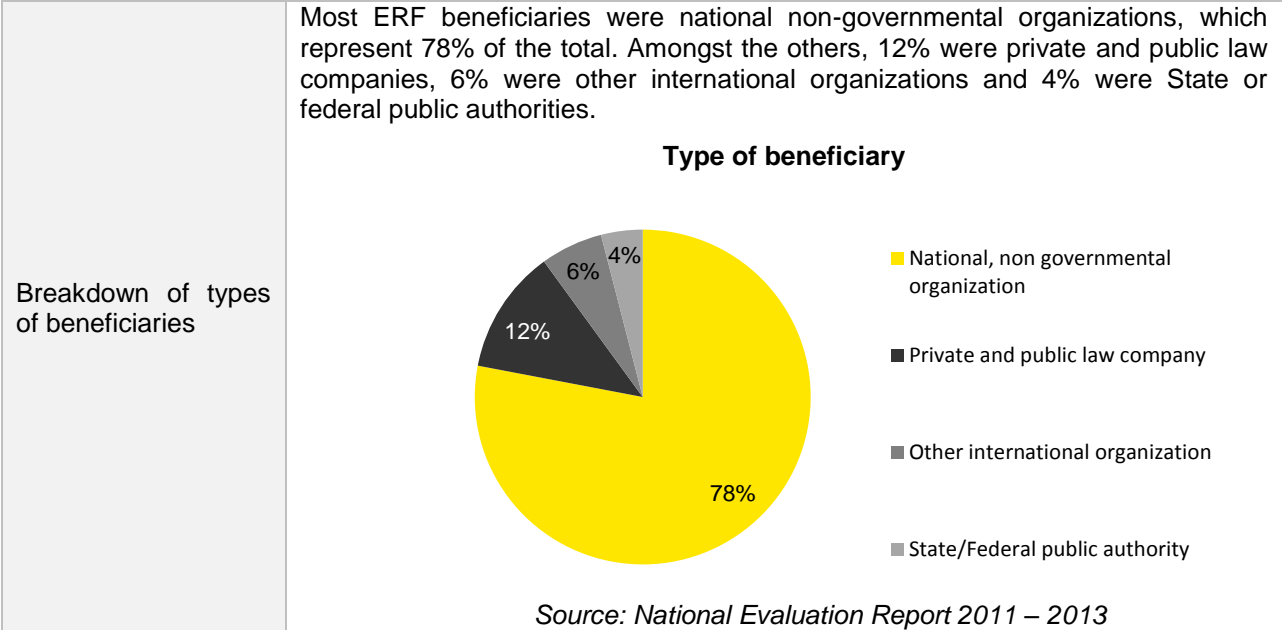
⁹⁰ National Evaluation Report 2011 - 2013

⁹¹ National Evaluation Report 2011 - 2013



Types of actions implemented

- ▶ Projects focused on Priority 1 included:
 - ▶ Actions aiming at improving reception conditions (such as advise and counseling on the procedures and on housing and psychological and psychotherapeutic care);
 - ▶ Actions aiming at improving integration (such as measures aiming at giving initial aid with integration (social advice), labor market training or language and educational classes).
- ▶ Projects focused on Priority 2 included:
 - ▶ Actions aiming at developing methodological tools mainly supported the asylum authority, which mainly consisted of the training of persons and of the collection of country information and documentation (database and answer to queries). One action consisted of evaluating first instance decisions and analyzing judgments.



b. Relevance of the ERF

- ▶ In Austria, the ERF aimed to meet national needs and complement national resources whilst being aligned and consistent with national priorities. With 54 000 persons being granted with international protection in the past 10 years⁹², the focus was put on integration and reception, which is relevant to the Austrian context and challenges.
 - On the reception side, the ERF financed projects aiming at completing the services ensured by the national basic welfare support system and focused on psychological and psychotherapeutic care, legal counselling and actions aiming at improving the management of procedures.
 - On the integration side, the ERF completed the lacks of the national system, where integration conditions were deteriorated by the combination of higher demands and higher approval rates with increasing costs of labor and housing markets. It consisted of social counselling, support for language learning, education, accommodation and labor market integration.
- ▶ Most projects were consistent with this approach and aimed to propose new and innovative activities that were not considered through the national funding sources and directly contributed to support national needs and priorities. While reception centers are supported by the government, the ERF focused on specific additional activities related to integration or medical care uncovered by national funding. Some projects included information activities to the local population/ Austrian citizens, which proved both successful and relevant to foster the integration. For certain beneficiaries, project ideas were even developed together with the RA to ensure their relevance to the government and their coherence with the other ERF projects. Only on few occasions, some interviewees wished the ERF had not funded some legal advice activities considered as “standard” and supposed to be covered by national funding. Even if not as innovative and original as other types of projects, legal assistance clearly covered existing gaps in the asylum system.
- ▶ Most stakeholders met during the country visit acknowledge the relevance of the Austrian ERF “strategy”. This strategy is broad and flexible so that almost any project could be funded; therefore any emerging need can be covered by the ERF without the need for major adjustments. The strategy also allowed the coverage of multiple needs under the same project (ex: the Caritas Education center could develop a project covering both the need for accommodation and for integration of asylum seekers and refugees).
- ▶ A few lessons could be learnt for the future based in the Austrian experience, some of which are already implemented within the AMIF:
 - Whilst the ERF is used to finance national needs, some interviewees considered that too little funding is made available for European / International activities and responsibility sharing activities. One way could be the promotion of Community Actions which are only partially known and used by the actors.
 - Although familiar with national priorities (especially on the occasion of communication events and project calls which provide reminders of this strategy), the civil society has not been as widely consulted at the stage of the strategy definition as has been the case when defining the AMIF multiannual strategy.
 - While priorities are flexible and adapted to the context evolutions, eligibility criteria were more generally described as restrictive. In particular, some NGOs wished the ERF could include EU citizens as targets groups when implementing awareness-raising and integration activities involving both refugees and national citizens.

⁹² Source: interview

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	Unknown
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	64 182
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Objectives pursued were mainly related to improving reception conditions (such as advise and counselling on the procedures and on housing and psychological and psychotherapeutic care), improving integration (such as measures aiming at giving initial aid with integration (social advice), labour market training or language and educational classes), and developing methodological tools mainly supported the asylum authority, which mainly consisted of the training of persons and of the collection of country information and documentation (database and answer to queries). One action consisted of evaluating first instance decisions and analyzing judgments. ▶ Targets for the number of targeted people reached by the projects have been “easily exceeded”; for Priority 1, only 20% of the projects were unable to reach the planned targets (but only 3 of the projects reflected an under performance of over 15% in terms of number of persons reached), and for Priority 2, the projects generally exceeded the keys targets and only in 3 cases certain indicators were not achieved (like, for example, “the average duration of counselling per person”), since the increase of flows hardened the challenge. ▶ The ERF has had concrete results and impact in Austria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It contributed to improve the quality of asylum procedures and supported sound decision-making; ▶ The ERF was effective in supporting some key structural developments through such initiatives as the COI project which has been continued and enlarged each year since its first developments. ▶ It covered the highest number of final beneficiaries possible (ex 100% as for Treffpunkt Osterreich), although quality of services has recently had to be adapted to the flows increase. ▶ The ERF also had positive effects on the reception and integration of AS/ refugees by working on their specific needs as well as on the perception of the local population. For instance, the “Treffpunkt Osterreich” project allowed the complete support of all refugees in one region. The “Interface” project focused on accommodation in Vienna. ▶ However the contribution of the ERF to any EU-harmonization and implementation of the CEAS is not clear as this was not the core objective of the ERF annual programmes. Apart from CAs which are not well-known at the regional and local level, MS cooperation remained limited and beneficiary NGOs did not frequently exchange with other MS except IO and networks (ex: UNHCR, CARITAS). 	

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of <u>operations</u> implemented with this specific objective	57
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	NA
<p>ERF funded projects gave a high contribution for authorities and asylum seekers and were meaningful with regards to the increased demands.</p> <p>Two examples are significant: the ACCORD project, implemented by the Red Cross and aiming at improving legal counselling for vulnerable people, and a project implemented by the Zebra organization, aiming at giving psychotherapeutic care to the increased number of traumatized people. In both cases objectives were reached and the projects reconfirmed. The first one published research studies, country reports, a database shared and used by 164 countries and a manual containing several trainings that promote quality standards and are translated in several languages. The second one supported on average 300 people per year and went up to 400 during harder times.</p>	

Positive aspects explain those success:

- ▶ The long experience of the beneficiaries: 12 years for the first one and 15 years for the second one. By getting familiar with the administrative procedures they can focus more on the content of the projects.
- ▶ The good networking and relations with other organizations and the use of European trainings: in the first case the ACCORD project is on the way of institutionalization under EASO and collaborate in synergy with the European Asylum Curriculum to form its employees; in the second case, the project benefits from the Erasmus Plus funding for European trainings.

This is confirmed by the survey published in the national evaluation report, in which a long professional experience (96% of the responses), the high qualification of the employees (93% of the responses) and a good networking and relations with other institutions/organizations/stakeholders in the area (78% of the responses) were mentioned as success factors.

The increase in the demand of asylum seekers had an impact the number of people reached, on activities directly involving the people (integration – counselling – psychological and psychotherapeutic care). On the other hand, the increased number of demands is also a reason why certain qualitative indicators, such as “the average duration of counselling per person” were not reached (as the number of final beneficiaries assisted increased, the time dedicated to each one of them decreased), together with some specific reasons such as the rising costs of housing and accommodations.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of <u>operations</u> implemented with this specific objective	141
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	NA

In general, good transition from the basic welfare support to integration was provided and objectives were reached or over-reached.

- ▶ The projects aiming at social counselling and housing were successful and the targets exceeded: according to the national report, indicators were elaborated and around 5000 accommodations were provided. For example, the Interface organization, in charge of housing assistance in the language of origin, provided between 2011 and 2013 an average of 2 housing contracts per week. The raising housing market prices increased and made transition harder, but the number of housed people increased, given the familiarity of the owners with the issues.
- ▶ The projects aiming at giving support for language courses, education and labor market integration were very successful according to the interviewees but encountered some implementation problems according to the national reports.

According to the evaluation report, the targets were not completely met for projects supporting language courses, education and labor market integration, because projects were too short and it is hard to form or teach a language in one year. On the contrary, interviewees were positive. For example, the Caritas Educational Center was able to help in education “every refugee that showed up” and the project geographically expanded with the time from Vienna to the upper east of the country. The success of this project is related to the fact that 2 previous small projects were put together in order to develop a new more efficient one. Another example is given by the Cultrain pilot project, implemented since 2012 by the IOM and involving cultural orientation trainings and intercultural events for young refugees. The project developed 62 trainings with 582 participants from 2012 to 2016 and responded to the specific needs of the young population through adapted methods, such as sport, cooking and cultural events which were publicized through a Facebook page liked by around 560 people. Participating in those trainings reduced insecurities that might occur from the meeting of two cultures.

However, the narrow definitions of target groups increased the administrative burden and discouraged the excluded target groups. A more flexible definition could make projects more efficient, especially in smaller towns, where it is hard to organize a project for refugees only. However, the target groups’ definition became more flexible in the AMIF.

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	N/D
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	N/D
There were no projects focused on resettlement during this period.	

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	19
<p>The ERF contribution on this area was small but existing, for example with regards to the COI service. According to the interview with the Red Cross for example, the ACCORD project was effective in developing its relations with the Office for Immigration and Asylum, the Federal Administrative Court and some legal advisors. The main results, through several years, consisted of the publication of reports and of a database collecting information for more than 160 countries, as well as of a manual translated in several languages meant to deliver trainings and teach about quality standards. According to the national evaluation report, legal counselling activities were however the most concrete contribution to the clearance of legal information and the implementation of procedures.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

<p>MS cooperation is considered as positively achieved by the beneficiaries of Community Actions. The MedCoi action started by approaching a few countries, year by year developed a helpful network of 14 MS and they now want to extend it to all MS through the institutionalization under EASO. It contributes to the ECAS, through regular meetings and discussions. Further MS cooperation could be enhanced through more relations and communication with the Commission. This project also had a spillover effect and inspired other similar projects.</p> <p>National projects only partially supported MS cooperation. For some beneficiaries of national projects, the ERF improved the quality of national asylum policies but did not provide a real common approach. For others, the exchanges with MS was less common but existed, especially amongst international organizations, and could take the form of study visits and research on other countries' systems.</p> <p>One of them, which used Community Actions before, like the RED CROSS, used national projects to develop a common portal shared with other MS and aiming at being institutionalized with the EASO to include all the EU Member States. This structure made proof of synergies and spillover effects: they use the European Asylum Curriculum to form its employees and adapt their content to the existing tools, like the EASO database, through relations with the Commission. This interconnection is useful for European harmonization and develops a common understanding.</p>

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sustainability was not systematically determined during the monitoring nor stated at the end of the project. However, according to the national report, 89% of the managers that participated in an online survey believed that there has been certain sustainability. ▶ Long term funding is the main factor in support to sustainability. According to the ex-post final evaluation report 2011 – 2013, 2/3 of the projects were reselected at least once. More rarely, they lasted for the 3 years.. Continuity helps the executing bodies, as project beneficiaries that are not sure to be re-financed do not always invest in the development of the projects to avoid the risk of not being

reimbursed. In fact, it is true that projects that could not be funded by the AMIF anymore can now be funded by alternative funding (for ex. The Interface project). However, according to the national report, projects were continued more often with the executing body's own resources or with funding from other sources than with the public sector control structures.

- ▶ Long term projects have positive effects and increase their efficiency. First, structures having more experience with the ERF administrative procedures can dedicate more time to the management of the project itself and the achievement of its results. Second, some objectives that are hardly quantifiable can only be reached in the long term. One example is given by the organization Interface aiming at housing target groups. Signing housing contracts became easier once the owners got familiar with the refugees and more aware and sensitive to the asylum situation.
- ▶ For several projects the effects continued and still exist. The database elaborated by MedCoi since 2009 is still active and shared by 14 Member States and it is also on the way of its institutionalization under the EASO. The COI database elaborated by the ACCORD project has been active for now 15 years. UNHCR projects allowed the development of QA guidelines, checklists, etc. as well as interpretation standards which were subsequently discussed with EASO to develop an EU-wide curriculum.
- ▶ The MedCoi Community Action wants to be taken over by EASO. In this way, complementarity will be ensured. However, a stronger follow up by the EU institutions towards this way is wished according to the interviews.

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	Closed	4 831 000	4 823 000	99%	4 638 000	96%
2012	Closed	4 543 000	4 538 000	99%	4 389 000	96%
2013	Open	4 729 000	4 723 000	99%	4 570 000	96%
Total		14 103 000	14 093 000	99%	13 597 000	96%

- ▶ According to the National Evaluation Report, 48 % of the projects have been rejected and in some cases the budgets have been reduced. The resources were not sufficient for multiple reasons: (i) The number of asylum seekers and refugees increased and the resources available per person diminished; (ii) The long pre-financing period as well as the delays between one disbursement and the other (for example, ERF 2011 was given in 2013 and ERF 2012 in 2015), hardened management and impact on effectiveness, especially for small structures or structures with low liquidity.
- ▶ According to the national authorities, the ERF is sufficient although modest if compared to the high inflows. Because of the combination of flows increase and funding reduction, some useful and successful projects were not reconfirmed the year after. This is particularly true for the Community Actions, where an increased competition hardened the access to the fund, and for small structures, that often are not able to advance payments and carry out the projects.
- ▶ According to project holders met during the country visit, ERF transactional costs were high, though reasonable and justified. These costs were estimated around 3% to 7% of total human resources costs in average. Institutional learning over time allowed a better acceptance and more efficient processes to be implemented within beneficiary organizations. One of the key factors is the level of experience and familiarity gained with the applications and administrative procedures. The management of the funding represents a high administrative burden for the first-time beneficiaries, which spend a lot of time and money on financial controls and evaluation reports. On the opposite site, structures having implemented sustainable projects for several years consider it reasonable and fair if compared to other public institutions. However the administrative burden could have been reduced

through less reporting (biannual was considered too frequent) and less staff turn-over within the delegated body.

- ▶ Administrative burden was particularly high for international organizations that in some cases had to hire additional staff members to compensate the contradictions between the communitarian and national framework. Indeed, the lack of a very well defined status often requires double reporting or a double certification on payments. Further harmonization is desired. Furthermore, financial control is higher than qualitative control, which is instead desired by the beneficiaries.
- ▶ The administrative burden related to both the reporting mechanism and the financial controls was reduced with the AMIF, which include indirect costs (without justification).

Budget and overall Fund management

- ▶ On the basis of the interviews, the administrative burden related to the ERF management is high but reasonable.
- ▶ The cost of the administrative burden for the Responsible Authority corresponded to approximatively 4,5 FTE.

f. Coherence and complementarity

- ▶ ERF projects complemented each other and showed no duplication. For example, the project implemented by Interface and related to housing was stopped notwithstanding its success, because a project with the same objectives had started in the close area.
- ▶ The coherence between the ERF and other SOLID funds was managed by the designation of one single authority (and one Delegated Authority) which is responsible for managing all AMIF funds. The selection decisions for the four SOLID funds were selected by the BMI with no other specialist on the matter.
- ▶ Although no overlaps could be noted at the level of individual projects thanks to rigorous monitoring and audit, difficulties were raised with the definition of the respective target groups of the different SOLID funds which might have led to such overlaps and which are not fully consistent with the national policies. At the national level, people looking for protection are generally not distinguished from other migrants; for instance at the EU level, the ESF target groups are more flexibly described than in the ERF. However, 70% of the projects continuation suggested that bodies primarily used ERF.
- ▶ The coherence and complementarity between Community actions and Annual programmes are not sufficiently promoted and managed. CAs are not well known amongst national stakeholders (both national authorities and NGOs). As a consequence there was no synergy used between national projects and Community actions, although such synergy would have brought clear added-value to ERF projects (for instance whilst the ERF complemented national systems through some outsourcing of additional services, CAs would have brought some opportunities to harmonise these services and contribute to the implementation of the CEAS).
- ▶ Some synergies could be observed between ERF projects and other EU/ international institutions working on asylum issues. For example, two of the interviewees collaborated with EASO. The ACCORD project developed a database whose use is adapted to a pre-existing one put in place by EASO.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

NA

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

NA

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

Austrian structures were not main beneficiaries of any Community Actions. However, as the table shows below, Austrian structures have been co-beneficiaries of 12 Actions and co-organizer of 1 Action. The average budget per project was of around 455 800€, below the average of all Community Actions (around 550 900€).

Year	N° Contrat	Title
2012	HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4020	Making Alternatives to Detention in Europe a Reality by Exchanges, Advocacy and Learning (MADE-REAL)
2011	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2264	Refugee Integration - Assessment, Evaluation, Engagement and Capacity building in selected Western and Central European countries
2011	HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265	MedCOI 2 : Sharing of Medical Country of Origin
2010	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1695	Asylum Seeking And Work (ASAW)
2010	HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721	Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report
2009	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1005	Promotion and dissemination of good practice in addressing specific needs of vulnerable groups - especially victims of torture and human rights violations - based on a transnational in-depth study and evaluation of working and treatment methods
2009	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1006	Sharing of existing information and best practices, research on policies and jurisdiction in the eu and training of national authorities' officials aimed at developing a common approach on the collection and usage of medical coi in individual cases
2009	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1013	Integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems of EU member states: evaluation and promotion of current best practices
2009	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016	European asylum curriculum, phase III - temporary implementation unit
2009	HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1024	Access of minor asylum seekers (aged 15-18 years old) to the educational system in europe - meeting the challenges
2008	HOME/2008/ERFX/CA/1016	Continuing the extension of the european coi sponsorship (ECS)
2008	HOME/2008/ERFX/CA/1021	Transnational advisory and assistance network for asylum seekers under a Dublin process

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

The objectives of CAs h have been generally reached. For example:

- ▶ The project “Transnational advisory and assistance network for asylum seekers under a Dublin process” established new working methods that have been shared by organizations at the EU and national level. It also ensured the development of a EU-wide system of follow up for asylum seekers involved in transfer measures.
- ▶ The project “Continuing the extension of the European COI Sponsorship (ECS)” ensured the durability and improvement of the ECS, a Europe-wide network aiming at exchanging COI information. Based on the “one for all principle”, the network helped burden sharing through multilateral cooperation.
- ▶ The project establishing a “European network for technical cooperation on the application of the

Dublin II regulation” allowed spreading knowledge on the Dublin process main issues EU-wide.

- ▶ The project “Access of minor asylum seekers (aged 15-18 years old) to the educational system in Europe – Meeting the Challenges” meant to develop the existing educational framework in favor of minor asylum seekers, through the elaboration of European tools and interrelated actions. Vienna hosted one out of the two meetings. During this meeting, a tool questionnaire was finalized and a revised time table was agreed with the partners.
- ▶ The project "Integrating Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States: Evaluation and Promotion of Current Best Practices" aimed at promoting the educational integration of children refugees in the EU by developing common standards and sharing of best practices.
- ▶ The “Assessing the Dublin Regulation's impact on asylum seekers' access to protection and identifying best practice implementation in the European Union” was successful in providing recommendations related to the recently implemented Dublin III regulation.
- ▶ The project “Medical Country of Origin Information project MEDCOI” aimed at increasing EU cooperation and harmonization on the research and use of medical country of origin information. It involved regular expert meetings and developed a database. After its 4th version, the projects' beneficiaries want to institutionalize it.
- ▶ The project “Refugee Integration - Assessment, Evaluation, Engagement and Capacity building in select Western and Central European countries” focused on two different methodologies in Central and Western Europe, for the development of tools with regards to refugees' integration.

From the interviews, two lessons can be learnt:

- ▶ There is a will of improving MS cooperation but the extent is marginal because the number of Community Actions is limited and of difficult access. Organizing a transnational project requires higher effort than for national ones and the probability of winning the calls for proposals is less given the high competition for the little funding.
- ▶ Some structures do not know well about the Community Actions whose procedures to apply lack of visibility.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

- ▶ The ERF clearly brought some additional funding to implement activities that would not have been implemented or would have been implemented on a smaller scale without the ERF support (for ex. the UNHCR project allowed the creation of new staff positions and additional activities such as interpretation, public information, QA to BFA, etc.). This is confirmed by the fact that during the transition period preceding the establishment of the AMIF, the State only financed 38% of ERF activities and focused on a few priorities only. ERF allowed the filling in of gaps not covered by national laws and funding. (for ex. the CARITAS project on legal representation in the 2nd jurisdiction where there was a need for representation)
- ▶ In addition, the biggest added-value of the ERF was its role in the implementation of resettlement activities: according to all interviewees, the ERF has been a key incentive for Austria to re-start resettlement activities and clearly influenced the political decision.
- ▶ Finally, the EU added value also relied on the fact that the ERF shows the possibility of a concrete common approach through MS cooperation. This was particularly true for international organizations and for structures interested into Community Actions, because the ERF allowed transnational issues to be considered. Two of the analysed projects, after many versions, go towards institutionalization under EASO. This allows the extension of national measures to all Member States. It is the case of MedCoi and ACCORD. However during the interviews, the beneficiaries of those projects mentioned that a stronger support and follow-up by the European institutions is welcome to fasten the previously mentioned institutionalization.

j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Ministry of the Interior	Responsible Authority of the ERF	Thomas Muhlhans	07/07/2016
Ministry of the Interior	Head of the Department of Asylum and Aliens Matters	Hilbert Karl	07/07/2016
ICMPD	Co-beneficiary of the Community Action "MedCoi2"	Martin Wagner	07/07/2016
Caritas	Head of department	Karin Abram	07/07/2016
Red Cross	Leader project of "ACCORD"	Andrea Jakober	07/07/2016
Caritas Education Center	Leader project of "Treffpunkt Österreich"	David Himler	08/07/2016
Interface	Leader project of "MoWien"	Susanne Schaidinger	08/07/2016
IOM Austria	Manager of the project CulTrain	Katharina Benetter	08/07/2016
Verein Zebra	Involved in the project 'Intercultural psychotherapeutic care of asylum seekers, those entitled to subsidiary protection and recognized refugees in Styria'	Alexandra Koeck	11/07/2016
UNHCR	Head of UNHCR Austria	Christoph Pinter	11/07/2016

9.5.2 Case study report: Belgium

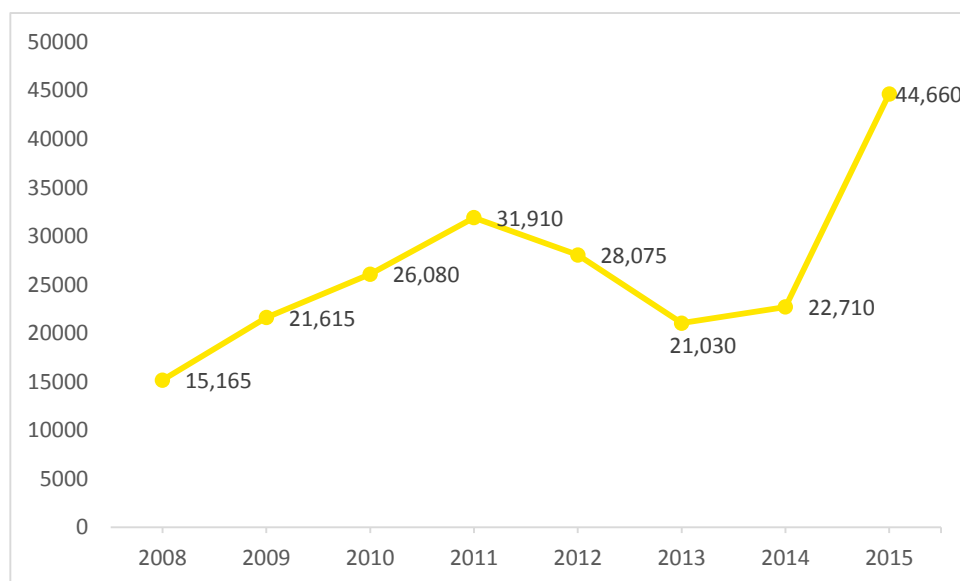
a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy

Asylum trend figures : evolution of first time asylum applicants

According to Eurostat, the first time asylum applicants in Belgium went from 15,165 in 2008 to 44,660 in 2015 (+294%).

Evolution in the number of asylum seekers and first time applicants



The asylum system in Belgium

The asylum system in Belgium is mainly organized as follows.

The reception is organized in an **open reception structure**, managed by Fedasil or one of its partners.

Belgium has **50 open reception centres for asylum seekers**, where residents are free to enter and leave the centre they have been accommodated to.

The infrastructure of the reception centres vary greatly, from former military bases, boarding schools or hospitals to newly-built prefab buildings, but the centres offer mainly the same services: 'bed, bath, bread', guidance, daily life and neighbourhood associations.

Asylum seekers recognised as refugees receive a resident's permit for an unlimited period.

Implementation of the ERF Strategy

The ERF Belgium strategy on asylum and migration **did not change over the course of the period 2008-2013**, whereas it focused on different areas.

As said above, in the period 2011-2013 the strategy was more focused on **specific national needs in terms of asylum and migration to respond to (i.e. assistance in housing) and targeted to specific vulnerable target groups**.

With this regard, several projects were financed during the concerned period, aimed at supporting the assistance in housing (since the first reception of refugees and asylum seekers to the arrangement of housing facilities when leaving the temporary shelters) and mostly targeted to vulnerable groups.

ERF strategy in Belgium under the period 2011-2013 took to the implementation of actions aimed at:

1. **Improving the reception conditions** by:
 - ▶ informing, educating and providing an help desk on asylum procedure, subsidiary protection and reception addressed to operators;
 - ▶ implementing suitable reception arrangements or accompanying and supporting asylum seekers and refugees in finding an accommodation.

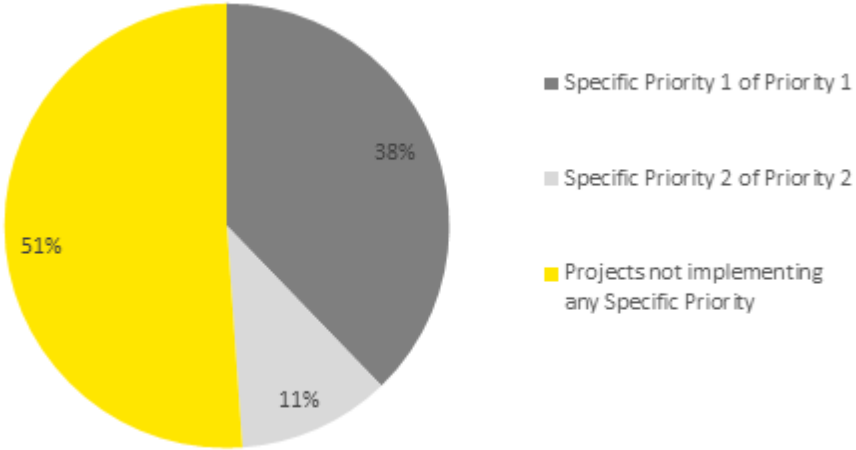
2. **Supporting the integration of target groups** by:
 - ▶ facilitating the access to public services (including centers for professional training, employment services, support services for access to housing, family reunification etc.);
 - ▶ providing collective responses to distress related to the course of exile (by organizing discussion groups, artistic activities etc.) and specialized ethno-psychological support for asylum seekers and refugees with serious mental health problems;
 - ▶ providing specific support to women in vulnerable circumstances, unaccompanied minors / minors with integration difficulties, elderly people and disabled;
 - ▶ addressing the needs of “vulnerable groups”.

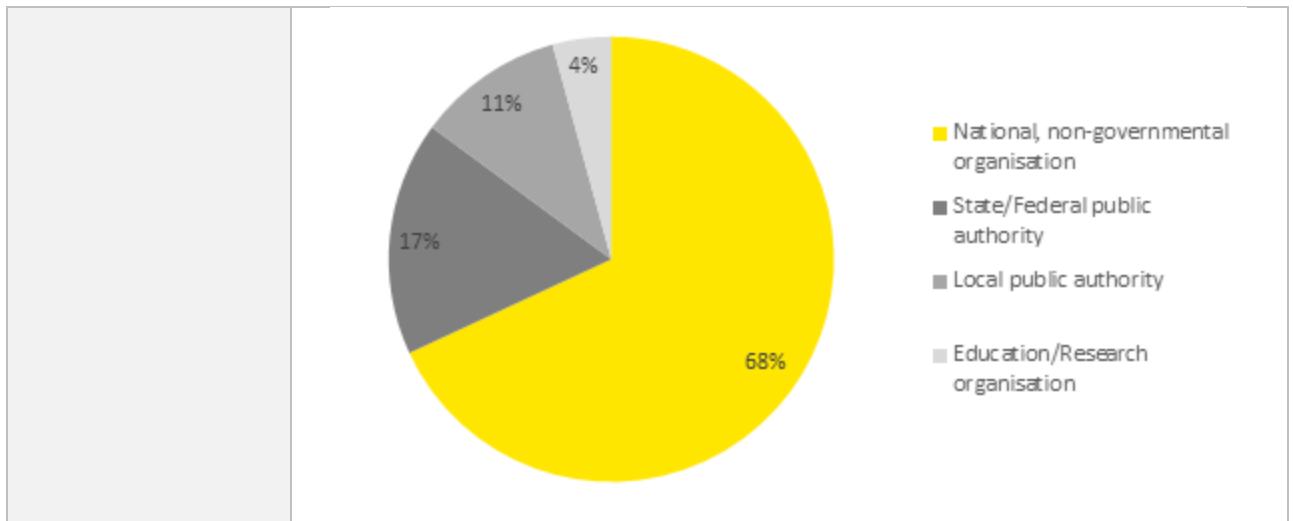
3. **Developing reference tools and evaluation methodologies, improving the quality of asylum procedures, enhancing practical cooperation with other Member States on asylum policy** with:
 - ▶ the analysis of the implementation of European Directives in the Belgian practice and the recommendations for a better application;
 - ▶ the establishment of a computer database to manage the reception of asylum seekers.

4. **Implementing Resettlement procedures**
 - ▶ Through the implementation of a project by Fedasil and the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, aimed to develop a refugee resettlement programme including the identification, transfer, reception and integration of refugees.

ERF strategy and actions

MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum	<p>While in the period 2008-2010, Belgium strategy had focused more on the implementation of projects related to enhancing the knowledge of applicable laws (implementation of new regulations on procedures and reception of asylum seekers), in the period 2011-2013 the main focus moved to the response to more specific needs in terms of reception of migrants (assistance in housing, support to vulnerable groups etc.</p> <p>Belgium national strategy on migration and asylum for the period 2011-2013 (ERF 2008-2013), aimed at achieving to main priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ improving the reception capacities and facilities of the country, especially for vulnerable people and ▶ fostering the quality of asylum procedures (mainly realized through the implementation of emergency measures in AP 2011). <p>The selection of the projects under the ERF reflected this strategy.</p>
Number of ERF funded actions	<p>AP 2011: 8 actions financed + 2 Emergency Measures</p> <p>AP 2012: 6 actions financed</p> <p>AP 2013: 8 actions financed</p>

<p>Breakdown of actions per priority</p>	<p>More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 38 projects were financed under the Priority 1 “Implementation of principles and measures defined in the framework of the EU acquis in the asylum sector, also in relation to the integration objectives” ▶ 6 projects were financed under the Priority 2 “Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims for international protection and to underpin administrative structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States”; ▶ 1 project was financed under the Priority 3 “Actions helping to enhance responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries”.
<p>Types of actions implemented</p>	 <p>Legend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1 (38%) ■ Specific Priority 2 of Priority 2 (11%) ■ Projects not implementing any Specific Priority (51%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 38% of the projects matched the Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1 ▶ 11% of the projects matched the Specific Priority 2 of Priority 2 ▶ 51% of the projects did not implement any Specific Priority
<p>Breakdown of types of beneficiaries</p>	<p>The main beneficiaries of the actions implemented in Belgium APs were national / non-governmental organisations and State/Federal Public Authorities. More details are shown in the following chart.</p> <p>More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 32 projects were implemented by National, non-governmental organisations; ▶ 8 projects were implemented by State/Federal public authorities; ▶ 5 projects were implemented by Local public authorities; ▶ 2 projects were implemented by Education/Research organisations.



b. Relevance of the ERF

Relevance of the ERF eligible actions compared to national situation and needs

The main features of Belgium strategy for the intervention of the Fund during the period 2011-2013 regarded **the improvement of reception conditions and integration**. In fact, in Belgium the reception of asylum seekers is a Federal responsibility, while the integration of refugees is a regional one.

Nevertheless, while they are still asylum seekers, migrants are under Fedasil's responsibility, so several projects focused on finding housing and accommodation for this target group were financed under the ERF 2011-2013.

As regards the **country's needs in terms of asylum**, some of them emerged during the interviews:

- ▶ fostering reception and accommodation facilities;
- ▶ providing asylum seekers with the needed psychological and social accompaniment;
- ▶ foreseeing an integration strategy for the target groups, with a specific attention to people with special needs, i.e. unaccompanied minors (Belgium received several unaccompanied minors especially from Afghanistan).

The funded projects were broadly considered by the interviewees to be **consistent** with the APs designed in the framework of the ERF 2008-2011 and with Belgium national strategy on asylum and migration as well.

Relevance of the ERF objectives in regards with Europe's evolving asylum issues

Belgium strategy was perceived to be consistent with Belgium national policy and priorities.

According to the evolutions of the international context, a need for the European refugees' policy to evolve in terms of objectives was considered to exist by all the interviewees.

In fact, the EU was mainly considered to be in charge of leading a response to several challenges relate to migration and asylum at the EU level.

However the current position and action plan of the European institutions were perceived to be appropriate to respond either timely and comprehensively to these challenges, and an evolution in EU policies seemed to have already started with the conception and implementation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the purpose of harmonizing the asylum procedures at the EU level.

Focus on Community Actions

CAs were considered to respond to transnational issues with specific regard to the topics they were related to:

- ▶ a study on the implementation of Dublin II regulation as to compare the situation in different Member States;
- ▶ a project on the training of Dublin units, useful as to enhance their capacity to deal with asylum procedures and asylum seekers,
- ▶ a projects on the research of information in the countries of origin about the access to healthcare was useful in order to collect valuable information in that field
- ▶ a project to support the enhance the credibility on asylum procedures at the EU level

The outputs produced and/or their developments/updates are still used by Belgium authorities, with specific regard to the information gathered on the access to healthcare and the modules developed to train the asylum units, which have been further developed by EASO in the framework of the EU Training Curriculum.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	38,290
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	Total 40,627 Of which 1,922 vulnerable persons and 1,667 unaccompanied minors

According to the ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013, **most of the financed projects achieved the planned results, with a notable increase compared to the period 2008-2010**, which can be explained by different reasons: i.e. increasing experience of the project executors (in budgeting as well as in execution of the project), less kick-off issues etc.

Several projects exceeded the planned results, due to different reasons: an increasing number of target groups (especially after the asylum crisis); the chance to benefit from a larger acquaintance in the region where the project was implemented, which could lead to a higher number of targeted people (asylum seekers as well as personnel or volunteers); the experience of some project executors in prior/other projects.

Besides, for some of the projects the goals were 'redefined' during the implementation, due to different reasons i.e., the number of target group was re-elaborated (e.g. a project was in the beginning only allocated to unaccompanied minors, but due to success and an increased request from a broader group of asylum seekers, the target group was broadened to adults until a certain age, in addition the total of target group was also adjusted in numbers).

The number of projects that did not achieve the planned outputs was rather limited. More specifically, two projects were faced to a lower number of influx of unaccompanied minors; the planned target number had been set too high, whereas in reality the number of unaccompanied minors had been lower. However, the output of these projects was very positive and they achieved good results with a slightly smaller target group.

In addition, according to the RA, projects related to housing had difficulties to enter the renting market, because of the overall house renting market that was rather expensive (even for local people), so it was

even more difficult to find appropriate housing facilities for asylum seekers (high prices combined with low availability on the market).

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	16
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	10,615

According to the [ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013](#), indicators related to reception were generally achieved by the projects implemented: “the number of available places in shelters increased significantly. As there was an asylum crisis, Belgium was obliged to take additional actions with respect to the reception conditions of the asylum seekers.”

In addition, asylum procedures were simplified and more human resources were engaged as to treat a higher number of dossiers.

With specific regard to the **improvement of the reception conditions of asylum seekers**, according to the ex-post evaluation report and to the Belgium RA, the following actions/projects provided a fundamental support:

- ▶ Emergency measures I: creation of additional shelter places for asylum seekers and hire temporary personnel in order to process additional files
- ▶ Emergency measures II: formation of additional personnel to increase the number of files to be handled and reviewing the asylum procedures in order to shorten the time of an asylum process (5.004 additional places and files handled)
- ▶ Project SeTIS BXL: providing additional interpreters in the local asylum centres, to improve the communication between the asylum seekers and the authorities which handle their files (assistance in the files of 1.334 asylum seekers).

In addition, as regards the improvement of the reception conditions of vulnerable persons, an important project allowed reaching approximately 745 unaccompanied minors by accelerating the asylum procedures. With this regard, the main impacts regarded the accommodation for unaccompanied minors with specific psychological and psychiatric problems, who needed to be taken care of by specialists.

With reference to the **improvement of the asylum procedures**, some studies and interventions were implemented aimed at reducing the duration of procedures for the recognition of the refugee status:

- ▶ In the framework of the project “COI”, information on different countries of origins were researched and analysed, focusing on specific items; the results of the study converged into a training addressed to interpreters, lawyers, etc.;
- ▶ A project implemented by CGVS focused on the harmonization of information as to improve the transparency of the asylum procedures;
- ▶ Various studies were elaborated by Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen aimed at enhancing the assistance in asylum procedures, with a special focus on the analysis of the motivations for requesting asylum;
- ▶ An online database was implemented, available to several instances in the asylum process;

A comparative project focused on the assistance and analysis of the Belgian and European rights related to refugees, with specific regard to the improvement of the knowledge and implementation of the applicable international regulations.

According to the RA, it is difficult to assess the extent to which reception conditions and asylum procedures have developed or improved on the basis of the implementation of the ERF funding, because they were also influenced by the Belgium Reception Act dated 2007 and by the transposition of EU Directives on Migration.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	5
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	10,870
<p>Under the ERF, some interventions were implemented in order to improve the integration conditions of asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>With respect to “housing”, several projects (i.e. implemented by Convivium, CPAS Liège and OCMW Destelbergen) had a positive impact in terms of the integration of the target groups; in fact, before the implementation of the ERF, no procedure was in place for the assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in finding a permanent accommodation after leaving temporary shelters.</p> <p>Regarding other areas of integration, several projects positively focused on education, social integration in the local communities and assistance with administrative formalities.</p> <p>Concerning the integration of a specific vulnerable target groups, three main projects targeting unaccompanied minors were implemented: Les SAMPA, OCMW Antwerpen, Mentor Escale, reflecting an increasing trend in the reception of this target group.</p> <p>According to the RA, it is difficult to assess the outcomes and impacts of the ERF in terms of integration, because of the involvement of different levels of responsibility (Federal and regional) but, in general, the contribution of the ERF was fundamental in order to improve the integration of asylum seekers, especially for vulnerable groups.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	1
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	100
<p>In the period concerned, only one project was implemented by the RA in the field of the resettlement of refugees, within which 100 persons were resettled.</p> <p>According to the RA, the impact of this project was very high. The project was implemented in two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ First accommodation in reception centres and ▶ Individual housing. <p>The public social welfare has taken in charge some of the persons resettled.</p>	

About 50 municipalities had been involved and developed and shared an expertise in the field. According to the RA, this result would not have been achieved without the ERF.

Thanks to the ERF funding, it was possible to do an evaluation of the programme as well.

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	N/A
The impact of the ERF on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies were perceived to be variable, because some domains have been more affected than others i.e. reception.	

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

Except from CAs, no specific actions were implemented as to improve the cooperation between Member States or to enhance their responsibility sharing on asylum policies.

No specific formal networks / partnerships were created across EU Member States.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

According to the interviewees, the interventions financed by the ERF have continued to have positive effects even after the implementation of the co-financed actions had terminated.

Generally, according to the interviewees, the success of a project depended on many factors, such as people, circumstances, etc. e.g. according to IOM, micro-business activities could be implemented only from people having specific competences, ideas and attitude.

One of the most important factors supporting sustainability of projects were considered to be the positive results and outcomes achieved by projects, with specific regard to the ones related to the integration of target groups into local communities.

According to the interviewees, some projects' outcomes such as special tools are being used even after the termination of the AP. For example, with regard to the procedures of integration, specific tools were not completely available for operators before the implementation of the ERF but they keep on being used even after its termination (i.e. checklist for house-seeking, budget templates etc.).

In addition, projects addressed to unaccompanied minors seem to have had positive and long-lasting effects, with specific regard to the organisation of conferences on the topic and the introduction of the item into the political agenda.

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	Closed	€ 8 969 000	€ 8 932 000	99,59%	8 107 637,59€	90,77%
2012	Open	€ 5 421 000	€ 5 409 000	99,78%	4 767 451,26€	88,14%
2013	Open	€ 7 329 000	€ 2 822 000	38,50%	2 654 638,71€	94,07%
Total		21 719 000€	17 163 000€	79,02%	15 529 727,56€	90,48%

According to the ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013 and the interviewees, mainly the RA and the final beneficiaries considered to have had **enough resources** (both human and financial).

However, some issues emerged, with specific regard to **human resources**: their availability and potential replacement by temporary personnel when necessary (e.g. in case of sickness, maternity leave, etc.) was considered mostly too expensive for some final beneficiaries and with a negative impact in terms of the time schedule of the projects. In addition, finding volunteers was often considered a tough task to be accomplished.

Concerning **financial resources**, the overall costs to achieve the projects' outputs seemed reasonable and realistic also considering that before the approval of the project, a detailed analysis of the cost aspects of the proposals had been realised. The principle of **value for money** were considered as of high importance in implementing the projects so no specific squandering of money has emerged.

Besides, it emerged the necessity to have more liquidity for the execution of projects and the reduction of the administrative burdens, which were considered rather resource and time consuming.

The same results were not considered to have been realized at a lesser cost.

Budget and overall Fund management

The **monitoring of the budget was considered to be efficient**. It was mainly managed by the administrative officers (desk monitoring), considering i.e. the eligibility of the expenses, the state of play in the implementation of the project; in addition, monitoring visits (on the spot visits) were performed for each project (at least once) for checking the effective implementation of intervention. The RA stated to have tried, whenever possible, to help projects reaching their targets and outputs (i.e. number of asylum seekers received).

The results of the administrative and financial monitoring visits were presented in final reports prepared by the RA, which took into account potential final beneficiaries' explanations related to some issues emerged during the monitoring phase.

Except for some delays, **no specific difficulty was encountered by the RA in submitting reports and documents requested by the EC.**

f. Coherence and complementarity

Besides the European Return Fund, no specific other Fund (structural or national) was called upon by the RA and no specific actions was co-financed with these instruments.

In order to be financed, each project had to have a private co-financing: this was an initial requirement for each project. This condition was verified by the RA by reviewing final report in its financial part, with specific regard to the costs related to personnel, transportation, consumables, subcontracting and general

costs eligible under the ERF.

No specific overlap or duplication was identified when implementing the projects. In order to prevent overlapping, duplications or even double financing of expenses, the final report included a detailed list of the costs of the project (i.e. with regard to personnel expenses, the related personnel working on a certain project including their specific tasks and hours to be performed, detailed invoices for all incurred expenses).

All the implemented CAs were considered by the RA to be coherent with the national actions approved and financed in the framework of the ERF Annual programs.

On the basis of the ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013, several projects under the ERF appeared to be complementary to other actions related to asylum issues and implemented under national programs (especially local programs) focused on labour market (support to low-skilled people, vulnerable people, foreigners, etc. in finding a job.)

According to the interviewees, whereas no national program focused on housing, assistance and integration of vulnerable persons (e.g. unaccompanied minors), the ERF was fundamental in financing these type of projects.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Due to the migration crisis, Belgium called upon **two Emergency Measures (AP 2011)**:

- ▶ Emergency measures I': creation of additional shelter places for asylum seekers and hire temporary personnel in order to process additional files
- ▶ 'Emergency measures II': formation of additional personnel to increase the number of files to be handled and reviewing the asylum procedures in order to shorten the time of an asylum process (5.004 additional places and files handled).

The implementation of such measures was considered to be useful by the RA in order to reduce the pressure situation, especially considering the tough Belgian political situation.

These measures directly responded to a very specific and urgent need of Belgian authorities: to have more places for asylum seekers' accommodation along with more protection for accompanied minors and to shorten the asylum process.

In the framework of Emergency measure I, temporary personnel was hired (in the Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et Apatrides, the Office des Etrangers and the Conseil du Contentieux des Etrangers) in order to process some documents, accelerate the process of the examination of asylum requests and ensure high qualitative standards. In addition, additional shelter places for asylum seekers were created.

In the framework of Emergency measure II, additional personnel was hired and trained in order to increase the number of applications handled and simplify the asylum process.

These emergency measures were implemented in a timely manner and were coherent with the other actions already implemented in Belgium and financed both from national and ERF resources.

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

In the case of Belgium, the emergency situation did not generate a specific sustainable cooperation between MS, but contributed to the increase of the reception facilities and to the simplification of the asylum process.

The AR stated the Emergency measures to have been especially important for the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors, with effects lasting even after the migration crisis was over.

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

Belgium was co-beneficiary of the following Community Actions :

- ▶ **“EUROPEAN ASYLUM CURRICULUM, Phase III - TEMPORARY IMPLEMENTATION UNIT”** (HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1016) implemented in 2009, with the participation of the Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons and the Odysseus Network;
- ▶ **“Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report”** (HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721) implemented in 2010, with the participation of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE);
- ▶ **“MedCOI 2”** (HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2265) implemented in 2011, with the participation of the Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office;
- ▶ **“Supporting EU-wide access to know-how on objective credibility assessment”** implemented in 2012, with the participation of ECRE.

Interviewees perceived the CAs implemented in Belgium to have been very effective in their respective areas of intervention (respectively a comparative analysis on the implementation of the Dublin II regulation, collecting medical information, supporting the capacity building of reception units and enhancing the credibility in the target groups), reflecting Belgium needs in terms of improving reception conditions and asylum procedures in the country.

The implementation of these was considered to be efficient as well.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

More generally, **the priorities set up by the EC for the CAs were considered to be relevant compared to asylum issues**, especially for what concerns the recognition of the need of refugees and asylum seekers for a broader assistance, whereas a focus on resettlement has just emerged recently.

With specific regards to the CA titled “EUROPEAN ASYLUM CURRICULUM, Phase III - TEMPORARY IMPLEMENTATION UNIT”, it has had long-lasting effects and the results had been taken in charge by EASO, which developed the more complex EASO Training Curriculum.

Concerning “MedCOI 2”, the project was considered to be very useful for all the MS taking part to the action in order to satisfy their need of information and share harmonised information as well concerning medical procedures.

The results of the two CAs implemented by ECRE “Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report” and “Supporting EU-wide access to know-how on objective credibility assessment” were transposed into two studies.

ECRE is now preparing some recommendations on sharing responsibilities between Member States on the reception of Dubliners based also on the study produced in the framework of the CA. The

participation to the second CAs had lesser impacts.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

According to the Evaluation Report 2011-2013 and the interviewees, the ERF allowed to finance projects/actions that – mainly for budgetary reasons - could not have been financed by national public resources only.

In fact, during the period concerned, the organisations working in the field of asylum and migration were still hugely impacted by the effects of the financial crisis. National and regional budgets had been cut, so many NGOs could implement projects only thanks to the ERF funding.

The RA stated that thanks to ERF several projects (i.e. resettlement) could not have been financed because of the lacking of national resources; in addition, the results achieved in the framework of the ERF encouraged the policymakers to put some specific topics and issues in their agenda and policy programs.

In addition, ERF made it possible to share results and methodologies, increasing the knowledge of target groups, with specific regards to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers (unaccompanied minors, victims of human beings traffic, women with children etc.).

According to Minor-ndako, ERF made it possible to focus more not only on reception but also on the integration of target groups.

IOM stated that ERF enabled to finance innovative projects, whereas national resources focused more on financing “traditional” projects, namely in the area of the improvement of reception facilities.

As regards transnational projects, ERF was perceived to be crucial in giving the possibility to address cross-border issues such as the collection on country of origin information.

j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Coordination et Initiatives pour Réfugiés et Étrangers (CiRé)	Director Human Resources and Finance	Joelle Van Pe	05.09.2016
International Organization Migration (IOM)	Officer in Charge, Head of Migrant Assistance Unit. Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg	Valon Halimi	06.09.2016
Minor-ndako	Director	David Lowyck	06.09.2016
Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and	Head of the Knowledge and Learning centre	Muriel Frémal	07.09.2016

Stateless Persons			
Office of the General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons	Coordinator of ERF and AMIF projects	Geert Beirnaert	07.09.2016
Fedasil's Head Office	Director – Management and Control	Ms Els Van Obberghem	07.09.2016
Fedasil's Head Office	Directeur	Ms Fanny François	07.09.2016
ECRE	Coordinator	Ms Claire Rimmer Quaid	07.09.2016
Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office	Team manager at the Belgian Desk on Accessibility	Ms Ynske de Bruyne	07.09.2016
Federal Public Service Home Affairs – General Directorate Aliens Office	Head of Mid-COI team	Ms Elfriede Dewallef	07.09.2016

9.5.3 Case study report: Bulgaria

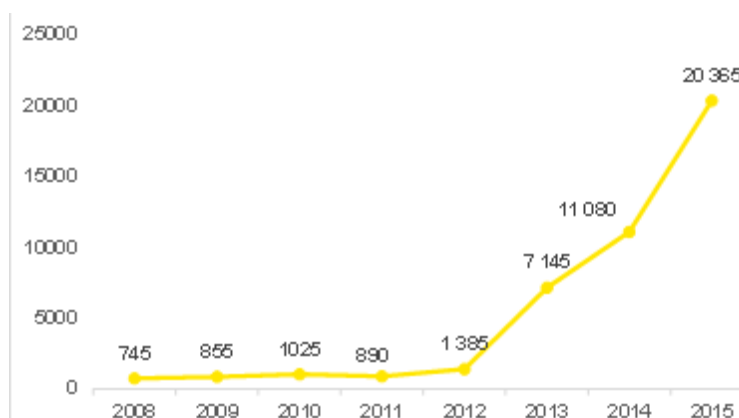
a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy

Asylum trend figures : evolution of first time asylum applicants

Since 2012, Bulgaria has experienced – more so than most Member States – a large influx in the number of first time asylum applicants in the country.

Evolution in the number of asylum seekers and first time applicants



Source : Eurostat database

Since the collapse of the socialist regime, Bulgaria has experienced a high rate of emigration

Immigration to Bulgaria, on the other hand, has been limited in the country's recent history. There were approximately 5 300 beneficiaries of international protection in Bulgaria in 2008, with around 900 asylum applications pending. Since the early 2000s, the average number of asylum-seekers in the country prior to the beginning of ERF III had been approximately 900.

The asylum situation observed in 2008 continued throughout the major part of ERF III implementation. Despite Bulgaria's strategic location as one of the gates into Europe along the Balkan and the East Mediterranean migration routes, the country was not a preferred entry or transit destination for migrants. Since mid-2013, however, the situation in Bulgaria has dramatically changed with a spectacular increase in the number of undocumented migrants. Notwithstanding, Bulgaria remains in general a country of transit as the vast majority (99%) of those who applied for asylum did so after being apprehended by the police, and almost half of them upon their attempt to exit irregularly from the country. Most undocumented migrants who are detected by the Border Police initiate a procedure for seeking international protection. There has thus been a constant increase in the number of migrants seeking international protection during the final period of ERF III.

The two principal actors responsible for immigration in Bulgaria are the Migration Directorate and the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) with the Council of Ministers. Created in 2003, the Directorate is responsible for issuing residence permits, implementing the administrative aspects of measures relating to foreign nationals, the return of irregular migrants and the provision of input to the consultative procedure of obtaining, restoring and release from Bulgarian nationality. SAR, which is directly overseen by the Council of Ministers, manages, coordinates, and controls the implementation of State policies relating to granting refugee status and humanitarian status in Bulgaria. The Agency maintains a database of all asylum applicants and manages reception and transit centres and an integration centre. The National Police Service is responsible for the issuance of identity documents and residence permits and for administrative control, whilst the Border Police Main Directorate within the General Police Directorate of the National Police Service is responsible for border control. Finally, a number of other ministries also have tangential roles in the immigration and asylum processes, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Employment Agency, the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the State Agency for Child Protection.

An asylum application may be lodged either before the specialised asylum administration, the SAR, or before any other state authority which will be obligated to refer it immediately to the SAR. Asylum applications in Bulgaria are examined in 3 stages: i) Dublin procedure; ii) accelerated procedure; and iii) regular procedure. The decision-maker, the SAR, is a single central administrative authority, which has the rank of a ministry, but whose budget is assigned through the Ministry of Interior. SAR is competent to decide on all individual asylum applications and to grant/reject refugee or subsidiary protection status.

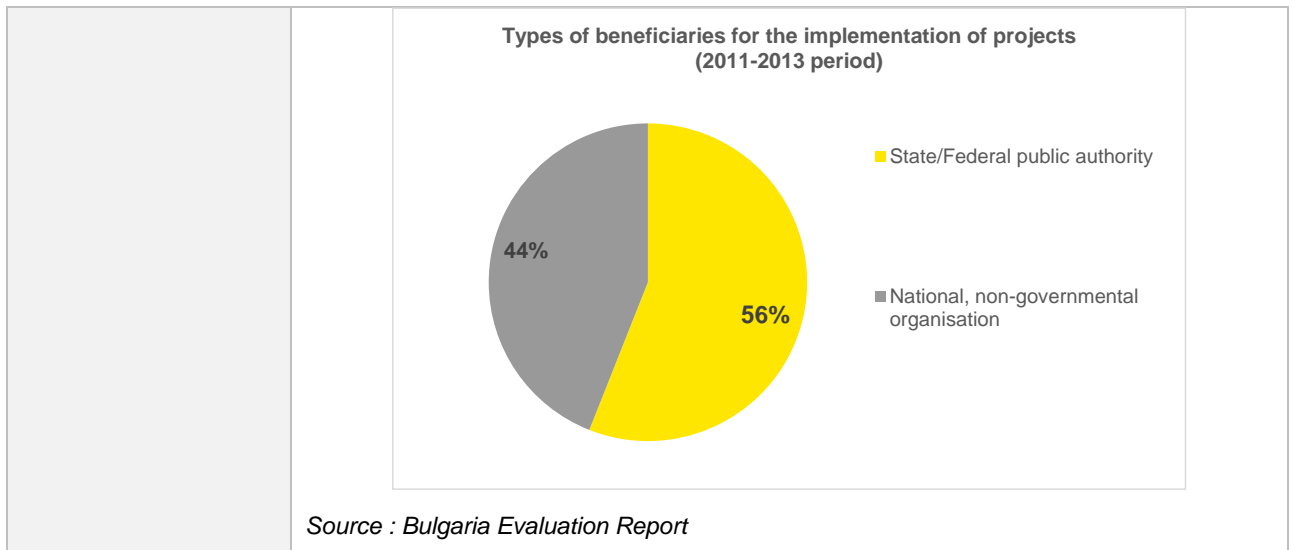
The State Agency for Refugees was designated as the Responsible Authority for ERF in Bulgaria pursuant to Art.53, para 12 (new, SG No 52/2007) of the latest amendments to the Law on Asylum and Refugees adopted by the National Assembly and promulgated in the State Gazette No 52/29.06.2007.

Before the integration of Bulgaria into the European Union, the national policy was not focused on refugees. When numbers increased, there were significant needs concerning the satisfaction of basic needs and the improvement of reception and accommodation conditions. Moreover Bulgaria was an emigration country and is still viewed as a transit country, so the problems of refugees and asylum seekers have been off the focus of public interest. Thus, there was also a high need for integration activities.

ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum</p>	<p>The multi-annual programme for the period 2008-2013 focused on the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The improvement of the reception and accommodation conditions for asylum-seekers; ▶ The improvement of the quality of the refugees status determination procedure in order to ensure the implementation of the minimum standards and the relevant EU acquis; and ▶ The development of specialized projects in the field of integration. <p>Projects to respond these priorities were implemented between 2008 and 2013. With the unexpected increase in the number of asylum seekers, focus shifted in later years towards the improvement of reception condition and the satisfaction of basic needs, especially in 2013 through the emergency measures.</p>								
<p>Number of ERF funded actions</p>	<p>Between 2011 and 2013, a total of 50 projects were implemented with the support of the ERF. 56% of them were implemented under the “awarding body” method.</p> <p>The annual number of projects decreased significantly following 2011 and remained stable until the end of the programming period. The relatively large number of projects funded in 2011 can be explained by an evolution in the type of projects funded. Indeed, the amount of funding earmarked for the improvement of reception capacity and accommodation conditions increased between 2011 and 2013. Most of these projects were implemented by the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers and were of significantly larger size compared with those under the other two objectives implemented by NGOs.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Total number of projects funded under each annual programme</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Projects</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Year	Number of Projects	2011	22	2012	13	2013	15
Year	Number of Projects								
2011	22								
2012	13								
2013	15								

	<p>Source : Bulgaria Evaluation Report</p>								
<p>Breakdown of actions per priority</p>	<p>The majority (38) of implemented projects in Bulgaria was aimed at addressing Priority 1 of the ERF. 11 projects were implemented under Priority 2, and only one project was funded under Priority 3.</p> <p>The national needs concerning the improvement of reception and accommodation conditions and the increase in capacity were high during the period of implementation and explain the large number of projects funded under Priority 1. Most of the projects funded under the Priority 2 concerned projects aimed at training the staff of institutions whose professional activity relates directly to refugee and asylum seeker issues.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Distribution of projects funded under 2011-2013 period, per priority</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Priority</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Priority 1</td> <td>76%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 2</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 3</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>Source : Bulgaria Evaluation Report</p>	Priority	Percentage	Priority 1	76%	Priority 2	22%	Priority 3	2%
Priority	Percentage								
Priority 1	76%								
Priority 2	22%								
Priority 3	2%								
<p>Types of actions implemented</p>	<p>Priority 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improvement of the capacity and the reception and living conditions in Registration and reception centres ▶ Development of social mediation during the stage of initial adaptation of asylum seekers ▶ Assistance to the integration of vulnerable groups especially unaccompanied minors ▶ Language training for interpreters ▶ Legal assistance <p>Priority 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training of workers in direct contact with asylum seekers (judges, interviewers, officers, institution staff...) ▶ Working visit in Italy and Germany for exchange of good practices in the field of international protection ▶ Development and implementation of a software for a monthly payment of benefits and health insurance for asylum seekers ▶ Facilitating employment of recognized refugees <p>Priority 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Organisation of a 2 days workshops on issues related to the resettlement 								
<p>Breakdown of types of beneficiaries</p>	<p>As shown in the pie chart below, only national authorities and NGOs implemented projects between 2011 and 2013. Whilst NGOs implemented more projects, the value of projects implemented by national authorities was substantially higher.</p>								



b. Relevance of the ERF

Overall, the evaluation found that the ERF objectives were highly relevant to Bulgarian needs. Since 2013, the dynamic asylum situation further underlined the challenges being faced by the country and the relevance of the ERF. A consultation mechanism and monitoring committee were also put in place to ensure the relevance of projects funded by the ERF and was generally appreciated by stakeholders interviewed.

Bulgaria's needs in terms of asylum during the period 2011 - 2013 have been highly compatible with the general objectives of the ERF III. Generally speaking, Bulgaria has been faced with strengthening the capacity of the country as an external EU border, the implementation of the European acquis, further improving reception conditions and the application of asylum procedures, and ensuring a favourable environment for refugees' integration in Bulgaria since its accession to the EU in 2007.

Since 2013 in particular, and because of the dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers, the dynamic refugee situation has further underlined these general challenges, particularly in terms of ensuring the most basic reception conditions, such as accommodation and social services. Numerous monitoring reports prepared by international organisations such as Amnesty International and UNHCR had highlighted the deficiencies in Bulgaria's reception conditions and asylum procedure. During the 2013 period, the final year falling within the scope of this evaluation, independent reports highlighted the unsatisfactory material conditions in reception centres, the inadequacy or complete absence of basic services and social, medical, legal and interpretation assistance, the inability to comply with legal obligations relative to the asylum process and total lack of any initial integration or support. Indeed, in January 2014, the UNHCR called for a temporary suspension of transfers of asylum-seekers back to Bulgaria due to, "a genuine risk of inhuman or degrading treatment due to systemic deficiencies in reception conditions and asylum procedures". However, it should be noted that UNHCR lifted its call to suspend Dublin transfers in April 2014, which can be attributed, to a great extent, to ERF assistance.

Interviews conducted with independent stakeholders and project beneficiaries by the evaluation team corroborated the documentary review concerning local conditions in Bulgaria during the period covered by the evaluation and the relevance of actions financed under ERF III. In particular, stakeholders underlined large gaps in national funding due to budgetary constraints and a lack of political will. This was most apparent in the area of integration.

A consultation mechanism and monitoring committee was also put in place to ensure the relevance of projects funded by the ERF. Stakeholders appreciated the opportunity to provide input and in general felt that most recommendations were taken on board. However, some stakeholders complained that process was not taken seriously by the SAR and that insufficient time was allotted to stakeholders to provide input.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	Unknown
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	27 000
<p>The Regulatory Authority defined the strategy of the ERF implementation in the multi-annual programme 2008-2013. The main operational objectives were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improve the conditions for asylum-seekers reception and maintenance by ensuring the renovation of the existing facilities and provide conditions for asylum-seekers' adaptation ▶ Provide conditions for the efficient delivery of the Dublin procedure ▶ Expand the options for using interpretation services (video conference) and provide qualified translation for the purpose of the Refugee Status Determination Procedure (RSDP) ▶ Secure legal assistance at all RSDP stages and ensure provision of all relevant information to asylum seekers in relation to their rights and obligations ▶ Develop programmes to increase information concerning the asylum-seekers ▶ Develop programmes for the improvement of the competences of the staff who deal with refugee cases ▶ Provide social adaptation measures for the asylum-seekers and integration activities which are not included in the National Integration programme ▶ Develop and carry out a long-term awareness campaign aimed at improving the attitude of Bulgarian society <p>According to the national evaluation report, "the general effectiveness of programmes 2011-2013 is high". It is especially the case under priority 1: the indicators concerning the improvement of reception conditions and services as legal assistance, accommodation or medical aid have been implemented at or above 100%. The exceeded planned outputs can be explained by the large increase in the number of asylum seekers over years of implementation. On the contrary some projects failed to achieve planned outputs. It was especially the case for projects concerning "Assistance in housing and means of subsistence" because of the lack of interested asylum-seekers.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	25 projects / 32 'operations'
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	45 161 targeted vs. 58 735 reached (130%)
<p>Evaluators found that the projects financed by ERF III have undoubtedly made a critical contribution to the improvement of the conditions for reception of asylum seekers in the country, particularly within the context of the sharp increase in asylum seekers from 2013. However, some issues raised by interviewees may have likely limited the extent of the impact of these investments.</p> <p>Reception conditions include access to information at the border, living conditions at the refugee centres, access to legal services, education and medical care, employment, duration of the asylum procedure and freedom of movement. ERF financed projects during the 2011 – 2013 period contributed to improvements in all aspects of reception conditions.</p> <p>The major portion of resources targeting the improvement of reception conditions were implemented through the executing body method with the objective of refurbishing and expanding the capacity of accommodations for asylum-seekers (EUR 8,3M). This includes resources provided through emergency</p>	

measures. These projects allowed for the improvement of living conditions and an expansion of the capacity for accommodation of asylum-seekers from 1 230 to up to approximately 6 000 persons. The following sites were concerned by these investments.

- ▶ Registration and Reception Centre (RRC) in Sofia
- ▶ Registration and Reception Centre in the village of Banya
- ▶ Pastrogor Transit Centre
- ▶ Harmanli Reception Centre
- ▶ Vrazhdebna Reception Centre in Sofia
- ▶ Voenna Rampa Reception Centre in Sofia

Projects amounting to approximately EUR 460K were implemented by NGOs to support the improvement of reception conditions for asylum seekers. The successful social mediation mechanism developed during the first phase of ERF III (2008 – 2010) continued to be developed during the years 2011 - 2013. This initiative involved the inclusion of mediators from the refugee community in the support provided to asylum seekers through consultations and assistance for the exercise of their rights and respect of their obligations, intermediating and facilitating the communication between the asylum seekers and the state authorities. A package of measures was financed to support the initial adaptation of the asylum seekers in Bulgaria. ERF projects also supported the sustainability of specialized healthcare and psychological assistance to vulnerable groups and individuals and the provision of legal support to asylum seekers at all stages of the asylum process. Finally, training campaigns were organised for interpreters of rare languages for the territorial divisions of SAR.

Evaluators found that the projects financed by ERF III have undoubtedly made a critical contribution to the improvement of the conditions for reception of asylum seekers in the country, particularly within the context of the sharp increase in asylum seekers from 2013. It is clear that without ERF support, the reception conditions, notably the most basic services (e.g. accommodation), would have been significantly worse.

The link with ERF funding is particularly clear given the history of negligence in investment in this area underlined by non-institutional stakeholders interviewed. The ERF thus played a very crucial role in the improvement of reception conditions in Bulgaria during a period of crisis. The low initial baseline in reception capacity also translated into a high level of investment in basic infrastructure and services critical for ensuring a minimum level of reception capacity.

However, some issues raised by interviewees may have likely limited the effectiveness and impact of these investments. Mainly, the continuity of key services provided by NGOs was impacted by gaps in financing created by the time-consuming process of launching calls for proposals and the inability of SAR to anticipate the time-lag in order to avoid gaps.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	12 projects / 18 'operations'
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	4 351 targeted vs. 4 438 reached (102%)

Evaluators found that the ERF was able to provide critical support to integration actions in the context of a complete lack of public support in this domain on the national level.

According to monitoring reports published by NGOs and IOs as well as stakeholders interviewed, there is a complete lack of public investment in integration activities in Bulgaria. Interviews with SAR stakeholders found that there is a widespread culture of assuming that refugees do not wish to remain in Bulgaria and that integration activities are this not worthwhile. The limited ERF resources devoted to integration activities (approximately EUR 300K) thus represented a precious, although small, contribution to supporting the integration of refugees.

ERF supported a series of projects over the period 2011 - 2013 targeting the integration of refugees and, in particular, support to vulnerable groups. The ERF supported the sustainability of specialized healthcare

and psychological assistance to vulnerable groups and individuals for costly medical care and services not covered by the National Health Insurance Fund. For government institutions and NGOs in direct contact with these target groups, a guidebook was developed for working with refugees with special needs. The ERF also supported the development of a Bulgarian language training curricula, a methodology for enrolling children at school, placement tests and the training of resource teachers. Refugee students were also targeted through cultural orientation and adaptation courses. Economic integration was also targeted through a training course on key competencies for employment (ability to take initiative, leadership skills) and starting small business projects. Finally, SAR invested in improving conditions in the integration centre in Sofia

Whilst the overall level of resources devoted to integration activities was limited, it can be noted that actions were targeted to a great extent to the integration of minor and underage refugees. This focusing of activities no doubt contributed to achieving an actual impact, albeit within a restricted group of refugees.

However, the effectiveness and impact of these activities were reduced by the complete lack of national funding for integration. The critical 'leverage effect' of ERF funding was thus non-existent. Stakeholders also noted that integration projects were ultimately also limited by the tendency of refugees to leave the country. If increasing numbers of refugees are settling in Bulgaria, many continue to leave the country for countries in Western and Northern Europe.

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	0
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	0

The effectiveness and impact in this area was limited due to a lack of actions, although actions helped lay the groundwork for envisaged future activities in this domain.

On the topic of resettlement of refugees from third countries, two seminars were held, financed under the 2011 Annual Programme. According to State officials interviewed, Bulgaria could not take part in resettlement activities under ERF III due to 'internal political factors'. However, the country is set to receive approximately 40 resettled refugees from Turkey in the coming months supported through AMIF. Stakeholders at SAR confirmed that the projects financed during the 2011 – 2013 period under ERF III contributed to "laying the ground work" for current developments in this area.

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	11 projects / 10 'operations'
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Evaluators found that the projects in this area likely had an important impact on raising the awareness of public servants concerning the realities of working with refugees, particularly those outside SAR.

ERF projects falling under the objective *Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies, improvement of the quality of asylum procedures* for the period 2011 – 2013 were relatively limited in terms of their number and level of resources (11 projects representing approximately EUR 120K). Moreover, this number was inflated by the fact that the activity for training of the staff of institutions whose professional activity relates directly to refugee and asylum seeker issues was previously attributed to Priority 1 (61% of resources for the 2011 – 2013 period). Indeed, investments in IT systems (typically a large component under this objective) were drastically reduced during the 2011 – 2013 period following important investments during the initial phase of ERF III).

The Resource Centre for countries of origin constructed under the 2009/2010 Annual Programmes was expanded and its functionality enhanced through connection with the territorial divisions of SAR in the village of Banya and the Transit Centre in Pastrogor. Two working visits were initiated and conducted by SAR delegations for exchange of best practice in the field of international protection to the "Civil

Freedoms and Migration” department of the Ministry of Interior of Italy and to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of Germany. A project for development and introduction of specialized software for monthly payment of material assistance and health insurance of asylum seekers was also implemented by SAR. NGOs implemented several ERF-supported projects aimed at training a wide range of public servants, both within SAR (e.g. interviewers) and other administrations (e.g. judges, local employment services, social workers, child protection services, school teachers).

The evaluation team found that the projects likely had an important impact on raising the awareness of public servants concerning the realities of working with refugees, particularly those outside SAR. According to interviewees, few public servants outside of the authorities directly dealing with the asylum process (e.g. SAR) had experience working with migrants. The rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers and refugees meant that a much wider array of administrations became implicated directly or indirectly in the process. ERF thus contributed to building the capacity and awareness within the Bulgarian public administration.

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

The effectiveness and impact in this area was limited due to the relatively limited number of actions.

Two study visits were conducted to Germany and Italy through actions financed under Priority 3. Stakeholders at the SAR affirmed that these study visits led to the exchange of best practices, but could not identify any enhancements to responsibility sharing between the Member States involved in these visits, nor any evidence of formal or informal networks or partnerships created. According to a stakeholder interviewed, it could have been more useful to have visits in other Eastern Europe countries (Czech republic or Poland) rather than in Germany and Italy. Indeed there is a gap between Western countries and Bulgaria because of the difference in the integration time in the European union and in the habit of dealing with asylum-seekers.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

The evaluation team found positive evidence of the sustainability of ERF actions, although this deserves to be nuanced due to several factors. The significant increase in accommodation capacity continues to prove crucial for handling the influx of asylum-seekers in the country several years later. Likewise, the capacity-building actions contributed to providing training to a wide array of public servants with almost no previous experience dealing with asylum-seekers and refugees. According to some stakeholders, the haste with which the infrastructure investments were made led to poor quality, which reduced the sustainability of investments. The level of staff-turnover was also seen as potentially negatively affecting sustainability. However, State officials affirmed that AMIF funding is providing the resources to continue to make necessary investments to maintain progress achieved. Finally, the sustainability of services provided has been limited by the lack of funding to continue to provide services following the conclusion of projects.

To some extent, the sustainability of many actions financed by the ERF during this period is almost self-evident. For instance, the significant increase in accommodation capacity continues to prove crucial for handling the influx of asylum-seekers in the country several years later. The ERF also allowed for the enhancement of national and international cooperation. According to one interviewee, projects helped strengthen local NGOs’ recognition in the field of asylum. However, the evaluation team uncovered a number of issues that may significantly reduce the sustainability of ERF supported actions.

A significant amount of resources from ERF III for the period 2011 – 2013 were invested in increasing and improving reception capacity. This involved in particular investments in new infrastructure and significant refurbishments of existing facilities. It is highly sustainable to the extent that Bulgaria’s readiness for asylum-seeker reception has been durably improved for the coming years. However, the quality of works conducted has been questioned by a number of stakeholders interviewed. The construction work was conducted within a very short time period by an over-stretched administration using exceptional public procurement procedures that created a higher level of risk for the use of sub-standard practices by contractors (e.g. use of sub-standard materials and construction practices in order to increase profit margins). Although this could not be confirmed materially, stakeholders with knowledge of the reception centres highlighted that contractors used cheap and ill-adapted materials for construction work and the

centres were not designed to withstand the level of wear-and-tear experienced by such establishments. As a concrete example, one stakeholder highlighted that normal, unprotected mattresses had been purchased for one reception centre, which had quickly become saturated by dirt, bodily fluids and small insects.

Interview testimony and monitoring reports by IOs and NGOs published in 2015 have highlighted degrading conditions. According to an AIDA report from October 2015 prepared by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, since the beginning of 2015, the quality and quantity of the food vary and rarely meeting the required nutritional values, which was further compounded by SAR's retroactive suspension of small monthly financial allowances to refugees in February 2015. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's 2015 Annual Report on the Monitoring of the Status Determination procedure in the Republic of Bulgaria also found that the reception conditions for applicants for international protection are unsatisfactory: "Following the improvements made in 2014, reception conditions were gradually deteriorating in several main areas". SAR stakeholders indicated that expensive investments were required to maintain the centres, often due to damage perpetrated by refugees, but such investments are being covered through AMIF and national financing. **For the sake of transparency, it should be noted that evaluators did not have the opportunity to physically inspect reception centres.**

ERF resources were also used to significantly enhance the expert capacity to manage asylum seekers amongst both institutional and non-institutional actors. Examples include the training of case workers and translators working for the State agency for Refugees, the provision of training for judges with little to no experience handling asylum cases and the increased level of experience amongst Bulgarian NGOs in the delivery of services to asylum seekers. This capacity provides a greater 'guarantee of compliance' with the European standards in the field of international protection in the coming years. However, stakeholders also expressed concern that the residing refugee crisis would lower investment in the maintenance of this human capacity in the future. Moreover, staff turnover in administrations (including the State Agency for Refugees), even amongst low-level staff, is notoriously high during political transitions. Nonetheless, evaluators observed some concrete positive signs that ERF-funded actions had enacted lasting change in the country. For example, training for judges provided on an ad hoc basis through ERF financed actions has since been instituted as a regular training provided by the national institute responsible for the training of judges and will thus be available to future generations of judges in the country.

Typical of all projects focused on the provision of services (e.g. social mediation, integration, legal support...), the sustainability of the ERF in Bulgaria has been limited by the lack of funding to continue to provide services following the conclusion of projects. In the area of integration, this appears particularly evident. The lack of political will concerning the national integration strategy has resulted in the State Integration Programme implementation being postponed several times. This contributed to an unclear situation concerning the availability of national funds. There is thus little political will to ensure the sustainability of European actions at the national level in the field of integration. The sustainability of actions implemented under ERF in this area is also questioned by the fact that there are very few refugees who want to build their life in Bulgaria. They only see the Member State as a transit country so they benefit from the integration project in their day-to-day life during the time they stay but the refugees do not see the long term aim of integration in projects.

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	Closed	756 000	687 000	90,9%	664 000	96,7%
2012	Closed	753 000	721 000	95,8%	519 000	72,0%
2013	Open	6 408 000	6 059 000	94,6%	5 111 000	84,4%
Total		7 917 000	7 467 000	94,3%	6 294 000	84,3%

The evaluation team found that the implementation of the ERF in Bulgaria was achieved at reasonable costs, despite some issues raised by stakeholders. The efficiency of the management of the programme during the period under evaluation also appears to have significantly improved due to the build-up of capacity and expertise in the Responsible Authority.

Overall, the ERF was executed at a rate of 96% for the period 2011 – 2013. The average underspend per project was approximately EUR 18 000, or roughly 10% of the committed amount. This percentage was slightly lower for projects implemented under the executing body method (8%) than under the awarding body method (11%). However, projects implemented under the executing body method represented the large amount of underspend in absolute terms (even the overwhelming majority when including emergency measures).

Project beneficiaries believed that the projects were implemented in a reasonably efficient fashion, incurring management costs comparable to those for projects financed through other funds/donors. Whilst the ERF project management was seen as higher than some instruments (particularly resources provided through bilateral donors and private organisations), it rated as more efficient as other instruments.

Nonetheless, project beneficiaries interviewed highlighted a number of issues having a negative impact on efficiency. These include:

- ▶ Beneficiaries complained of a high level of administrative burden, particularly for project reporting. Beneficiaries interviewed, as well as independent actors, noted that the reporting process imposed by SAR was more stringent than those required by the European Commission. In particular, the day-to-day collection of data for being able to report on the indicators in the reports was criticised as very stringent for operational personnel by some interviewees.
- ▶ According to the interviewees, the capacity required within project implementers is high because of the numerous reports requested. The small Bulgarian organisations with no experience managing European funds do not have good chances of accessing funds. Moreover, one interviewee underlined the fact that the SAR was strict with beneficiaries and that mistakes in a report, which can lead to the non-reimbursement of some costs engaged. Organisations thus spent significant amounts of resources to ensure the accuracy of reports as a risk mitigation measure
- ▶ The delay regarding the selection process can impose short time-frames for implementation. Indeed, the beneficiaries had sometimes to wait 3 to 4 months to know if their project was approved before starting the implementation. This meant they had to implement funds in a very short time. The short timeframe for implementation also concerned the SAR for emergency measures, with EUR 5 million to implement in 6 months. Moreover these delays also led to gaps between years, during which actions are suspended. This means that refugees could not benefit from project outputs, but it also caused staff management issues.
- ▶ Interviewees underlined that the SAR did not have adequate capacity nor expertise to act as a funding agency. The implementation of ERF III was thus very much a learning experience and capacity and expertise were gradually built up over the course of the programme with experience. After the initial transition period, however, stakeholders agreed that SAR had been able to build up the necessary capacity and expertise to execute its responsibilities efficiently.

Budget and overall Fund management

Prior to ERF III, the SAR had never served as a funding agency for any other comparable instrument during. As no projects financed by national or other EU funds were identified that can be considered comparable, no direct comparison is possible in view of the reasonableness of the incurred costs by evaluators. However, the resources mobilised were comparable to practices observed in other Member States. The implementation of the ERF required the full-time work of three persons from the international affairs department and part-time work from three persons from the public procurement unit. They were also assisted by one legal adviser and one financial controller.

f. Coherence and complementarity

Overall, the coherence and complementarity of the ERF with other financing instruments and EU

interventions can be considered positive. In particular, synergies were realised with EASO assistance.

No major issues were highlighted concerning coordination between the ERF and other EU and international financial instruments.

- ▶ The principal EU instruments concerned are the other SOLID funds and the ESF. Funds provided through other international donors in Bulgaria have become increasingly scarce as major IOs and NGOs shift from a role of donor to monitoring and advocacy.
- ▶ Stakeholders believed that there were no major issues of coordination between the different SOLID funds. In line with the remits of the different actors in Bulgaria, the responsible authority for the European Integration and Return Funds was the Ministry of Interior. However, one stakeholder involved extensively in integration activities, highlighted practical difficulties created by the artificial divisions created by the separation of integration activities between the ERF and the EIF.
- ▶ Concerning the coherence and complementarity of ERF actions with those financed through other EU instruments, no major issues were highlighted by stakeholders. However, it can be noted that there was generally a low level of awareness amongst SAR stakeholders concerning other EU funds and their direct or indirect connections with areas covered by the ERF. When questioned about formal coordination mechanisms between the different responsible authorities, no information could be provided.
- ▶ Concerning the ESF, one can cite in particular two operational programmes of the ESF, specifically: the Operational Programme Administrative Capacity; and the Operational Programme Human Resources Development". According to the national evaluation report, under OP Administrative Capacity three projects were financed with a direct impact on the achievement of the goals of the Multiannual Programme of the ERF for three types of beneficiaries: the judiciary, the executive and the local authorities. Under OP Human Resources Development, one project was financed concerning innovative services for preventing and overcoming social exclusion.
- ▶ Finally, the national funds in the field of refugee and asylum-seekers are very scarce so no overlaps were raised by the SAR or the beneficiaries.

In 2013, Bulgaria requested and obtained the European Asylum Support Office's support to face the large increase in the influx of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. In October 2013, the two parties signed an Operational Plan for support which included deployment of EASO support teams in Bulgaria (53 Asylum Support Teams of over 100 experts) and provision of technical and operational aid. The actions started at the end of the ERF implementation and were first designed to analyse the asylum process and suggest solutions to improve the Bulgarian asylum registration, asylum procedure and reception system and to support the pre-registration of asylum seekers in different Reception Centres. It also focused on helping Bulgaria with the implementation of EU funding and especially with the transition between the ERF and the AMIF fund. The actions aimed to support:

- ▶ the reception system
- ▶ the Country of Origin Information system
- ▶ the training of new staff
- ▶ the referral procedures for unaccompanied minors, vulnerable groups and persons with special procedural or reception needs

Regarding these statements and according with interviewees there appeared to be no coherence issues with the ERF.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Due to the large increase in the number of asylum-seekers (five time higher than in 2012), Bulgaria applied for a revision of the 2013 annual programme to include emergency measures. The Commission approved and included the measures in November 2013.

The Commission granted EUR 6M of emergency support from the European Refugee Fund in 2013. The

Bulgarian state co-financed 20% of the amount. Through this measure, five actions were implemented by the SAR aimed at increasing reception condition and capacity:

- ▶ Increase of the reception and accommodation capacity for asylum seekers in terms of the large flows of asylum-seekers to Bulgaria – EUR 5M
- ▶ Securing the livelihood of asylum seekers in Bulgaria – EUR 707 000
- ▶ Provision of medical and psychological assistance for asylum seekers in Bulgaria – EUR 99 500
- ▶ Provision of supplemental qualified administrative capacity for the reception, accommodation and care of asylum seekers in Bulgaria – EUR 213 300
- ▶ Logistics and transport costs – EUR 92 200

All the interviewees agreed that the emergency measures were very necessary and effective. They assert that without this help, the refugee situation would have been a disaster in Bulgaria.

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

The period of implementation of emergency measures was very short (limited to six months due to ERF legal basis) which led to some difficulties with regards to the large amount of resources to be implemented. The main project for the construction of accommodation was implemented in a very short time by an over-stretched administration. The SAR used exceptional public procurement procedures that created a higher level of risk for corruption. The reception centres have been constructed with poor quality materials and numerous degradations have already occurred.

However, the reception capacity has been substantially increased in Bulgaria (by 5.580 places) with the emergency measure support. It also raised the European awareness concerning the Bulgarian situation with the recognition of the expression of solidarity with the country by the European Commission and the European Parliament in 2014 and the start of the collaboration with the EASO.

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

N/A – the beneficiary declined to be interviewed.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

N/A – the beneficiary declined to be interviewed.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

Evaluators found that the ERF demonstrated measurable EU added value in Bulgaria. This was most apparent in terms of the financial added value of the Fund, but also in terms of other “softer” aspects of EU added value.

The first added value is the increase in the amount dedicated to the refugee and asylum-seekers. Due to political position and economic difficulties, Bulgaria was not able to face the situation without European funds. According to the interviewees the situation would have been “a disaster without EU funding” and refugees would have been accommodated in “awful conditions without ERF”.

The interviewees also pointed to the diversification of activities allowed by the European funds. Some projects had been developed to cover more than basic needs. It is for instance the case of the Bulgarian Red Cross project which allows the training and employment of social workers in the reception centres to

help refugees with day-to-day Bulgarian life and provide legal assistance. The project is seen as an example and would not have been funded under national fund because of its uniqueness.

The SAR and NGOs also appreciated the experience gained in dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers and in management of European funds. NGOs which were funded under the ERF gained in recognition in Bulgaria and the funds strengthened cooperation and enhanced the formation of a stable and engaged community of agents in the field of asylum. It also increased the awareness of the State and to a lesser extent of public opinion.

In terms of MS cooperation, two study visits were conducted to Germany and Italy through actions financed under Priority 3. Stakeholders at the SAR affirmed that these study visits led to the exchange of best practices, but could not identify any enhancements to responsibility sharing between the Member States involved in these visits, nor any evidence of formal or informal networks or partnerships created.

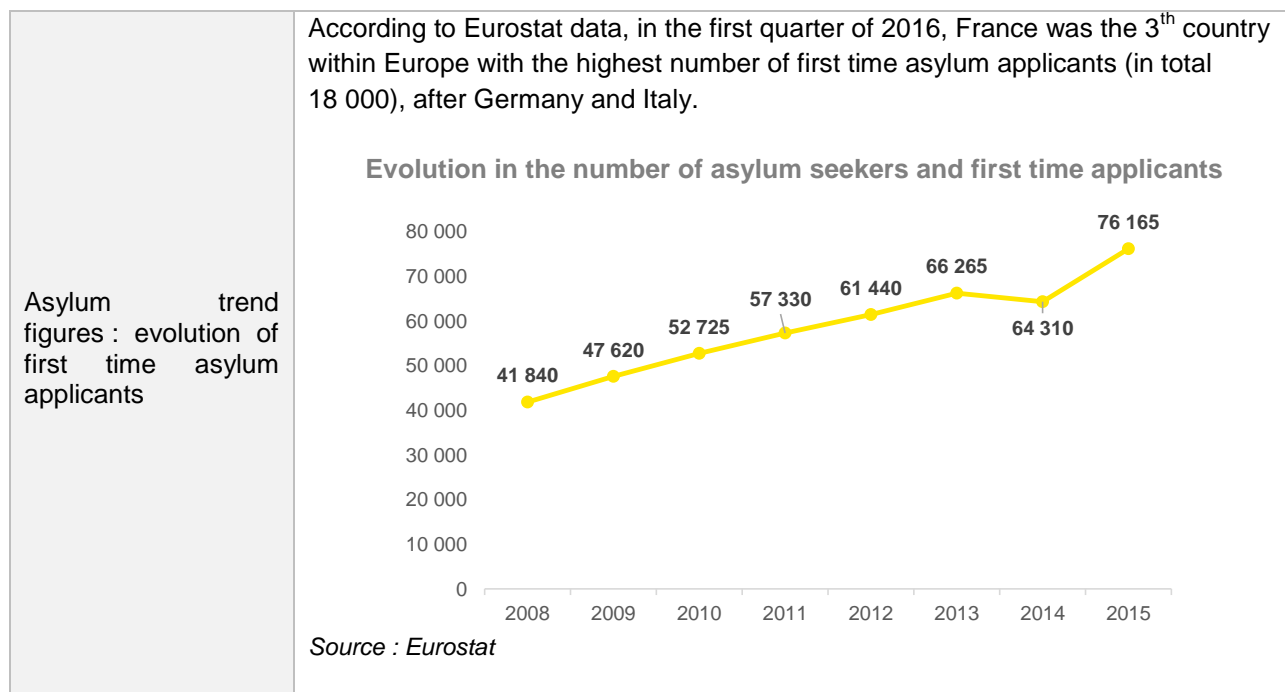
j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Bulgarian Red Cross	Prog. Manager, Refugee services	Mariana STOYANOVA	12 July
UNHCR	Programme Director	Tatyana VALCHANOVA	13 July
IOM	Head of Office	Radoslav STAMENKOV	13 July
FORUM Assn.	Chairman	Mariya KARAGYOZOVA	13 July
Caritas Bulgaria	Director, Intl. Cooperation	Angel GYOREV	13 July
SAR-COM	Financial Controller	Slava ZAHARIEVA	14 July
SAR-COM	Senior Jurisconsult	Plamenka VASSILEVA	14 July
SAR-COM	Jurisconsult	Vassil PENOV	14 July
SAR-COM	Chief specialist	Lilyana SHOPOVA	14 July
SAR-COM	State Expert	Emilia GEORGIEVA	14 July
Bulgarian H.C.	Manager, Refugee Programme	Iliana SAVOVA	15 July
SAR-COM	Director, Intl Relations Directorate	Ivan MILANOV	July

9.5.4 Case study report: France

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy



Several changes have recently⁹³ (end of 2015) modified the French asylum system since 2015; a single desk (“guichet unique”) has been deployed all over the territory to receive at the same time and in the same physical place claims for asylum and material reception conditions.

In France, the steps to apply for asylum and the stakeholders involved are as follows:

- Pre-reception: local orientation platforms are, most of the time, responsible for pre-reception of asylum seekers. They are in charge of providing an appointment to the asylum seeker for his interview at the Prefecture or the single desk;
- At the single desk, the asylum seeker is provided with an asylum claim certification and a document to be filled in and sent to the OFPRA (“Office Français pour la Protection des Réfugiés et des Apatrides”), in charge of the examination and decisions of all asylum applications. In case of a negative decision or in case of a decision granting subsidiary protection for an asylum seeker looking for a refugee status, appeal can be made and will be analysed by the National Court of Asylum (CNDA).

During this procedure, asylum seekers can benefit from several reception conditions and facilities. The OFII (“Office Français de l’Immigration et de l’Intégration”) is responsible for receiving asylum seekers and their integration for the first 5 years of their stay in France. In particular, the OFII is in charge of the “Contrat d’Accueil et d’Intégration” (CAI), a contract signed between asylum seekers and the State and which details both rights and responsibilities. The OFII manages the national reception system, meaning the CADA (“Centre d’Accueil de Demandeurs d’Asile”) system, allowing asylum seekers to have accommodation during their application period.

⁹³ Source : www.asylumineurope.org

ERF strategy and actions

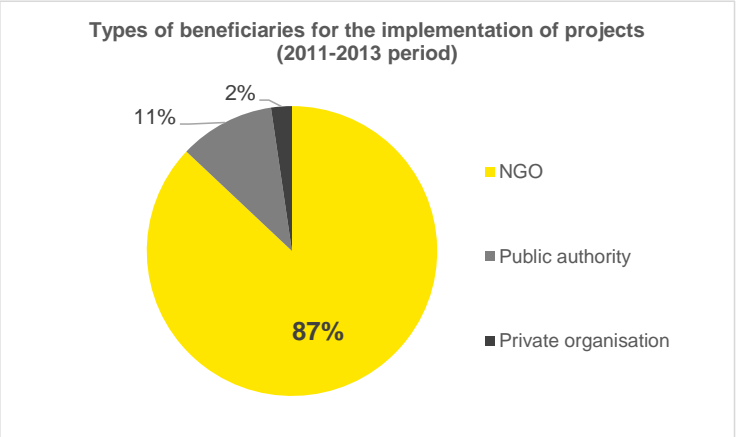
<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum⁹⁴</p>	<p>The General Directorate for Foreigners (part of the Ministry of Interior) was the French responsible authority for the ERF 2011-2013. ERF 2008-2010 used to be implemented and co-managed by decentralised departments of Ministry but was re-centralised for the period covering 2011-2013, for a better and more effective management. Decentralised State services are still highly consulted and solicited with regard of the ERF.</p> <p>The other three SOLID funds were managed by the same Responsible Authority.</p> <p>In its multi-annual strategy, France decided to focus on the improvement of first reception conditions and integration of refugees, both corresponding to ERF Priority 1.</p>								
<p>Number of ERF funded actions⁹⁵</p>	<p>The number of ERF funded actions in France was constant in 2011 and 2012 and increased by around 20% in 2013.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Total number of projects funded under each annual programme</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of projects</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>68</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>67</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>81</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Year	Number of projects	2011	68	2012	67	2013	81
Year	Number of projects								
2011	68								
2012	67								
2013	81								
<p>Breakdown of actions per priority⁹⁶</p>	<p>In France between 2011 and 2013, the vast majority of projects were implemented under Priority 1 (202), and only a few were under Priority 2 (14). Priority 3 (resettlement and relocation) was not implemented in France.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Distribution of projects funded over 2011-2013, per priority</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Priority</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Priority 1</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 2</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 3</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Priority	Percentage	Priority 1	94%	Priority 2	6%	Priority 3	0%
Priority	Percentage								
Priority 1	94%								
Priority 2	6%								
Priority 3	0%								
<p>Types of actions implemented⁹⁷</p>	<p>In line with the objectives set up by France in its multi-annual strategy, actions implemented through projects focused mostly on the improvement of reception</p>								

⁹⁴ Source: National Evaluation Report

⁹⁵ Source: National Evaluation Report

⁹⁶ Source: National Evaluation Report

⁹⁷ Source: National Evaluation Report

	<p>conditions and integration.</p> <p>With regards to the reception of asylum-seekers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 57% of Priority 1 projects had activities linked to social, legal and administrative assistance, as well as language and interpretation services; ▶ 15% of them includes medical and/or psychological care activities; ▶ The remaining activities of projects were linked to accommodation infrastructure, education and language training. <p>For the integration of refugees, implemented projects carried on activities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Social, administrative and legal assistance (aiming at promoting equality of access and outcomes in dealing with public institutions) for 35% of Priority 1 projects; ▶ Self-empowerment and employment access (through educational or vocational trainings) for 35%; ▶ Assistance in housing and means of subsistence for 32% of Priority 1 projects; ▶ Medical and psychological care for 16% of them. <p>For projects implemented under Priority 2, the focus was stressed on actions related to COI and to the improvement of the efficiency and quality of asylum procedures.</p>								
<p>Breakdown of types of beneficiaries⁹⁸</p>	<p>In France, 87% of ERF beneficiaries were national NGOs (associations). The remaining beneficiaries were public authorities or private companies.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Types of beneficiaries for the implementation of projects (2011-2013 period)</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Types of beneficiaries for the implementation of projects (2011-2013 period)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of beneficiary</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>NGO</td> <td>87%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Public authority</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private organisation</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Type of beneficiary	Percentage	NGO	87%	Public authority	11%	Private organisation	2%
Type of beneficiary	Percentage								
NGO	87%								
Public authority	11%								
Private organisation	2%								

b. Relevance of the ERF

The ERF objectives and eligible actions were all-in-all consistent to French national asylum policy and adequate to France’s needs.

Indeed, the French national policy was designed so that the focus for 2011-2013 period was on the improvement of first reception conditions and the integration of refugees; Priority 1 was consequently fully relevant to these needs so were eligible actions. According to national beneficiaries of the ERF, the relevance of the European tool and its capacity to adapt to national contexts was systematically deemed as positive. The ERF is perceived by national beneficiaries as an important financial tool to implement their projects; even though the Responsible Authority agrees with this statement and notes the relevance of the ERF as a financial tool, the small participation of the ERF to national asylum budget (about 7%) was also underlined.

⁹⁸ Source: National Evaluation Report

For national beneficiaries, the leeway left by the objectives of the ERF always permitted to implement their projects and to have them fit onto eligible actions. In other words, the flexibility of the ERF in the definition of its objectives and eligible criteria participated to their relevance in France. The main criticism raised by the Responsible Authority and some national beneficiaries were linked to the unclear definition of target groups for some types of actions, and the differences between the EC's checking mechanism for target groups eligibility and French ones (especially for unaccompanied minors); it seems the rules for eligibility were not clear for all beneficiaries and changed in the middle of 2011-2013 period, leading to difficulties for beneficiaries to justify some expenses and projects' scope.

Despite its relevance, it seems that the use of the ERF in France lacks of strategic perspective, and the budget provided by the ERF is seen as a budget line additionally contributing to the implementation of the national policy, rather than an opportunity to develop innovative projects and to design a strategic approach of the Fund.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013) ⁹⁹	222 608
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	284 944 <i>of which 17 624 vulnerable persons and 4 742 unaccompanied minors</i>

According to the national report for the period 2011 – 2013, projects realized under this sub-priority were successful, and objectives were generally speaking achieved and, in almost all cases, overachieved. Failed projects were most of the time due to financial and cash flows difficulties encountered by beneficiaries they could not cope with. The ERF 2011-2013 is considered as an effective tool.

This success and target overachievement were partially explained by the fact that people benefited more than once during the years of reception help, but also by the increase of asylum demands. Projects under priority 1 mainly focused on « Social assistance, assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation » but also on medical and psychological care, accommodation and Education, language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person. Objectives have been overachieved, especially in the case of Social assistance, assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, language assistance, interpretation and on medical and psychological care. The overachievement is partly explained by the earlier mentioned reasons, as the increase of the demands and the counting issues. However, objectives have not been reached in the case of measures related to « Education, language training, other initiatives consistent with the status of the person », because it was not part of the national strategy and because it focused mainly on minors that often refused to engage the procedures.

The AMIF and the possibility for beneficiaries to design multi-annual strategy led to an increase in the effectiveness according to the beneficiaries and the Responsible Authority.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	185
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	264 682 vs. 142 693

Many projects were implemented under Priority 1 and targeted at the improvement of reception conditions. The variety of eligible actions permitted to implement a large scope of activities.

The COMEDE put forward the reception of asylum seekers and implement activities related to medical and

⁹⁹⁹⁹ Source : objectives indicated for each action in the national annual programmes (2011, 2012, 2013)

psychological care, legal aid in general and to have access to some specific care, social assistance...In particular, it has implemented a project all along the covered period, aimed at enhancing the medical and psychological care provided to asylum seekers in Ile-de-France region, with a specific focus on victims of torture and unaccompanied minors. The project had two aspects: first, it was looking for the enhancement of all the activities related to medical care, then it brought a specific support to practitioners to ensure a continuous training. This long-term project is cited by the Responsible Authority as a success story, since it included both asylum seekers and practitioners as targets and included an innovative aspect, with the elaboration of an indicator base for social vulnerability.

Generally speaking, and according to the national evaluation report, targets were overachieved in this action. The increasing asylum flows in France also participates to the explanation of the overachievement of targets to this matter.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	243
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	80 523 vs. 45 213
<p>With regards to integration, the ERF was crucial to the development and implementation of the national integration strategy, especially in the national context: the influx in the number of asylum seekers urged national focus to be re-orientated towards reception conditions and capacities, leaving behind integration aspects. The ERF funding enabled to keep implementing activities in this matter.</p> <p>Projects implemented by the French Red Cross particularly focused on refugees' integration: as explained by the interviewee, the goal of the project carried on by the Red Cross in Bourgogne was to accompany refugees with a certain level of autonomy but which would still necessitate help to find housing. The Red Cross facilitated the contact with social housing landlords and also assisted refugees in their job hunt. Roughly 60 refugees were helped through this project. The Red Cross elaborated its own qualitative and quantitative indicators to follow the improvement of the refugees situation and the effectiveness of its action, but explained that the indicators set up for integration measures, especially through the AMIF, were unclear.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	N/A
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	N/A
<p>No projects were implemented under Priority 3 of the ERF.</p> <p>However, the Responsible Authority used the financial incentive as described in Article 13(3) of Decision 573/2007/EC to complete the funds necessary to implement its national resettlement strategy.</p> <p>As stated in the national evaluation report, 55% of resettled persons were so thanks to the ERF fixed amount (representing 139 persons, including 7 unaccompanied minors out of the 252 resettled in total).</p> <p>According to the Responsible Authority, this fixed amount is of a good help and an incentive for resettlement activities, but is too small to participate actively to French resettlement strategy. It is used, but the restrictive criteria set in the ERF often did not correspond to the candidates of the Ministry of Interior</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	16
<p>Between 2011 and 2013, 14 projects related to this priority have been implemented in France. According to the interviews, projects under Priority 2 have been successful and had a positive impact on evaluation and monitoring policies. When projects under this Priority are implemented, they happened to be effective and to have long-term impacts, provided the maintenance activities are organised.</p> <p>As an example, the project aiming at modernizing the EURODAC system and implemented by the DPGSI, contributed to the monitoring and evaluation of asylum demands and supported France to adapt with regards to the Dublin II regulations. As registered in the project final report for the year 2013, 51 379 fingerprints have been registered and the project helped improving productivity and stability of the system. According to the interviewee, the ERF was used, in this case, to finance a project left behind by public authorities, and, consequently, to show the importance of such investments for a better national asylum system. Another example is the projects implemented by the OFPRA focused on the improvement of the quality of interviews conducted with: the ERF enabled to finance interpretation activities and to highly improve this aspect of interviews.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

<p>The lack of cooperation between Member States through the ERF was raised by the Responsible Authority. Instances and workshops specifically targeting the exchange of best practices and more adapted for the informal but practical exchanges.</p> <p>According to the Responsible Authority, all projects are implemented respecting the CEAS framework, but it is not possible, at the French level, to measure specifically the impact of the ERF in the implementation of the CEAS. The ERF remained a financial tool. As stated for instance by the OFPRA, the heterogeneity of asylum systems and mechanisms across Europe prevents from a concrete cooperation and implementation of the CEAS.</p>

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

The way the ERF strategy was designed and used by beneficiaries in France did not ensure, in general, a high level of sustainability of projects and of their impacts.

The same projects implemented from Priority 1 were often financed from year to year, and the same beneficiary would receive the annual allocation to carry on its projects. A certain stability and continuity emerged from this project allocation system, but, on the same time, reveals the incapacity of project holders to carry on projects without the support of the ERF (interviews of beneficiaries linked to Priority 1 stated that the possible end of funding from the ERF would put them into great difficulties), which is even more critical when implemented projects are highly linked to first reception conditions and basic needs the State is supposed to cover. For instance, the CADA system was partly financed through the ERF and was not able to find a sufficient autonomy level to keep on functioning without European funding. Besides, it can be noted that sustainability of projects was not written as a selection criteria in the rules for the French call for proposals¹⁰⁰.

However, it can be noted that projects relative to the implementation of Priority 2 were more sustainable in France, because of the nature of the outputs (new and more performant IT systems, enhanced procedures...) the systematization and the institutionalization of the results. The DPGSI for instance implemented, thanks to the ERF, a new and more reliable IT system regarding CADA occupation; the OFPRA has implemented thanks to ERF funding new interpretation procedures, participating to more effective and efficient asylum procedures: OFPRA's agents trainings and the enriched interpretation system are sustainable outputs and projects.

¹⁰⁰ Source : France annual programmes 2011, 2012 and 2013

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	Closed	11 727 00	11 515 000	98,2%	9 110 000	79,1%
2012	Open	13 973 000	11 482 000	82,2%	9 341 000	81,4%
2013	Open	17 010 000	16 958 000	99,7%	13 906 000	82,0%
Total		42 710 000	39 955 000	93,5%	32 357 000	81%

According to the 2011-2013 national report, resources were adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries. It has been rare that costs exceeded the available funds, and costs were reasonable compared to observed results.

This is explained by the fact that the beneficiaries propose the funding in function of their needs and that revision of the contracts are possible during the implementation phase. However, one difficulty consists on the capacity to foresee the quantity of migration flows and given the great increase during the recent years, more consistent funding are wished.

All interviewed beneficiaries generally criticized the administrative burden represented by the use of the ERF and the costs incurred (in terms of time)

Budget and overall Fund management

The DGEF was the Responsible Authority for all SOLID funds (and is now the Responsible Authority for the AMIF). For the covered period, roughly 2,5 FTEs were dedicated to the management of the ERF only. In 2009, only 1 FTE was responsible for all SOLID funds, leading to organizational issues. After 2009, a necessary phase of catch up and restructuring of the Responsible Authority occurred, leading to a better implementation of the Fund at national level now.

f. Coherence and complementarity

According to the national report for the 2011-2013 period, a real complementarity between national and European measures was ensured and controlled by the Responsible Authority: for instance with regards to Priority 1, national funding supported accommodations, while the ERF financed housing, medical and psychological care, social counseling etc. For integration, national funding supported trainings and integration courses through the "Contrat d'Accueil et d'Integration" and the ERF completed those measures by addressing integration measures more specifically to people having obtained international protection. Other funding were deployed by the project beneficiaries, both national and European, to complete their budget for the implementation of their projects. For instance, the ERF represented only 10% of the total budget of the project modernizing the EURODAC system.

The Responsible Authority was in charge of all SOLID funds, decreasing the risk of overlapping in the implementation of actions of the different funds. From all interviewed beneficiaries' point of views, scopes and mandates between all Funds are clear, and no overlapping or risks of duplication was identified; all Funds were even complementary, as well as the ERF with public action.

With regards to EASO, it was not perceived by stakeholders as a possible source of inconsistency.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Although emergency measures were not mentioned by the Responsible Authority neither the national beneficiaries during the case study, it appeared that France called for the emergency measure mechanism in 2013, when the number of asylum seekers unexpectedly increased. 1 600K€ were dedicated to the relief of the pressure, which represented roughly 4% of the total programmed budget dedicated to emergency measures between 2011 and 2013 and across all Europe.

In France, the recourse to the emergency measure mechanism was explained by¹⁰¹ the saturation of regional reception facilities, especially in Rhône-Alpes and Lorraine. With winter approaching, the obligation to host as many asylum seekers as possible was a constraint which seemed hard to reach, and the goal of the emergency measure additional funding was to provide adapted accommodation to all asylum seekers in both regions. The beneficiaries of the emergency measure funds were the NGO Forum Réfugiés Cosi in Rhône-Alpes and the Regional Health Agency in Lorraine.

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

N/A

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

4 Community Actions were led by a French lead beneficiary between 2008 and 2013. In particular, one CA per year was implemented between 2008 and 2011.

- ▶ The CA HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2276: Process of recognition and orientation of torture victims in European countries to facilitate care and treatment
- ▶ The CA HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721: European Network for technical cooperation in the application of the Dublin II regulation
- ▶ The CA HOME/2009/ERFX/CA/1002: Process of recognition and orientation of torture victims in European countries to facilitate care and treatment
- ▶ The CA HOME/2008/ERFX/CA/1021: Transnational advisory and assistance network for asylum seekers under a Dublin process

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

Generally objectives were reached. Main outputs show the transnational value of CAs.

For example concerning the HOME/2011/ERFX/CA/2276 main impacts consisted of a training and of the coordination of Member States that were successfully conducted. The main visible refer to the fact that the PROTECT tool is now recognised at EU level.

The HOME/2010/ERFX/CA/1721 enhanced the possibility to deepen knowledge about actors related to the Dublin process and developed a European network.

In general, a positive feeling was collected during the interviews with regards to the potential, the effectiveness and the impacts of Community Actions. According to France Terre d'Asile, Community Actions responded to the European needs and gave a strong contribution by reinforcing networks with other organisations as well as cooperation between Member States. According to Forum Réfugiés Cosi, CAs represent a rare financing tool able to encourage transnational developments and promote an EU added value.

However, the potential of CAs is not exploited enough. According to two interviewees, CAs are not very well known. One mentioned that the distinction between national ERF and communitarian funds is not clear. Another clearly stated not knowing the funds. Finally, another interviewee mentioned that transnational

¹⁰¹ Source : France's annual programme 2013

projects supported by the ERF are not enough.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

Several aspects of the ERF European added-value were raised during interviews and in the national evaluation report:

- ▶ First, the ERF most cited added-value is the financial resource it represents for beneficiaries, and even for the national Responsible Authority. Without the ERF, and according to both national beneficiaries and the Responsible Authority, many projects would not have been implemented, or, at least, to the same extent and with the same scope.
- ▶ For the Responsible Authority, one of the added-value of the ERF is to provide extra budget for the implementation of the national policy. Indeed, maybe contrary to the general objective of the Fund which is to complete national funding and to finance additional services, the ERF was used by the French institutions (OFII) to finance and improve some of its central reception mechanisms, which would usually more under national responsibility. The AMIF is similarly used by the Responsible Authority, and is important in the implementation of the French asylum policy: it will finance (through the OFII as a national beneficiary) the improvement of first reception centers (CADA);
- ▶ As mentioned in the national evaluation report, and confirmed by interviews, one of the ERF added-value aspect was the professionalization of implementing organisations, getting more effective and efficient in their internal functioning and, mostly, in their application skills to EU funds;
- ▶ The ERF represented also the opportunity to dedicate specific funds to vulnerable persons and especially unaccompanied minors
- ▶ Finally, the ERF good reputation has a positive effect on the way it encourages meetings and exchanges between people which often have positive spillover effects in terms of best practices and ideas exchange. Thanks to the EU legal framework, which imposes evaluations and follows up of the implemented projects, employees are professionalized and better informed about the EU general support.

j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organization	Position	Name	Date
Ministère de l'intérieur	European fund Officer	Yildiz ATIS	01/07
Ministère de l'intérieur	European Fund Management	M. Yassine Diour	19/07
Ministère de l'intérieur	Chef du pôle pilotage, finances et achats, DPGSI	M M.Issim Fartout	19/07
Association Croix Rouge Française	Director « Etablissements sociaux »	Mme Aline Clavellier	23/09
Association Forum réfugiés Cosi	Finance manager	M.Sébastien Minaut	13/07
Association Comede	Administrative and financial director	Mme Yasmine Flitti	12/07
France Terre d'asile	Responsible of the general administrative secretariat	Christophe Harrison	28/09
France Terre d'asile	European Officer	Hélène Soupios-David	28/09
OFII	Responsable du Pôle coordination des fonds	Mario MORALI	05/07

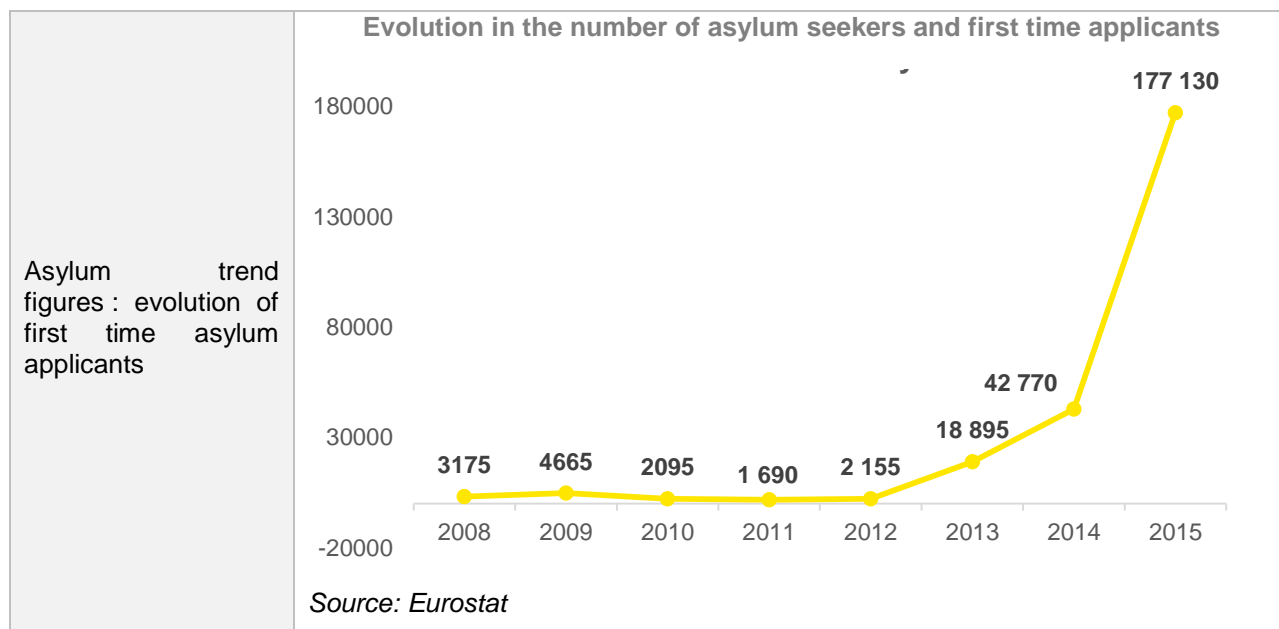
européens

OFPRA	Chef de la mission des affaires européennes et internationales	Rachel Morin	01/07
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9.5.4 Case study report: Hungary

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy



Since mid-2012, Hungary has experienced a great influx in the number of asylum seekers applications, making it a transit Member State (MS) towards Western MS, while it used to be, until the end of 90s, a country from where migrants used to leave (meaning an emigration country, not receiving asylum seekers). . In addition to this context, the political climate regarding migration issues has grown in intensity, mostly because of the government's new anti-migrant policy, which started to take shape in 2014 and which measures were implemented from 2015. However, during the period covered by the evaluation, six reception centers¹⁰² were opened throughout the country, as well as two centers dedicated to children reception.

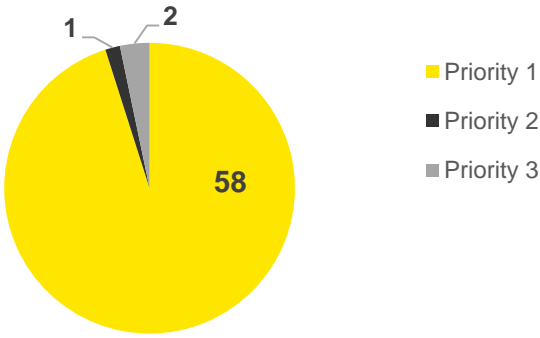
Hungary adopted in the late 1990s the **Asylum Act** (renewed in 2008), which regulates the Hungarian asylum system. As part as its integration to the European Union (EU), Hungary had to focus from 2004 on the harmonization of its system with European standards, in terms of legal practice, asylum procedures and reception conditions; in addition, specific attention was paid to vulnerable groups, the status of refugees as Hungarian citizens was recognized, and a legal basis was set up for the development of a national resettlement programme (which eventually took shape in 2013).

The asylum system is managed and coordinated by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, which provides policy and regulation instructions, while the **Office of Immigration and Nationality** (OIN) is in charge of the implementation of the policy. As the Responsible Authority (RA) for SOLID funds, the Ministry manages them, and has not delegated any of its functions. However, the RA has solicited potential beneficiaries of the ERF (mainly NGOs working on the field) for the elaboration of the multi-annual programme, which was then done in a collaborative process.

¹⁰² As of today, only 4 reception centers are still open, and offer 1066 places

ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum</p>	<p>When the multi-annual programme 2008-2013 was elaborated, the main Hungarian concerns were to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue with the initiated improvements of the asylum system, in particular in terms of reception conditions, treatment of vulnerable groups, asylum procedures and integration, ▶ Meet the new requirements arising for the renewed 2008 Asylum Act (in terms of resettlement for instance). <p>To do so, national authorities designed operational objectives, detailed in the multi-annual programme 2008-2013 and widely inspired from the ERF's priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure an effective and fair asylum procedure ▶ Improve reception conditions ▶ Integrate recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection ▶ Build capacity to develop and improve the asylum policy ▶ Prepare a resettlement programme <p>As stated in the multi-annual programme - and confirmed by the Responsible Authority -, the implementation of the strategy was initially timely organized in two phases, with the following objectives :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improve asylum procedures and reception conditions (<i>first and second objectives</i>) ▶ Favour integration, enhance capacities of the structures working in the field of asylum, set up a resettlement programme (<i>three remaining objectives</i>). <p>Regarding the 2011-2013 period, the unexpected increase of migration flows from mid-2012 urged Hungary to finally put the focus on the first objectives with the exception of the development of a resettlement programme in 2013. According to the RA, since 2014, Hungarian strategy is to “join and embrace better the CEAS, and to keep improving the receiving conditions and the procedures” (under the AMIF).</p>								
<p>Number of ERF funded actions</p>	<p>Between 2011 and 2013, a total of 65 projects were implemented thanks to the ERF contribution. All of them were funded in the “awarding body” method. Under the AMIF however, the “executing body” method is more used.</p> <p>The evolution of the number of funded projects is not remarkable, even if an increase between 2012 and 2013 can be noted and attributed to the beginning of the migration crisis in Hungary.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total number of projects funded under each annual programme</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Projects</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>24</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of Projects	2011	22	2012	19	2013	24
Year	Number of Projects								
2011	22								
2012	19								
2013	24								

	<p>Source : Hungary Evaluation Report</p>
<p>Breakdown of actions per priority</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Distribution of projects funded under 2011-2013 period, per priority*</p>  <p style="text-align: right;"> ■ Priority 1 ■ Priority 2 ■ Priority 3 </p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">*To add to reach 65 projects: 2 resettlement projects and 2 emergency measure</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Source : Hungary Evaluation Report</p> <p>The vast majority (89.2%) of implemented projects in Hungary were aimed at addressing Priority 1 of the ERF, in line with the country's overall objectives regarding migration strategy; the lack of interest of beneficiaries to implement Priority 2, and thus, the few applications, also explain the distribution.</p>
<p>Types of actions implemented</p>	<p>Most projects were dedicated to the improvement of asylum seekers and refugees' living conditions and daily life, in the reception centers and after they are granted the refugee status. In addition, the projects covered different specific objectives (reception conditions and integration of refugees) and several target groups; for instance, the Reformed Mission Center would organize social and leisure activities for asylum-seekers and keep on supporting them through social activities after they get granted the refugee status.</p> <p>Projects' activities were composed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Social support ▶ Leisure activities (cooking, sports, summer camps for children) ▶ Language courses (to learn Hungarian) ▶ Medical and psychological care ▶ Educational activities and programs for children ▶ Support to find housing and accommodation and paying the rents ▶ Vocational and capacity-building trainings and mentoring activities for the target groups (classes and workshops to help to find jobs) ▶ Research activities (documentary review) ▶ Production of synthesized material to better instruct cases (in the judicial practice) ▶ Dissemination of practical tools ▶ Development of e-learning tools <p>In the context of the Community Action led by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee Other types of actions and activities were implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training material production, translation and dissemination (among Europe and other countries in the world). ▶ Training sessions ▶ Study visits

	<p>As part of the resettlement obligations, the Hungarian authorities have also designed and implemented a resettlement programme.</p>												
<p>Breakdown of types of beneficiaries</p>	<p>As shown in the pie chart below, the beneficiaries of the ERF under 2011-2013 period are mainly of two types: state authority and national NGOs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Types of beneficiaries for the implementation of projects (2011-2013 period)</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <caption>Data from Pie Chart: Types of beneficiaries for the implementation of projects (2011-2013 period)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Type of beneficiary</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>State/Federal public authority</td> <td>36%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>National, non-governmental organisation</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local public authority</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private and public law company</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education/Research organisation</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source : Hungary Evaluation Report</i></p> <p>The “state public authority” kinds of beneficiaries are, for almost all of them, represented by the Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN). This office is indeed under the direction of the Ministry of Interior, and is responsible of the reception of asylum-seeker applications and their analysis to decide on the granting. As a structure, the OIN includes and manages the four reception centers (the biggest fifth and biggest reception center was closed down in October 2015); which can apply (independently from its parent structure) for the ERF. Therefore, all grants awarded to the OIN of reception centers are counted as for “state authority” beneficiaries.</p> <p>The main remaining beneficiaries are national NGOs, such as the Cordelia Foundation, the Menedék - Hungarian Association for Migrants or the Reformed Mission Center (6 projects each).</p>	Type of beneficiary	Percentage	State/Federal public authority	36%	National, non-governmental organisation	23%	Local public authority	3%	Private and public law company	2%	Education/Research organisation	1%
Type of beneficiary	Percentage												
State/Federal public authority	36%												
National, non-governmental organisation	23%												
Local public authority	3%												
Private and public law company	2%												
Education/Research organisation	1%												

b. Relevance of the ERF

The Hungarian requirements and expectations for The ERF’s objectives and overall strategy were completely in line with the Hungarian needs, requirements and expectations in terms of asylum and migration.

Back in 2008, Hungary’s main focuses were to clarify the asylum-system framework, to raise it to European standards and to improve Hungarian procedures and reception conditions. Most projects selected by the RA were targeted upon these objectives, and eligible actions by virtue of Article 2 of the Council Decision 573/2007/EC.

All the interviewees including beneficiaries considered the ERF’s strategy and eligible actions were relevant to their needs and expectations.

Regarding the relevance of the ERF with regards to Europe and Hungary’s evolving asylum issues, all interviewees agreed that the ERF’s objectives and priorities kept on being relevant to their needs, and no need for major adjustments in the multi-annual strategy or the annual programmes were necessary to adapt to the evolving situation. This continuous relevance is mainly due to Hungary’s choice to focus on ERF Priority 1, since improvements of reception conditions needed to be reinforced as first signs of migration crisis emerged in Hungary.. During the field visit, the OIN specifically underlined the idea that

ERF was of a great support during 2011-2013 period, and able to adapt to the local stakeholders' evolving needs.

Nevertheless, regarding lessons to be drawn for the future, interviewees (especially beneficiaries of the Funds) criticized the loss of flexibility of the AMIF: for instance, beneficiaries must apply for long-term projects (2 to 3 years), which seems irrelevant in a fast changing context and given Hungarian recent political turn. More generally, the integration of the ERF into the AMIF has changed the eligible actions' logic: actions are now associated to specific target groups, which can prevent some beneficiaries to implement complex and multi-aspect projects. As an example, the Reformed Mission Center used to implement projects that would combine housing (house hunt and rent payment), cultural activities and education for the children, which is no longer possible under the AMIF since target groups are different for all of these actions.

Finally, the Community Action project analyzed during the case study also proved to be relevant to the Hungary's situation and, more widely, the EU. This Community Action, CREDO2, was led by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, an independent NGO which has regularly implemented projects thanks to the ERF, and implemented between June 2013 and January 2015. It was designed to improve credibility assessments in asylum decision making procedures and to harmonize practices across MS, with a focus on two specific asylum-seeker groups (children and LGBTI). As stated in the final report, the overall objective of both CREDO projects was to "contribute to the quality of EU asylum systems by ensuring that all relevant stakeholders in the EU asylum sector have actual access to the know-how of structured, objective, high-quality and protection-oriented credibility assessment, in particular in child and gender-related claims". The activities relative to this project consisted in:

- ▶ Provide trainings to relevant stakeholders all over the EU, in various languages
- ▶ Elaborate practical training material (manual, training curricula e-learning...)
- ▶ Ensure the dissemination and the translation of the material

CREDO2 project responded accurately to transnational needs: all Member States were in the project's scope, and its outputs were disseminated all over Europe - and beyond. The interviewees insisted on the project's objective to reach all Member States, especially from South and East of Europe, by delivering trainings in local languages or translating the final training manual. CREDO2 was the continuation of a first CREDO project, and has evolved with Europe's context and issues, as proves the focus on LGBTI group, which has only being recently identified as a group with specific needs.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	Unknown
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	46 815

The Hungarian national evaluation report 2011-2013 provides performance indicators for the implementation of each Annual Programme, which support the conclusions that the overall performance of ERF projects was relatively high:

- ▶ In 2011, 80,9% of the Annual Programme's indicators was achieved
- ▶ In 2012, 62,5% of them were achieved, and at least half of them overachieved
- ▶ In 2013, roughly 90% of the planned indicators were completed.

Overachievement of indicators are mainly justified by the increase in the number of asylum seekers between 2011 and 2013, generating more activities for NGOs, more actions to implement and more

people to reach. On the contrary, underachievement of targets was explained by changes in the political and legal context (especially in cases of “multiple allocation” projects¹⁰³).

Overall, the interviews conducted during the field visit served to support the conclusion of the national evaluation report that the objectives were achieved: beneficiaries have always exceeded their targets when implementing their activities, and explain it by the influx in the number of asylum seekers. They also spoke positively about the ERF contribution to the improvement of their capacity and skills, which participate to reaching and over reaching targets. All in all, the effectiveness of the ERF and its contribution to positive actions and effects on refugees and asylum seekers was always praised.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	26
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	5 405 vs. 70 973

As stated in the national evaluation report, and as confirmed by all interviewed stakeholders, the ERF is a very effective tool to improve reception conditions of asylum-seekers in Hungary. Many projects were dedicated to that goal, and more specifically to the provision of basic services to target groups, directly in reception centers for instance.

According to the national evaluation report, there were:

- ▶ Five accomplished projects regarding the accommodation infrastructure or services
- ▶ One project dedicated to material aid (provision of healthier food)
- ▶ Three projects regarding medical and psychological support directly in reception centers
- ▶ Nine projects aimed to support asylum seekers in their procedures in general (social assistance, administrative and judicial formalities support, counselling and legal aid, language assistance and interpretation)
- ▶ Eight projects concerned education, language classes and training

The interviews conducted during the field visit enabled to refine the impacts of the projects.

For instance, the **Menedek association** has implemented a project regarding **social counselling**, directly in reception centers, **reaching 406 asylum seekers** and providing **100 children** with psychological support. Another long-term project from the Menedek association – meaning implemented in 2011, 2012 and 2013 - was relative to the organization of **leisure activities** in reception centers, in order to structure the days of asylum-seekers (cooking classes, sports, games...): **1 000 hours per year** were organized, and roughly **10 000 people participated** along the three years¹⁰⁴. More generally, the ERF enabled the association to organize children “**summer camps**”, **educational activities** (390 participants)...The projects related to reception are, for most of them, looking to improve the day-to-day life of asylum seekers. According to the Responsible Authority, many projects also included **staff training** (including **social workers** working in the field of asylum), **judges training** (see section below) etc.

The **OIN** had also implemented a project related to the reception infrastructures (renovation, provision of extra material) but the concerned center was closed down.

Finally, a project implemented by the **National Judicial Office** and **exclusively dedicated to the improvement of procedures** can be pointed out. The goal of the project was to provide to specialized **judges a comparative analysis of judgment practices of the European court of Human Rights and Court of the EU**. This analysis was conducted by collecting relevant EU legal cases and decisions, and by analyzing and synthesizing them under a **curriculum**, available online on a website and sent out through a 100 electronic copies (CDs). These outputs of the project were widely disseminated among

¹⁰³ Namely projects that are planned for a two-year implementation and are allocated funding two years after only one application

¹⁰⁴ Estimation of the association

judges, law and court clerks and expert involved in the refugee procedures. According to an interviewed former judge, the outputs of the projects are still used by legal experts and help, on a practical way, to improve the judges' decision and to **harmonize the legal procedures**.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	48
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	2 169 vs. 5 983

Although integration was a specific objective of the Hungarian strategy, the State kept on focusing on the reception conditions of asylum-seekers (due to the influx) and could not implement its integration strategy; hence the targets from the multi-annual programme could not be reached.

Nevertheless, many beneficiaries of the ERF implemented activities within their projects which objectives were the integration of refugees. For instance:

- ▶ The **OIN** has organized since 2011 **vocational trainings**, to which roughly **60 people** participated in the covered period. **25%** of them are nowadays **employed or self-employed**, and **10%** of them were granted with the **Hungarian citizenship**.
- ▶ The **Reformed Mission Center** set up projects which aimed refugees at finding accommodation, at learning Hungarian in order to integrate better in the hosting society and at providing them support (social, psychological, through leisure activities) whenever they need it.

The **Menedek association's** projects provided asylum seekers with **self-empowerment** activities and workshops to find jobs, accommodation, to learn Hungarian...For instance, among **27 participants** to a workshop dedicated to find accommodation, **10** of them have now a permanent home.

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	2 resettlement operations
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	15 persons resettled vs. 10 persons resettled

Whilst the legal basis for resettlement already existed in the Asylum Act, the financial support of the ERF was the element favouring the implementation of a programme.

During the covered period, a total of **10 people were resettled** in Hungary: 1 between 2011 and 2012 and 9 in 2013. The total number of resettled people can be seen low compared to some other Member States (the first year is described as "not of a great success" and a "test" by the RA in the national evaluation report), but was explained by the novelty of this type of actions for Hungary. The increasing number of resettlements between 2011 and 2013 supports this justification. It is to be noted however that in 2012, a government decree limited the number of participants to resettlement programme to 10 persons per allocation year.

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	3
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Hungary considered the evaluation and monitoring system of local asylum policies was not a priority given the country's situation. None action was therefore initiated in this area, although implemented projects could have side-effects on the evaluation and monitoring system through the improvement of databases

accuracy (Country of Origin Information) or capacity building for a better use and management of data (for the RA).

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

There were very few projects and action aimed at enhancing cooperative relationships between Member States and responsibility sharing of the burden receiving asylum-seekers. The Responsible Authority confirmed that cooperation and burden sharing were not the focus of Hungary under the ERF. All implemented projects, indeed, concerned the Hungarian asylum-seekers and refugees, and was about dealing with national issues rather than favour cooperation amongst Member States.

It is to be noted that the beneficiaries are part of formal and informal networks, and, in the case of the OIN, in close contact with European counterparts such as the OFPRA in France, but the ERF did not trigger these exchanges.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

In terms of **impacts**, the **projects** supported by the ERF can be qualified as **sustainable**: for instance, vocational trainings led, in many cases, to refugees getting diplomas, finding jobs, finding accommodation and paying autonomously rents, integrating into the host society...

However, as analyzed thanks to beneficiaries' interviews, and as acknowledged by the RA, the **sustainability of projects** is a **problematic issue** in Hungary. The Hungarian asylum stakeholders' landscape is composed of public structures (such as the OIN) and small NGOs (Reformed Mission Center, Menedek association...etc.) with few financial and human resources and highly relying on SOLID funds to implement projects and maintain the whole asylum reception and integration system.

The financial "gap year" (between the end of the ERF's funding and the beginning of the AMIF) proves the lack of sustainability of projects: beneficiaries reduced or suspended their actions and activities and, according to UNHCR, the whole Hungarian asylum system "threatened to collapse". The UNHCR was forced to jump in and try as much as possible to bridge the gap and support the associations - with difficulties and little success.

The exception of the Community Action implemented by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, which proved very sustainable, is to be noted (see section "Focus on Community Actions").

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)¹⁰⁵

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	C	1 268 000	1 268 000	100%	1 121 959	88,5%
2012	C	1 284 000	1 268 000	98,8%	1 232 478	97,2%
2013	O	2 355 000	2 355 000	100%	2 291 058	97,3%
Total		4 907 000	4 891 000	99,7%	4 645 495	95,0%

The budget implementation rate for 2011-2013 is almost of 100%. The evaluation report, backed by the

¹⁰⁵ For data source, see p. 23 and 24 of the revised interim report.

interviews conducted during the visit suggests that the ERF was an efficient tool: the allocated amounts were always recognized as sufficient to implement projects, and underspending almost never occurred.

- ▶ According to many beneficiaries, the ERF administrative requirements (in terms of application and reporting) represents a burden, but they also become more and more effective as much as they apply, and accept these are necessary.

Budget and overall Fund management

In terms of local organization, the ERF is managed by the **Ministry of Interior**, which deals more generally with migration policies and manages all the European funds in the field of migration.

In total, the ERF required:

- ▶ **Three full-time equivalents** (project manager, technical supervisor and financial supervisor for the selection of projects general management of the funds and the projects);
- ▶ **One part-time general manager** (Head of Department, dealing with all former four funds);
- ▶ **Financial, legal and IT staff, part-time dedicated to the ERF.**

The ERF “technical assistance budget line” was used for staff salary, but is fully dedicated to technical assistance activities under AMIF.

As far as the ERF budget is distributed, the Responsible Authority set up an organized financial management system, in order to provide pre-financing to the beneficiaries that would not have been able to submit proposals otherwise due to their available cash flows.

According to all interviewees, allocations were sufficient to reach the targets and to achieve concrete results.

Although it is not possible to scientifically measure the efficiency of projects, the Responsible Authority acknowledged that since the ERF has been used in Hungary, the service provided to asylum seekers is much better and more harmonised with other MS.

f. Coherence and complementarity

The Ministry of Interior was responsible for managing and coordinating all European SOLID funds, and was consequently able – through the elaboration of multi-annual and annual programmes in a collaborative manner with all potential beneficiaries – to ensure a full coherence and complementarity between the ERF, the EIF and the RF.

At a field level, the ERF was the main – if not only - fund beneficiaries could apply to in this field (except from a few local funds with much less significant allocated amounts), which prevents from overlapping with other funds or financial instrument.

With regards to the development of national partnerships and/or networks, the field visit revealed it was not a side-effect of the ERF. EASO, for instance, has not participated to any project, but coherence is ensured mainly thanks to EASO’s knowledge of the ERF implementation and to the OIN, which has close ties with it. The UNHCR also helps in ensuring the coherence and complementarity of projects, since it has a broad and complete view of what is implemented.

Regarding Community Actions, there is no evidence of effective consultation between the Commission and the RA on the potential synergies between CAs and national projects prior to their implementation; indeed, the RA had no clue of current or past implemented CAs and their outputs, neither the Hungarian beneficiaries.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Due to the unpredictable increase in the number of asylum-seekers, Hungary used the funding for emergency measures at the end of 2013 through the OIN, to implement a one-year project which objectives were to enhance quickly reception centers facilities to host more asylum-seekers and in decent conditions. The project thus enabled to renovate buildings, to provide reception centers with extra blankets, food...

According to the OIN, the expected results were achieved, even if the timeline to realize the project was tight given the nature of the activities (building renovation) and the emergency measure helped reduce the pressure on a specific issue for Hungary with the quick implementation of concrete activities.

All in all, the OIN spoke very positively of emergency measures, perceived as a flexible and effective tool able to help solve issues in a timely manner (the Commission was very reactive to provide funds). The OIN also raised that direct contacts with the Commission to be awarded funds were welcome, especially given the political tension and suspected manipulation of the SOLID funds in Hungary.

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

In this specific case, the sustainability of the emergency measure results is highly questioned since the reception center which benefited from the fundings was closed down by the government in late 2015. The OIN had to refund the Commission. This political decision represented an important issue for the OIN, firstly because all projects had to be suspended, secondly because the renovation of the reception resulted to be useless, and thirdly because the image of the beneficiary and Hungary was affected towards the Commission.

Finally, the emergency measure was called upon to deal with a national issue therefore did not have consequences on Member States' cooperation.

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

One of the five Community Action selected for deeper analysis, "Credibility Assessment in Asylum Procedures" (CREDO2) was implemented by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee as leader between June 2013 and December 2015. CREDO2, which followed the success of a first CREDO project, aimed at "*ensuring that all relevant stakeholders across Europe have actual access to the know-how of structured, objective, high-quality and protection-oriented credibility assessment, in particular in child and gender-related claims*". Credibility assessment is a key moment in the instruction of asylum-seeker cases, and harmonisation across Europe of practices appeared necessary to ensure fair and equal treatment of asylum applications. The Community Action also aimed at targeting specifically groups which specificities have emerged recently (LGBTI asylum seekers and children). As the leader of the CA, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee was the main stakeholder implementing the activities.

All expected activities for the CA were implemented (training material and training sessions in particular), and targeted outcomes were overachieved (*see below*).

However, a claim for more follow-up from the Commission was formulated.

Indeed, the Commission organises indeed the control and audit of the Community Actions, but do not seem to follow them on a project prospective. According to the interviewees, it is hard to get clear and helpful answers from the Commission whenever they have questions, and they do not know if the evaluation reports are used in some way afterwards. The only level of follow-up seems to be on budgetary aspects; the Commission allocated funds for the implementation of projects but do not follow them on strategic or implementation aspects, and, thus, do not support enough its beneficiaries.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

CREDO2 project was very successful and reached – if not exceeded - all expected objectives in terms of material production and dissemination:

- ▶ A training manual was elaborated, translated in 10 languages and disseminated all over Europe (and beyond),
- ▶ Online curricula are available and used,
- ▶ “Train-the-trainer” activities to ensure knowledge-transfer even after the project has ended,
- ▶ Training sessions are still being organized on the basis of the manual resulting from the CA.

The success of the project and its sustainability can also be measured by unexpected effects:

- ▶ The manual was used by the UNHCR to design guidelines on credibility assessment (that are published and globally);
- ▶ Ad hoc training activities provided by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee expert were carried out even after the project ended;
- ▶ Some MS (the UK, the Netherlands) have modified their national guidelines on credibility assessment on the basis of CREDO output;
- ▶ The EASO guide in evidence assessment clearly refers to the CREDO methodology;
- ▶ The principle of many trainings was to be joined, which gave the opportunity to different stakeholders of a same MS (judges, social workers, State representatives, NGOs) to gather and exchange.

Finally, CREDO2 was designed to be transnational and has clear transnational impacts; first in its objectives of harmonization of credibility assessment across Europe and then through the translation of training material in various languages.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

The European added-value of the fund for Hungary can be summarised in three features (which emerged during the field visit interviews and in the evaluation report):

- ▶ First, the ERF represented for most beneficiaries the major financial resource, if not the only way to implement medium-term projects. According to some beneficiaries (Menedek Association for instance), a very few actions could have been undertaken without the ERF, but to a much smaller scale and quality;
- ▶ Then, the ERF widely favoured capacity building amongst its beneficiaries, which could then structure better their intervention in the long term. The European framework and standards provided by the fund as well as its requirements have helped improve and professionalise local organisations;
- ▶ Finally, as a European tool, the ERF is perceived as “neutral” for its beneficiaries: it enabled local NGOs, on the one hand, to prove the government the success and benefits of their actions (and maybe to influence policies), and, on the other hand, to have access to a politically unbiased financing resource.

More generally, interviewees think that the ERF, as well as SOLID funds, represents the first step for a CEAS, as it encourages MS to raise their systems to common standards.

However, the impacts of the ERF in terms of cooperation between Member States are much less significant, even if it has contributed more regular contacts and exchange of best practices between RAs, through meetings in Brussels. According to Hungarian RA, the ERF (now AMIF) remains a tool favouring actions towards national needs and issues, and is not operationally designed to set up the CEAS.

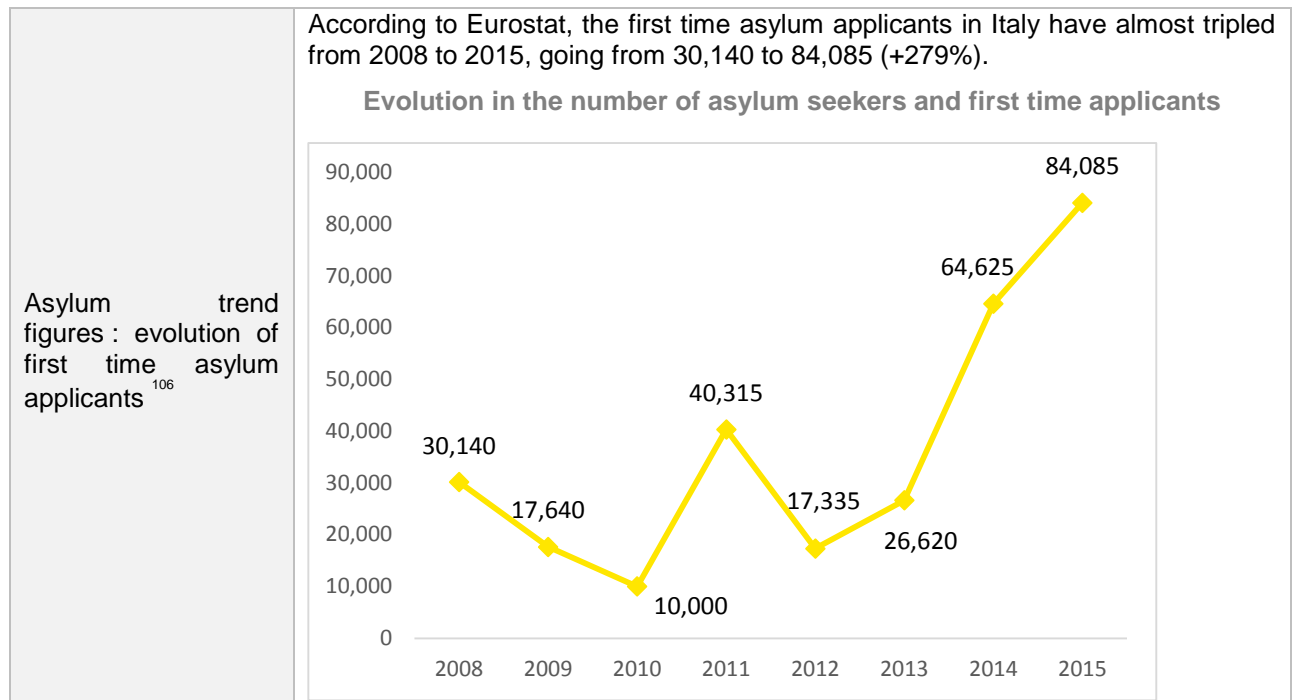
j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Ministry of Interior	Head of Department of Support and coordination	Dr. Szilvia Szedo	05/07
Ministry of Interior	Project Supervisor	Róbert Rontó	05/07
Ministry of Interior	Project Manager	Amarilla Radnayné	05/07
Office of Immigration and Nationality, Department of International Affairs	Head of International Relations and Funds Unit	Tamas Lestak	06/07
Reformed Mission Center	Project manager	Dóra Kanizsai-Nagy	05/07
National Judicial Office	Group Leader	Petra Tobik	05/07
Menedék - Hungarian Association for Migrants	Project manager	Dóra Lippényi	06/07
UNHCR - Regional Representation for Central Europe	Head of Hungary Team	Dr. Agnes Ambrus	05/07
UNHCR - Regional Representation for Central Europe	Integration Associate	Zsuzsanna Puskas	05/07
Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Refugee Programme Director, trainer and President of the European Network on Statelessness	Gabor Gyulai	06/07
Hungarian Helsinki Committee	Project coordinator (for the analysed Community Action)	Tudor Rosu	06/07

9.5.5 Case study report: Italy

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy



Asylum system

The ***Italian Asylum System*** consists of Territorial Commissions responsible for examining and deciding on applications for international protection. These bodies are coordinated by a National Committee located in Rome. The number of Territorial Commissions has progressively increased, from ten in 2010 to forty in 2015, to ensure better management of applications for international protection and deal with the increasing number of requests.

To promote greater efficiency of administrative procedures, Italy has continued to develop and implement a national computerized system, launched in 2012, for the collection of applications for international protection, which allows for the direct acquisition of data in electronic form by the Police Headquarters (Questure). The applications are then immediately forwarded to the competent Territorial Commissions.

The ***Italian reception system*** for asylum seekers is an integrated system that follows a multilevel organizational approach. It comprises both the Ministry of Interior, which is the central coordination body that manages and finances the interventions and local authorities involved in reception services.

The reception system, therefore, is divided into two sub-systems:

- ▶ the first one is managed by the Government and is composed of large reception centers;
- ▶ the second one is a vast network of local centers scattered all over the territory, managed by the so-called SPRAR (System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees) which supervises a series of small and medium interventions, providing specific and personalized services.

Together with this ordinary reception system, specific flexible mechanisms are implemented in cases of

¹⁰⁶ Eurostat data

emergency, in order to cope with large incoming migratory flows.

One of these operative plans has been carried out by the National Civil Protection System for the “North-African Emergency”, which started at the beginning of 2011 and has deeply affected the national reception system for the following 2 years.

According to 2015 SPRAR Report¹⁰⁷, the number of reception accommodation provided has progressively increased, from almost 4,000 in 2011 (3.979) to 16,000 in 2014-2016. In particular, in 2014 the whole number of accommodation places, including the additional places, increased to over 20,000.

Furthermore, on the 10th of July 2014 a “National Plan to face the extraordinary migratory pressure”¹⁰⁸ has been signed. This plan was aimed at overcoming emergency approach, improving the governance of the system and strengthening cooperation between central and regional level.

Implementation of the ERF Strategy

According to the emerging needs at that period, the ERF Annual Programmes 2011, 2012, 2013 privileged actions and activities aimed at implementing the reception capacity and at qualifying the services provided. Therefore, as clearly shown in the chart below, 100% of the projects financed in the three years, matched the Priority 1 of the Fund.

More specifically, the 2011 AP concentrated the funding on implementation of reception capacity, integration services for persons granted international protection, job placement services for refugees, and services for vulnerable targets.

On the other hand, the 2012 AP was aimed at implementing the national reception capacity with special regard to reception of vulnerable targets, at improving integration services such as housing and job placements for ordinary and vulnerable targets, reception and integration services for Dublin cases returned to Italy.

The 2013 AP was consistent with previous APs and continued funding reception, support and integration projects for asylum seekers and refugees, in complementarity with National Reception System. Due the economic crisis, ERF financed projects aimed at promoting employment and self-employment, in order to facilitate the refugees’ exit from reception centers and to promote their autonomy.

ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum</p>	<p>The significant increase in the number of persons in search for/ granted international protection in the last years makes definitely Italy a country of asylum. Indeed, over the last years asylum protection in Italy has experienced profound changes.</p> <p>In light of the above, changes initiatives have been taken both on the legislative and organizational levels so as to empower different reception circuits. The reorganisation consisted in an increase of the overall reception capacity and in the gradual improvement of the management, e.g. the implementation of reception standards.</p> <p>According to Italy’s multi-annual programme (ERF 2008-2013), the overall goal was to combine in a single national system (<i>reductio ad unum</i>) the various reception systems on the territory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ the governmental reception large centers for asylum seekers – CARA;▶ the network of local centers managed by the System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR -);
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¹⁰⁷ [Rapporto Annuale Sprar 2015](#)

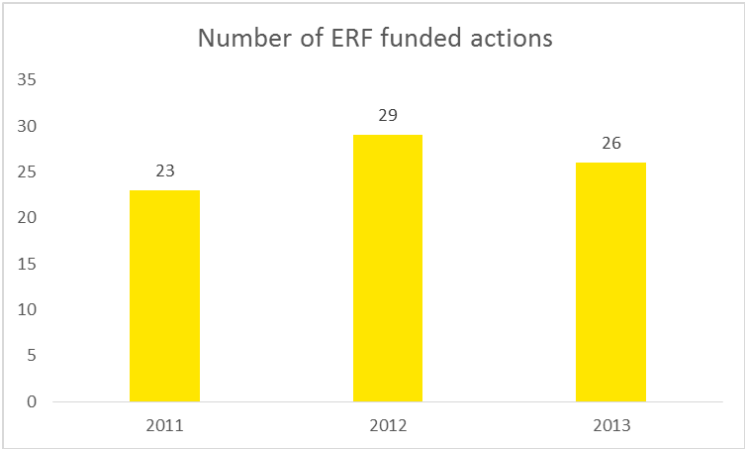
¹⁰⁸ [“Piano nazionale per fronteggiare il flusso straordinario di migranti, adulti, famiglie e minori non accompagnati”](#), 2014

- ▶ other local reception centers.

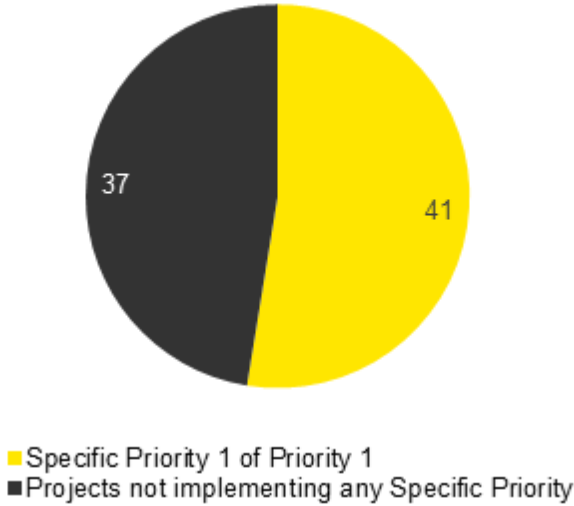
The **specific objectives** were:

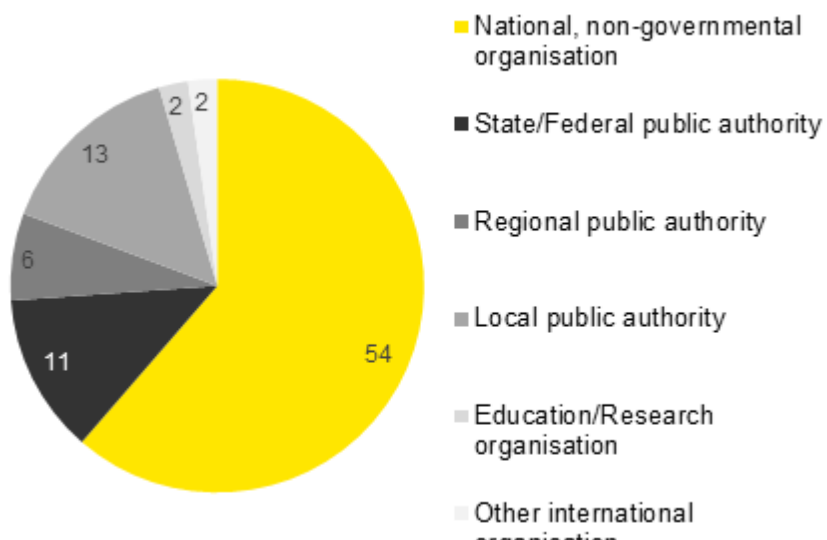
- ▶ to improve the management and to harmonise the different reception systems;
- ▶ to integrate and develop several services already provided through the National Reception System;
- ▶ to strengthen protection and integration measures provided to asylum applicants and refugees, especially belonging to vulnerable groups;
- ▶ to monitor the effective implementation of European rules on asylum,
- ▶ implemented under the Italian law;
- ▶ to program policies and interventions as aimed at developing the national asylum system (for example increasing resettlement services).

Number of ERF funded actions



Breakdown of actions per priority



Types of actions implemented	<p>The main actions implemented within the ERF AP 2011, 2012 and 2013 are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ actions addressing the socio-economic integration of persons seeking/ granted international protection – not belonging to vulnerable categories; ▶ actions addressing the business start-up of persons seeking/granted international protection – not belonging to vulnerable categories; ▶ actions of first reception, information on the asylum procedure; administrative/judicial assistance, linguistic assistance, orientation and insertion in 2nd level reception and integration paths for the target group – not belonging to vulnerable categories; ▶ actions addressing the reception, support and orientation of persons seeking/ granted international protection belonging to vulnerable categories and arriving to the Italian trans-border transit hotspots, according to the Dublin regulation; ▶ actions for the rehabilitation and socio-economic integration of vulnerable persons seeking/ granted international protection; ▶ actions addressing the business start-up vulnerable persons seeking/ granted international protection. 														
Breakdown of types of beneficiaries	 <p>A pie chart illustrating the distribution of beneficiaries across different organizational types. The largest segment is 'National, non-governmental organisation' at 54%. Other segments include 'State/Federal public authority' (11%), 'Regional public authority' (6%), 'Local public authority' (13%), 'Education/Research organisation' (2%), and 'Other international organisation' (2%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Organization Type</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>National, non-governmental organisation</td> <td>54</td> </tr> <tr> <td>State/Federal public authority</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regional public authority</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Local public authority</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education/Research organisation</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other international organisation</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Organization Type	Percentage	National, non-governmental organisation	54	State/Federal public authority	11	Regional public authority	6	Local public authority	13	Education/Research organisation	2	Other international organisation	2
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Education/Research organisation	2														
Other international organisation	2														

b. Relevance of the ERF

Relevance of the ERF eligible actions compared to national situation and needs

The main relevant **country's needs in terms of asylum** emerged during the interviews were:

- ▶ Increasing the reception system in terms of accommodation capacity;
- ▶ Improving the management and to harmonise the different reception systems;
- ▶ Strengthening integration measures provided to asylum applicants and refugees, especially belonging to vulnerable groups.

According to *ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013*, the strategies and strategic objectives of ERF, "have **well identified the real needs of the asylum system** as well as the potential pilot actions useful to fill

the gaps and needs, always more structural, of asylum sector.”

According to interviewees, **the ERF eligible actions were numerous and covered the national needs** (reception conditions, integration measure, access to the labour market, language training, housing, capacity building, etc.)

However, according to RA **even if the ERF eligible actions were consistent with national need in qualitative terms, the financial and operational support of the ERF was inadequate compared to needs emerged in last years.** Italy has been facing a relevant demand of additional accommodations for asylum applicants and refugees, using almost exclusively national resources.

Therefore the ERF national strategy was aimed at complementing the efforts in developing reception system, covering others areas of intervention and financing specific and complementary projects as integration measures for vulnerable groups, support to implementation of Dublin regulation, standardization of services provided through specific guidelines and memorandum of understanding etc.

For the external evaluator, “it is quite evident that financed actions have offered a consistent **contribution to the upgrading of the overall management of asylum**, through the enforcement of the capacity to offer reception and support to the people in search for/beneficiaries of international protection.

Overall the ERF regulation was found flexible enough to match the national needs and objectives.

Relevance of the ERF objectives in regards with Europe’s evolving asylum issues

According to the evolution of the international context, all the interviewees **underlined a need for the European refugees’ policy to evolve in terms of objectives.**

According to the RA, it is crucial to promote a **more effective solidarity between MS** and the **relocation**, with an effective and proportional distribution of asylum seekers and refugees within the entire EU territory.

In addition, a reform of the Dublin system was found urgent by the most part of interviewees.

Focus on Community Actions

The **Community Actions implemented** were:

- ▶ a transnational research project (*Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report*) aimed at comparing on how this Regulation is applied by States (AP 2010)
- ▶ a transnational research project (*E.T: exploring new form of access to asylum procedures*) aimed at evaluating and promoting the access to international protection procedures; (AP 2009)
- ▶ a transnational project (*Maieutics*) aimed at fixing a new methodology to support vulnerable targets and victims of torture. (AP 2010)

These projects responded to transnational issue.

Specifically, the implementation of Dublin II Regulation has an evident impact on EU dimension and has a crucial impact on several Member State. The project was aimed at enhancing knowledge of the implementation of the Dublin Regulation and investigate and analyzing MS practice surrounding the technical application of this Regulation

The projects resulted coherent and complementary with the ERF, because they were focused on extending the results of the analysis in Italy and other MS.

The projects provided several recommendations at the EU level, through a wide dissemination and advocacy activities More specifically, A public conference to spread recommendation of project E.T. was also organized, with the participation of Commissioner Malmström.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	2,266
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	8,419
<p>According to the <u>ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013</u>, "It appears clear that the majority of indicators have been achieved (both indicators of result and implementation)." The overall feedback is very positive as the majority of indicators has not only been achieved but also largely exceeded the expected results (i.e. the majority of projects have effectively responded to a higher number of requests than the ones initially planned within the multi-annual and annual programming and the target groups). Where discrepancies occurred, beneficiaries often compensated the gap with the implementation of additional services.</p> <p>The accomplishment of the main indicators were confirmed by <u>all interviewees</u> directly involved in the implementation of ERF projects in the period concerned.</p> <p>Therefore, the fundamental positive aspect of the ERF Multiannual program 2011-2013 was represented by the "positive gap" between the number of envisaged target group persons and those effectively achieved.</p> <p>At the same time, even though the projects generally achieved the planned results, it was also noted that sometimes external and subsequent factors (economic crisis, internal mobility of migrants) sometimes compromised the sustainability of certain results.</p> <p>The <u>Delegated Authority</u> warned that only considering the achievement of the indicators, is a limiting element of knowledge: the most important result of ERF in Italy was rather the improvement of the Final beneficiaries' project management, the better and proper financial management of projects and the enforcement of the networking created among public and private stakeholders.</p> <p>In the same line, the main relevant result underlined by all the interviewees was the enforcement of the capacity building concerning both final beneficiaries and public administrations.</p> <p>The projects, beyond the output achieved, gave a relevant contribution in planning, developing, monitoring and evaluating actions. Durable networks between public and private bodies were activated in many areas. Pilot projects have spread advanced standards, best practices and new methodologies.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	21
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	8,419
<p>According to the <u>ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013</u>, the indicators of the reception project were generally achieved.</p> <p>With reference to actions addressing the Dublin cases and specifically to the Emergency measures foreseen by the Fund, ERF provided a significant contribution to the Italian national system. An operational protocol for the assistance of Dublin cases was released, and a lasting assistance process has been started.</p> <p>Although ERF contribution was overall positive and provided added value to the Italian system, it is worth pointing out that, due to ERF Program's relevant financial limits, only a limited number of territories and projects out of the entire national territory were directly affected by the Fund. Subsequently, "ERF</p>	

contribution should be considered of medium impact in relation to the period 2011-2013”.

According to the RA, the harmonization process of Italian reception system is still an ongoing process: the contribution of ERF was important, but did not cover the entire national territory.

In addition to above mentioned quantitative analysis, all respondents underlined the qualitative contribution provided by the ERF on the Italian asylum reception system. Through the projects co-financed by the fund, public authorities, municipalities and centers managers increased respective capacities to manage projects and to monitor and evaluate the services provided.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	57
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	8,419
<p>Under the ERF, many interventions were implemented in order to improve the integration conditions and autonomy of asylum seekers and refugees. It was the main goal of the ERF strategy in 2011-2013, following a previous phase (2008-2010), in which more research and evaluation projects were financed in order to give a contribution to the architecture of the national system.</p> <p>ERF resources have funded measures aimed to test models of integration and to take on more responsibility of vulnerable target group persons (normally not covered by the mainstream system) or measures addressing strategic situations, linked for example, to the consistent increase of Dublin cases.</p> <p>Main relevant projects were related to housing and employment (self-employment, entrepreneurship start-up) in order to promote the autonomy through the implementation of individual services and a multidisciplinary approach.</p> <p>According to the <i>ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013</i>, indicators were generally accomplished and largely overcome.</p> <p>The RA underlined that pilot actions for training refugees were launched at regional level, involving Regional authorities and others actors, through a complementary use of respective funds.</p> <p>However assessing the impact of the projects on migrant’s integration appears to be complex. From the interviews conducted, it emerged that the integration process was quite long, while the projects aimed at assisting asylum seekers lasted shortly. Moreover, integration is connected to many variables (changes in the economic and employment scenario, high level of mobility within territory, personal choices etc.) often not depending on projects.</p> <p>To conclude, even though the projects achieved the expected results, they could have not been durable.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	N/A
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	N/A
<p>The AP 2011, 2012, 2013 did not finance actions concerning resettlement.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	N/A
The AP 2011, 2012, 2013 did not finance actions concerning the evaluation and monitoring of asylum policies.	

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

The AP 2011, 2012, 2013 did not finance actions concerning specifically MS cooperation.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

According to the interviewees, the interventions financed by the ERF have continued to have some positive effects even after the implementation of the co-financed actions had terminated.

This occurred especially in relation to the upgrade of competencies and know-how of the partnership in the asylum sector as well as in relation to the empowerment of the coordination capacities between the partners, the territorial services (e.g. health services; socio-health in relation to the, job orientation) and the adherence of partners in the relevant territories and contexts.

Specific tools, as an operational protocol for assistance of Dublin cases is still used, along with many contents of manuals relating to financial and procedural obligations provided by the ERF, that have been extended to the usage of the SPRAR and the AMIF projects.

According to several beneficiaries interviewed, also the methodologies for providing individual and high standard services to vulnerable groups are still in use.

In a general and strategic point of view, the projects represented the opportunity to enforce important networks and to create synergies between the public and private sectors, the social and the economic-productive ones and the health one and promoted a major focus on the organizations and entities involved in activities for the integration of target groups.

Therefore, according to ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013, it is reasonable to foresee that the ERF program, especially in some territories, will continue to produce its effects upon the end of projects' duration.

For example, according to the RA, starting with the project "Step V", the final beneficiary have continued to cooperate with the municipality of Bologna in planning of policies and actions targeted to asylum seekers and refugees. In the "Sistema Ti.P." project, carried out by Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, an inter-institutional table on international protection was set up and still operates today.

The RA also underlined that the financial support has represented a relevant feature for the sustainability of projects. In some cases, without a financial contribution, the activities (reception, scholarships) have not kept to be put in place. Indeed, the additional financial contribution provided by the ERF was considered essential, especially to finance projects aimed to provide high standard services to vulnerable targets, and meanwhile ordinary reception services were financed through national resources. Therefore, considering a higher and increasing demand of services, the specific EU support is crucial.

According to the DA, the evidence of an effective sustainability of actions financed comes when the refugees are taken in charge by local and ordinary services, instead of special ones: therefore the main instrument to achieve integration is to promote the transition of target groups from the reception system to the ordinary local services system (SPRAR).

According to UNHCR, the issue of sustainability is a relevant concern, because the pilot projects, often implemented at local level, should be systematized nationally, in order to cover the whole territory and to ensure an organic approach. Therefore, sustainability occurs when the governance, the mainstreaming and coordination between policies, legislation and State budget are ensured.

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	Closed	€ 19.841.000	€ 19.747.000	99,53%	€ 18.223.794,47	92,29%
2012	Closed	€ 11.992.000	€ 11.992.000	100,00%	€ 11.337.989,25	94,55%
2013	Open	€ 18.859.000	€ 18.674.000	99,02%	€ 15.653.596,84	83,83%
Total		€ 50.692.000	€ 50.413.000	99,45%	€ 45.215.380,56	89,69%

According to the ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013 and the interviewees, enough human resources were used for the implementation of programs and projects.

Concerning financial resources, the interviewees stated they were limited compared to the national needs, but that were used in an efficient way. Also the overall costs to achieve the projects' outputs seemed reasonable.

According to the RA, considering the consistent increase of requests for international protection occurred in Italy during the period concerned, the ERF allocations were inadequate. The real situation and structuring of good practices at the national level would have requested much more resources.

Besides, it emerged the necessity to have more liquidity for the execution of projects. A constraint regarded the need for beneficiaries to anticipate part of the financial resources granted and their capacity to do so, especially when budget were consistent. The delay in transferring the financial resources obliged entities of private nature to ask for a bank credit and the subsequent obligation to pay the interests, which are not eligible under the ERF.

It was strongly underlined by many interviewees, the need to reduce the administrative burdens, which were considered rather resource and time consuming.

More specifically, the accounting rules were generally acknowledged as useful to prevent abuse and their implementation has widely improved the management capacities of beneficiaries. The DA underlined moreover that the ERF procedural and accounting rules should be extended also in other sectors. However, some beneficiaries highlighted difficulties occurred by some provisions on expense reporting. They underline also the importance to focus on a result-driven approach instead of an administrative one, because of the load of duties connected to it.

Some interviewees stated that even if the budget granted was sufficient, they didn't use it entirely due to

accounting limitations (i.e. the rent deposit).

In the RA's and the main interviewees' perception, the same results could not have been realized at a lesser cost.

According to the DA, the analysis of the efficiency should be based on a comprehensive evaluation of proposals, budget and output. In general terms, there wasn't a uniform level of efficiency in every projects. The best performances were found in project with a fair balance between costs for HR and target groups.

Generally, it was recognised that projects providing high standards services for vulnerable group had afforded appropriate costs.

Budget and overall Fund management

The monitoring of the projects and budget was considered to be efficient by RA.

The monitoring system was complex and articulate, including a specific role for external auditors and for the Delegated Authority, in charge of the 2° level control of projects implemented in AP 2011-2013.

Two-monthly monitoring report were provided by the final beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were invited by the RA to participate to focus groups to share methodologies and solutions. They were also invited to bilateral meetings with the RA, in case of difficulties and/or irregularities.

The monitoring system also included an individual reporting on migrants, quite useful to avoid overlapping with other individual services provided and to elaborate accurate monitoring reports.

The DA underlined as a strength the combination of on-site checks and financial controls, in order to have a comprehensive evaluation through several sources of information (interviews with beneficiaries, target groups, desk controls etc.)

Except for some delays, no specific difficulty was encountered by the RA in submitting reports and documents requested by the EC, with the exception of report on emergency measures, requested every month, because the time frame was considerate too short and caused duplication of work.

f. Coherence and complementarity

According to the ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013, "the use of ERF funds, since its beginning, have been fully part of the overall asylum national strategy".

ERF resources "could be considered complementary as the national resources are not sufficient to ensure the support needed. The Fund therefore is important to support with specific resources, specific situations or specific autonomy paths that could not be supported with the ordinary budget". Therefore the ERF represented for Italy an additional and integrative resource to the national funds."

With reference to the use of resources, the ERF Evaluation Report has "highlighted a discrete degree of integration between ERF resources and national ones i.e. National fund for asylum policies and services".

Conversely, all respondents confirmed that in the management of the ERF there wasn't overlapping with national resources and actions, because the ERF financed additional reception services required by the growing demand of accommodation places and also because that fund financed experimental and qualified services for socio-economic integration of ordinary and vulnerable target groups.

The Community Actions implemented (research projects aimed to fix a new methodology to support vulnerable targets and to promote the access to international protection procedures) resulted coherent and complementary to ERF national actions, because they were focused on to extend in Italy and other MS the results of analysis.

On the basis of the *ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013*, **several projects under the ERF appeared to be**

complementary to other actions related to asylum issues.

According to the interviewees, **there wasn't overlapping between differences funds** and a strong attention on complementarity was perceived, also to achieve the best results by a limited resources available.

The **main relevant complementarity regarded the ERF and SPRAR projects**, as planned by RA in the national strategy as additional and qualitative contribution to the ordinary reception system.

Some projects' partnerships (e.g. Umbria Region in Nansen project; Coop. CRS-Caritas of Rome; Coop. Badia Grande in Al-Roshd project) have been also **able to interconnect the different financial sources including ERF, ESF, National relevant funds**, demonstrating their competence and the additional potentiality ERF represents.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

On the basis of the *ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013*, several projects under the ERF appeared to be complementary to other actions related to asylum issues.

According to the interviewees, there wasn't overlapping between differences funds and a strong attention on complementarity was perceived, also to achieve the best results by a limited resources available.

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Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

The AR stated the Emergency measures to have been especially important for the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers and for increasing the capacity of Territorial Commissions, with long-lasting effects.

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

The Community Actions implemented were

- ▶ a transnational research project (*Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report*) aimed at comparing on how this Regulation is applied by States (AP 2010)
- ▶ a transnational research project (*E.T: exploring new form of access to asylum procedures*) aimed at evaluating and promoting the access to international protection procedures; (AP 2009)
- ▶ a transnational project (*Maieutics*) aimed at fixing a new methodology to support vulnerable targets and victims of torture. (AP 2010)

With regard to ***Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report***, the objective was to enhance knowledge of the implementation of the Dublin Regulation and to investigate and to analyse MS practice surrounding the technical application of this Regulation

There are vast divergences in the way MS apply the Dublin Regulation. As a result, asylum seekers subject to the Dublin Regulation are not always guaranteed a fair and efficient examination of their asylum claim. Therefore, the **identified need** was to promote an harmonization in the application of Dublin Regulation and to guarantee the respect of jurisprudence of the ECtHR and CJEU,

The project activities were:

- ▶ Legal, social and material assistance and follow-up for asylum seekers;
- ▶ Enhance knowledge and share expertise on legal standards and case law among different MS regarding the application of the Dublin II Regulation;
- ▶ Dublin II Regulation Training Module;
- ▶ The production of national reports and a European comparative report on the application of the Dublin II Regulation.

The recommendations provided were:

- ▶ the EC should conduct a comprehensive audit of all costs associated with the Dublin system.
- ▶ the EC should ensure that the recast Dublin Regulation along with other EU asylum legislation is properly implemented at the national level
- ▶ MS must ensure that Dublin Regulation is applied in a manner consistent with the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and CJEU.
- ▶ MS must ensure that the principle of family unity is respected within the Dublin procedure by applying the humanitarian clause in cases where adherence to the binding criteria would result in such families being separated.
- ▶ The sovereignty and humanitarian clause should be applied in a fair, humane and flexible manner that addresses the complex and varying situations in which many asylum seekers find themselves.

Applicants should be regularly provided with information on the progress of their case within the Dublin procedure.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

The CA projects provided recommendations at the EU level, through a wide dissemination and advocacy activities and also within public a conference with the participation of Commissioner Malmström.

The finding and recommendations of projects entered in the political agenda, through dissemination and advocacy actions.

However the effective impact of proposals advances is still to be verified.

With specific regard to *Dublin II Regulation Lives on Hold Comparative Report project*, it has really helped to deepen the knowledge of stakeholders on the implementation of the Dublin regulation and more particularly on its legal aspects.

It also helped to establish a strong network of specialized associations on the issue

For the achievement of national reports, the project has identified the challenges at national level. For its part, the comparative report has enabled a state of the European places. This study was particularly important that a study of this magnitude had not been carried out long ago.

This study is particularly relevant that it was made during the negotiations on the reform of the Dublin regulation and is output when the redesign project was about to be definitively adopted.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

According to all interviewees, the ERF added value was quite relevant, both in financial and qualitative terms.

Also according to the *ERF Evaluation Report 2011-2013*, “in light of the overall quantitative and qualitative results achieved, it can be highlighted that the added value represented by ERF, in the framework of the national policy for people seeking/beneficiaries of International protection, have been significant”.

The ERF added value has been particularly strong in relation to pilot projects addressing the social integration of persons in search for/ granted international protection, and in relation to the care and rehabilitation of vulnerable ones by representing a kind of “fine tuning” measures aimed at the creation of territorial expertise.

Overall, ERF added value has been, especially at the territorial level, significant. Thanks to the ERF, many beneficiaries had the opportunity to test models and innovative practices or simply projects that could not have been implemented otherwise.

An additional interesting element that emerged from beneficiaries’ feedback is that the Fund (likewise other EU funds) requires a consistent working methodology based on clear and tangible objectives (i.e. indicators, timetable and budget) which is often absent, on the contrary, in the national reception system management.

The ERF was also considered a fundamental tool to achieve a Common European Asylum System and quite coherent with the EU legislative reform and harmonization process.

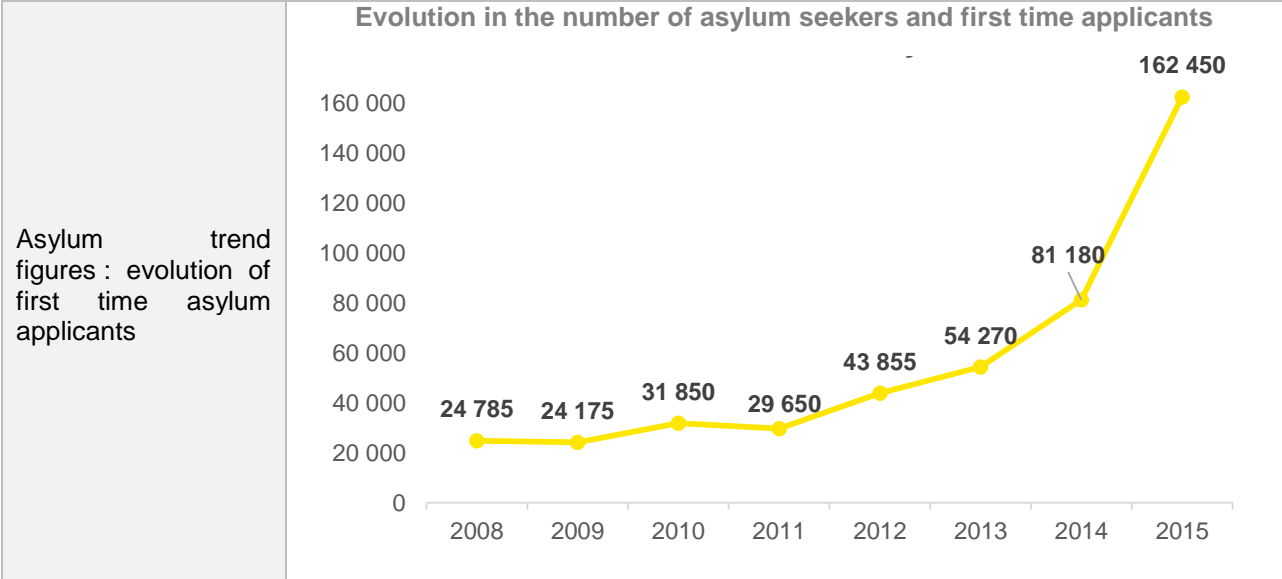
j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
ANCI – Central Service	ERF Office coordinator in Central Service - DA	Ms Antonella Romanelli	19.07.2016
Home Affairs Minister-Central Direction for Asylum services - ERF Responsible Authority	Officer	Ms Martha Matscher	21.07.2016
Coop. Camelot	Project office representative	Ms Anna Occhi	21.07.2016
ILO Italy	Senior program manager	Ms Monica Rossi Rizzi	26.07.2016
CRS	Project office representative	Ms Annaclara De Martino	26.07.2016
CIR – Italian Council for Refugees	Project office representative	Ms Martina Socci	27.07.2016
Friuli Venezia Giulia Region	Administrative officer	Mr Paolo Zuccaro	31.08.2016
Home Affairs Minister-Central Direction for Asylum services - ERF Responsible Authority	2011-2013 ERF Responsible Authority	MS Rosetta Scotto Lavina	16.09.2016
UNHCR	Officer for Protection	Mr Maurizio Molina	19.09.2016
UNHCR	Legal Protection Officer	Mr Riccardo Clerici	19.09.2016

9.5.6 Case study report: Sweden

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy



Asylum trend figures : evolution of first time asylum applicants

Responsibility for implementing the Government’s migration policy in Sweden rests with the Swedish Migration Agency. The agency is the authority that considers all applications from people who want to take up permanent residence in Sweden, visit the country in circumstances where prior clearance is required, obtain citizenship or seek asylum.

Where the reception of refugees is concerned, the Swedish Migration Agency provides housing and money for food to those seeking asylum while they await a decision in their case. When a refugee is granted a residence permit in Sweden, appropriate compensation is provided from the State to the local authority where the refugee resides. In this regard it is primarily the responsibility of the municipalities and county councils, working alongside the Swedish Public Employment Service, to help the refugee become fully integrated into Swedish society. Where an asylum seeker’s claim is rejected, the Migration Agency takes on responsibility for ensuring that the failed applicant leaves the country.

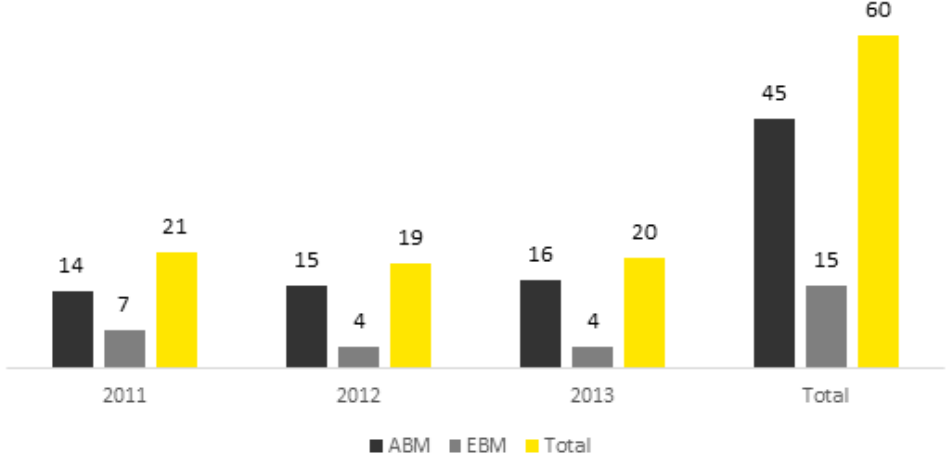
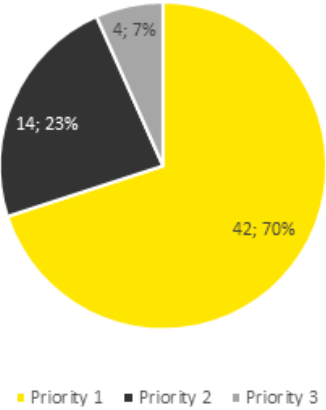
The significant rise in the number of asylum seekers in recent years (ie from 29,650 in 2011 to 162,450 in 2015) eventually led to the Swedish Government increasing the number of Migration Agency staff from 4000 in June 2015 to 8000 in August 2016. This increase, together with a number of emergency measures introduced in the summer of 2016 (eg temporarily suspending the grant of asylum on humanitarian grounds, severely restricting the grant of permanent residence and introducing stricter rules regarding family re-unification) have resulted in the number of asylum seekers reducing from around 10,000 per week to nearer 500 per week.

The Responsible Authority for the ERF is the Swedish Migration Agency. The Director General is the responsible officer and principal contact point for the Commission. Because the Migration Agency both receives and manages EU funds (including, formerly, the ERF), and is the major beneficiary, the Responsible Authority Unit forms a virtual rather than integral part of the Agency with a dotted line to the Director General. The reason behind this arrangement is to present a clear separation between the Agency’s overall EU Fund management and internal project financing/delivery roles, and place the Responsible Authority Unit in a position of independence alongside three other Units which need to be seen to operate independently (eg Internal Audit).

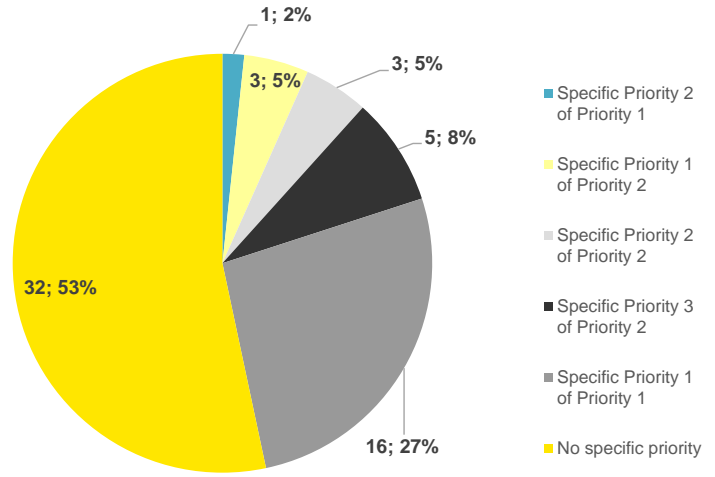
The Responsible Authority Unit has a complement of 29 staff split approximately 50/50 between the Migration Agency's headquarters in Norrköping and a small office in Stockholm (Liljeholmen). The roles performed by members of the Unit reflect a number of essential skills, including project management and co-ordination, financial management, legal compliance and quality control. The main focus of the Unit is now on the effective and efficient management of the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), and recent structural and organizational changes mean that none of the current staff have any direct experience of ERF related activity and management.

The Audit Authority in Sweden is the Swedish National Financial Management Authority. The Certifying Authority function in Sweden is performed from within the Migration Agency.

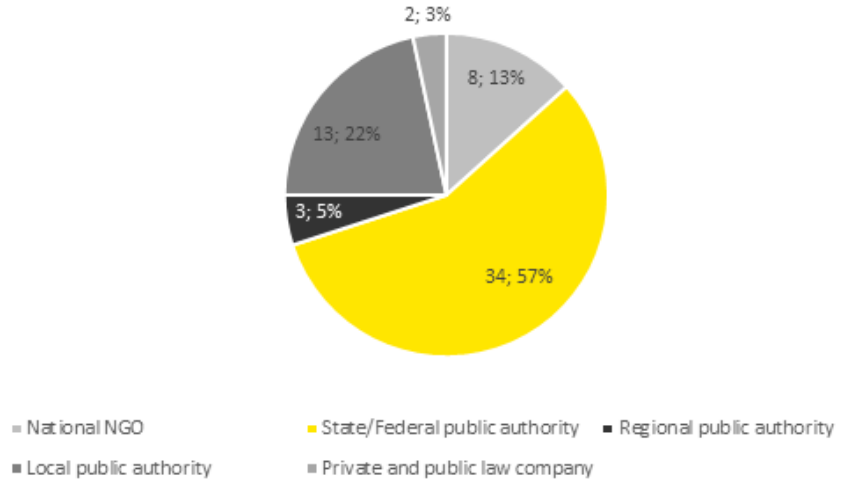
ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum</p>	<p>The Swedish Government's overall policy objective is to ensure a long-term sustainable migration policy that safeguards the right of asylum and, within the framework of managed migration, facilitates mobility across borders, promotes needs-based labour migration, harnesses and takes into account the effects of migration on development, and deepens European and international cooperation.</p>																				
<p>Number of ERF funded projects (ABM = Awarding Body Method; EBM = Executing Body Method)</p>	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>ABM</th> <th>EBM</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>14</td> <td>7</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>15</td> <td>4</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>16</td> <td>4</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>45</td> <td>15</td> <td>60</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	ABM	EBM	Total	2011	14	7	21	2012	15	4	19	2013	16	4	20	Total	45	15	60
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Types of projects implemented



Breakdown of types of beneficiaries



b. Relevance of the ERF

Relevance of the ERF eligible actions compared to national situation and needs

The number of people seeking asylum in Sweden grew steadily from 24785 in 2008 to 54270 in 2013, and then jumped dramatically to 81180 in 2014 and 162450 in 2015. Within these totals the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors rose from 2657 in 2008 (ie 10.72%) to 31917 in 2015 (ie 19.65%). It is therefore not surprising that the addressing the issue of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors became an increasing priority for the Swedish government throughout the 7 year period, and during the ERF 2011-13 programme projects focused on unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors accounted for almost 50% of the total number of projects implemented under Special Priority 1 of Priority 1. This compares to the 2008-10 period when the majority of Priority 1 projects were focused on the establishment of the labour market.

In terms of the broader picture, the majority of Priority 1 ABM projects were aimed at various integration initiatives intended to reduce the assimilation period through contacts with business, work experience, education and community integration. These projects also focused on improving the reception of asylum seekers, refugees, unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and other vulnerable groups, as well as improving practices and procedures and the skills of professional staff who work with these groups. Improving health and dealing with trauma were key areas in this regard.

Priority 1 projects instituted by the Swedish Migration Agency under the EBM were mainly focused on improving working methods and strategies to reduce processing times for asylum seekers, help safeguard their rights against discrimination on grounds of gender, gender expression and sexual orientation, and increase the number of residential places for the target group. Initiatives were also launched to enhance the skills of the Agency's personnel, as well as interpreters and officials engaged by the municipalities and county councils.

Priority 2 ABM projects mainly involved independent evaluations and research initiatives highlighting transnational ties of the target groups and how they affect expectations around referrals, accommodation standards, choice of residence and relationship with the labour market. One project involved a survey of outcomes and living conditions for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. Almost 50% of the Priority 2 EBM projects concerned unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors related research.

The main Priority 2 EBM projects involved connection to the EU common portal for country of origin information and the development of a nationwide support method to improve the legal quality of decisions.

Priority ABM projects included improvement of regional cooperation, information initiatives and greater transnational cooperation to develop the reception of resettled persons. They also covered a number of related training initiatives. The only Priority 3 EBM project launched in 2011-13 was aimed at developing a Migration Agency IT tool to facilitate the planning, management and monitoring of resettlement.

All of the ERF projects undertaken during the period 2011-13 were considered by the interviewees to be entirely consistent with the needs of the MS. It was said, in particular, that the tight financial position would have made it difficult to manage the marked increase in asylum applicants, including the corresponding rise in unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors, and meet a number of important national objectives in the process, without the ERF support afforded.

Relevance of the ERF objectives in regards with Europe's evolving asylum issues

Some difficulties were encountered at a national level in the early years of the management of SOLID funds (ie 2008-10) with regard to the interpretation of the regulatory framework. However, these problems were gradually ironed out as the programme progressed, with the result that ERF funding became better utilized, and more firmly aligned to MS needs and the evolution of asylum issues (eg emergence of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors as a significant problem) throughout the 2011-13 period.

Both written and oral feedback hints at a regret that the number of projects declined over the programme period, partly due to difficulties in attracting applications. The reason for this may have its roots in the uncertainties created in the early years through differing interpretations of the eligibility criteria but, whatever the cause, it was felt that a more active involvement on the part of NGOs and the voluntary sector would have brought a different and enriching perspective. This is not to suggest that MS priorities could not be properly aligned with the ERF's objectives and priorities, but that it may have been easier (and more effective) to do so had there been a more diverse range of interest in the application and delivery processes (thereby conceding the criticism made by the Commission in March 2015, albeit somewhat implicitly – see previous section).

Focus on Community Actions

The Swedish Migration Agency is recorded as a co-beneficiary of one of the Community Actions selected for analysis as part of this evaluation (ie "European Asylum Curriculum, Phase 111 – Temporary Implementation Unit (ref Home/2009/ERFX/CA/1016). However, data relating to this Community Action could not be obtained in either Sweden or the UK (the leading partner). Consequently it was not possible to conduct an evaluation in this specific regard.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	9541
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	18901

The main focus of the Swedish Government over the period 2011-13 was to improve reception conditions, develop integration initiatives and strengthen resettlement programmes, all in the face of unparalleled increases in the number of asylum seekers. Whilst some of the operations that were implemented had a planned target group in mind, the majority were aimed at improving structures, systems, processes and working methods in order to have a beneficial impact on the asylum seeker's overall experience in terms of both environmental factors and the quality and speed of decision making. Consequently, the projects pursued did not engage directly with the ERF's primary target groups to any great extent.

The Migration Agency have said that their evaluators did not consider that working directly with the target groups would have produced a more advantageous outcome based on the needs analysis which underpinned the multi-annual and annual programmes. A number of interviewees, from both the Migration Agency and external beneficiaries, also expressed the view that the success criteria were too focused on numbers targeted, and that it would have been more meaningful to concentrate on qualitative outcomes (eg how the lives of members of the target group had been improved as a result of an ERF funded intervention).

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	A total of 35 operations were implemented (out of 36 planned) covering 6 topic areas.
Total number of people reached	Target: 7316

vs. targeted	Reached: 16013
<p>Projects relating to housing, infrastructure or services did not achieve the planned objectives in 6 operations and failed to reach 679 persons from the target group. Another 5 operations were implemented and 596 persons reached. A total of 3 operations worked directly with the ERF target group, but only 2 of them succeeded in reaching the target group (ie a housing based operation led by the Kronoberg local authority and one focused on the reception of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors led by the Municipality of Eskilstuna). In the latter case the Municipality of Eskilstuna undertook a number of innovative measures, including meeting unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors at the port of arrival (ie Malmo) and escorting them to the city rather than expecting them to find their own way, via a complicated train journey, as hitherto. The municipality also used the ERF funding provided to help find foster homes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors within Eskilstuna and, as a last resort, created a number of dedicated reception centres (which increased from 2 to 7 during the programme period). Furthermore, a guidance booklet reflecting local experience and learning, entitled “Tips and Tricks”, was published for use by social workers dealing with unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors across Sweden.</p> <p>Projects involving care-related initiatives greatly exceeded the number of persons targeted, largely through the success of two operations led by the Public Health Agency of Sweden aimed at improving the structure and coordination of medical examinations for asylum seekers (ie taken together the two operations resulted in 13353 persons being reached).</p> <p>In other reception related areas (ie social assistance, counselling, and training activities) a total of 2064 persons were reached against a combined target of 1533 across the 7 operations involved. 2000 of those reached were through a YMCA project about “Living in Sweden” which concentrated on various empowerment orientated activities and training initiatives aimed mainly at unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors and other young people.</p> <p>The Migration Agency does, however, accept that it can be difficult to interpret the outcome of initiatives which have been successful. In this regard it is noted that success may be partly due to the vast increase in the number of asylum seekers which led to demand far exceeding that anticipated (eg as in the case of the number of medical examinations being exceeded). On the other hand, success may also arise in whole or in part from organizational initiatives and changes in working practices.</p> <p>Conversely, the failure to meet targets in some areas may equally be due to the unprecedented increase in demand, and the inability of certain services to cope within existing capacity and capabilities.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	A total of 23 operations were implemented covering 3 topic areas
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	Target: 2225 Reached: 2888
<p>3 operations undertaken within the framework of care-related initiatives resulted in 644 persons being reached against a target of 560. The biggest impact arose from a Malmo University led operation entitled the “Support Platform for Migration and Health (MILSA)”. MILSA comprised for sub-operations aimed at addressing issues such as the health of newly arrived refugees, their ability to work, the stimulation of physical activity and provision of essential health information.. All of the constituent elements involved inter-action between researchers, practitioners and newly arrived refugees aimed primarily at labour market integration. The operation succeeded in reaching 600 of the 644 people Reached through the 3 care-related initiatives.</p> <p>A further 9 operations focused on training and similar activities succeeded in reaching 799 people against a target of 1301, with the most successful being an accommodation based project led by the Kronoberg</p>	

County Administrative Board which reached 550 people (ie 69% of the total). This collaborative project, involving the Immigration and Education Services amongst others, was aimed at finding ways to motivate newly arrived refugees in Kronoberg to settle in areas of the County that needed more inhabitants. The project had a particular focus on ready access to work and accommodation, and establishing strong links with the business community.

The remaining 11 operations were orientated towards meaningful participation in the life of the community. These activities resulted in 1445 people being reached against a target of 364, with two municipal projects proving particularly successful here (ie those led by Uppsala and Ronneby). In the former case the Municipality of Uppsala developed an education focused programme aimed at better integrating unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors into community life. The package of materials, which includes a website and videos as well as written information in 12 languages, has been positively evaluated and shared with 95% of municipalities across Sweden. The programme continues to be sustained without recourse to EU funding.

The reasons why some operations were relatively more, or less, successful than others in contributing to the overall target being exceeded are attributed to similar factors to those described in the previous section relating to reception (ie the impact of exceptional demand, one way or the other, and organizational initiatives). However in the case of a Ronneby led project, aimed at promoting a more active engagement by refugees in community life (with a particular focus on education) one of the key reasons for success is cited as the decision to train 12 Social Orientation Communicators in 12 languages to help create better empathy and understanding with the asylum seeking client group.

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of operations implemented with this specific objective	A total of 4 operations covering 2 topic areas
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	Target: None Reached: None
3 of the 4 operations undertaken under this heading were concerned with the development and establishment of resettlement programmes, whilst the fourth involved preparatory initiatives for resettlement. All 4 were focused on the development of methods, structures, support, knowledge and information to help create a better basis for the resettlement of refugees. All have been deemed successful in meeting the planned objectives. However, none of the projects had a direct connection with the target group.	

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	A total of 11 operations covering 2 topic areas, in addition to 5 procedural improvements
Of the 11 operations undertaken, 1 was concerned with the development of country of origin information whilst the other 10 related to the evaluation or development of policy and procedures relating to asylum reception. The former was led by the Migration Agency, whilst 9 out of the remaining 10 were conducted by universities or university colleges as research projects. The one exception was conducted by the Swedish Red Cross, and resulted in a blueprint for detention centre design and development which proved instrumental in helping improve facilities across Sweden. These activities have encompassed the 5 procedural improvements planned within the framework of asylum reception.	
Whilst all of these activities are judged to have advanced learning and understanding of the asylum	

processes in Sweden, one strong note of caution has been sounded by the Migration Agency. In this regard it is confident that, in a stable environment, the beneficial outcomes achieved are capable of being successfully applied in adapting and designing structures and processes for the future. However, it is concerned that the dramatic increases in the number of asylum seekers in recent years, and the associated strain it has placed on the national authorities, receiving municipalities and other stakeholders, may make it difficult to take a step back and apply the lessons learned in a calm, objective and systematic manner. In other words, does the capacity exist to be able to apply past lessons and academic learning or will the increasing demands force the authorities into crisis management mode and coping with the intense pressures as best they can in a more day to day, fragmented manner? No ready answers were offered in response to the question posed. However, one suggestion was that a higher proportion of AMIF funding may need to be devoted to emergency type activities in future in order to create the scope for systematic and sustainable improvements as the asylum issues continue to evolve.

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

No specific initiatives were designed or launched aimed at enhancing responsibility sharing between MS.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

Of the total of 60 projects which co-funded under ERF arrangements, 17 were assessed by the evaluators as being able to contribute a clear benefit in the long term. The potential benefit depended, however, on the nature of the particular project's objectives and activities. For example, those projects which were focused on developing learning and knowledge (essentially the research projects) relied on effective dissemination and communication amongst stakeholders to ensure that the potential benefits are fully realized. Those projects of a more practical nature, such as the 15 led by the Migration Agency, rely for sustainability on strong management and stakeholder buy-in, and a concerted determination to continue delivering the project outcomes which must, however, be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain consistent with evolving asylum issues and objectives.

Those projects which have been well designed, robustly managed, adapted to changing circumstances and disseminated effectively have been found to be the ones that stand the best chance of long term sustainability. In this regard three projects led at a municipality level were identified as being particularly successful because they had either seamlessly turned pilot activity into standard practice (Eskilstuna) or ensured that the good practice emerging was captured in well-designed written materials and effectively communicated to a wider stakeholder community (Stromsund and Uppsala). It was also pointed out that a pattern had emerged suggesting that the larger a project was, the better the conditions for high levels of achievement and sustainability in the long term.

Interviewees involved in managing successful ERF funded projects in both Eskilstuna and Uppsala explained that the improvements made were being sustained through the application of national or local resources, and that there are currently no plans to apply for AMIF funding to support or expand these or any other initiatives in the future.

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

ERF budget data per annual programme (in €)¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ For data source, see p. 23 and 24 of the revised interim report.

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	C	16 055 000	15 088 000	94%	10 805 393	71,6%
2012	C	17 016 000	14 101 000	82,9%	11 920 874	84,5%
2013	C	17 173 000	12 972 000	75,5%	11 934 455	92,0%
Total		50 244 000	42 161 000	83,9%	34 660 722	82,2%

The main criticism, robustly expressed, was that the bureaucratic and protracted processes involved in managing the ERF placed a disproportionate burden and cost (both financial and staffing) which could have been better deployed on extending practical project activities. In this regard it was argued that the processes involved were far more complex and time consuming than those involved in managing any other comparable EU fund, and that these factors had a detrimental impact on the efficiency of ERF management in Sweden. Notwithstanding these challenges, it was reported that organizational and procedural changes aimed at improving administrative efficiency within the Migration Agency had resulted in a significant reduction in the time taken between the decision to grant funding and contract signature (ie from 442 days in 2010 to 78 days in 2012). Such improvements had a consequential, and beneficial, impact on the ERF budget implementation rate over the 3 year programme period, but insufficient to drive the figure closer to 100% and recover from the relatively slow start. The proposition flowing from this was not that level of resources allocated were insufficient, or that the same results could have been achieved for less cost at a project level, but that too high a proportion of the funding available was, of necessity, consumed by burdensome administrative functions and provision of technical assistance. That said, it was also argued that some efficiencies may have been possible had more voluntary organisations been attracted to bid for projects. This was based on the premise that such organisations are often able to reach target groups more directly than public sector bodies, and can operate more cost effectively. Rather conversely, it was also said that the larger the project the better the conditions for success and long term sustainability and, therefore, the realization of economies of scale.

In overall terms, the picture that emerged was one of improved efficiency as the ERF programme matured in Sweden, both in terms of its central management by the Migration Agency and implementation at a practical level as all those responsible for operational delivery became more familiar with programme guidance, constraints and opportunities.

Budget and overall Fund management

No data was available at the time of the field visit to provide a more detailed insight into how the ERF budget was managed and monitored during the life cycle of the programme.

f. Coherence and complementarity

Although it was felt clear that the ERF has clearly stated target groups and objectives, it was also considered that a risk of overlap existed between the ERF, EIF and the Social Fund. This risk was particularly marked within the framework of measures that exist to improve integration under ERF Priority 1.

These risks have been mitigated in Sweden through the establishment of close cooperation between the Migration Agency and the Swedish European Social Fund Council (which manages the EIF and Social Fund). The Agency also established two partnerships in the form of a national consultation committee and an expert group, through whom all aspects of ERF utilization were tested on an on-going basis.

Beyond these areas of interaction, there were no potential overlaps with other European or international financial instruments which needed to be addressed.

Overall, the evaluators engaged by the Migration Agency were satisfied that ERF funding added to, and did not replace or reimburse, national funding and identified no issues with regard to the complementarity

of ERF objectives with other national and EU funded actions.

A number of projects provided a firm basis for introducing new partnerships or creating innovative ways of developing cooperation among stakeholders operating in the same or a similar field. Examples include a new organization created in Eskilstuna around the reception of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors; a similar partnership in Stromsund; a Migration Agency/Public Health Agency initiative to improve the structure and coordination of health surveys; and various county administrative boards aimed at introducing better reception conditions for resettled refugees which have generally led to better relationships among stakeholders.

Although the Migration Agency naturally liaises with MS wide bodies, such as EASO, on a regular basis, none of the new partnerships or cooperative arrangements developed with the assistance of ERF co-funding could be claimed to have resulted from action or input at a Community level. What is clear, however, is that is unlikely that some of the initiatives introduced would have been possible without ERF assistance.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Sweden was not involved in any emergency measures.

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

Sweden was not involved in any emergency measures.

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

No data was available in respect of the Community Action selected for analysis as part of this evaluation (implemented in 2009), nor ERF related Community Actions more generally. Consequently it was not possible to conduct an evaluation in this area as originally planned.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

Please see response to the previous section on the presentation of implemented Community Actions.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community)

The consensus was that the funding made available through the ERF was critical in ensuring the implementation of beneficial initiatives which would not have been possible through national budgets given the prevailing economic climate and lack of other alternative sources of funding.

Although it was disappointing that only a small number of municipalities were active in utilizing the resources available through the ERF, those that did (eg Stromsund, Eskilstuna and Uppsala) were able to develop new structures and build tools and knowledge in areas such as integration and support for

unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors. The resources needed to undertake such work is seldom available at a municipal level, and the ERF was therefore able to contribute to addressing asylum issues in Sweden in a rather unique way. The impact would probably have been greater in terms of reach had it been possible to attract more municipal authorities, and voluntary organisations, to participate, but that should not be allowed to detract from the positive outcomes that were achieved by those who did take advantage of the ERF opportunity.

From a Migration Agency focused perspective, the share of the national budget at its disposal has been severely stretched by the dramatic increases in asylum numbers and ability to allocate resources to developmental type activity. Consequently, the ERF has played a vital role in enabling the Agency to think beyond managing the increasing pressures on a day to day basis.

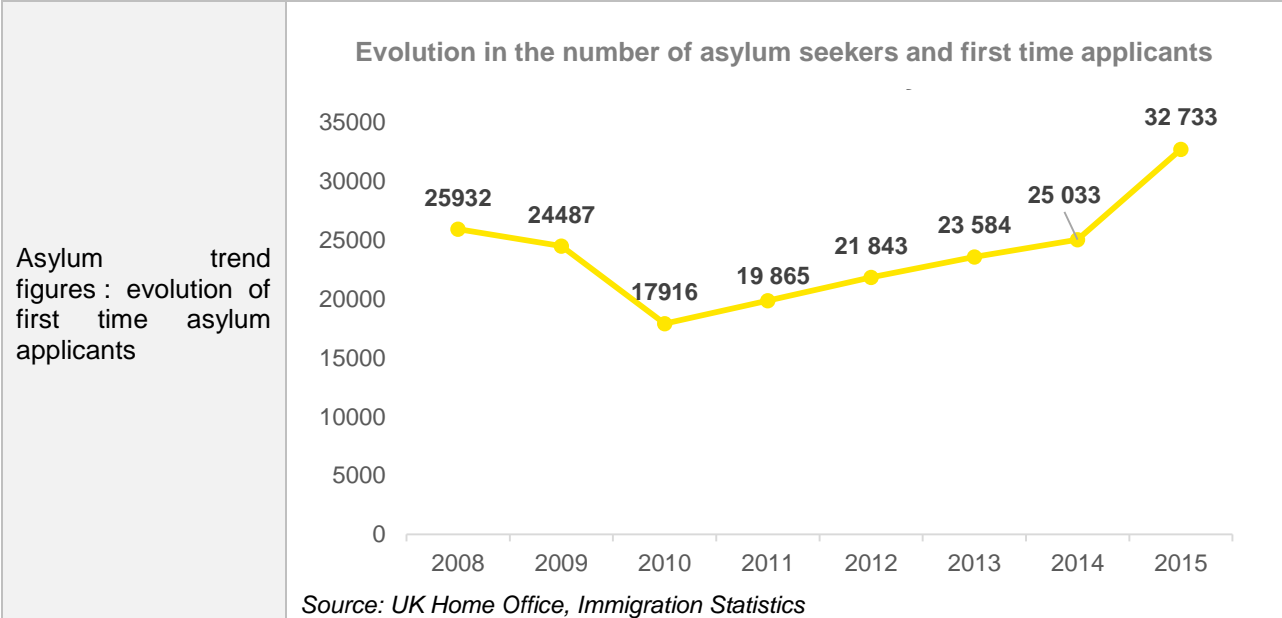
j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Swedish Migration Agency	Head, Responsible Authority for EU Funds	Mikael J Zaar	23.08.16
Swedish Migration Agency	Program Specialist	Dimitrios Karampelas	23.08.16
Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, External Funding	John Gunnarsson	23.08.16
Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, Project Funding	Izabela Lindsjo	23.08.16
Swedish Migration Agency	Specialist, Project Funding	Christer Lindgoen	23.08.16
Swedish Red Cross	Senior Advisor, Migration	Ewa Jonsson	24.08.16
Municipality of Eskilstuna	Head of Social Services	Anna Westberg	24.08.16
Swedish Police	Former Principal Administrative Officer (now retired)	Hans Rosenqvist	24.08.16
Municipality of Uppsala	Project Manager	Tove Osterling Wallner	25.08.16

9.5.7 Case study report: United Kingdom

a. Contextual elements regarding asylum and the ERF

Asylum context and national asylum policy



Asylum trend figures : evolution of first time asylum applicants

When the UK’s Multi-annual Programme for the ERF was compiled and approved in 2008, responsibility for the UK asylum system rested with the UK Border Agency (UKBA), an executive agency of the Home Office. However, the UKBA was dissolved on 1 April 2013, when all of its functions were reintegrated into the main body of the Home Office. Since that time responsibility for such functions have been allocated within the Home Office as follows:

- ▶ UK Visas and Immigration: visas, asylum and non-asylum immigration casework;
- ▶ International and Immigration Policy: overall immigration policy;
- ▶ Capabilities and Resources: finance and resource issues;
- ▶ Immigration Enforcement: enforcement of immigration laws.

In addition, responsibility for UK border controls (which were also a former UKBA responsibility) rests with the UK Border Force which became an integrated part of the Home Office one year earlier (ie 1 April 2012).

The UK Responsible Authority (UKRA) for the ERF (and other SOLID funds) is the EU Funding Team which is located in the Finance and Estates Directorate of the Capabilities and Resources group. The head of the UKRA reports to the Director of Finance for HM Passport Office and UK Visas and Immigration within the Finance and Estates Directorate, who also chaired the UK Apportionment Board which was responsible for agreeing and reviewing the apportionment of ERF and other SOLID funds. Membership of the Apportionment Board consisted of representatives of UNHCR and UKRep in addition to other UK Government Departments. The same senior official now chairs the Monitoring Committee (MC) which has been established, with a slightly wider membership, to perform a similar role to the Apportionment Board, but in respect of the AMIF arrangements.

Although the UKRA is line managed by the Director of Finance, he does not play an active role in the day to day operation of its functions given the need to demonstrate independence in his role as the Apportionment Board/Monitoring Committee chair. Moreover, the UKRA (which has a total staffing complement of 24) is treated within the Home Office as being ring-fenced for resourcing purposes. This is to protect its total focus on EU fund management, and to ensure clarity and transparency given the exceptional source of funding in Home Office terms (ie through the technical assistance mechanism).

The UKRA has not delegated any of its functions, although some are discharged via service level

agreements with other parts of the Home Office or provided under contract by external partners.

The Audit Authority for the ERF (and other SOLID funds) in the UK is the Internal Audit unit of the Home Office, which is part of the Performance and Risk Directorate of the Capabilities and Resources group. The Certifying Authority function is performed by a named senior civil servant in the Home Office (currently Mostaque Ahmed) who is supported by his own staff or contractors, as appropriate.

Independent evaluation of ERF (and other SOLID funds) is provided by Home Office Science: Migration and Border Analysis (MBA). The MBA has adopted a three tier approach to the evaluation of SOLID fund projects (ie large research, case studies and audit) and contracts external evaluation expertise where required or appropriate.

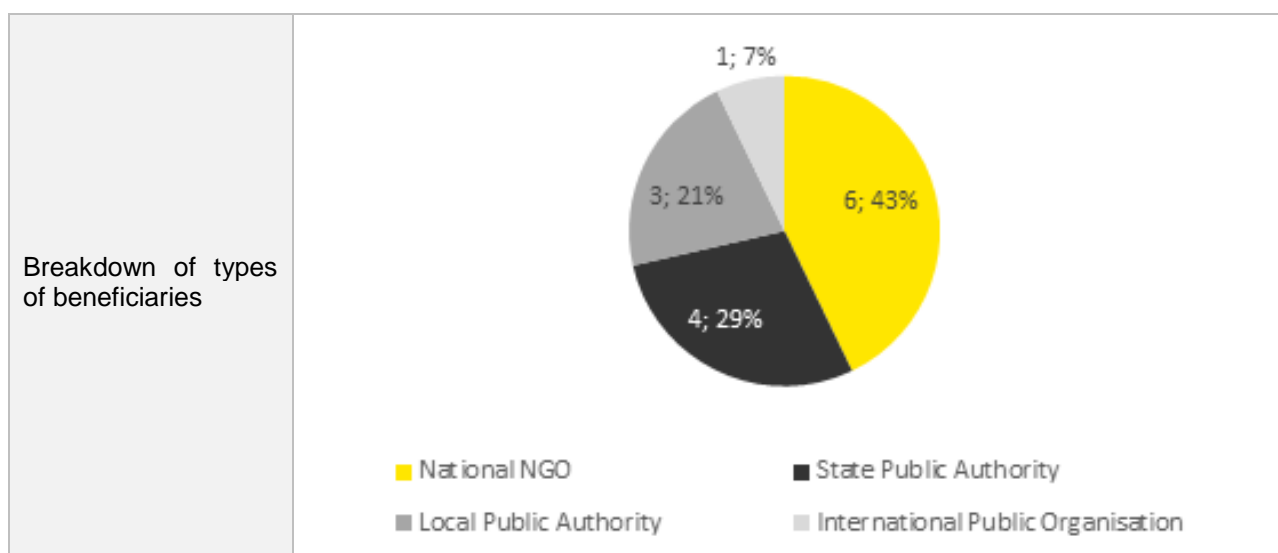
The work of the UKRA was not afforded a particularly high priority within the Home Office until 2012 when a change in management responsibilities resulted in an overhaul of the unit's practices and procedures and the attainment of a higher internal profile. Up until that point the UKRA's performance was relatively poor, and characterized by inadequate controls, long processing delays, frequent funding disqualifications and robust challenges from the Commission/Court of Auditors. The structural and organisational improvements introduced following the managerial changes in 2012 and, to a lesser extent, those that flowed from the dissolution of the UKBA in April 2013, contributed to the UKRA receiving a sharper Home Office focus and enhanced status. In addition, the audit of projects has been outsourced. As a result of these changes the average processing backlog of 16 months in 2012 was completely eradicated within a year; potential projects and bids were subjected to more robust analysis at the outset (as well as throughout project lifespans); and evidence to support actions gathered on a more systematic basis in order to prevent claim disqualification and the associated financial/administrative problems. Following these changes the UKRA has become, according to one senior interviewee, an exemplar of good practice.

ERF strategy and actions

<p>MS objectives in terms of migration and asylum</p>	<p>The UK's overarching strategy is to secure the UK borders and control immigration. Within this overarching strategy, the former UKBA set out three strategic objectives in the multiannual plan. These were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Protect the UK border and national interests ▶ Tackle border tax fraud, smuggling and immigration crime ▶ Implement fast and fair decisions <p>In the context of the ERF the UK has targeted the available financial support on Integration and Resettlement focused projects.</p>
<p>Number of ERF funded actions¹¹⁰</p>	

¹¹⁰ According to the evaluation report, no projects were funded in 2012.

	<p>A bar chart comparing the number of actions implemented for three categories: ABM (black bars), EBM (grey bars), and Total (yellow bars) across four time periods: 2011, 2012, 2013, and Total. The y-axis represents the number of actions. In 2011, ABM has the highest number of actions, followed by Total, and then EBM. In 2012, there are no actions recorded for any category. In 2013, EBM and Total have a small number of actions, while ABM has none. The 'Total' category shows the highest overall number of actions across all years.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>ABM</th> <th>EBM</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	ABM	EBM	Total	2011	4	1	5	2012	0	0	0	2013	0	1	1	Total	4	2	6
Year	ABM	EBM	Total																		
2011	4	1	5																		
2012	0	0	0																		
2013	0	1	1																		
Total	4	2	6																		
<p>Breakdown of actions per priority</p>	<p>A pie chart showing the distribution of actions across three priority levels. Priority 1 (yellow) accounts for 50% of the actions (7 out of 14 total). Priority 2 (black) accounts for 7% (1 out of 14 total). Priority 3 (grey) accounts for 43% (6 out of 14 total).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Priority</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Priority 1</td> <td>7</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 2</td> <td>1</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Priority 3</td> <td>6</td> <td>43%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Priority	Count	Percentage	Priority 1	7	50%	Priority 2	1	7%	Priority 3	6	43%								
Priority	Count	Percentage																			
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<p>Types of actions implemented</p>	<p>A pie chart showing the types of actions implemented. The categories are: Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1 (4, black), Specific Priority 1 of Priority 3 (5, yellow), Combination of Specific Priorities (1, grey), and No Specific Priority (4, dark grey).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Type</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Specific Priority 1 of Priority 3</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Combination of Specific Priorities</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Specific Priority</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Type	Count	Specific Priority 1 of Priority 1	4	Specific Priority 1 of Priority 3	5	Combination of Specific Priorities	1	No Specific Priority	4										
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No Specific Priority	4																				



b. Relevance of the ERF

The UK Government’s ERF related needs were entirely consistent with its overall asylum policy.

Financial support from the ERF in the UK was targeted upon integration and resettlement. These actions were eligible actions by virtue of Article 3(l) (b) and (d) of the Basic Act, 573/2007/EC. The other three eligible action areas of asylum procedures and reception conditions, policy development, and transfers between Member States were lower priorities for the UK, and not key requirements for the use of ERF funds.

- ▶ The overall requirement with regard to integration was for support which exceeds that which could be provided by national resources and for the encouragement of innovative ideas, particularly in relation to obtaining employment for refugees.
- ▶ The resettlement of refugees who require humanitarian protection is a key priority for the UK. The overall requirement here is to maintain, expand and generally develop the resettlement programme and act as an exemplar in terms of resettlement policy and practice across Europe.
- ▶ With regard to the lower priority of asylum procedures and reception conditions, the UK’s principal focus is on developing existing liaison arrangements, and particularly the Asylum Liaison Officer network through increasing returns and the efficiency of practical measures with other MS for transfers under the Dublin arrangements.
- ▶ On policy development the UK’s need for ERF funds was limited because it considers that it already has the required measures, programmes and resources in place. The one exception is the production of country of origin information where a need exists to enhance the UK’s capacity and capabilities.
- ▶ Finally, the UK had no requirement for the use of ERF funds to support the transfer of refugees to other MS and nor did it consider that there were needs which were not already covered by the ERF eligible actions.

All of the representatives interviewed, including the beneficiaries, considered that the ERF eligible actions were entirely relevant to the asylum situation in the UK and did not see any inconsistencies or unfulfilled needs.

Regarding the relevance of the ERF with regards to Europe’s evolving asylum issues, the consensus amongst interviewees is that the ERF objectives and priorities had remained relevant throughout the programme period notwithstanding the constant evolution of asylum issues. This was largely because the priorities adopted by the UK were sufficiently broad and flexible to enable new developments (which were primarily to do with scale or geographical source) to be accommodated without the need for major adjustments.

There was an understandable reluctance on the part of those interviewed to speak about any lessons to be learned for future funding arrangements, in terms of maintaining relevance and consistency in a

changing environment, given the political uncertainty caused by the outcome of the recent UK referendum on EU membership.

Finally, both Community Actions analysed during the case study interviews have had real impacts in their respective asylum focused fields, through the availability of improved information and data, and remain relevant to the evolving asylum situation.

- ▶ The CREDO2 project (of which the UK was a co-beneficiary) was designed to improve credibility assessments in asylum decision making procedures across MS. The initiative flowed from research (CREDO1) which showed that there was a degree of inconsistency in credibility assessments, including evidence that women were statistically more likely to fail credibility assessments than men. The project, which was developed by UNHCR in partnership with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (lead beneficiary), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles and Asylum Aid (a UK based NGO), led to the publication of a multidisciplinary training manual on credibility assessment aimed at asylum decision makers and caseworkers, immigration judges and legal practitioners. The manual was adopted by EASO who have built relevant modules into its training programme.
- ▶ The MedCOI2 project (of which the UK was also a co-beneficiary) was developed with the Netherlands (main beneficiary) and other MS to provide easily accessible, high quality and timely medical country of origin information (COI) for use by officials in the UK and other MS involved in deciding asylum and human rights cases, and return cases. The levels of success achieved were such that a number of participating MS decided to continue the project (as MedCOI3), using national ERF funds, when Community Action funding expired in 2014.

c. Effectiveness of the ERF

Objectives pursued

Total of number of targeted people (2011-2013)	8863
Total of number people reached (2011-2013)	9473

The performance of ERF co-funded projects across the period 2011 to 2013 was as follows:

- ▶ Priority 1: 1295 refugees reached (95% of target);
- ▶ Priority 2: Single project developed to improve evaluation of methodologies and procedures in determining asylum applications resulted in 74% of targeted information requests being processed;
- ▶ Priority 3: 8178 refugees resettled (109% of target).

In terms of each programme year the following results were achieved:

- ▶ 2011: 13 projects were active involving a mix of integration (P1) and resettlement (P3). Of the total of 83 output targets, 46 (55%) were achieved or exceeded. The remaining 37 output targets were met in part (18 between 75-99% achieved, 5 between 50-74% achieved, and 14 less than 50% achieved). Achievement was generally lower for integration related activities (particularly education and housing support) because of difficulties in identifying eligible participants);
- ▶ 2012: 10 projects were active again involving a mix of integration (P1) and resettlement (P3). Of the total of 47 output targets, 22 (47%) were achieved or exceeded. The remaining 25 output targets were met in part (21 between 75-99% achieved, 3 between 50-74% achieved and 1 less than 50% achieved). Again, challenges in identifying eligible participants was a factor where integration output targets were not met;
- ▶ 2013: 8 projects were active comprising 7 focused on resettlement (P3) and 1 on evaluation methodologies (P2). Of the total of 33 output targets, 18 (55%) were achieved or exceeded. The remaining 15 output targets were met in part (5 between 75-99% achieved, 5 between 50-74% achieved and 5 less than 50% achieved).

The outcome of the interviews conducted served to support the conclusions drawn in the evaluation report as to why projects had been successful or unsuccessful in meeting their objectives. In particular, the existence of robust recruitment procedures, retention of experienced and knowledgeable staff, creation of detailed plans tailored to individual refugee needs, good partnership and networking capabilities and

sourcing accommodation which is both suitable and secure were all seen as critical success factors in meeting both integration and resettlement objectives.

Where target outcomes were not met, interviewees consistently cited a number of contributory factors. These included a failure to accurately assess need and demand at the application stage, difficulties in interpreting or applying the eligibility criteria, problems in maintaining participant attendance on programmes (eg because of competing demands on time), legal, language, security and staffing problems and changes in the wider political or economic environment (eg security/stability in source countries, impact of austerity measures).

Moreover, a combination of independent research conducted by Home Office Science: Migration and Border Analysis (MBA), and external evaluation it commissioned from GVA, Ipsos Mori and NatCen has revealed that integration and resettlement projects would benefit from (i) a deeper analysis of potential demand at a local level to avoid the risk of under or over estimating at the planning stage, (ii) providing more cultural information to refugees in advance as part of the resettlement programme to avoid misunderstandings on arrival, and (iii) placing a sharper focus on employment issues given that this represents one of the biggest challenges to successful integration. Such research showed few unintended results. Exceptions in this regard included the unexpected popularity of peer mentoring support for some refugees, and the improved understanding of homelessness and the private rented sector amongst staff in one project which resulted in housing expectations being exceeded.

Overall, interviewees from all backgrounds spoke very positively about the contribution of ERF to the delivery of their projects and the general effectiveness of the outcomes achieved, notwithstanding the challenges faced and scope for improvement identified through related research.

Outcomes and impacts in terms of reception

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	None
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	None
The UK considers that its reception conditions and asylum procedures are sufficiently well developed and resourced to obviate the need for recourse to ERF co-funding. It has not, therefore, initiated any actions in this area.	

Outcomes and impacts in terms of integration

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	A total of 7 projects covering 5 topic areas and 13 operations
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	Target: 1363 Reached: 1295
<p>The actions dedicated to the integration of refugees covered a wide variety of support functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assistance with housing and means of subsistence ▶ Medical and psychological care ▶ Social assistance, assistance with administrative formalities, legal aid, language assistance and equality issues ▶ Education, vocational training, acquisition of skills, access to employment and promotion of self-improvement ▶ Actions enabling recipients to adapt to society and participate in civil and cultural life. <p>With one exception, a mix of NGO and Local Authority organisations were contracted to deliver these services on a local/regional basis. The exception involved a project executed by the former UKBA aimed at establishing links and processes between the UK and Italian authorities to facilitate the sensitive</p>	

removal and care of unaccompanied children and families under the Dublin arrangements.

The locally/regionally based projects enjoyed varying degrees of success. The reasons for under or over achievement in each area are as outlined in the overall effectiveness section above, with housing support being the most challenging service to provide and sustain (as it is for most vulnerable groups in the UK). The UK/Italy liaison project resulted in the removal of 260 individuals against a target of 240 (ie an achievement rate of 108%). A second target of removing 75% of Italian cases within 6 months of claiming asylum in the UK was slightly exceeded (ie 77% or 167 of 216 cases). But two further targets were not met. On one of those targets, 22 refugees were accepted back by the Italian authorities against a target of 30 (ie 73%). On the other only 1 workshop aimed at exploring the risks of onward migration with key organisations was delivered against a target of 12 (ie 8%). Factors which had an adverse impact on the delivery of these targets included staff sickness absences, legal challenges to removals, and the practical/legal difficulties in returning unaccompanied children.

The research findings, briefly described in the overall effectiveness section above, were supported by the relevant beneficiaries interviewed. In terms of the locally/regionally based projects, they each confirmed the challenges faced at a practical level, not least around ensuring recipient participation in educational and similar programmes and securing suitable housing and psychological care in a difficult environment where demand consistently exceeds supply. Nevertheless, all those interviewed said that ERF funding was invaluable in achieving outcomes which would not otherwise have been affordable or deliverable. They also said that an excellent working relationship with the UKRA had contributed to their ability to deliver their ERF related objectives, either in whole or in part. With regard to the UK/Italy liaison project, the interviewee opined that, after a difficult start, the outcomes exceeded all realistic expectations. Not only have the arrangements been sustained post ERF funding, but have served as a model which other MS have either replicated or sought to mirror.

Outcomes and impacts on resettlement and transfer of targeted groups

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	A total of 6 projects covering 3 topic areas and 6 operations
Total number of people reached vs. targeted	Target: 7500 Reached: 8178
<p>All of the UK's resettlement projects are managed as part of a broader Gateway Protection Programme established in 2004 by the former UKBA in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Under the terms of this arrangement the UNHCR is mandated to identify and assess particularly vulnerable refugees based in selected locations overseas for potential resettlement in the UK. Once identified and assessed by the UNHCR, applicants considered to be eligible are submitted to the UK authorities (led by UK Visas and Immigration) for consideration. The applications are then tested against a range of criteria including refugee status, need for resettlement, security risks, family status and health (including the health of any dependents). The travel arrangements of successful applicants (ie documentation, medical clearance and transportation) are then organised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) under a contract with the Home Office. On arrival in the UK they are provided with a 12 month support programme to aid integration.</p> <p>The Gateway Protection Programme is now well established and the arrangements between the Home Office, UNHCR and IOM work extremely smoothly with annual targets (750 refugees per year) being regularly met or exceeded. The individual projects aimed at resettlement and integration at a local level face the range of difficulties and challenges described in the overall effectiveness section above and meet with the varying degrees of success already described (many of the same organisations are involved in delivering Gateway and non-Gateway focused integration projects).</p> <p>The general consensus amongst interviewees was that a combination of the additional money available through the ERF, and the excellent relationship built up between the UKRA and those responsible for delivery, had contributed to the achievement of resettlement outcomes above those which might otherwise be possible.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on evaluation and monitoring of local asylum policies

Number of actions implemented with this specific objective	1 project covering 3 topic areas and 3 operations
<p>The single project funded under this specific objective was MedCOI3. This involved the consolidation and expansion of a project previously funded by an ERF Community Action (ie MedCOI2). In the interregnum between ERF CA funding ceasing in 2014, and AMIF arrangements commencing in 2015, a number of participating MS (mainly the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands) decided to use existing ERF funds to support continuation of the project with the Netherlands remaining in the lead. MedCOI3 aims to provide quickly accessible, high quality and timely medical country of origin information (COI) for use by officials in the UK and other MS involved in deciding asylum, human rights and return cases. It also seeks to consolidate and expand the database of medical COI accessible to the UK and other MS.</p> <p>The project had 5 objectives and over 20 sub-objectives. Success in meeting these (largely numerical) objectives was mixed, but all were achieved either in whole or in part. The overall assessment, however, was very positive. In this regard it was judged that the availability of more reliable and timely information, combined with an online database, had gone a long way to supporting better and faster decision making in MS. It has also met the secondary goal of improving EU wide co-operation in this area. The tools and methodologies involved continue to be used and developed.</p>	

Outcomes and impacts on Member States cooperation

The UK considered that it had no requirement for use ERF funds to support transfers of refugees to other MS beyond the integration specific UK/Italy liaison arrangements already described in the Integration section above.

d. Sustainability of ERF actions

Positive effects continued after the intervention of ERF actions terminated and before AMIF funding became available. For instance the Gateway Protection Programme, which included projects co-funded by the ERF, continued to develop and deliver the UK's resettlement strategy in the short period between ERF cessation and AMIF commencement. The availability of AMIF funding has enabled the UK to sustain the full impact of the Gateway Protection Programme in a way which would not be possible, without a significant re-prioritisation of the immigration budget, if it had to rely solely on national funds. Meanwhile, the UK/Italy liaison arrangements remain strong and effective, whilst the MedCOI3 tools and methodologies are now firmly embedded. The latter provides the potential for wider adoption across MS..

e. Efficiency of the ERF

Efficiency of the implementation of actions

Year	Status	Programmed	Committed	Commitment rate (%)	Payments	Payment rate (%)
2011	C	11 537 000	11 329 000	98,2%	9 756 018	86,1%
2012	C	13 540 000	11 939 000	88,2%	10 793 047	90,4%
2013	C	13 643 000	13 776 000	101%	11 371 967	82,5%
Total		38 720 000	37 044 000	95,7%	31 921 033	86,2%

¹¹¹ For data source, see p. 23 and 24 of the revised interim report.

The budget implementation rate varied between 88% in 2012 and 98% in 2011 with an overall rate of 93% across the 3 years. The evaluation report, backed by related research evidence, suggests that the implementation rates point to the resources available being sufficient to implement the corresponding projects. This view was supported by those who were interviewed. Where underspends did occur the reasons could generally be attributed to lower than anticipated support needs (eg medical interventions) and therefore activity. In terms of the Gateway Protection Programme it was explained that the constituent budgets were prepared in the expectation that the transport and other related costs would be relatively high given that resettlement is often undertaken at short notice when aircraft seats etc are at a premium. In practice, however, every effort is made to contain costs by planning on as long a term as possible and achieving economies of scale through, for example, arranging group travel where feasible. This focus on securing optimum value for money usually resulted in small underspends being achieved against planned budgets.

An examination of the unit costs across the range of projects revealed nothing surprising or out of the ordinary. For example, the unit costs of resettlement are higher than those for integration, as should be expected given that the former include the costs of travel and subsistence for refugees and, in some cases, associated medical costs. Again, the level of resource input appeared to be adequate when examined at a unit cost level.

The case study research undertaken suggests that delivery organisations were fully conscious of the need to demonstrate value for money, including economies of scale and the sharing of resources across objectives and partner organisations wherever possible. Value for money is one of the key criteria when the UKRA is assessing funding bids, and there is nothing in the available research to suggest that money was spent unwisely or inappropriately, or that the objectives could have been achieved at less cost.

Budget and overall Fund management

The UKRA (24 staff), assisted by the Audit Authority and the Certifying Authority, managed the ERF in accordance with the Management and Control System (MCS) agreed with the Commission. However, it is fair to say that the UKRA struggled initially to meet all of its monitoring and reporting obligations, to the extent that backlogs reached 16 months by 2012.

A change in line management responsibilities in 2012 led to complete overhaul of the UKRA's practices and procedures, with the result that the backlogs soon became eradicated. The introduction of more robust monitoring arrangements also led the incidence of claim disqualification being greatly reduced. By the end of the programme error rates in respect of eligible spend had been reduced to 0.2%.

One of the lessons learned by the UKRA was to focus on a small number of high value projects with organisations who could demonstrate a proven capability track record, rather than a large number of small value projects involving organisations operating near the limits of their capacity/capability. In this way it was better able to manage project award, subsequent monitoring and budgetary control. Taken together with the other structural and organizational changes introduced in 2012, this initiative led to a significant improvement in overall UKRA performance.

f. Coherence and complementarity

The UKRA was responsible for managing all European SOLID funds. Consequently it was able, through the development of the respective multi-annual and annual programmes, and advice and recommendations made to the Apportionment Board, to ensure maximum synergy and complementarity between the ERF, EIF and RF.

The ERF also complements the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in relation to the promotion of employment and building sustainable communities respectively. Active co-operation between the various government departments responsible for administering other international/EU financial instruments helps ensure complementarity and cohesive understanding of the priority areas, eligible actions, eligible target groups, the strategic programming of proposals, and management and control systems.

It is worth noting that these co-operative arrangements have recently been strengthened by extending the

membership of the former Apportionment Board (now the Monitoring Committee under AMIF arrangements) to include representatives from all government departments with a responsibility for managing international/EU financial instruments.

At a practical level, although some individual beneficiaries of ERF may also have been clients of projects funded by the ESF and/or ERDF, there was no overlap in terms of strategic programming. All EU co-financed projects of both funds are rigorously monitored and audited to ensure that only eligible target groups are served within the auspices of their respective funds. These monitoring and audit arrangements included visits to individual projects to conduct spot checks in addition to the routine desk based scrutiny.

Furthermore, the implemented Community Actions covered by this study are considered to be coherent with overall national policy. However, it is recommended that RAs are properly consulted before CAs are implemented to ensure that there is no potential overlap or duplication.

At a national level other institutions with a responsibility or interest in asylum issues are systematically involved in the implementation/design of actions through routine stakeholder engagement (eg. meetings and telephone discussions) and the work of the Apportionment Board (now Monitoring Committee for AMIF) in making investment decisions. Some of these actions involve close partnership working (eg between the Home Office, UNHCR and IOM on the Gateway Protection Programme).

At an EU level the extent of engagement depends very much on the nature of the project (eg the MedCOI3 and UK/Italy liaison projects involved a considerable amount of MS partnership co-operation around the design and implementation arrangements).

As indicated previously, there is little evidence of effective consultation between the Commission and RAs on the relationship between Community Actions and national projects prior to implementation. It is therefore recommended that this be remedied under the AMIF arrangements if not already actioned.

g. Focus: emergency measures

Short-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

The UK was not involved in any emergency measures

Long-term outcomes and impacts of emergency measures

The UK was not involved in any emergency measures

h. Focus: Community Actions

Presentation of implemented Community Actions

With regard to CREDO2 (HOME/2012/ERFX/CA/4001), the need was to develop a multidisciplinary training manual aimed at improving credibility assessments made in asylum decision making following research (CREDO1) which showed that there were inconsistencies across MS in this area. The training manual was developed in partnership between the UNHCR, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (main beneficiary), the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, and Asylum Aid (a UK based NGO and co-beneficiary). Following publication it was adopted by EASO who built relevant modules into its own training programme. The single interviewee who worked on this programme reported that the partnership arrangements worked very well, although the Commission's administrative arrangements were extremely burdensome and led to some delays in the delivery of the project.

The MedCOI2 project (HOME/2011/ERFZ/CA/2265) arose from a need to improve timely access to high quality country of origin information of a medical nature. Access to such information was necessary to help improve the speed and quality of decisions taken in asylum and return cases. The Netherlands, as the main beneficiary, worked in partnership with other MS, including the UK, to develop the improvements required and associated database. There were a number of objectives focused on enhancing the availability and accessibility of data, as well as improving training and quality assurance. Although the levels of achievement were varied, the overall success of the project led several participating MS

authorities to continue the project (as MedCOI3) using ERF national funding when Community Action funding ceased in 2014. The aims of the Community Action have thus been sustained to the potential benefit of wider MS engagement. Feedback suggests that the Community Action was organized in an efficient manner, save for the usual comments about the bureaucratic nature of the administrative arrangements.

Outcomes and impacts of the Community Actions

The outcome of the CREDO2 project was the availability of a multidisciplinary training manual on credibility assessment, disseminated to MS through the normal participating partner/Commission communication channels (eg posting on websites etc). Dissemination and adoption has also been assisted through EASO's decision to incorporate learning from the manual into relevant modules of its training programme.

The MedCOI2 Community Action led to the improved availability and accessibility of medical country of information data which, in turn, contributed to quicker and better informed decisions about asylum and returns where such information was key. These improvements have been consolidated and extended under MedCOI3, funded out of ERF allocations by participating MS when Community Action funding ceased in 2014.

i. European added-value

Analysis of the additional value brought by the European level for the implementation of actions (National and Community Actions)

ERF funds were used in the UK to extend existing activities (eg the Gateway Protection Programme), develop new activities (eg the UK/Italy liaison arrangements) and support a range of integration projects which may not otherwise have been initiated. The clear view expressed by interviewees was that a number of these activities would not have got off the ground without ERF funding, or would not have had the impact achieved, given the absence of alternative funding in a climate of national and international austerity.

There is some evidence of improved working relations and the development of more effective networks across MS through the introduction and maintenance of certain projects and activities. For example the MedCOI3 and UK/Italy liaison projects, and the CREDO2 Community Action, all relied for their success on the creation of new or enhanced working relationships between national authorities and/or delivery partners operating at a practical level. This was less marked in some of the more established integration and resettlement focused projects, but even there interviewees spoke of the development of better communication channels and improved understanding through, for example, working with the refugee community for the first time. Furthermore, a number of interviewees felt that exposure to the ERF had improved their understanding of EU funding arrangements and the need to work closely and co-operatively with partners across a range of disciplines and national borders in order to secure optimum impacts.

j. Annex: list of interviewees

Organisation	Position	Name	Date
Home Office	Director of Finance, HM Passport Office and UK Visas and Immigration	Paul Darling	11 July 16
Home Office	Acting Head of the UK Responsible Authority	Claire Rainey	01 July 16
Home Office	Senior Finance Business Partner, Syrian Refugee Resettlement	Stephen Sykes	19 July 16

		Programme (former Head of UKRA)		
Home Office		UKRA Account Manager	Anthony Ball	01 July 16
Home Office*		Operational Head, Refugee Resettlement Programme	Tracey Raw	01 July 16
Home Office*		Project Manager, Country Policy Research, Country Policy Information Team	Amanda Wood	01 July 16
Home Office*		Head of Non Detention Casework Team, Third Country Unit	Luke Fenning	01 July 16
Home Office		AMIF Programme Manager, UKRA	Steve Blackmore	01 July 16
Horton Association	Housing	Head of Service, New Communities	Jayne Higgins	07 July 16
Asylum Aid		Policy and Research Manager	Debora Singer MBE	12 July 16
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	for	Head of Operations, Resettlement Programmes	Brian Quaiife	19 July 16

Notes

1. The three Home Office interviewees marked with an asterisk represented Units that were beneficiaries of ERF programme funding.
2. Amanda Wood was unavailable on the day of interview, but provided a written response to the interview questionnaire.
3. The Horton Housing Association is located in Bradford, Yorkshire so the interview was conducted by telephone.

