



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Regulatory Scrutiny Board

Brussels,  
Ares(2017)

## **Opinion**

**Title: Evaluation / European Refugee Fund 2011-2013**

**Overall opinion: POSITIVE**

### **(A) Context**

The EU has been developing its Common European Asylum System since 1999. Because of internal freedom of movement, EU countries need a joint approach to protection for refugees.

Asylum flows vary across EU Member States and over time. Different Member States that are supporting common EU objectives can face very different burdens. From 2008 to 2013, the European Refugee Fund (ERF) supported financial solidarity between Member States, to share cost burdens of providing for the needs of refugees. In 2014 the ERF was merged into a successor fund, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

This evaluation examines the ERF for the period 2011-2013. During this time period the Fund had a budget of 386 million euros. Almost all (97%) of the implementation was through national programmes, including emergency measures. The Commission implemented the remaining 3% directly through Community actions.

The results of this evaluation will feed into a mid-term review of the AMIF national programmes, to take place in 2017 and 2018. They will also feed into a 2018 interim evaluation of AMIF.

### **(B) Main considerations**

**The Board appreciates the particular challenge of evaluating this spending programme, as its legal base does not appear to fully reflect the policy objectives. It also does not define operational objectives or targets.**

**The Board gives a positive opinion, but considers that the report should be improved and complemented with respect to the following aspects:**

- **Explicitly acknowledge that the intervention logic is weak, and that this makes it harder to evaluate the programme's results.**
- **Clarify how the evaluation assessed the Fund's effectiveness in the absence of specific EU-level objectives and targets. Demonstrate how the ERF applied the solidarity principle in practice.**
- **Show the extent to which emergency measures contributed to the Fund's flexibility.**
- **Streamline and harmonise the conclusions, and indicate lessons that are relevant for future action.**

### **(C) Further considerations and recommendations**

#### **(1) Intervention logic**

The report should ensure that the main text and the executive summary are consistent in their descriptions of the programme's objectives and priorities. It should fully acknowledge weaknesses of the underlying legal base such as ill-defined objectives and targets and insufficient monitoring and evaluation arrangements. The report should indicate whether these weaknesses were already present in the original Commission proposal. It should draw lessons for more effective monitoring and evaluation of future programmes.

#### **(2) Measuring effectiveness**

The report should clarify how the Fund's effectiveness was measured in the face of the above-mentioned weaknesses in the intervention logic. It should show how well the Fund translated the solidarity principle into practice, i.e. how the allocation of the funds responded to actual needs of the Member States. The report could simulate what would in hindsight have been an optimal distribution of funds, and benchmark the actual allocation against this theoretical distribution.

The report should also assess whether actual programme targets were relevant and well-adapted to the context of the refugee crisis. For example, do falling contributions per refugee indicate higher efficiency or lower quality of service? Do indicators take into account the various challenges of Member States, e.g. "transit countries" versus "destination countries"?

#### **(3) Emergency measures**

The report should show how and to what extent emergency measures contributed to the overall flexibility of the Fund as the refugee crisis unfolded. It should compare the observed allocation of funds against a theoretical allocation without emergency measures. This would establish how emergency measures were used and help a reader to assess whether such measures were the most helpful way to ensure this flexibility.

#### **(4) Lessons for the future**

Conclusions of the report and its executive summary should be consistent and indicate the main lessons for future programming periods. They should also indicate how these lessons may already have been taken into account in the 2014-2020 programming period. This includes an explicit reference to any need for clearer objectives and targets in the legal base and better monitoring arrangements (see above). Moreover, the SWD should address the administrative burden, given that the support study finds this to be high and sees scope to simplify. The conclusions should indicate whether the findings on the administrative burden were taken into account in the following programming period.

*Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG.*

### **(D) RSB scrutiny process**

**The lead DG is advised to ensure that these recommendations are taken into account in the report prior to launching the interservice consultation.**

Full title	Ex post evaluation of the European Refugee Fund 2011 - 2013
Reference number	2016/HOME/081
Date of RSB meeting	06/06/2017