



2019

Annual Activity Report

**Directorate-General
for Migration and
Home Affairs**



Foreword

Dear Readers,

When I took over as Director-General for DG HOME in January 2020, the situation in the fields of migration and security looked relatively stable, despite the temporary impasse in the negotiations on the reform of the Common European Asylum System. Leaving this reform project aside, DG HOME had in 2019 worked hard to have important legislation adopted, relating among others to the protection of the EU's external border, preventing terrorism and organised crime, and the handling of visa applications. During the year, DG HOME had provided support to Member States, and had made it possible for 22,800 people in need of protection to come to Europe via safe and legal pathways.

With the tensions we have seen lately at the Greek-Turkish border, we have been reminded that the situation can change quickly, and that we need to take further action to guarantee a solidary and efficient migration management. Experience shows that it is only through common European solutions that we can effectively address challenges related to migration. In this context, we should also remember that regular migration is an opportunity for both third-country nationals and host societies. Supported by DG HOME's efforts to improve integration of new people, the gap between the employment rates of third-country nationals and EU nationals narrowed in 2019.

As EU citizens, we have become used to move freely between countries in the Schengen area. DG HOME is strongly committed to preserve this freedom of movement, while ensuring the security of people living within the Schengen area. At the time of writing, we see individual Member States close their internal borders in their efforts to stop the new Coronavirus outbreak. Also here, DG HOME is in the forefront, working to improve cooperation between Member States to tackle this challenge. It is my strong conviction that we can achieve more when we are united in action.

Focussing on the security of people, DG HOME has during 2019 succeeded in having a number of legislative proposals adopted, among others making it harder for terrorists and other criminals to access explosives and financing, and restrict their movement. To make sure that border guards and police officers all over the EU have access to the right information whenever they need it, measures were agreed that will make European information systems work together in an intelligent and targeted way. Work must now continue on the basis of previous achievements.

In the lead of DG HOME, I look forward to continue the internal work that is ongoing to ensure staff-wellbeing under the challenging and changing circumstances we face. In this context, I am pleased to note that the DG has reached gender balance in middle management.

Now, I look forward to working with my new colleagues and the Commissioner towards a sustainable migration system and strengthened internal security, equal to the challenges of the future.

Monique Pariat

Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs

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ACRONYMS AND OTHER SHORT FORMS

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
CEPOL	EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training
DG BUDG	Directorate-General for Budget
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG JUST	Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EMAS	Emergency Assistance
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
eu-LISA	EU Agency for the Operational Management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice
Europol	EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FP7	7 th Framework Programme
FR	Financial Regulation
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ISF	Internal Security Fund
OLAF	European Anti-Fraud Office
RAL	open commitments / <i>reste à liquider</i>
RER	Residual Error Rate
SIS	Schengen Information System
SIENA	Secure Information Exchange Network Application
SOLID	Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows

THE DG IN BRIEF

The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) is responsible for EU policy, legislation and action in the fields of **migration and security**. Commissioner Ylva Johansson gives political guidance as of 1 December 2019, when she replaced Commissioners Dimitris Avramopoulos and Julian King.

Migration and home affairs policies are **shared competences** of the European Union provided for in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU – Title V of Part three). They are based on European core values and principles: human dignity, freedom, democracy as well as the rule of law, equality, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

The requirement to provide swift and effective responses to migration challenges and security threats has led to necessary staff reinforcements in the past years. Currently **590 people are working for DG HOME**.

The DG's current structure is the result of a reorganisation that took effect on 16 September 2019 and was aimed at maximising efficiency and enhancing synergies between different strands of policy work. A new Directorate for audit, data management and risk assessment was set up. In December 2019, Ms Monique Pariat was appointed the **new Director-General of DG HOME**, replacing Ms Paraskevi Michou as of 16 January 2020. DG HOME also accommodates the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator, who has the task to improve coordination and develop EU policies to address trafficking in human beings, and an Adviser for enhancing external and internal policy aspects of migration and security. Until end-November it also held the Secretariat of the Task Force on the Security Union.

DG HOME's **vision** is an open and secure Europe, where people can enjoy their rights and freedoms.

The mission of DG HOME is to develop EU-level rules, watch over their implementation and give support on the ground, in order to build an open and safe Europe where people can enjoy their rights and freedoms. This includes legal and

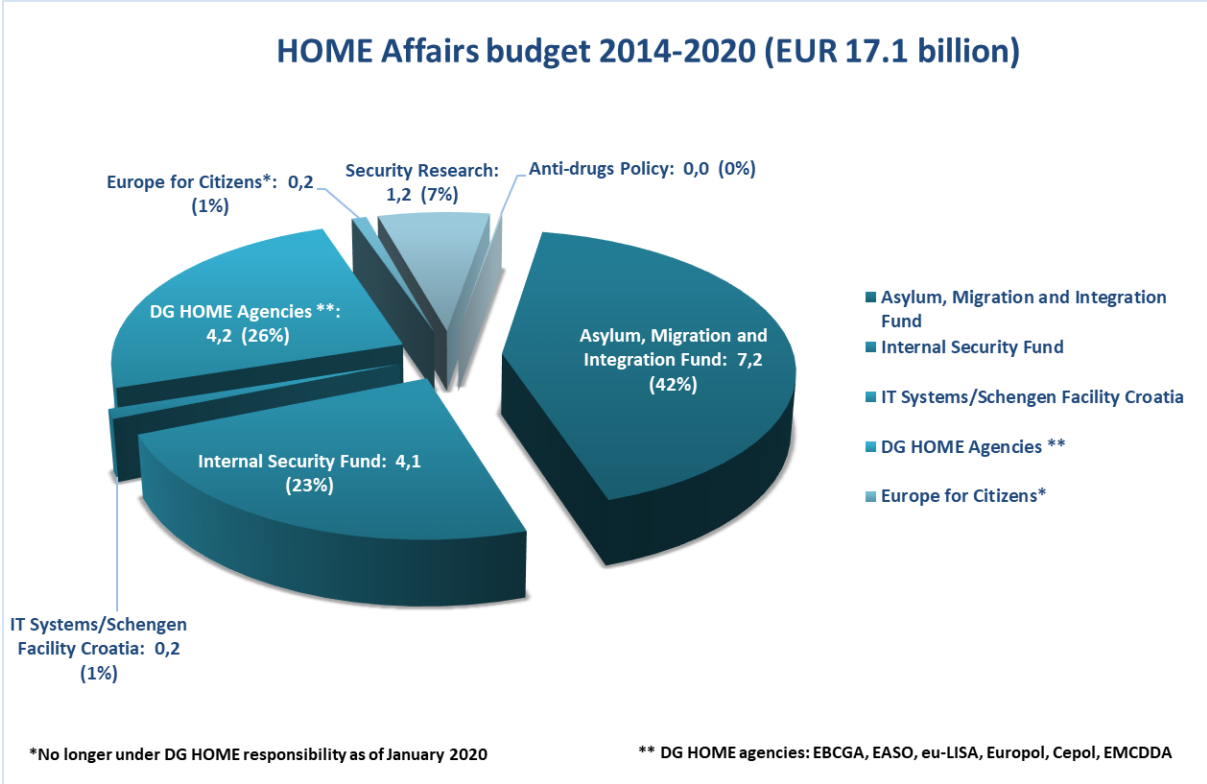
irregular migration, integration and return of migrants, as well as the fight against organised crime and terrorism, police cooperation and management of the EU's external borders. In addition, cooperation with non-EU countries on migration and security related challenges are included, as well as cooperation with EU security industry to ensure that Europe does not have to depend on third countries' technologies in highly sensitive domains.

DG HOME works to establish a comprehensive approach on migration and security, developing **legislative proposals** to establish and improve common EU action, monitoring and enforcing the correct **implementation** of applicable rules by the Member States, providing **financing** to support our policies, and supporting Member States operationally via its **migration management support teams** posted in Greece, Italy, Spain and Cyprus, that work in close cooperation with EU agencies on the ground to support the national authorities in handling migration and security challenges and in implementing agreed measures. Progress made towards a Security Union and in the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration has been subject to **regular reporting** allowing close monitoring of policy developments, implementation by Member States of agreed measures, and identification of gaps and necessary future actions to take.

The EU has established **six agencies** in the area of Migration and Home Affairs to support EU Member States and their citizens: the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol); the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL); the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA); the EU Agency for the Operational Management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA); the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The Agencies have a key role in the effective implementation of Home Affairs policies. In many ways, they have become the

operational arms of EU action ranging from migration, asylum, return and border management to security and drugs monitoring. In 2019, DG HOME supervised in addition the work of two executive agencies: the Research Executive Agency (REA) for the Horizon 2020 programme Secure Societies, and the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for the programme Europe for Citizens; the latter was transferred to DG JUST on 1 January 2020 and with it DG HOME’s oversight function for EACEA.

For the programming period 2014–2020, the overall budget managed by DG HOME amounts to EUR 17.1 billion. Most of these resources are allocated to two Home Affairs Funds: the **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund** and the **Internal Security Fund**. The initial overall budget of EUR 6.9 billion for these two Funds was substantially reinforced, currently reaching a total of EUR 11.27 billion. EUR 4.23 billion is reserved mainly for the funding of the Agencies, and EUR 1.37 billion are earmarked for three programmes (Europe for Citizens, Security Research and Anti-Drugs).



The two main Home Affairs Funds – the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) – are designed to be flexible and responsive to both shared and country-specific challenges and opportunities in relation to migration and security. For the implementation of the allocated budget, DG HOME uses several implementation modes¹:

- **Shared management** of AMIF/ISF funds (2014–2020), SOLID Funds (2007–2013)²;
- **Direct management** of grants research and non-research, and procurement;
- **Indirect management** of decentralised agencies and entrusted entities.

¹ See Part 2 for more information and reporting on the commitments that have been made in 2019.
² "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows" (SOLID) consisted of four instruments: External Borders Fund (EBF), European Return Fund (ERF), European Refugee Fund (RF) and European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF). DG HOME is in the process of finalising the follow up of the conclusions of the ex post and ECA audits.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Activity Report is a management report of the Director-General of DG HOME to the College of Commissioners. Annual Activity Reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties³.

a) Key results and progress towards the achievement of the Commission's general objectives and DG's specific objectives (executive summary of section 1)

DG HOME continued in 2019 to develop EU-level rules in the fields of migration and security, to oversee their implementation and to provide support on the ground.

Implementation of HOME Funds progressed according to plan, although the high number of requests for emergency assistance under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, led to a considerable increase of the 2019 work programme, from EUR 25 million to EUR 616.8 million.

DG HOME contributed in 2019 to...

1. ... reduce the incentives for migrants to come to the EU irregularly:

DG HOME continued working with **countries of origin, transit and destination**, keeping the dialogue on migration open. Funds were made available to help migrants in transit countries; 9,800 persons were returned safely home from dire conditions in Libya and 2,000 evacuated to other countries. Furthermore, the **EU-Turkey Statement**

More than 7,000 Syrian refugees in need of protection were resettled from Turkey to the EU in 2019 under the EU-Turkey Statement.

continued to reduce irregular arrivals and save lives at sea. While the number of migrants arriving at the Aegean islands increased in the second half of the year, the average number of daily arrivals were still 85% fewer than in the two months before implementation of the Statement⁴.

The fight against **migrant smuggling** is a priority for the EU. Therefore, the rules governing the European network of Immigration Liaison Officers were updated in 2019, allowing 424 officials⁵ around the world to collaborate better on counter-smuggling.

For the EU asylum system to be credible, **migrants with no right to stay need to be returned**. DG HOME took action to increase the return rate, for instance by giving Frontex a strong mandate on return and by improving the vital cooperation with key countries of origin, as well as pushing for an adoption of the recast return Directive, although no agreement has yet been reached. Despite these actions, the average return rate decreased from 35,6% in 2018 to 31,5% in 2019.

2. ... effectively manage the external EU border:

A well-managed external border is important to preserve the freedom of movement within the Schengen area while ensuring security. The decision to reinforce the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)** with more staff and new powers was a major step forward.

³ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012).

⁴ 9 January–20 March 2016.

⁵ 413 Member States staff and eleven DG HOME European Migration Liaison Officers.

Additionally, the EU signed agreements on border management with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia. As a result, Frontex teams and equipment were for the first time posted outside of the EU at the Albanian border with Greece to support local authorities with border surveillance and border checks.

During the year, migrants continued to come to Europe, fleeing persecution in their home countries or in search of a better life. People rescued at sea sometimes had to stay for longer periods on the rescue vessels before they could disembark. DG HOME supported negotiations on **temporary arrangements for disembarkation**, and coordinated the relocation of migrants to different Member States. In November, an understanding was reached on standard operating procedures.

With the support of DG HOME, irregular border crossings into the EU went down to 142,000 in 2019. This is the lowest figure in six years.

To alleviate the pressure on the **Greek islands**, DG HOME took action to accelerate the processing of asylum applications and return procedures. Despite these efforts, there were by the end of 2019, 42,000 migrants present in the camps. DG HOME provided EUR 376 million to improve their conditions: winter-proofing the camps, delivering essentials and providing medical care. Furthermore, DG HOME's financial support allowed 37,700 vulnerable persons to be transferred to the mainland.

3. ... enhance the protection of migrants:

International protection must be granted to people who need it. **721,000 asylum applications** were lodged in the EU in 2019 (11% more than in 2018), indicating that the pressure on national migration systems remained high. In response, operational support from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was provided to Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

To ensure that all applicants are treated equally no matter where in the EU they apply for asylum and to avoid secondary movements, one of the priorities for 2019 was to conclude the reform of the **Common European Asylum System**. Due to differing views between Member States, the reform proposals could not be adopted, despite DG HOME's best efforts to work with the respective Presidencies in identifying possible compromises and solutions. Independent of the negotiations, DG HOME also followed up on infringement cases in relation to the implementation of the current rules.

22,800 vulnerable people were resettled from third countries to Member States under the current resettlement scheme.

In terms of financial support, Member States could with the support of DG HOME Funds assist 379,340⁶ asylum-seekers; they spent in total EUR 133.7 million of EU contribution in the area of asylum.

4. ... address skill shortages and improve integration:

The Schengen Area cannot function efficiently without a common visa policy, strengthening security and facilitating legal entry. To this end, new rules aiming to harmonise Member States' practices for **handling visa applications** were adopted. The European Parliament and the Council could however not yet adopt the proposed legislation that would upgrade the Visa Information System and make the EU Blue Card more attractive.

As part of the preparations for **Brexit**, new legislation will make it possible for UK citizens to travel to the EU without a visa once EU law ceases to apply to the UK, provided that EU citizens can also continue to enjoy visa-free travel to the UK (reciprocity).

In addition, negotiations were concluded with Belarus on a visa facilitation agreement (jointly together with a readmission agreement).

⁶ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

DG HOME supports Member States in their efforts to **integrate third-country nationals** in European societies, by cooperation to promote integration and through funding. In 2019, Member States spent EUR 101 million of DG HOME Funds on legal migration and integration measures to help 954,500 migrants (almost 6 million in total since 2014)⁷.

5. ... prevent terrorism and radicalisation:

Firm action was taken during the year to **close down the space in which terrorists operate**: new adopted legislation will make it harder for terrorists and other criminals to access explosives and financing, and will restrict their movement. DG HOME supported the (still ongoing) interinstitutional negotiations on a legislative proposal to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online.

To make best use of available information relating to security, migration and border management, European information systems need to work together in an intelligent and targeted way whilst respecting data protection safeguards. To achieve this, **interoperability measures** were agreed, which will ensure that border guards and police officers have access to up-to-date information whenever and wherever they need.

DG HOME also engaged with international partners to strengthen external action in the fight against terrorism.

6. ... disrupt organised crime:

To tackle organised crime, **cross border information exchange** is essential. New legislation was adopted to further facilitate exchange of financial information. Member States also made increased use of Europol's information exchange mechanisms, making 7,489,400 searches in the Europol Information System and exchanging 1,243,940 messages in Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application.

In relation to **trafficking in human beings**, close cooperation between Member States is key to protect victims' rights and ensure appropriate assistance. The high-level event 'Leaving no one behind: breaking the silence on trafficking for sexual exploitation' was part of the efforts to increase cooperation.

In the European Semester exercise 2018–2019, DG HOME included eight country-specific recommendations for 2019 regarding the **fight against corruption**.

7. ... respond to cybercrime:

With an increase in activity from malicious actors, countering cybercrime remains a priority for DG HOME. New legislation adopted will improve the legal framework to tackle fraud/counterfeiting of **non-cash means of payment**.

The growing number of successful operations conducted with the involvement of Europol's Cybercrime Centre, going from 254 in 2018 to 397 in 2019, shows the effectiveness of international and public-private cooperation.

8. ... enhance citizens' understanding of the EU:

The *Europe for Citizens* Programme, with 433 new projects selected for funding in 2019, aims to enhance citizens' understanding of the EU. DG HOME's event *Europe for Citizens – History Defines our Future* attracted over 300 participants.

9. ... strong and competitive EU security industry:

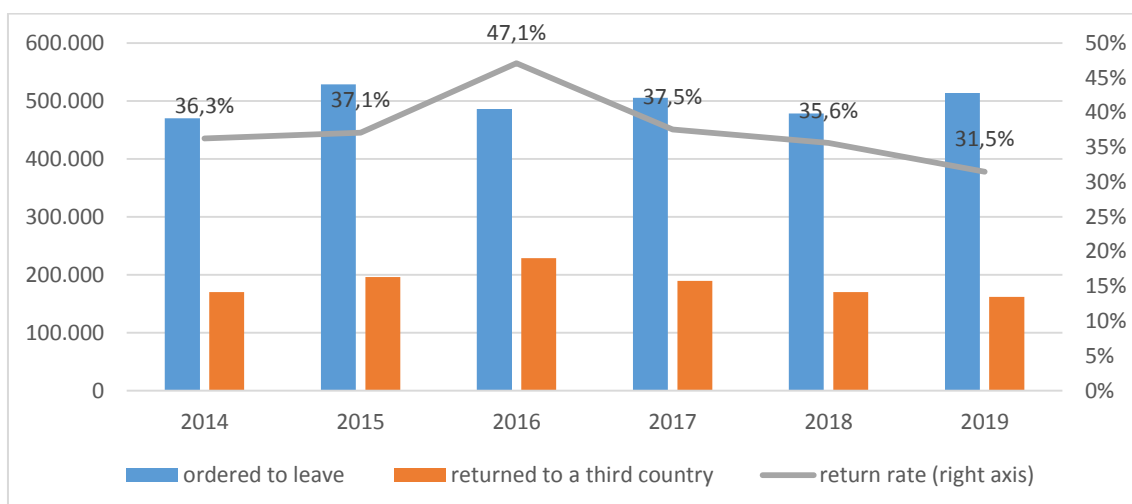
New research is often not taken up by the security industry due to fragmentation, low market visibility and financial limitations. In 2019, 22 research projects were selected for funding within Horizon 2020 Secure Societies with an EU contribution of EUR 134 million.

⁷ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

b) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Key Performance Indicators reported on below were defined in the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan to measure DG HOME's achievements. During 2019, they developed as follows:

Key performance indicator 1: Rate of return of irregular migrants to third countries measured as % of effected returns compared to return decisions issued by Member States (impact indicator 1a in the Strategic Plan). For the asylum system to be credible, migrants with no right to stay in the EU need to be returned. The target set in the Strategic Plan is to reach higher return rates in 2020 than in 2014. DG HOME took in 2019 action to provide all necessary support to increase the return rate in the coming years. In 2019, the rate of return to third countries decreased to 31.5% (compared to 35.6% in 2018)⁸. This decrease is partially explained by the combination of a significant increase in return decisions issued (around 34,000 more than in 2018, in particular in some Member States; i.e. Greece, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Slovenia, Finland and the Netherlands), that has not been matched by a similar trend in numbers of effected returns to third countries (around 9,000 less than in 2018). This trend prevailed for a number of important countries of return. Even the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, which traditionally pushed the average EU rate up with rates close to 100%, witnessed in 2019 a decrease and influenced significantly the overall rate due to the high proportion of return decisions issued to their nationals out of total number of decisions. Additional efforts are required to address key challenges to the effectiveness of returns through measures both in Member States and with third countries.



Source: DG HOME computation of Eurostat data⁹

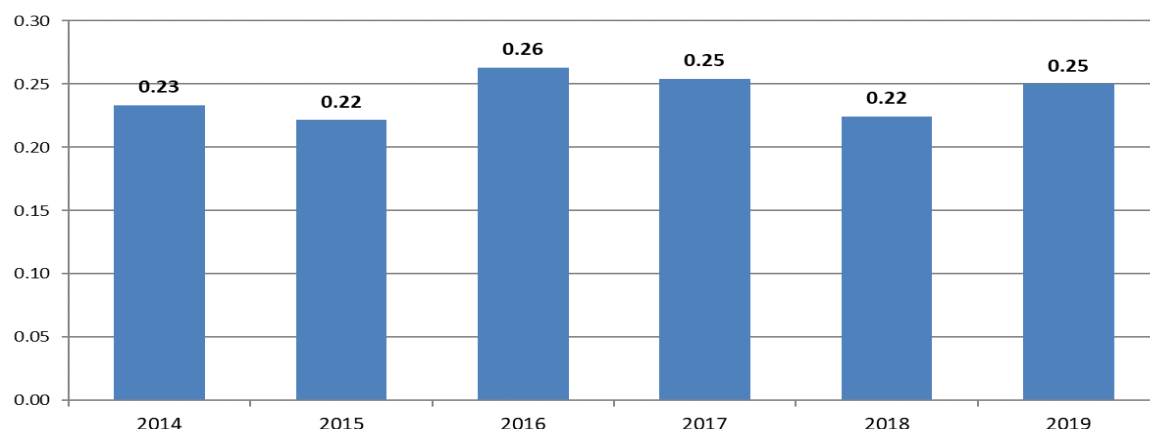
Key performance indicator 2: Convergence of protection recognition rates for asylum seekers from the same country (result indicator 1.3c in the Strategic Plan)¹⁰. This indicator aims to measure the harmonisation of rules and practices in the EU regarding asylum procedures. This is done by using a proxy: the ratio between the number of Afghan nationals who get international protection in Member States at first instance and the number of first instance decisions concerning Afghan nationals. The target is to reach a lower standard deviation than in 2014. From the graph below, it can

⁸ The return rate for EU-27 (without the UK) was 29% in 2019 compared to 32% in 2018.

⁹ Eurostat collects both the nominator and the denominator annually from the Ministries of Interior / Border Guards / Police of the Member States. The data depend on national circumstances and policies. In addition, the time lag between the return decision and its execution means that the reference population of the nominator and denominator are not the same.

¹⁰ Convergence is measured by the standard deviation in the recognition rates in the Member States for asylum seekers from a specific relevant nationality – the lower the standard deviation is, the greater the convergence. The chart displays this indicator for asylum seekers from Afghanistan.

be seen that notwithstanding progress achieved in the development of the Common European Asylum System, there are still significant disparities between the Member States, and in 2019 the standard deviation increased compared to 2014. The planned New Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to harmonise rules and practices in the EU and decrease the deviation.



Source: DG HOME computation of Eurostat data.

Key performance indicator 3: Use of EU information exchange mechanisms measured through number of hits in the Schengen Information System (SIS) and Prüm databases and the use of Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA) and the Europol Information System (EIS) (result indicator 2.2b in the Strategic Plan). This indicator shows the increased use Member States make of the information exchange mechanisms and the growing importance of cross border information exchange.

	2014 (baseline)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (target)
Hits on foreign SIS alerts	128,598	154,768	200,778	243,503	267,239	283,713	Increase
Prüm: total matches	2,082,741	2,219,311	2,806,642	3,466,995	4,538,388	n/a ¹¹	Increase
SIENA messages exchanged	605,245	n/a	869,858	1,005,610	1,110,962	1,243,943	Increase
EIS searches performed	367,922	n/a	1,436,838	2,478,825	4,062,974	7,489,410	Increase

Source: Europol, EU-LISA and Member States, respectively

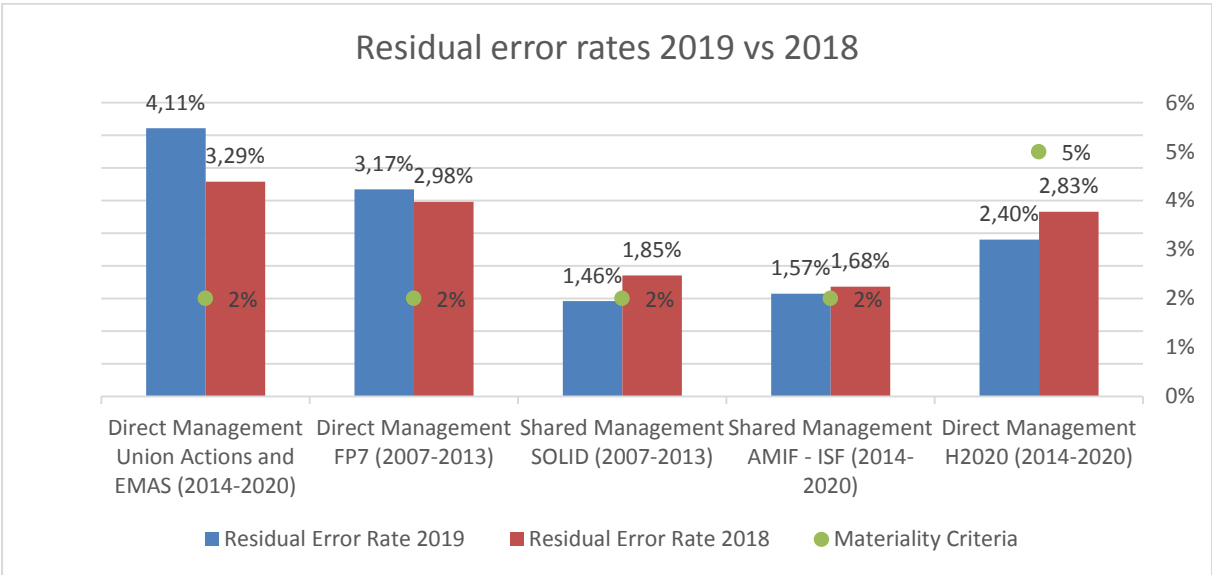
Key performance indicator 4: Number of operations conducted with the involvement of European Cybercrime Centre (result indicator 2.3b in the Strategic Plan). The growing number of operations conducted with the involvement of Europol's Cybercrime Centre confirms that although cybercrime is on the rise, so is law enforcement response to it. High-profile operations coordinated by Europol regularly involve law enforcement from EU and non-EU states: the number of successful operations shows the importance and effectiveness of international cooperation.

	2013 (baseline)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (target)
Number of high-profile operations	57	72	131	175	180	257	397	Increase

Source: Europol

¹¹ The Prüm Decision foresees that information on implementation is submitted to the Council. The Secretariat General of the Council will collect the 2019 data from Member States and produce an overview in Q3 of 2020.

Key performance indicator 5: Estimated residual error rate assessed for each of the defined control systems. The target is a **residual error** below the materiality level of 2% (and below 5% for Direct Management Horizon 2020 grants) for each control system/Member State. The graph below presents the Residual error rates for 2019 for the most relevant internal control systems in comparison to the residual error rates reported in 2018. The Relevant Control System affected by error rates higher than 2% is direct management-grants (research and non-research). The graph is showing a positive trend of error rates in comparison to 2018 for all management modes, except for 'Direct Management Union Actions and emergency assistance'. The slight increase of the error rate for this specific control sytem can be explained by several reasons, such as a different reporting period (old 2007-2013 period not included anymore), finalisation of audits on the emergency assistance grants awarded during the migration crises, and a revised methodology applied to implement a recommendation issued by the European Court of Auditors. As described for each reservation included in this Report, action plans including measures to address the weaknesses identified were set up.



c) Key conclusions on Financial management and Internal control (executive summary of section 2.1)

In accordance with the governance arrangements of the European Commission, (the staff of) DG HOME conducts its operations in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations, working in an open and transparent manner and meeting the expected high level of professional and ethical standards.

To ensure the achievement of policy and management objectives, the Commission has adopted a set of internal control principles, based on international good practice. The financial regulation requires that the organisational structure and the internal control systems used for the implementation of the budget are set up in accordance with these principles. DG HOME has assessed the internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control principles are implemented and function as intended. Please refer to section 2.1.3 of this report.

In addition, DG HOME has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, including those aimed to supervise entities to which it has entrusted budget implementation tasks, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by internal auditors and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on the management's assurance as regards the achievement of control objectives. Please refer to section 2.1 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance, albeit qualified by the following reservations:

- 1) Shared management - Reservation concerning SOLID funds 2007-2013 in several Member States.
- 2) Shared management - Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States.
- 3) Centralised Direct Management – Non research grants.

d) Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between the DG and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration, including the reservations envisaged, have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Johansson, responsible for Home Affairs.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND DG'S SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

DG HOME contributes to the following general and specific objectives, as identified in the 2016–2020 Strategic Plan:

General objectives		Specific objectives	
1	Towards a new policy on migration	1.1	Reduce incentive for irregular migration.
		1.2	Effective border management: Save lives and secure EU external borders.
		1.3	Enhance protection and solidarity.
		1.4	A new policy on legal migration to address skill shortages in the EU and enhance effective integration.
2	An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust	2.1	A strong EU response to tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation.
		2.2	Disrupt organised crime.
		2.3	An effective response to cybercrime.
3	A Union of democratic change	3.1	Enhance citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level.
4	A deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base		

This section presents key results and progress made in 2019 towards achieving the objectives. Indicators which come from the programme statements for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund¹² are drawn from the Annual Implementation Reports submitted by the Member States. **For an exhaustive list of DG HOME objectives set for 2019 and their results, see Annex 12.**

1.1 Commission General Objective: Towards a New Policy on Migration

The *European Agenda on Migration*¹³ sets out the strategic framework for migration policy in the period 2015–2020.

In 2019, DG HOME contributed to the Progress reports on the Implementation of the **European Agenda on Migration**¹⁴, taking stock of progress made over the past four years and setting out the measures still required to address immediate and future migration challenges.

DG HOME actively followed the negotiations on the new Home Affairs instruments under the next **Multiannual Financial Framework**; the Integrated Border Management Fund and the Asylum and Migration Fund relate to migration.

Deliverables relating to the General Objective are detailed in Annex 12.

Collectively, we have laid down the structural and operational foundations for a comprehensive European migration system that not only responds effectively and delivers results, but also promotes solidarity and responsibility. While there is still more work to do and the situation remains fragile, we are much better prepared than we were in 2015.

Former Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship
Dimitris Avramopoulos, 16 October 2019

¹² The programmes statements for AMIF and ISF are included in the Working Document Part I "Programme Statements of operational expenditure" annexed to the Draft General Budget of the European Union.

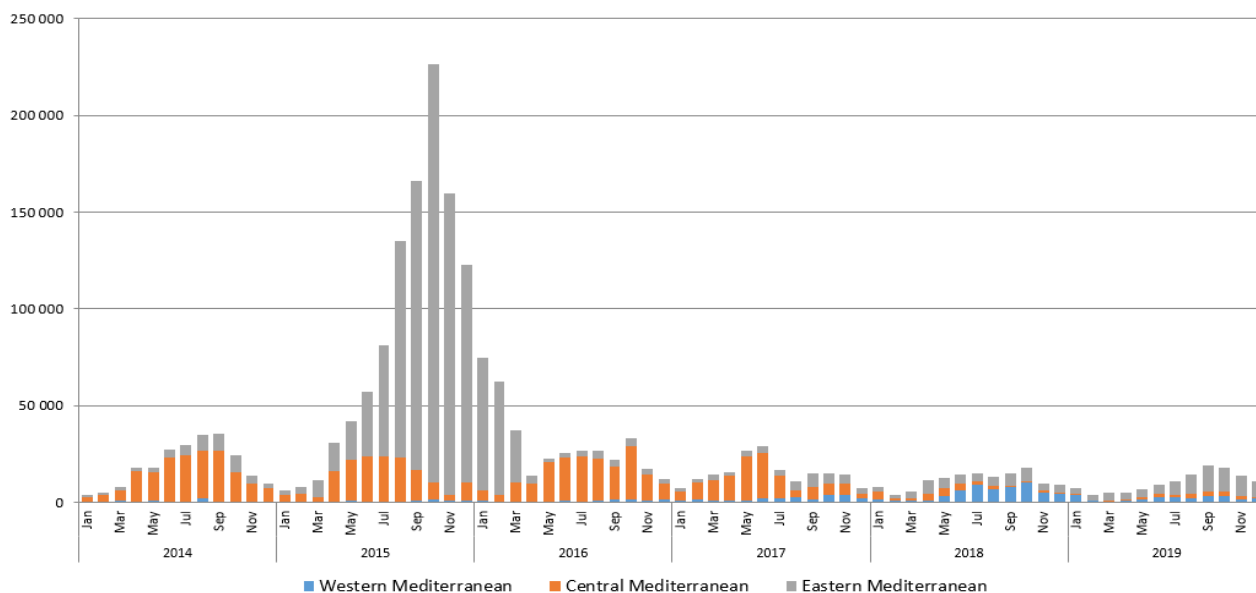
¹³ COM(2015) 240 final of 13.5.2015.

¹⁴ COM(2019) 126 final of 6.3.2019, and COM(2019) 481 final of 16.10.2019.

1.1.1 DG HOME Specific Objective: Reduce incentives for irregular migration

Under this Specific Objective, DG HOME worked in 2019 to address the root causes of irregular migration, enforce effective return, and fight against smuggling and trafficking; action was taken on both external and internal dimensions of migration policy. With support of DG HOME activities, the total number of detected irregular border crossings decreased further in 2019 to 142,000, compared to 149,000 in 2018¹⁵.

Irregular border crossings registered on the three main routes



Source: DG HOME computation of data from Frontex

➤ Addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in third countries

DG HOME is working with **countries of origin, transit and destination**, using an effective range of measures to address the root causes of irregular migration in its bilateral relations with third countries¹⁶, and plays a key role in a variety of wider migration processes and dialogues¹⁷.

High-level **dialogues** with partner countries are crucial to keep focus on migration and security. In 2019, DG HOME held/followed-up dialogues with **Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, China, Egypt** and **India**, prepared a renewed dialogue with **Mali**, and the terms of reference for a migration dialogue with **Iran**¹⁸.



The Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 was the first milestone in the implementation of the **Global Compact on Refugees**. DG HOME's contribution showcased EU efforts on **resettlement** and announced support for 30,000 new resettlement places in 2020.

DG HOME continued to **work closely with North African Countries** on migration and security, and monitored closely the implementation of the **integrated border management programmes** in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. By supporting the **EU-Africa**

¹⁵ Frontex

¹⁶ E.g. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, India, Ivory Coast, Mali, Moldova, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tunisia and Turkey.

¹⁷ Such as the [Budapest Process](#), the [Khartoum Process](#), the [Rabat Process](#), and the [Prague Process](#).

¹⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/38229/st06539-en19.pdf>

Trust Fund¹⁹ with **EUR 30 million** under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Union actions, DG HOME contributed in 2019 to shaping the strategic approach to countries in North of Africa. Financial support to specific areas in Morocco contributed to reducing the number of irregular migrants on the Western Mediterranean route.²⁰ To build up or strengthen asylum and reception systems and to address protection needs in African countries, DG HOME contracted in 2019 **EUR 19.5 million** through the **Regional Development and Protection Programme**, rolling out new actions in Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Sudan.

DG HOME also contributed to get migrants out of the dire situation they were facing in Libya, by giving support to the voluntary return and reintegration programme implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM – **EU Trust Fund for Africa** funded). It helped **9,800 migrants to return safely home from Libya** to 34 countries across Asia and Africa. DG HOME also supported the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in operating an emergency evacuation mechanism from Libya through which in 2019 over **2,000 of the most vulnerable persons in need of international protection were evacuated from Libya** to Niger, Rwanda, Romania and Italy.

In the EU neighbourhood, cooperation continued with Turkey under the **EU-Turkey Statement**. The Statement continued to deliver results in **reducing irregular arrivals and saving lives** in the Mediterranean. The number of arrivals to the Aegean islands increased however in the second half of the year. Despite this, the average number of daily arrivals in this period represents a **decrease of about 85%** when compared to the number of arrivals recorded in the two months before the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement (9 January–20 March 2016).

To maximise the impact of EU action on migration and enhance the engagement of the authorities on the ground on migration issues, **European Migration Liaison Officers** – reporting directly to DG HOME – were at the end of the year deployed in 11 partner countries, with recruitments ongoing for five more countries²¹. The Liaison Officers prepared 93 reports in 2019²², feeding the Commission with up-to-date, key migration related information.

Finally, an important step in 2019 for migration management in our external relations was the finalisation of the negotiations of the **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Belarus**, which led to the signature of the Agreements at the beginning of January 2020. DG HOME also followed up on the intention to launch a visa liberalisation dialogue with **Armenia**, but the unanimity needed that would allow the Commission to effectively launch the dialogue was not reached in the Council.

➤ **Fighting against smugglers**

The fight against migrant smuggling is a priority to prevent migrants from being exploited by criminal networks and to reduce incentives for irregular migration.

In the first half of 2019, DG HOME supported the inter-institutional negotiations on a proposal from 2018 to revise the **European network of Immigration Liaison Officers**.²³ The Regulation was adopted on 20 June and allows to for DG HOME to better coordinate staff posted in third countries (Member States' staff as well as the European Migration Liaison Officers) and thereby to better counter migrant smuggling. Work immediately took off to implement the Regulation: a Steering Board was set up and meetings of Immigration Liaison Officers were organised in third countries.

¹⁹ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/408/migration-partnership_en

²⁰ 26,687 irregular arrivals in 2019 compared to 57,568 in 2018, a 54% decrease.

²¹ In Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Serbia, Sudan, Tunisia. Candidates were identified and are in the recruitment process for the posts in Turkey, Pakistan, The Gambia, Egypt and Bangladesh.

²² There were several changes related to the European Migration Liaison Officers (numbers, persons) in 2019. The reports received covered every months and all countries.

²³ Regulation (EU) 2019/1240 on the creation of a European network of immigration liaison officers (OJ L 198, 25.7.2019).

With DG HOME support, the **European Migrant Smuggling Centre** in Europol provides an effective hub for operational cooperation between Member States aiming to arrest smugglers, take them to court and seize their vehicles. The Centre was complemented in July 2019 with a **Joint Liaison Task Force on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings**, making it possible for liaison officers from Member States to work even closer together on common investigations.

Discussions with third countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia) advanced with the aim to negotiate **cooperation agreements with Europol**, while technical negotiations with Turkey were concluded in October 2019. In addition, the Council also gave the Commission a mandate to start negotiations with New Zealand.

DG HOME is also working **bilaterally with key countries of origin and transit** to prevent and address migrant smuggling. Since 2016 so called **cooperation platforms on migrant smuggling**²⁴ are organised in Pakistan, Tunisia and Nigeria. As the European Migration Liaison Officers are located in key countries of origin and transit, they also foster important cooperation between local authorities and the EU.

A study²⁵ commissioned by DG HOME provides an **assessment of the needs and gaps** in the field of counter-migrant smuggling legislation and strategies in Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It aims to feed the design of future common operational partnerships on migrant smuggling with those countries.

A call for proposals of EUR 7.5 million under the Internal Security Fund-Police was launched and completed in 2019 with the aim of **strengthening cooperation on tackling migrant smuggling**. The awarded project will kick off in 2020 and is made up of several sub-projects involving EU countries (Austria, France, Netherlands, Germany, Italy) and third countries (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria, Horn of Africa and the African Police Cooperation Organisation).

➤ **Effective return policies**

For the asylum system to be credible, migrants with no right to stay in the EU need to be returned. Unsatisfactory return rates persist due to inefficient enforcement of EU return and readmission tools and cooperation instruments at national level, and an insufficient cooperation on readmission from main countries of origin. The return rate²⁶ for 2019 was 31,5% (compared to 35,6% in 2018). The insufficient enforcement of return decisions is due to a complex set of factors, including lack of cooperation of individuals subject to return procedure, administrative obstacles at Member State level, such as weak links between asylum and return procedures and substantial rates of absconding, and a lack of cooperation from third countries. Furthermore, Member States could make more use of increased cooperation with Frontex.

Carrying out returns is first and foremost the **responsibility of the Member States** that should use all available instruments to their full potential. At the same time, the **willingness of third countries** to accept returning citizens is crucial. DG HOME took

Figures showcasing action against smuggling of human beings

In 2019 Europol ...

- ...supported*
 - **56** Action Days, leading to **600** arrests
 - **104** priority criminal cases
- ...processed*
 - **20,500** contributions of intelligence (18,200 in 2018)
- ...produced*
 - **525** operational analytical products to assist Member States in investigations linked to migrant smuggling (409 in 2018)

²⁴ With the participation of Member States, EU agencies, EU delegations, International Organisations and national authorities.

²⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/dr0618306n_en.pdf

²⁶ The rate of effective return measures the % of effected returns to third countries compared to return decisions issued by the Member States. Data source: Eurostat.

action to provide all necessary support to increase the return rate, on the ground as well as to improve the legal and policy framework. During the year, the DG:

- pushed for the adoption of the **recast of the Return Directive**²⁷, on which the Council adopted a partial general approach on 7 June; the European Parliament did however not adopt its position before the end of the legislative period;
- worked with Member States to ensure that all necessary technical steps were completed to make the Regulation on the use of the **Schengen Information System** for the return of irregular migrants²⁸ operational as soon as possible;
- performed on-site visits, as part of the **Schengen evaluation mechanism** to assess Member States' return practices, foster compliance with the relevant acquis, and achieve more effective return policies;
- supported the inter-institutional negotiations on **the European Border and Coast Guard Agency** (Frontex) Regulation²⁹, adopted on 13 November, with a strong mandate on return, aimed at strengthening the Agency's support to Member States, enabling it to coordinate all aspects of return and to act as the operational hub for return management at EU level;
- supported the inter-institutional negotiations on the **Visa Code Regulation**³⁰ adopted on 20 June, which, besides facilitating procedures for legitimate travellers and promoting mobility, will allow visa policy to be used as a tool to foster cooperation from non-EU countries on return and readmission; the Regulation applies as of February 2020;
- worked with Member States and non-governmental organisations under the *European Migration Network – Return Expert Group* umbrella on improving return practices, with topics including elements on effective reintegration, alternatives to detention (also in cooperation with the Council of Europe), last minute asylum applications (in cooperation with EASO and Frontex), detention conditions, and Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration;
- worked with key countries of origin and transit and with EU Member States to improve cooperation on **readmission** by:
 - ensuring the implementation of the 23 existing instruments: 17 Readmission Agreements³¹, as well as six practical arrangements concluded with countries that were not ready to negotiate formal Readmission Agreements³²;
 - continuing negotiations with a number of third countries with which the Commission has a mandate to negotiate Readmission Agreements. Negotiations were finalised with **Belarus** and the readmission agreement is pending conclusion. Negotiations are ongoing with **China, Tunisia** and **Nigeria**, even though they have been hold for most of 2019 with the two latter due to the electoral periods in those countries. Discussions have not yet been re-launched with **Morocco**, but could restart once all the conditions for the relaunch of a wider dialogue on migration and mobility are in place. With **Jordan** and **Algeria** negotiations of a readmission agreement stalled and it seems unlikely that they will be launched in the foreseeable future. In addition, engagement on return and readmission continued with **Ghana** as part of a more holistic approach on migration (but has shown little prospect for concrete steps towards formalising cooperation in the field of readmission practices), and the dialogue with **Iraq** has been on-hold due to the country's

²⁷ COM(2018) 634 final of 12.9.2018.

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2018/1860 on the use of the Schengen Information System for the return of illegally staying third-country nationals (OJ L 312, 7.12.2018).

²⁹ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019).

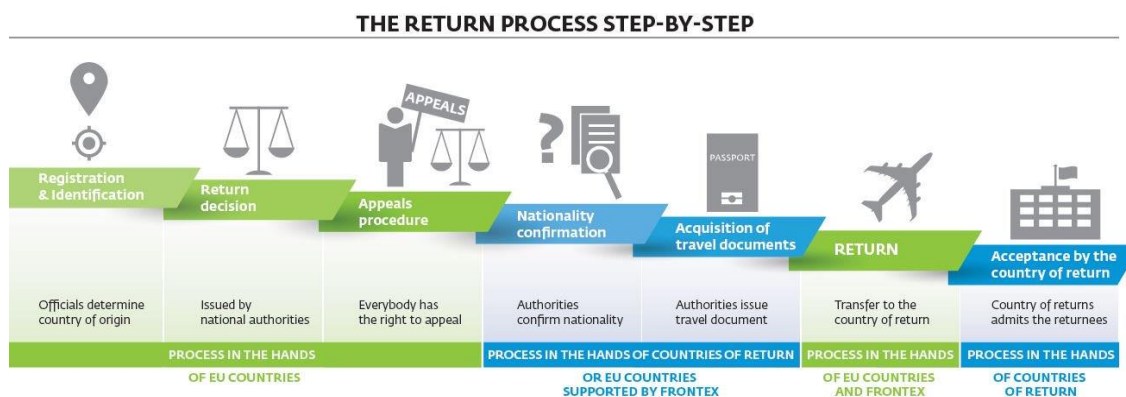
³⁰ Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019).

³¹ With Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Georgia, Hong Kong, Macao, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Ukraine.

³² With Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea, Ethiopia, The Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire.

political situation;

- supported third countries through specific tools, such as readmission case management systems, which **improved their capacity to answer to readmission requests** (by automatizing the workflow and reducing bottlenecks); such support is financed by the Readmission Capacity Building Facility under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Union actions, and implemented by the International Organisation for Migration;
- worked on a continuous basis with Member States readmission practitioners and European Liaison Officers to build and transfer good practices on readmission processes, and to give individual operational support to Member States in their relations with third countries of return.



Picture: Frontex

With HOME's support, the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** (Frontex) organised 330 return operations with charter flights in 2019 (down from 345 in 2018, but well above the target of 130 set in the 2016–2020 Strategic Plan), **returning 10,900 persons** (compared to 12,200 in 2018) to their countries of origin. In addition, the number of people returned by scheduled flights tripled to almost 4,800 persons (to 81 countries), increasing efficiency and reducing costs.³³ It is worth recalling that the Agency can only assist Member States to implement enforceable return decisions issued by competent national authorities.

Under the EU-Turkey Statement, returns of **Syrians to Turkey** have continued, but at a very slow pace. In 2019, 30 **Syrians** were returned from the Greek islands to Turkey. In total, **1,995 persons were returned to Turkey between March 2016 and the end of 2019** under the EU-Turkey Statement.

In the financial year 2019³⁴, Member States returned 64,500 persons with support of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, with a total of 276,140 persons returned since 2014 by means of voluntary and non-voluntary returns.³⁵

In addition, DG HOME provided financial support to Member States for supporting the return of irregular migrants through **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programmes**. 23,530 returned migrants received pre and/or post return reintegration assistance co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, a figure which remained stable compared to 2018.³⁶

In total, EUR 998.6 million have been allocated to priorities in return (voluntary and non-

³³ Data source: Frontex.

³⁴ 16 October 2018–15 October 2019.

³⁵ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

³⁶ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

voluntary) under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund in 2014–2020 and EUR 457 million have been spent so far, reaching an absorption rate of 45.8%. In 2019, Member States declared payments for EUR 90.25 million.

To ensure compliance with human rights and the dignity of the returnees, Member States are according to the Return Directive³⁷ requested to set up an independent body to monitor returns³⁸. In 2019, 6,099 persons benefited from training in return-related topics in Member States.³⁹

1.1.2 DG HOME Specific Objective: Effective border management – Save lives and secure the external borders

➤ *Strengthening the protection of EU's external borders*

Under the policy steer of DG HOME, the **European Border and Coast Guard Agency** (Frontex) pursued in 2019 an effective presence of patrolling assets at sea, thereby contributing to saving people in distress and fighting against irregular migration and cross-border crime. DG HOME worked very closely with the Agency, including through participation in the Management Board and various expert networks.

A major step forward to strengthen the protection of the external borders was made in December 2019, with the entry into force of the **Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard**⁴⁰. DG HOME facilitated the successful inter-institutional negotiations.



WHAT IS NEW?



A 10,000-STRONG STANDING CORPS

The new standing corps of 10,000 border guards – to be rolled out gradually – will ensure sufficient resources for the Agency.



OWN EQUIPMENT

The Agency will acquire its own equipment, such as vessels, planes and vehicles, available to be deployed at all times.



EXPANDED TASKS AND POWERS

The standing corps will be able to carry out executive tasks such as identity checks and authorising or refusing entry – only under the authority and control of the host Member State.



ANTENNA OFFICES

Temporary antenna offices can be set up in EU Member States and third countries to support operational activities of the European Border and Coast Guard.



MORE SUPPORT ON RETURN

The Agency will support Member States in return procedures, including in collecting information necessary for issuing return decisions and identifying non-EU nationals who have no right to stay, acquiring travel documents from non-EU countries, as well as by organising and financing return operations.



COOPERATION WITH NON-EU COUNTRIES

The Agency will be able to launch joint operations and deploy border guards to countries outside the EU and beyond the neighbouring countries.

³⁷ Directive 2008/115/EC on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals (OJ L 348, 24.12.2008).

³⁸ The monitoring body decides which return operations to monitor, taking into account resources available and the priorities set; for example monitoring return of families and vulnerable people.

³⁹ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

⁴⁰ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019).

The new Regulation makes the **European Border Surveillance System** (EUROSUR) the 'backbone' of the European Border and Coast Guard, bringing together Frontex and the Member States' authorities responsible for European Integrated Border Management.

The new standing corps will be ready for deployment from 2021, and will then gradually reach its full capacity of 10,000 border guards.

Close cooperation with third countries is essential to better protect the EU's external borders, manage irregular migration and enhance security. An important milestone was achieved in May, when the Status Agreement between the European Union and **Albania** entered into force, followed by the immediate deployment of Frontex teams and equipment to the border of Albania with Greece. Thereafter, one status agreement was signed in October with **Montenegro** and one in November with **Serbia**. In addition, a status agreement was initialled in January with **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, adding to the one initialled in 2018 with **North Macedonia**.

EUR 2.3 billion has been allocated to Member States in their National Programmes under Internal Security Fund – Borders and Visa in the period 2014–2020 to support actions for an **integrated and further harmonised border management system** and a common visa policy. While EUR 313 million of expenditure was declared by Member States in the financial year 2019, the cumulative expenditure supported by the Fund from 2014 to 2019 amounted to EUR 937.9 million. This equals an implementation rate of 40%. Which is explained by the significant top-ups provided in the past 3 years for IT system developments. These are long-term projects, and usually costs are declared at the end of the projects. Special attention will however be given to ensure that all the funding made available will be absorbed by the end of the programming period (December 2022).



The above actions aiming to reinforce the controls at external borders, reflect the commitment to **preserve the freedom of movement** within the Schengen area while ensuring the security of citizens. However, the decision to introduce **border controls at internal borders** belongs to the

Member States, and five of them – Austria, Germany, Denmark, France and Sweden as well as the Schengen associated country Norway – decided in 2019 to prolong internal border controls until May 2020. In March 2020, a number of Member States introduced in addition temporary border controls in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic evolving across Europe.

Based on the results of the **Schengen evaluation** process performed by DG HOME, the Commission reported in October that **Croatia** had taken the measures needed to ensure that the necessary conditions for the full application of Schengen rules and standards were met. In December the Schengen evaluation of Slovakia marked the successful completion of the **first five-year multiannual evaluation programme (2015-2019)** of the Schengen Member States managed by the Commission.

In DG HOME's 2019 reorganisation, a new unit (HOME.B.2) was set up to be fully dedicated to Schengen evaluation and monitoring. This aims to speed up the correction of weaknesses detected during Schengen evaluations, in particular thanks to a closer monitoring of the remedial action plans provided by the evaluated Member States.

In 2019, DG HOME continued to contribute to the **EU Integrated Political Crisis Response Arrangements** activated in 2015 in response to the migration crisis, among others through participating at roundtables and producing weekly, restricted reports on the migration and refugee situation. DG HOME also continued its work on a possible monitoring and early warning mechanism for migration flows, in order to improve prevention and preparedness.

In this context, in December 2019, a feasibility study was launched on a **forecasting and early warning tool for migration based on Artificial Intelligence**.

Disembarkation and *ad hoc* relocation

Disembarkation events in the Central Mediterranean, including those performed by vessels of non-governmental organisations, clearly demonstrate the need to find **European solutions** for a sustainable approach to migration management **based on solidarity and common responsibility**. DG HOME was in the forefront and coordinated the relocation exercises following 24 disembarkation events throughout the year. In connection to those events, Member States⁴¹ pledged to relocate 1,800 migrants⁴². These exercises clearly show the **added value of European action**, with receiving Member States participating voluntarily, EU agencies providing support (in particular the European Asylum Support Office), the Commission coordinating, and EU funding⁴³ supporting Member States with the disembarkations and with putting in place procedures for processing and relocation.

Temporary arrangements on disembarkation

DG HOME has been actively encouraging and supporting the development of **temporary arrangements** for disembarkation, pending an agreement on a long term sustainable system linked to the reform of the European Asylum System. At a ministerial meeting in Malta on 23 September, Ministers from Italy, France, Malta and Germany in the presence of the Finnish Presidency and the Commission/DG HOME set out the contours of a predictable and structural set of arrangements. These were subsequently discussed with all Member States at the Home Affairs Council on 8 October, where the Commission encouraged as many Member States as possible to subscribe to this solidarity effort. Thereafter, the DG HOME convened three technical meetings with EU Agencies and Member States interested in the voluntary relocation scheme, to discuss existing practice and explore areas of further improvements. In November, at these technical meetings, a common understanding was reached on **standard operating procedures** to be applied for relocation.

➤ ***Use of IT systems and technologies for Smart Borders to better ensure internal security and facilitate the border crossing of bona fide travellers***

On 20 May, two Regulations⁴⁴ were adopted to make **European security, migration and border management information systems work together** in a more intelligent and targeted way. These interoperability measures entered into force on 11 June and are set to ensure border guards and police officers access to the right information whenever and wherever they need it. However, interoperability and all the innovation it entails **can only make a difference on the ground if each Member State fully implements the related legislation**. DG HOME and the Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) provide Member States with expertise and best practices, using a network of national coordinators and developing a scorecard to enable effective monitoring and coordination arrangements.

The tasks relating to interoperability increase eu-LISA's needs for resources. The Agency's staff increased from 186 persons in 2018 to 271 in 2019, and will reach 370 in 2022. eu-LISA's



⁴¹ In 2019, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Spain, participated in at least one of the

⁴² 1,005 had been relocated at the end of 2019.

⁴³ In 2019, emergency assistance of EUR 475,000 was granted

to carry out voluntary relocations of up to 500 persons from Malta to EU Member and Associated States. A request for extension of this project was submitted on 31.12.2019 proposing the relocation of additional 500 persons for EUR 475,000 more.

⁴⁴ Regulation (EU) 2019/817 establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of borders and visa; and Regulation (EU) 2019/818 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration (OJ L 135, 22.5.2019).

budget increased by EUR 105 million, and reached EUR 296.6 million in 2019.

In 2019, Member States **consulted the Schengen Information System around 6.7 billion times**⁴⁵ compared to 6.1 billion times in 2018 and 4 billion times in 2016. This reduced the risk that people who pose a security threat, including returning EU nationals, cross borders unnoticed. At the same time, the number of hits made was 283,700, a 6% increase compared to 2018.

The European Commission provided the funds for seven research projects in 2019 worth a total of EUR 39.5 million in EU contribution within the Border and External Security call of the **Horizon 2020 Secure Societies Challenge Work Programme**, to support actions to develop technologies, tools and methodologies which contribute to securing EU external borders. These projects are managed directly by the Research Executive Agency.

In 2019, DG HOME allocated a total of EUR 212 million in the form of top ups under the Internal Security Fund–Borders & Visa to the Member States' National Programmes to



EU funded border management project in Latvia



Automated Border Control gates in Denmark

support the implementation of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (EUR 96.5 million), the Schengen Information System-recast (EUR 36.8 million), and the overall development of IT systems in general (EUR 79 million) as a result of the contribution from the Schengen Associated Countries to the EU budget.

➤ **Supporting the hotspot approach**

In 2019, the number of arrivals to Italy decreased by 51% compared to the year before, while the number of arrivals to the Greek islands increased by 87% with more than 60,000⁴⁶ migrants arriving irregularly to the Aegean islands. DG HOME followed the evolution very closely throughout the year and continued to **support the Greek authorities operationally, technically and financially** to address the challenges linked to the increased arrivals.

While the Member States remain responsible for the hotspots, DG HOME was in constant contact with the Greek authorities and other stakeholders to **accelerate the processing of asylum applications and return procedures** in order to alleviate the pressure on the islands. By the end of 2019, there were despite these efforts 42,000 migrants present in the hotspots. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund supported in 2019 the **transfer of 37,700 persons** from the islands to the mainland (compared to 29,540 in 2018), the increase of reception capacity and the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme. Moreover, the Greek government and its partners implemented projects for a total amount of EUR 376 million received from DG HOME to improve the conditions in the hotspots; among others to upgrade infrastructure, deliver non-food items and cleaning services, make the hotspots winter-safe, deploy medical staff on the islands and accelerate the asylum procedure. Furthermore, under the Greek AMIF National Programme there are two projects amounting to EUR 79 million (EU contribution approximately 59 million) for the provision of catering and cleaning services

⁴⁵ Data Source: SIS II 2019 annual statistics (eu-LISA doc. 2020-074 – March 2020).

⁴⁶ DG HOME computation of data from the Hellenic Police.

in the Reception and Identification Centres of the Eastern Aegean. Particular focus was given to create places suitable for vulnerable migrants. In view of the urgency of the situation in the second half of the year, DG HOME facilitated bilateral assistance to Greece from several Member States and international organisations.

In September, Greece launched an initiative for the relocation of 2,500 unaccompanied minors from Greece to other Member States. Following the difficult situation at the Greek-Turkish borders in March 2020, ten Member States had at the time of writing offered to help by pledging up to 1,600 places, and DG HOME had assumed the coordination of these efforts.

Faced with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic evolving across Europe as of March 2020, DG HOME has been making full use of its established mechanisms, funding possibilities and presence on the ground in order to support Greece in responding as effectively as possible to the challenges for Greece's migration management system, notably on the overcrowded hotspot islands.

As regards Italy, the Italian government and its partners were implementing projects for a total amount of EUR 12.4 million EU contribution in the hotspots, mainly in order to provide ambulances and other medical equipment, check the arriving migrants to prevent terrorism and fight smuggling, and ensure interpretation/inter-cultural mediation services for identification and registration purposes.

To support Member States, DG HOME deployed in 2019 two staff members in Rome, eight in Athens, four on the Greek hotspot islands, one in Madrid, and as of September one in Nicosia.

Since 2015, **Greece** has in total benefitted from **EUR 1.6 billion** from Home Affairs Funds – the largest financial support ever provided for migration. The funding allocated to **Italy** amounts to over **EUR 1 billion**. **Bulgaria** has been allocated in total EUR 320 million; **Spain** EUR 802 million; and **Cyprus** EUR 104 million from Home Affairs funds.

1.1.3 DG HOME Specific Objective: Enhance protection and solidarity

➤ Strengthening the Common European Asylum System

According to Eurostat data, **721,000 asylum applications** (of which 657,000 first time applications) were lodged in the EU in 2019. This represents an **11% increase compared to 2018** (but 45% less than the peak in 2015), indicating that the pressure on national migration systems remained at high level. At the end of 2019, 898,675 applications for international protection were still under consideration by the national authorities. At the end of 2018, this figure was 889,145.⁴⁷

One of the priorities identified in DG HOME's 2019 Management Plan was to reach an agreement on a reform of the **Common European Asylum System**. The European Parliament and the Council could not reach an agreement on the package before the European elections in May 2019, mainly due to diverging views on the Dublin reform and the Asylum Procedure Regulation in the Council.

Upon taking office, President von der Leyen proposed a fresh start **through a new Pact on Migration and Asylum to be presented in 2020**. The objective is to set out a reform building on a holistic approach, looking at new forms of solidarity between Member States; a sustainable, reliable and permanent approach to search and rescue; legal pathways to the European Union; strengthened cooperation with countries of origin and transit; and protection of external borders.

In the context of monitoring the compliance with EU asylum rules, in 2019 **DG HOME referred Hungary to the Court of Justice** over legislation which criminalises activities that support asylum applicants and restricts the right to seek asylum. The Commission

⁴⁷ Data source: Eurostat.

pursued **infringements against Member States which have not ensured the full transposition of the asylum Directives**, either by initiating new procedures or sending reasoned opinions. A new infringement procedure was launched against **Hungary for not providing food to persons in the transit zones**, whose applications for international protection have been rejected and who remain in the transit zone for the purpose of return. This constitutes in the Commission's view a violation of the Return Directive and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In 2019, DG HOME continued cooperating very closely with the **European Asylum Support Office (EASO)** and supported it in delivering its mandate and work programme, including through active participation in EASO's Management Board. EASO further strengthened its **operational support to Greece, Cyprus and Malta**, including through a first Operating Plan with Malta agreed in June. In addition, the Agency announced in January 2020 that it will double its presence in Greece throughout the year. The Support Office applies tailored measures in providing support to unaccompanied children.

➤ **Protecting children and other vulnerable migrants**

In December 2019, the Spanish authorities estimated that approximately 13,400 unaccompanied children were present in the country. In Italy this figure was 6,000, and in Greece 5,300 – of which about 2,000 in the hotspots. In Italy, unaccompanied children are transferred to specialised and dedicated reception facilities almost immediately after disembarkation.

In 2019, **Greece** developed with DG HOME support a strategy for unaccompanied children. In September, the Greek authorities called on other Member States to **relocate 2,500** of these children. However, the response by the other Member States was scarce. **Specific facilities** for vulnerable migrants exist on Lesbos, Kos and Leros. **Child protection officers** are present on all hotspot islands. With financial support from Home Affairs Funds, actions were taken to ensure unaccompanied children safety in the hotspots. EUR 50 million from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund are dedicated to support Greece in providing up to 2,000 places in shelters dedicated for unaccompanied children. The call has been open since 2017 and at the end of 2019 more than a half of the forecasted places had been created. Considering the end of the programming period and the limited budget availability under the National Programme, priority is now given to support the 1,200 places already created.

In parallel, DG HOME keeps putting pressure to the Greek authorities to increase the overall accommodation capacity for children. Through a pilot project, approximately EUR 2.2 million were provided to set up apartments for Semi-Independent Living for teenagers above 16 years. Moreover, in September 2019, DG HOME provided an additional **EUR 4.2 million** to create additional **safe zones for unaccompanied children** in the Reception and Identification Centres. But the situation for the children remains difficult.



Supporting refugee children in Bulgaria

In the last five years, 539 project activities targeting children in migration were implemented under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The total estimated EU contribution is EUR 550 million.

In the course of 2019, the **European Asylum Support Office Vulnerability Expert Network** continued its activities relating to the identification and determination of support needs for various categories of vulnerable applicants,

among others by starting the development of a **vulnerability assessment tool**⁴⁸. Agencies also take action against trafficking in human beings in line with the commitments in the 2018 Joint Statement signed by the European Asylum Support Office, the Agency for Fundamental Rights, and Frontex.

➤ **A structured EU system on resettlement**

Resettlement schemes provide a legal and safe pathway to the EU for **vulnerable people in need of international protection**. A common strategic approach forms the basis for the EU resettlement schemes. Good progress has been made in relation to the ongoing EU scheme⁴⁹, under which Member States have pledged to resettle over 50,000 persons. From December 2017 until end-2019, more than 43,800 of these resettlements were carried out to 17 Member States, **approximately 22,800** of them in 2019.

Resettlements continued also under the **EU-Turkey Statement** with more than **7,000 Syrian refugees** in need of protection being resettled in 2019. The total number of resettlements under the EU-Turkey Statement, which started in April 2016, had hence reached close to 25,700 (a part of these places have already been counted under other EU resettlement schemes).

In the common resettlement schemes, Member States get financial support to help implementation. The total amount claimed by Member States from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund on resettlement and relocation in the period 2014–2019 was equal to EUR 962.9 million.

Trends suggest that global resettlement needs are likely to remain high in years to come, which will require continuous implementation of EU resettlement efforts. The Commission has called on Member States to continue the collective resettlements in 2020. Member States have pledged more than 30,000 resettlement places for 2020, confirming their continued commitment to resettlement as a safe and legal pathway into the EU.

In the form of top ups to the Member States' National Programmes under the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund, DG HOME provided a total of EUR 97.6 million to support 50% of the pledges and in 2020 further funding will be made available for the remaining pledges.

1.1.4 DG HOME Specific Objective: A new policy on legal migration to address skill shortages in the EU and enhance effective integration

➤ **Well-managed legal migration and visa policy**

DG HOME supported in 2019 the interinstitutional negotiations on the amended **Visa Code** Regulation⁵⁰ aiming to harmonise Member States' practices for visa applications and link certain procedural facilitations to third countries' level of cooperation on readmission. The Regulation was successfully **adopted** on 17 April. **This completed the reform of the rules on Schengen Visas**, which was initiated in March 2018 based on DG HOME legislative proposals, facilitating the process for issuing visas for bona fide travellers for short stays and providing more options for mobility for third-country nationals, whilst strengthening security standards and reducing irregular migration. The



⁴⁸ The aim is to gather precise information on vulnerability assessments carried out by actors in different stages of the asylum procedure and reception. The tool will support authorities and organisations for their work with persons with special needs, by standardising and tailor the process to the needs of each individual.

⁴⁹ C(2017) 6504 of 27.9.2017: Commission Recommendation on enhancing legal pathways for persons in need of international protection.

⁵⁰ Regulation (EU) 2019/1155 of 20 June 2019 amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019).

reform is to be complemented by the adoption of the DG HOME proposal from 2018 to strengthen and upgrade the existing **Visa Information System**⁵¹, expected in the first half of 2020.

In the framework of Brexit preparedness, the proposal to amend the **Visa Regulation**⁵² to include the UK on the visa exempt list was adopted on 9 April and will become applicable once EU law ceases to apply to the UK.

Negotiations on the proposed reform to make the EU **Blue Card**⁵³ more attractive and thereby act against labour shortages in certain sectors stalled during 2019 due to disagreement between the European Parliament and the Council on a number of key political points.

As flagged above (section 1.1.1.) the negotiations on **visa facilitation** with **Belarus** were successfully finalised in June and the agreements were signed in January 2020. Progress on visa facilitation agreements with **China** and **Tunisia** is however slower than expected due to delays on the side of the negotiating partners. The legislative proposals put forward in 2016 on **visa exemption** for **Kosovo** and **Turkey** are blocked in the Council.

The framework on **legal migration at EU level** as a whole has been assessed through a comprehensive evaluation ('fitness check'), published on 29 March⁵⁴. The results will feed into the ongoing reflection on the future developments of the legal migration acquis.

Following the Communication on adapting the common visa policy to new challenges⁵⁵, the study on the feasibility and implications of options to **digitalise visa processing**⁵⁶ was finalised in September. In the light of the feasibility study and in view of preparing further steps, the Commission created a Working Group of the Visa Committee on digitalisation of visa procedures. The Working Group will in 2020-2021 contribute to developing a proof of concept and a prototype for a possible **future online application portal**, in close cooperation with eu-LISA.

➤ **Effective integration**

DG HOME supports Member States in their efforts to integrate third-country nationals, through funding and by working with a broad range of stakeholders to promote integration. The aim is to make **migration an opportunity for both third-country nationals and host societies**.

In 2019, cooperation with local and regional authorities has been strengthened in the area of integration. In particular, DG HOME has reinforced its cooperation with the Committee of Regions on integration, supporting the initiative **Cities and Regions for integration**. Under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, DG HOME financed in 2019, for a total of EUR 14.5 million, the creation of **eight transnational networks** of cities and regions for cooperation on integration which will start in 2020 and run during three years. On 3 December, DG HOME organised a large conference on integration at local level with more than 400 representatives from local and regional authorities across Europe. DG HOME also continued its



Integration project in Italy

⁵¹ COM(2018) 302 final of 16.5.2018.

⁵² Regulation (EU) 2019/592 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement, as regards the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union (OJ L 103I, 12.4.2019).

⁵³ COM(2016) 378 final of 7.6.2016.

⁵⁴ SWD(2019) 1056 final of 29.3.2019.

⁵⁵ COM(2018)0251 final of 14.3.2018.

⁵⁶ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2837/510316>

support to Member States through the **European Integration Network**.

The **gap between the employment rates of third-country nationals compared to EU nationals** – one of DG HOME's impact indicators – is used to measure progress in integrating third country nationals in EU societies. **In 2019, the gap narrowed** to 14.0 percentage points (compared to 14.6 in 2018) as the increase of the employment rate was higher for third-country nationals (60.6% in 2019 compared to 59.3% in 2018) than for EU nationals (74.6% in 2019 compared to 73.9% in 2018).⁵⁷

In the **European Semester** exercise 2018–2019, four countries (France, Belgium, Austria and Germany) received country-specific recommendations relating to the integration of third-country nationals. These recommendations were based on the input DG HOME provided to the respective Country Reports.

DG HOME supports Member States in their efforts to integrate third country nationals. In the period 2014–2020, EUR 1.02 billion have been allocated under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to support measures on **integration and legal migration**. In 2019, Member States reported expenditure for **EUR 101 million** in relation to integration and legal migration under the national programmes of the Fund.

➤ **Maximising the development benefits for countries of origin**

In 2019, DG HOME continued promoting a comprehensive approach on migration and mobility with third countries in line with the Partnership Framework⁵⁸.

Under the Mobility Partnership Facility⁵⁹, DG HOME ensured in 2019 funding for **four labour migration pilots for about EUR 6.2 million**. These projects involve **Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Nigeria** and are run by four Member States (Belgium, Spain, France and Lithuania). Close synergies have been established between the pilots and a project focusing on labour mobility funded under the North Africa window of the EU Trust Fund⁶⁰. This latter project, which also started in 2019, aims to create legal pathways from Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt to the EU.

In addition, DG HOME supported ten EU Member States in carrying out projects in Eastern and Southern neighbourhood countries that have signed **Mobility Partnership Joint Declarations**⁶¹ (based on mutual offers of commitments and project initiatives covering mobility, migration and asylum).

1.2 Commission General Objective: An area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust

The *European Agenda on Security*⁶² adopted in 2015, sets out the strategic framework for the period 2015–2020.

DG HOME coordinated in 2019 preparation of three **Progress Reports** on the Security Union⁶³. They recap the progress made on the main building blocks of the Security Union, including the closing of information gaps, building digital and electoral resilience, denying terrorists the means to act and addressing radicalisation.

Over the past few years, we have made substantial progress in enhancing our collective security. It is by working together and responding in a coordinated way that we can best address today's complex and multi-faceted security challenges from terrorism, cybercrime and disinformation. But there is more to do.

Former Commissioner for the Security Union
Julian King, 30 October 2019

⁵⁷ Data source: Eurostat.

⁵⁸ https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet_ec_format_migration_partnership_framework_update_2.pdf

⁵⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/global-approach-to-migration/mobility-partnership-facility_en

⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa_en

⁶¹ Morocco (2013), Tunisia (2014), Jordan (2014).

⁶² COM(2015)185 final of 28.4.2015.

⁶³ COM(2019) 145 final of 20.3.2019, COM(2019) 353 final of 24.7.2019, and COM(2019) 552 final of 30.10.2019.

It has become increasingly clear that today's security challenges – whether it is terrorism, organised crime, cyberattacks, disinformation or other evolving cyber-enabled threats – are **common threats**. Driven by the needs of national authorities working on keeping citizens safe, the EU-level support has focused on **legislative and operational measures where joint action can have an impact on the security of Member States**.

One of the areas concerned is the strong **protection of the external borders**, which is a determining factor for security in the area of free movement without internal border controls. In December 2019, the **Regulation on a further strengthened and fully equipped European Border and Coast Guard**⁶⁴ was adopted (see section 1.1.2).

In 2019, DG HOME actively followed the negotiations on the new Home Affairs instruments under the next **Multiannual Financial Framework**; for security, this is the Internal Security Fund.

Relating to financing provided via **Horizon 2020 Secure Societies research grants**, 22 projects covered by EUR 134 million of EU contribution targeted this General Objective directly or indirectly. The grants are managed by the Research Executive Agency⁶⁵.

Deliverables relating to the General Objectives are detailed in Annex 12.

1.2.1 DG HOME Specific Objective: A strong EU response to tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation

Under this Objective, DG HOME facilitated in 2019 the interinstitutional negotiations for several important legislative acts:

- EU Member States exchange more and more information. Responding to the operational needs, **interoperability of EU information systems**⁶⁶ will lead to faster, more systematic access to information for law enforcement officers, border guards and migration officials, thus contributing to improving internal security and border management.
- Firm action was also taken to **close down the space in which terrorists operate**: DG HOME facilitated interinstitutional negotiations that led to the adoption of proposals that make it harder for terrorists and other criminals to access **explosives**⁶⁷ and **financing**⁶⁸, and that restrict their **movement**⁶⁹.
- The interinstitutional negotiations are still on-going on DG HOME's proposal from May 2018 to **strengthen and upgrade the existing Visa Information System**⁷⁰.
- When it comes to **law enforcement access to electronic evidence**, further efforts are needed to support and facilitate investigations in cross-border cases. The European Parliament has yet to adopt its negotiating position adopt its negotiating position on the Commission's legislative proposals from 2018⁷¹.
- The proposal from 2016 to extend the scope of **Eurodac**⁷² is part of the reform proposal of the Common European Asylum System, on which the European Parliament and the Council did not reach any agreement. DG HOME is involved in the reflection process to identify a way forward in this area that started upon appointment of the new Commission.

⁶⁴ Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 on the European Border and Coast Guard (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019).

⁶⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/research-executive-agency_en

⁶⁶ Regulation (EU) 2019/817 and Regulation (EU) 2019/818 (OJ L 135, 22.5.2019).

⁶⁷ Regulation (EU) 2019/1148 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors (OJ L 186, 11.7.2019).

⁶⁸ Directive (EU) 2019/1153 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences (OJ L 186, 11.7.2019).

⁶⁹ Introduction of systematic checks carried out at the external borders on all citizens using the Schengen Information System.

⁷⁰ COM (2018) 302 final of 16.5.2018.

⁷¹ COM(2018) 225 final and COM(2018) 226 final, of 17.4.2018.

⁷² COM (2016) 272 final of 4.5.2016.

- The internet has been a crucial battleground for terrorist action in the 21st century. To prevent the dissemination of **terrorist content online**, DG HOME supported the interinstitutional negotiations launched in October on a legislative proposal⁷³, which would make it **mandatory for internet platforms to take down terrorist content within one hour** upon receipt of a reasoned request by competent authorities, and to take proactive measures proportionate to the level of exposure to terrorist content. The European Parliament and the Council have however not yet reached an agreement on the proposal.

In relation to terrorist content online, DG HOME worked in parallel on **voluntary partnerships** with online platforms. The participants of the **EU Internet Forum** committed to an **EU Crisis Protocol**⁷⁴ – a rapid response mechanism to contain viral spread of terrorist and violent extremist content online. Work is ongoing in cooperation with Europol regarding the Protocol's implementation.

Agreed measures will however only bring full benefits to security if all Member States ensure their swift and complete **implementation**. To this end, DG HOME is actively supporting Member States in the implementation of EU legislation, including through funding and by facilitating the exchange of best practices.

In 2019, the DG took further steps to support the work of the **Radicalisation Awareness Network** and continued to support the **European Strategic Communications Network**. The former issued in 2019 fact books on Islamist extremism⁷⁵ and far right extremism⁷⁶ and a manual on rehabilitation of radicalised and terrorist offenders⁷⁷, all priority topics identified by Member States. In 2019, DG HOME further increased support to and cooperation between cities, in particular by launching the initiative **EU cities against radicalisation**. To support Member States in **protecting public spaces**, DG HOME among others developed best practices for authorities and private operators⁷⁸. Under the Internal Security Fund, DG HOME financed in 2019, for a total of EUR 9.7 million, eight transnational projects on protection of public spaces and critical infrastructures, as well as the second phase of the civil society empowerment programme with eight projects of EUR 5.7 million.



To strengthen the EU's **external action in the fight against terrorism**, DG HOME engaged with priority third countries and international partners⁷⁹. Priority regions were the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa as well as the Sahel. DG HOME also supported Member States in relation to border management to prevent any undetected return of **foreign terrorist fighters**.

The **EU-U.S. Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme Agreement** was reviewed, and DG HOME published in July the joint review report⁸⁰. It found that the programme yields positive results – providing leads that were instrumental in advancing investigations on terrorist attacks in the EU – and essential controls continue to be properly implemented.

Substantial progress was made during the year in the negotiations between the EU and

⁷³ COM (2018) 640 final of 12.9.2018.

⁷⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_19_6009

⁷⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_factbook_islamist_extremism_december_2019_en.pdf

⁷⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_fre_factbook_20191205_en.pdf

⁷⁷ To be published in the second quarter of 2020.

⁷⁸ SWD(2019)140 final of 20.3.2019.

⁷⁹ United Nations, Interpol, G7, G20, the Global Coalition, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, NATO.

⁸⁰ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the joint review of the implementation of the Agreement between the European Union and the United States of America on the processing and transfer of Financial Messaging Data from the European Union to the United States for the purposes of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program, COM(2019) 342 final.

Canada on the processing and transfer of the **Passenger Name Record** data by air carriers, and a provisional agreement was reached. The Commission put forward negotiating directives for an agreement with **Japan**; the International Civil Aviation Organisation is developing **international standards** on Passenger Name Records (with DG HOME involvement) which will be important for the future. So far **Mexico** has not revived its interest in concluding such an agreement with the EU.

DG HOME conducted an evaluation of **Directive 2008/114 on European Critical Infrastructure** and issued in July the findings in a Staff Working Document⁸¹. The evaluation found that the Directive is now only of partial relevance, notably in light of changes in the technological and security context since the adoption of the Directive in 2008. Consequently, DG HOME intends to work in 2020 on a new legislative proposal on Critical Infrastructure.

The Internal Security Fund–Police supports the **prevention and fight against security related risks and crisis** (including terrorism), in order to ensure a high level of security in the Union. In the financial year 2019⁸², the Member States financed actions in this area for **EUR 17.6 million of EU funding**.

1.2.2 DG HOME Specific Objective: Disrupt organised crime

Providing law enforcement with **efficient tools to access and exchange vital information** in order to carry out investigations is critical for disrupting serious and organised cross-border crime. DG HOME supported the negotiations on its proposal for a Directive facilitating the use of **financial information** for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences⁸³, adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in June. The Directive will provide law enforcement authorities and Asset Recovery Offices with direct access to the national centralised bank account registries; enhance the cooperation between Financial Intelligence Units and law enforcement authorities; and facilitate the exchange of information between Financial Intelligence Units. The Member States have to transpose the provisions of the Directive in their national legal systems by August 2021.

As parent Directorate-General to Europol, one of the objectives in DG HOME's 2016–2020 Strategic Plan is for Member States to make increased use of **Europol's information exchange mechanisms**: In 2019, Member States exchanged 1,243,940 messages within Europol's Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA)⁸⁴ and performed 7,489,400 searches in the Europol Information System⁸⁵ compared to 1,110,960 and 4,062,970 respectively in 2018.⁸⁶ This indicator shows the increased use Member States make of the information exchange mechanisms and the growing importance of cross border information exchange.

Progress has been made in the negotiations with Turkey on an **agreement allowing Europol and Turkish law enforcement authorities to strengthen their cooperation** by exchanging personal data for preventive and investigative law enforcement purposes.

DG HOME exercised during the year its role as parent DG also to the **European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction**. Results of an external evaluation of the Centre⁸⁷ were published in May, confirming that it is overall functioning well, with

⁸¹ SWD(2019) 308 final of 23.7.2019.

⁸² 16 October 2018–15 October 2019.

⁸³ Directive (EU) 2019/1153 laying down rules facilitating the use of financial and other information for the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of certain criminal offences (OJ L 186, 11.7.2019).

⁸⁴ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/services-support/information-exchange/secure-information-exchange-network-application-siena>

⁸⁵ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/services-support/information-exchange/europol-information-system>

⁸⁶ Data Source: Europol.

⁸⁷ SWD(2019) 174 final of 14.5.2019.

both of the pillars (public health and security) being well covered by its work, but with some improvements needed.

Efforts to ensure policy coherence and consistency as to **trafficking in human beings** continued in 2019 based on the horizontal mandate of the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator based in DG HOME. In the 2017 Communication on trafficking in human beings⁸⁸, the Commission commits to support practitioners and authorities in Member States in their joint efforts.

Close cooperation at all levels – nationally and transnationally – is key to protecting children’s rights and ensuring assistance and support appropriate to their age and gender, including care, health and education. Following up on the Communication, the EU Anti-trafficking Coordinator delivered, in cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency, *Children deprived of parental care found in an EU Member State other than their own – A guide to enhance child protection focusing on victims of trafficking*⁸⁹. The document *EU anti-trafficking action 2017-2019: at a glance*⁹⁰ was also published. A call for proposals for projects for a total budget of EUR 2,550,000, addressing third country national victims of trafficking was published within the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

In January, a comprehensive report on **investor citizenship and residence schemes**⁹¹ operated by a number of EU Member States was presented by DG HOME and DG JUST. For the first time, the report maps the existing practices and identifies certain risks such schemes imply for the EU, in particular, as regards security, money laundering, tax evasion and corruption. The report also covers investor citizenship schemes in third countries with visa-free access to the EU, which DG HOME is monitoring.

In the area of **fighting corruption**, key outputs delivered by DG HOME include the EU participation in the Council of Europe’s Group of States Against Corruption as an observer. The observer status, acquired in July 2019, is an important milestone in the cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe, and will bring significant benefits to the Commission work in the area of anti-corruption and the rule of law. DG HOME also prepared the third implementation report assessing the extent to which the Member States have taken necessary measures to comply with the Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA of 22 July 2003 on combating corruption in the private sector, adopted in July 2019⁹².

In the **European Semester exercise** 2018–2019, DG HOME included eight country-specific recommendations for 2019 addressed to Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Malta and Slovakia regarding the **fight against corruption**. DG HOME continued to implement its experience-sharing programme on anticorruption, holding three workshops in 2019

A coordinated EU response to trafficking in human beings, e.g. via:

- meetings of the EU Civil Society Platform,
- the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms,
- the High level event ‘Leaving no one behind: breaking the silence on Trafficking for sexual exploitation’,
- the EU Agencies’ coordination group on trafficking in human beings, based on the 2018 Joint Statement of commitment of the Head of 10 EU agencies, and
- engagement with international organisations as well as with the European Parliament and the Council.

⁸⁸ COM (2017)728, of 4.12.2017.

⁸⁹ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-01-2019-at-a-glance.pdf

⁹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/file/2019_at_a_glance.pdf

⁹¹ Report on Investor Citizenship and Residence Schemes in the European Union, COM(2019) 12 final of 23.1.2019.

⁹² COM(2019) 355 final of 26.7.2019.



as well as one meeting of the National Contact Points on corruption.

The Internal Security Fund–Police is important to increase operational action and for the exchange of information. With support of the Fund, the Member States intensified training activities so that 7,785 law enforcement officials could be trained on cross-border-related topics, an increase of 26% compared to 2018 and 89% compared to 2017, reaching a cumulative of 19,597 of law enforcement officials over period 2014-2019.⁹³

Project supporting the Police in Germany

1.2.3 DG HOME Specific Objective: An effective response to cybercrime

Classic cyber threats to systems and data remain on the rise, with an increase in activity from malicious actors across a diverse range of targets and victims in 2019. In line with this, citizens' concerns about using the internet, for instance for online banking or buying goods and services online has not decreased as expected compared to 2014 (result indicator 2.3a). **Countering cybercrime** therefore remains a priority for DG HOME action.

An important milestone to improve the situation was reached in April 2019, when the European Parliament and the Council adopted the Directive on combatting fraud and counterfeiting of **non-cash means of payment**⁹⁴, based on a DG HOME proposal from 2017. DG HOME also took an active role also in the negotiations on the proposals from 2018 to improve **cross-border access to electronic evidence in criminal investigations**⁹⁵. On these proposals, the European Parliament has yet to adopt its negotiating position before they can enter into negotiations.



During 2019, DG HOME took stock of and supported the implementation of the existing cybercrime acquis, namely on **attacks against information systems** and **combating child sexual abuse and exploitation**, including through infringement procedures.

The growing number of successful operations conducted with the involvement of **Europol's Cybercrime Centre** shows the effectiveness of international cooperation and public-private cooperation.

International cooperation is essential

A noteworthy example of the importance of international cooperation is the investigation of the criminals behind a EUR 24 million cryptocurrency theft. Supported by the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT)⁹⁶, led by the UK's South West Regional Cybercrime Unit, in a joint operation with the Dutch Police, Europol, Eurojust and the National Crime Agency, the case revolved around the targeting of users' Bitcoin tokens, and is believed to have affected at least 4,000 victims in 12 countries. The operation was successfully concluded after a 14 month-long investigation and led to the arrest of six individuals.

Beyond cybercrime targeting systems and data, the EU continues to address the complex and multifaceted challenges posed by **hybrid threats**. In May, DG HOME led together with the Secretariat-General, the Commission services participation in the EU response cell to a **NATO** exercise aiming to improve the EU's ability to **respond to a complex**

⁹³ Data source: Member States' Annual Implementation Reports, referring to the financial year 2019 (16 October 2018–15 October 2019).

⁹⁴ Directive (EU) 2019/713 on combating fraud and counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment (OJ L 123, 10.5.2019).

⁹⁵ COM(2018) 225 final and COM(2018) 226 final of 17.4.2018.

⁹⁶ J-CAT is an operational cooperation framework between the Member States and Operational Cooperation Partners, who are willing to second dedicated cyber Liaison Officers to work closely with EC3 on high-profile cybercrime cases.

crisis of a hybrid nature. The exercise included a cyber-component, with both internal and external dimensions, and should improve cooperation with NATO in such situations. The 2019 exercise identified improvements needed in the implementation of the Commission recommendation on a Coordinated Response to Large-scale Cybersecurity Incidents and Crises⁹⁷.

Example of a project funded under the Internal Security Fund

FREETOOL v3.0 – Integration and Consolidation

The objective of the FREETOOL projects is to develop tailored **technical solutions for law enforcement**. The project brings together law enforcement and developers in a comprehensive programme of large-scale user testing and tool refinement. A number of tools have been developed and are now in use across the EU. The objective of v3.0 is to ensure that these tools **stay relevant and address new challenges**.

The FREETOOL v3.0 project runs between February 2019 and January 2021, with an EU contribution of EUR 1.2 million.

1.3 Commission General Objective: A Union of democratic change

Deliverables relating to the General Objectives are detailed in Annex 12.

1.3.1 DG HOME Specific Objective: Enhance citizens' understanding of the Union, its history and diversity, foster European citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level

In 2019, DG HOME was responsible for the political steering, monitoring and evaluation of the **Europe for Citizens**⁹⁸ Programme, while the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) was responsible for most of its implementation. In the beginning of 2020, the Programme moved to the remit of DG JUST.

The Europe for Citizens Programme aims to enhance citizens' understanding of the EU, foster citizenship and improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level. According to the Eurobarometer⁹⁹, 70% of EU citizens feel European. In 2019, 433 new projects were selected for funding: 36 Networks of Towns, 29 Civil Society, 49 Remembrance projects, 260 Town Twinning, 29 Europe for Citizens Points, and 30 operating grants.

Slightly fewer projects than foreseen were realised during the year, but with a higher value and more participants.

Heart of Europe

A network of towns project completed in 2019 (grant: EUR 150 000)

The project *Heart of Europe – network of towns promoting heart culture, solidarity and integration* coordinated by the Slovenian organisation *Društvo za naravno učenje z doživljanjem umetnosti in narave gledališče Kolenc* brought together 14 partner organisations from eight countries. The project attracted more than 830 direct participants at six international events, and over 2,000 indirect participants for the duration of the project. The project addressed youth unemployment, globalisation, immigration, European citizenship, Euroscepticism, and stigmatisation of migrants. It

⁹⁷ C(2017) 6100 final of 13.9.2017.

⁹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/europe-for-citizens-programme/index_en.htm

⁹⁹ Eurobarometer number 92 (autumn 2019).

contributed to the spirit of the European Year of Cultural Heritage by promoting culture as a tool for intercultural dialogue and active civic involvement. In each participating country, creative centres ('heart points') were established in which cultural events are planned, created and performed. Partners to the network explored different approaches of artistic expressions with the goal to contribute to common European identity and promote EU values as acceptance of diversity and mutual understanding.

The EACEA provided the reports foreseen in the general memorandum of understanding between EACEA and its parent DGs, enabling **DG HOME to closely monitor the implementation** of the Europe for Citizens programme in 2019.

At the event *Europe for Citizens – History Defines our Future*, which DG HOME organised in April, over 300 people discussed how to strengthen European values, achievements and identity whilst learning from history and being proud of one's heritage.

The event *Taking stock of European Memory policies in 2019* brought together representatives of remembrance projects selected under the Europe for Citizens Programme in 2018 and 2019 to share experience and learn from each other. It was co-organised with The Jean Monnet House (European Parliament) and the European Observatory on Memories.

DG HOME took in spring 2019 an active part in the negotiations with the European Parliament and the Council leading to a provisional agreement on the new **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values** programme.

1.4 Commission General Objective: A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base



A strong and competitive **EU security industry** contributes to meeting the EU's security needs. Whilst research often produces excellent results, there are important obstacles to their uptake, such as high fragmentation, low market visibility and financial limitations among others. On the other hand, a strong EU-based security industry ensures that Europe does not have to depend on third countries' technologies in highly sensitive domains.

DG HOME is responsible for the programmes **security research**¹⁰⁰ and **security industry policy**¹⁰¹. Acknowledging that public procurement can be a strong market catalyst, DG HOME launched the project iProcureNet¹⁰², designated to bring together potential procurers, harmonise their needs and procedures and thus consolidate the market from the demand side. **Innovation procurement** is a new approach for contracting authorities around Europe. Yet, in order to exploit the full potential of these tools, the community of innovative buyers needs to grow. The main procurers of security solutions being public authorities, joint action of several Member States helps overcome market fragmentation, and innovative procurement mitigates the innovation risk.

Other activities in this context were the annual **Security Research Event**¹⁰³ in Helsinki, organised together with Finland, and an **Industry Day** in the framework of the International Forum to Advance First Responders Innovation.

¹⁰⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/research-for-security_en

¹⁰¹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/innovation-industry-security_en

¹⁰² <https://www.iprocurenet.eu/>

¹⁰³ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/innovation-industry-security/annual-security-research-event_en

2. ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL

This section explains *how* the DG delivered the achievements described in the previous section. It is divided into two subsections.

The first subsection reports the control results and other relevant information that supports management's assurance on the achievement of the financial management and internal control objectives¹⁰⁴. It includes any additional information necessary to establish that the available evidence is reliable, complete and comprehensive. It covers all activities, programmes and management modes relevant to the DG.

The second subsection deals with the other components of organisational management: human resources, better regulation principles, information management and external communication.

2.1 Financial management and internal control

Assurance is an objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an assessment of the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

This examination is carried out by management, who monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis, and by internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. These are:

- the reports by Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation in the DG;
- the reports from Authorising Officers in other DGs managing budget appropriations in cross-sub-delegation;
- the reports on control results from management/audit authorities in Member States in shared management, as well as the result of the Commission supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the reports of the external auditors on the results of control on decentralised agencies in indirect management, as well as the result of the Commission's supervisory controls on the activities of these bodies;
- the reports received from entrusted entities (indirect management) in the framework of the delegation agreements;
- the contribution by the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at the DG level;
- the results of the ex post supervision and audit;
- the exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Article 92.3 FR);
- the limited conclusion of the internal auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service;
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors.

These reports result from a systematic analysis of the evidence available. This approach provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in a complete coverage of the budget delegated to DG HOME.

This section is for reporting the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into (a) Control results, (b) Audit observations and recommendations, (c) Effectiveness of internal control

¹⁰⁴ Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

systems, and resulting in (d) Conclusions on the assurance.

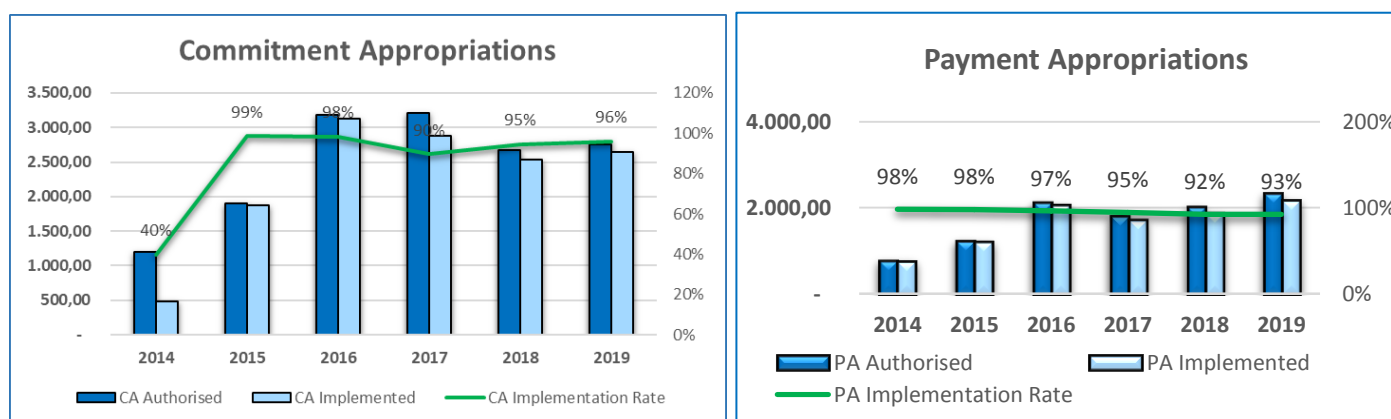
2.1.1 Control results

This section is for reporting and assessing the elements identified by management which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives¹⁰⁵. The DG's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in Annex 4 of this report. Annex 5 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

DG HOME policies are part of Chapter 3 *Security and Citizenship* which represented approximately 2.38% of the total EU general budget 2019¹⁰⁶.

In 2019, DG HOME policies were supported by EUR 2.75 billion of commitment appropriations representing approximately 1.86% of the EU budget¹⁰⁷, and a corresponding amount of payments appropriations equal to EUR 2.32 billion. These amounts correspond to the total appropriations available at the end of 2019 on DG HOME budget lines, including internal and external assigned revenues received during 2019.

Overall, the commitments made were equal to EUR 2.64 billion and the payments made were EUR 2.15 billion. The below charts illustrate the evolution during the current multiannual financial framework, up till 2019.



Source: Annex 3 of Annual Activity Reports - Outturn on commitment and payment appropriations in 2019

In 2019, DG HOME maintained good implementation rates as regards total available commitment and payment appropriations, achieving consumption rates of 95.97% for commitments (higher than in 2018 when it reached 94.67%) and 92.6% for payments (slightly higher than in 2018 when it reached 92.33%). The implementation of payment appropriations in 2019 has been impacted by the assigned revenues received in 2019 and not committed, in particular under Chapter 18 02 Internal Security. In this chapter, the assigned revenues come mainly from the contribution of the Schengen Associated Countries which were received during the second half of the year only, so they will be implemented in 2020.

When excluding these assigned revenues, the implementation of DG HOME's budget reaches 100% in commitments and 100% in payments.

DG HOME also managed to decrease the RAL (*reste à liquider* / open commitments) on

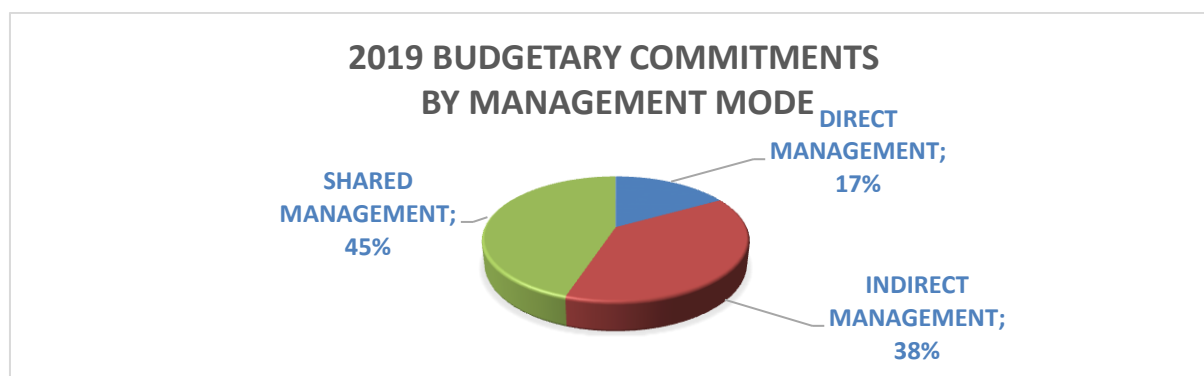
¹⁰⁵ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) *reliability of reporting*; 3) *safeguarding of assets and information*; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Article 36.2).

¹⁰⁶ The amount included in *Chapter 3. Security and citizenship* was equal to EUR 3,527,434,894 out of a total amount of EUR 148,198,939,744 (EU Budget 2019).

¹⁰⁷ In addition to the budget voted by the legislative authority, authorised commitment appropriations include appropriations carried over from the previous exercise, budget amendments, and miscellaneous commitment appropriations for the period (e.g. internal and external assigned revenue).

commitments previous to 2018 by 34.1% from EUR 4.77 billion to EUR 3.14 billion. The reduction of the amount from previous years is a good indicator, as it reflects the fact that projects are being implemented and paid. In addition, DG HOME keeps the RAL of the year under regular observation.

The graph below presents the distribution of individual commitments signed in 2019 per management mode:



The highest share of the 2019 commitments is represented by shared management with 45% from the total which reflects the 2019 allocation from the total envelope in the national programmes for AMIF and ISF (EUR 1 billion). Indirect management takes also a high share from the total (EUR 854 million), due to the high budget for the six decentralised agencies managed by DG HOME, in particular Frontex. Direct management amounts to EUR 390 million and covers mainly Union actions, emergency assistance and research grants.

The activities carried out to control the execution of DG HOME appropriations are presented in this section per control system:

- 2.1.1.1 Control system 1: Shared management
- 2.1.1.2 Control system 2: Direct management of grants
- 2.1.1.3 Control system 3: Direct management of procurement
- 2.1.1.4 Control system 4: Indirect management (decentralised agencies and delegation agreements)

Each sub-section is structured in two parts (ex ante control and ex post controls) and a conclusion on the assessment of the functioning of the management and control system.

To assess the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the control systems put in place, indicators have been formulated in a management tool used by all the Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation in DG HOME: the Relevant Control Systems for budget implementation. Based on the identified risks, the Authorising Officers have in their reports described the mitigating controls, the coverage and depth of these controls, their costs and benefits, as well as effectiveness, efficiency and economy.

The overview of the results of this assessment is provided in Annex 5, whilst the set of management and financial indicators used to measure performance is provided in Annex 10.

Control system 1. Shared management

SOLID (2007-2013)

Step 2 – ex post controls

In 2019, DG HOME finalised ex post controls for the annual programmes Slovakia, Slovenia (ERF, EIF, RF, EBF) and Ireland (ERF, EIF, RF). In addition, DG HOME is currently finalizing the audit reports for Cyprus (EBF, ERF, RF, and EIF) and Austria (EBF, ERF, RF and EIF).

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

The overall results of amount at risk per annual programme and the residual error rate is provided in Annex 10 together with a detailed table on the Member States and programmes for which the cumulative residual error rate is above 2%. **The average residual error rate for all closed annual programmes across all four SOLID funds is 1.46%, hence below the materiality threshold of 2%.** At Member States level, 16 Annual Programmes in ten Member States present a cumulative residual error rate higher than 2%. In these cases, a contradictory procedure following an ex post audit is ongoing, and reservations have been issued as presented in section 2.1.5.

Lifting of reservations included in DG HOME Annual Activity Report for 2018

Due to the implementation of corrective actions, the non-quantifiable reservations issued in 2018 referring to two Member States/shared management SOLID (2007–2013) can be lifted in this 2019 report:

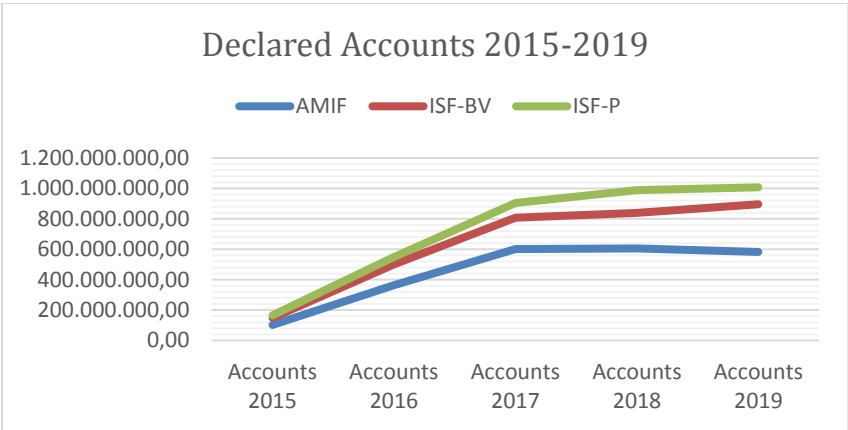
1. **ERF Slovenia:** The dialogue with the national authorities that took place in 2019 allowed DG HOME to ascertain that the error in the sample was reduced to below 2%.
2. **EBF France:** Following the finalisation of the audit process, DG HOME issued a recovery order.
3. **EIF and ERF Germany:** Following the finalisation of the audit process, DG HOME issued a recovery order.

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and Internal Security Fund (2014-2020)

In 2019, AMIF shared management represented 67% of all AMIF commitments implemented (EUR 1.67 billion). For ISF shared management represented 63% of all ISF implemented commitment appropriations (EUR 0.93 billion).

At the end of 2019, the **cumulative absorption rate** of AMIF and ISF under shared management is equal to **47.72%**, up from 35.84% by the end of 2018. This figure reflects the consumption from 2014 to 2019 financial years whose cumulative value is equal to EUR 3.6 billion out of a total allocation to the national programmes (including new top-up funding granted to HOME funds in 2019) equal to EUR 7.5 billion.

The graph below reflect the evolution of AMIF and ISF accounts from 2014 to 2019:



The **programme implementation** of the 58 multiannual national programmes **is now at cruising speed** and figures confirm a **rising trend in absorption** of the available resources although cumulative absorption rates may give the false impression that the implementation of the programmes are lagging behind. This is explained by the fact that the AMIF and ISF national programmes are often topped-up in response to new developments (see below). However, in the event of a decision by the budgetary authority on top ups in the course of a budgetary year, implementation can only start after approval of the programmes and the commitment of the resources and, as a result, the time to implement the top ups is often limited to two years, instead of the three years under the N+2 rule for the basic allocation.

A few Member States have reached excellent results in the absorption of the funds long before the eligibility deadlines. Estonia is close to 100% of disbursement as regards police related allocations and Finland has disbursed almost all the resources in the migration area. Luxembourg, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and other countries have allocated nearly all the available resources in the form of commitments under their programmes. Use of the AMIF resources is remarkable for resettlement operations. The Netherlands, UK, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden and France have very good absorption rates in this regard (more than 80% of the available envelopes).

Although many Member States improved their implementation after a slow start, there are 12 national programmes that face de-commitment. DG HOME is closely monitoring these cases and assisting the concerned Member States, who should mitigate the risk with action plans. Public procurement issues are also causing implementation delays in a number of Member States.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

In 2019, the revision of national programmes concerned 57 programmes: 38 revisions under AMIF and 30 under ISF. The revisions for the ISF national programmes were needed to increase the financial allocation for the implementation of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System and further development of SIS and other IT systems, while the AMIF national programmes were revised to integrate additional funding for resettlement, to re-commit unused amounts for relocation to other objectives with solidarity focus, and three revisions concerned cases of de-commitment.

At the beginning of 2019, 18 national programmes (AMIF: 8, ISF-B: 4 and ISF-P: 6) were at risk of de-commitment (total of EUR 145.36 million). The risk of de-commitment in the reporting period was significantly reduced thanks to the revision of the AMIF national programmes following the Article 18 AMIF legislative amendment¹⁰⁸, close monitoring and actions plans (guidance etc.) as well as the submission of early accounts. In the end, the amount to decommit was EUR 3.6 million and only three national programmes¹⁰⁹ had to de-commit.

Whereas the national programmes of AMIF/ISF are multiannual, the Member States submit annually (by 15/02/N+1 or exceptionally 1/03/N+1) a request for annual payment (supported by an annual 'assurance package') which results in an annual clearance decision by the Commission¹¹⁰ (by 31/05/N+1). In 2019, the clearance of the accounts submitted by the Member States for the financial year 2018 concerned 57 cost claims, leading to payments for a value of **EUR 433.84 million accepted in the clearance**.¹¹¹ In a few cases, only partial clearance could be made, due to the need to carry out additional checks on the information provided by 13 Member States. Despite the elevated number of partial clearances (compared to only four in 2018), this confirms a positive trend of disbursement as in 2018 the total value of cost claims amounted to EUR 417.2 million.

During the reporting period, **44 monitoring visits** were carried out by DG HOME in Member States, of which six in Greece and four in Italy. Beyond field visits, constructive dialogue with Member States proved to be crucial to support the implementation of AMIF and ISF at national level, thus Member States are on a regular basis provided with guidance. This takes places in various forms to suit best the needs of Member States: meetings of the AMIF/ISF Committee (in 2019: two; 2018: three meetings), guidance documents on specific topics (e.g. de-commitment, resettlement, top-ups, etc. in 2019: 24; 2018: 18 documents), and workshops, which are organised on an ad hoc basis on

¹⁰⁸ The amendment allowed Member States to continue to use the funding remaining in their national programmes for relocation beyond the end of the year and reallocate unused amounts for other key priorities in the migration area, for example for resettlement and integration. This way, the Commission wanted to ensure that the unused funds are not lost for the EU budget.

¹⁰⁹ AMIF CZ, AMIF HU, AMIF PT.

¹¹⁰ i.e. the (annual) clearance of accounts procedure.

¹¹¹ Commission Decision C(2019) 4259 of 3 June 2019, Commission Decision C(2019) 5779 of 26 July 2019 and Corrigendum Commission Decision C(2019)6556 to C(2019) 4259.

specific issues such as audit, procurement, and the future generation of Home Affairs funding.

The internal structure of DG HOME, having funding Units composed of country desks in a financial Directorate with weekly discussions on FAQs, facilitates the delivery of consistent and sound guidance and support to Member States in the implementation of AMIF and ISF.

In the case of **Greece**, the **financial plan** agreed with the Greek authorities at the beginning of 2019 constitutes an additional control mechanism.

Step 2 – ex post controls

The main activities consisted in the assessment of the annual accounts submitted by the Member States and a review of the accompanying audit opinions.

As from the clearance of accounts for financial year 2018, the assurance package included a detailed annual control report in which the national audit authorities document the audit work carried out to underpin the audit opinions issued as part of the annual payment. In addition to the annual clearance procedure, conformity clearance and financial corrections by the Commission are possible up to three years after the expenditure has been incurred by the Responsible Authority.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

In 2019, DG HOME performed three system audits: Germany (ISF), Ireland (ISF), and Iceland (ISF). The audits focused on the review of the audit work of the audit authority underpinning the audit opinions issued with the accounts submitted to the Commission in February 2019 (for financial year 2018). The audit reports will be finalized in 2020 but nevertheless the draft audit conclusions have been taken into account for the assessment of assurance for 2019. DG HOME auditors accompanied also the Court of Auditors on the DAS system audits in Poland (AMIF) and Italy (ISF).

The methodology to determine reservations and to estimate the net amount at risk is provided in Annex 4. The cumulative outcome of the assessment of the accounts is presented below (more detailed information per Member State is provided in Annex 10):

Activity/Fund	Cumulative amount at risk (EUR) (31 Dec 2019) in Mio. EUR	Cumulative EU payments (EUR) (31 Dec 2019) in Mio. EUR	Cumulative residual error rate
AMIF	24,36	1.527,21	1,59%
ISF	11,53	755,90	1,53%
Total	35,89	2.283,11	1,57%

The **average residual error rate across AMIF and ISF is 1.57%, well below 2%**. At Member States level, seven Member States present a cumulative residual error rate higher than 2%. In these cases, reservations have been issued as presented in section 2.1.5

IMPACT on Declaration of Assurance			AMIF			ISF		
				% of MCS	% of EU payments		% of MCS	% of EU payments
1	Reasonable assurance	Number of MCS	0	0%	0,0%	0	0%	0,00%
		Cumulative EU payments	-			-		
2	Reasonable assurance with low risk	Number of MCS	25	93%	88,5%	25	81%	82,97%
		Cumulative EU payments	1.351.505.455,75			627.134.981,24		

3	Limited assurance with medium risk	Number of MCS	2	7%	11,5%	6	19%	17,03%
		Cumulative EU payments	175.703.467,46			128.761.700,54		
4	Limited assurance with high risk	Number of MCS	0	0%	0,0%	0	0%	0,00%
		Cumulative EU payments	-			-		

2.1.1.2 Control system 2. Direct management – Grants

In 2019 DG HOME signed grant agreements for a total amount of EUR 466.76 million:

- EUR 108.52 million for Union actions grants
- EUR 249.36 million for emergency assistance grants and
- EUR 5.69 million for research grants

Step 1 – ex ante controls of Union actions and emergency assistance grants

Union actions and emergency assistance grants represented 17% (EUR 371.14 million) of total DG HOME payments in 2019.

'Union actions' are transnational actions or actions of particular interest to the Union covering the objectives under AMIF and ISF. These often complex and long-term projects support EU-wide networks, new ways of working, testing of tools or methods throughout the Union and cooperation activities between Member States and third countries. In addition, emergency assistance under AMIF and ISF supported Member States facing urgent needs on the ground in the areas of migration, border management and security, by means of projects run by national authorities and International Organisations.

Other programmes implemented through grants under direct management were the Anti-Drugs strand under the Justice Programme¹¹² and Europe for Citizens¹¹³.

Control activities include preparation and adoption of the annual work programmes, the calls for and evaluation of proposals.

Available budget for Union actions and emergency assistance:

2018: EUR 622,00 million

2019: ↗ EUR 842,42 million

Total awarded amounts for Union actions and emergency assistance:

2018: EUR 396 million

2019: ↘ EUR 363,2million

In 2019, the number of signed grants for **Union actions and drugs** (Justice Programme) reached 108 (146 in 2018 and 82 in 2017) for a total awarded budget equal to **EUR 108.52 million** (EUR 135 million in 2018 and EUR 78.16 million in 2017).

The percentage of available budget translated into awarded projects was equal to 96% for Union actions but only 33% for emergency assistance. This rate for emergency assistance reflects the fact that some very big projects under the 2019 Work Programme have been only awarded and contracted in 2020. To illustrate the diverse nature of grants, the average value of a grant is EUR 1 million for Union actions and EUR 9.12 million for emergency assistance.

The number of payments made in 2019 remained stable (260 versus 252 in 2018) but the total value of payments slightly increased (EUR 371.14 in 2019 versus EUR 313 million in 2018). The percentage of ineligible amounts found by the controls performed over these claims represented 0.43% of their value (0.49% in 2018).

¹¹² To help implement the objectives set by the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and to foster cross-border cooperation and research on drug issues.

¹¹³ Europe for Citizens contributes to citizens' understanding of the EU, its history and diversity and thus fostering European citizenship and improved conditions for civic and democratic participation at EU level (implemented through the executive agency EACEA).

As concerns the **emergency assistance**, DG HOME awarded 29 grants (30¹¹⁴ in 2018 and 26 in 2017), for a total awarded budget equal to **EUR 254.68 million** (EUR 263 million in 2018 and EUR 194 million in 2017) to address urgent and specific needs to improve migration and border management. Specifically, 11 Member States¹¹⁵ (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain) benefitted of emergency assistance. Beneficiaries were the national authorities, relevant ministries, as well as international organisations. More information on these grants is provided in Annex 10.

Information on the derogation from the principle of non-retroactivity of grants pursuant to Article 193 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union: in 2019 DG HOME awarded 13 Emergency Assistance grants under AMIF and ISF Border and Visa to actions that had already begun, as the applicants demonstrated the need for starting the action prior to signature of the grant agreement. More information on these awarded grants is provided in Annex 10.

Step 2 – ex post controls of Union actions and emergency assistance grants

In addition to the main control objective, the ex post controls serve other purposes:

- ✓ Detection and correction of any errors remaining undetected after the implementation of ex ante controls;
- ✓ Report to OLAF on any suspicions of fraud observed during the ex post control;
- ✓ Measuring the effectiveness of ex ante controls;
- ✓ Addressing systematic weaknesses in the ex-ante controls based on the analysis of the findings (sound financial management); ensuring appropriate accounting of the recoveries to be made (reliability of reporting, safeguarding of assets and information).

In 2019, DG HOME carried out 33 ex post controls, 29 being part of the annual audit plan 2019, 2 being part of the annual audit plan 2017¹¹⁶ and 2 being part of the annual audit plan 2018¹¹⁷. Taking into account the audits initiated in previous annual audit plans, DG HOME's auditors finalized 39¹¹⁸ audit reports in 2019. The audit coverage¹¹⁹ for 2007-2013 programming period was 30.34% and for 2014-2020 programming period was 25.58%.

Based on the analysis of the main causes and types of most commonly detected errors identified in ex post audits closed in 2019, three areas of irregularities have been identified, covering in value more than 90% of the errors detected:

Incorrect procurement procedure	58.80%
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¹¹⁴ Under EMAS two grants were awarded in 2018 through a Delegation Agreement hence reported under the specific section on DAs.

¹¹⁵ For example, emergency funding for Greece covered, among others, a significant part of the reception needs in the mainland and in the islands, the protection of the unaccompanied minors through the provision of accommodation, guardianship and foster care services, access to the Greek Asylum Service and the Assisted Voluntary Return scheme. Emergency assistance reinforced Italy's capacities of proceeding with: refugee status determination, carrying out humanitarian evacuations of vulnerable persons in need of international protection from Libya, providing immediate assistance to victims of trafficking, supporting the education of unaccompanied minors, fighting the exploitation of migrants' labour and supporting steps in view of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. In the framework of ISF Borders and Visa, emergency assistance was provided to Belgium authorities to address the needs on the Belgian maritime border and prevent illegal border crossings.

¹¹⁶ Projects HOME/2010/ISEC/FP/C1/4000001414 and HOME/2013/ISEC/FP/C1/4000005008 that could not be audited as part of the annual audit plan 2017 because of the long contradictory procedures with the beneficiary. These two projects were included again as part of the AWP 2019.

¹¹⁷ The fieldwork of audits of the projects HOME/2013/ISEC/FP/C1/4000005019 and HOME/2016/AMIF/AG/EMAS/0028 took place in 2019 because the Specific Contracts linked to these projects, being part of the AWP 2018, were signed in December 2018.

¹¹⁸ Finalised meaning that the final audit reports were signed and sent to the Authorising Officer by Sub-Delegation by the 31 December 2019.

¹¹⁹ Based on the finalized audits at 31 December 2019.

Missing/inadequate documentation	17.17%
Financial findings for staff costs	16.30%

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control systems (including best estimate of error)

Cumulative coverage rates for grants under direct management (research excluded) and the related residual error rates are reported below. The European Court of Auditors in its 2018 Annual Report and as a result of its review of the Commission's ex-post audits for research grants observed (among others) that the Commission methodology for the calculation of the error rate leads to an understatement of the error rate, the extent of which cannot be quantified. As a result, it introduced recommendation 5.3, accepted by the Commission, to address this and other observations made in the context of the above-mentioned review. To address the Court's finding, DG HOME has already revised its methodology also for the computation of the error rates of non-research grants.

The assessment of the residual error rate and amount at risk not detected by the supervisory and ex ante elements of the internal control is carried out through analysis of the results of ex post audits. The table below summarises the results of this analysis done according to the four steps detailed in Annex 4.

Audit coverage and error rate for direct management 2014-2020 funds (multiannual)	2019¹²⁰	2018
<i>Cumulative Auditable Population (in EUR million)</i>	459.12	802.94
<i>Cumulative Audited Population (in EUR million)</i>	99.46	184.85
<i>Cumulative Audit coverage (%)</i>	22%	23%
<i>Cumulative detected error rate (%)</i>	4.50%	3.84%
<i>Cumulative residual error rate (%)</i>	4.11%	3.29%

The cumulative residual error rate for 2014-2020 remains above 2% at the end of 2019 (4.11%). As a result, a **reservation has been made** as presented in section 2.1.5.

The ex post audit plan for 2020 foresees the audit of a number of grants as per approved annual audit programme, allowing for sufficient coverage having a direct impact on the reduction of the residual amount at risk.

Step 1 – ex ante controls of research grants (7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020)

In 2019, the Commission adopted the updated version of the Work Programme 2018-2020 Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge "Secure societies – Protecting freedom and security of Europe and its citizens" with a total budget of EUR 541 million supporting research and innovation activities on a wide range of topics.

Many internal controls are integrated into specific IT tools for the management of the research funds which is shared between DG HOME and the Research Executive Agency (REA)¹²¹. DG HOME is responsible for the work programme¹²² and security scrutiny. However, by the end of 2020 all the projects managed by DG HOME will be transferred to

¹²⁰ For the 2018 Annual Activity Report, the indicators were computed for the reference period 2007-2020, as per DG HOME methodology at the time. For the 2019 Annual Activity Report it has been decided to report the indicators for the 2014-2020 period as 94% of the auditable population and 84% of the audited population of 2019 belongs to the programming period 2014-2020. The slight increase in the error rates (detected and residual) can be explained by the decoupling of the two programming periods, the finalisation of audits on the EMAS grants awarded during the migration crises as of 2015 and the revised methodology applied to implement a recommendation issued by the European Court of Auditors.

¹²¹ Evaluation of proposals, preparation and management of grants are currently carried out by both entities. The share of budget and projects was initially set to 1/3 to DG HOME and 2/3 to REA. Following the update of the delegation agreement with REA in 2017, the ratio was foreseen evolve to 80% REA to 20% HOME.

¹²² The coherence of the Work Programme is guaranteed by the close co-operation of DG HOME, a security Research inter-service group and the Horizon 2020/SC7 programme committee.

the Agency. The implementation is then monitored by both DG HOME and the Agency.¹²³

Step 2 – ex post controls of research grants (7th Framework Programme and Horizon 2020)

The audit work for **7th Framework Programme** (FP7) is now completed with the finalisation of the last Common representative audit sample. Against this background, a wrap-up of the FP7 audit campaign is made below, and FP7 audits will no longer be covered in detail in future Annual Activity Reports.

Overall, some 4,600 audit results were drawn up by the end of 2019, exceeding the target by 13%. 8.8% of the total expenditure were audited (direct coverage), leading to an indirect coverage of 56.0% of expenditure, referring to non-audited participations of the audited beneficiary, which are deemed free from systematic errors.

The error rates for DG HOME¹²⁴ resulting from FP7 audit work are:

Overall Detected Error Rate: 5.90 % for HOME.

Common Representative Error Rate: based on 480 costs statements selected from the entire R&I family, this error rate is **5.45%**.

Residual Error Rate: at the end of 2019, this error rate amounts to 3.17 % for GROW/HOME¹²⁵.

The lessons learned from FP7 audits have been used in the development of **Horizon 2020** programme's general framework, which contributed to the achievement of the significantly lower error rates in the latter. The Horizon 2020 audit campaign started in 2016. In total, by December 2019, cost claims totalling EUR 16 billion were submitted by the beneficiaries. Three Common Representative Samples, Common Risk Samples and Additional Samples¹²⁶ have been selected, leading to the following error rates¹²⁷:

Overall Detected Error Rate: 2.78%

Residual Error Rate for DG HOME: 2.40%.

This is a slight increase with regard to the result in 2018 (2.32%) and taking into account the draft audit reports still to be closed, the Residual Error Rate for DG HOME is expected to increase further (to 2.66%).

Based on the Court of Auditors' findings on the Commission's methodology for the calculation of the error rate (see above for grants AMIF/ISF), the Commission will adapt its methodology for the calculation of Horizon 2020 error rate in line to the Court's observations starting with the implementation of the 2020 ex-post audit campaign.

The methodology for FP7 as well as Horizon 2020 audits is described in detail in Annex 4.

As a conclusion on the assessment with reference to grants research (FP7 and Horizon 2020), DG HOME applied the de minimis rules as indicated by central services. Based on the fact that payments for research grants represented 1.43% of 2019 payments and the exposure amounts to EUR 0.45 million (therefore below the threshold of 5%/EUR 5 million), the reservation issued by DG HOME on FP7 in the 2018 Annual Activity Report is not reported anymore in the 2019 Report (despite an error rate of 3.17%) and no reservation is issued

¹²³ Projects managed by REA are not being reported for in DG HOME's Annual Activity Report.

¹²⁴ The results include the audits previously launched for DG GROW.

¹²⁵ These amounts do not necessarily mean that there is a loss to the Community budget. Many of the projects spend more than the capped budget, and so the real loss to the Community budget will be lower the financial impact estimated directly by using the error rates above.

¹²⁶ This sampling accommodates special needs of certain stakeholders with regard to audit coverage and selection method. In addition, top ups, which are participations of selected beneficiaries which are added to the selected participations, are included in the total participations selected.

¹²⁷ The Common Representative Error Rate based on 298 out of 467 participations selected in three Common Representative Samples is 2.44%. However, if we take into account the draft audit reports, then the expected representative error rate for the full sample will be around 2.96%. Residual Error Rate for the Research and Innovation Family: 1.83 %, expected to rise to around 1.99 % when taking into account the draft audit reports.

for Horizon 2020.

2.1.1.3 Control system 3. Direct management - Procurement

The control system for direct management – procurement builds on three main processes: procurement procedures, financial operations and supervisory measures. This control system is limited to Step 1, as DG HOME does not carry out ex post audit on its own procurement, this being done by external auditors (IAS, ECA) as appropriate.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

In 2019, 17 tenders (open tenders + reopening of competitions under framework contracts) were published, leading to the signature of 154 contracts for a total value of **EUR 21.96 million**. The calls for tender launched in 2019 included six open procedures for services and studies; and nine re-opening of competition under the DG HOME Framework contract for evaluation and impact assessment.

As compared to 2018, these indicators represent an increase in the number of new tenders since DG HOME had to renew five framework contracts and a slight decrease in both the number of contracts signed and their financial value. Globally, the number of commitments and payments remained high and echo the intensive political framework of DG HOME where procurement and contract activities reinforce policy development in the field of migration, borders and internal security.

The contract management includes payments and monitoring of the delivery of the expected results while complying with regulatory and contractual provisions. To this end, DG HOME carries out ex ante checks of cost claims before processing transactions.

The amount of payments made in 2019 was equal to EUR 22.83 million, slightly lower than in 2018 (EUR 25.38 million).

Based on the methodology described in Annex 4, no ex post controls were performed for contracts. The audit findings signalled by the other internal or external auditors are taken into account for the assessment of assurance and the residual error is estimated to be below 2%. The average error rate is estimated at 0.50%, as per error rate computed by ECA on administrative expenditure.

2.1.1.4 Control system 4. Indirect management - Entrusted Entities and Decentralised Agencies

Entrusted Entities. In 2019, DG HOME managed six delegation agreements under AMIF and ISF annual work programmes. Payments made in 2019 were equal to EUR 221.38 million (2.7% of the total payments made) compared to EUR 51.37 million in 2018. In 2019, DG HOME did not sign new delegation agreements.¹²⁸

Step 1 – ex ante controls

Delegation agreements were monitored during the year through progress reports, regular meetings (including participation of DG HOME in Steering committees), and on the spot visits. The six delegation agreements signed before 2019 and operating throughout the year can be found in Annex 10.

Step 2 – ex post controls

Delegation agreements are subject to ex post verifications carried out by DG HOME. In 2019 DG HOME carried out one verification of delegation agreements that was signed under the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement, consequently the principles of the Agreement applied for the verification process.

Decentralised Agencies

¹²⁸ Five contribution agreements were signed in 2019 under emergency assistance. They have been subject to the same control strategy as all emergency assistance grant agreements. This is due to the particular characteristics of emergency assistance, whereby the nature of the applicant is not known in advance in the financing decision. Following the entry into force of the 2018 Financial Regulation, the contract type differs depending on the nature of the applicant (pillar assessed entity or non-pillar assessed entity).

HOME is partner DG to six agencies: European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), European Asylum Support Office (EASO), European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), and European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA).

DG HOME pays annual EU contributions to these agencies as authorised by the Budgetary Authority. In 2019, the total amount of commitment appropriations was equal to EUR 879.8 million, out of which EUR 855.3 million was implemented (97.2%). The authorised payment appropriations were equal to EUR 729.4 million, out of which EUR 704.9 million (96.7%) was consumed¹²⁹. Payments made to the six agencies in 2019 represented 33% of all payments made by DG HOME (EUR 606.84 million). In comparison to the previous year, some EUR 140 million more was budgeted, while the implementation rates were largely at the same level, or slightly better. A table summarising the amounts of commitment and payments appropriations budgeted and implemented in 2019 can be found in Annex 8.

Step 1 – ex ante controls

The overall objective is to ensure that HOME is duly and timely informed of any governance-related issues in agencies that could have an impact on the assurance of the agencies and/or represent a reputational risk for DG HOME. Decentralised agencies have full responsibility for the implementation of their budget, while HOME is responsible for regular payment of annual contributions established by the Budgetary Authority.

DG HOME closely monitors Agencies' activities in policy implementation, budget planning and implementation and internal control, including follow up on recommendations issued by the Internal Audit Service and the European Court of Auditors¹³⁰. DG HOME exercises its oversight role directly through membership (with voting rights) in agencies' Management Boards, where the Commission is represented at HOME Director-General and Deputy Director-General in most cases. In addition, HOME participates at preparatory meetings organized at technical level before MB meetings. Three agencies, EASO, eu-LISA and Frontex, have set up specialised working groups on budget and finance, in which HOME actively participates.

The agencies have not notified of any significant events with possible impact on DG HOME's assurance for 2019.

Step 2 – ex post control

The IAS acts as the internal auditor for the agencies, while the European Court of Auditors gives a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the annual accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. Based on these, the European Parliament grants discharge directly to the agencies. DG HOME, therefore, does not carry out ex post audits of its decentralised agencies' expenditure, but ensures follow-up of IAS and ECA audits, as well as of the discharge.

In 2019, ECA issued unqualified opinions on all decentralised agencies' accounts for 2018, except for EASO. However, ECA's opinion for EASO is no longer adverse and the European Parliament's CONT committee has voted to grant discharge to the Agency. Both of these decisions reflect the progress the Agency has made in implementing the corrective measures introduced to address the governance-related weaknesses identified in previous years. For the reasons above, HOME has decided to lift its reputational reservation for EASO.

For Frontex, ECA no longer reports on the financial impact of the illegal procurement procedure identified in 2017, which was the basis for HOME's reservation in last year's Annual Activity Report, and which was replaced with a new procurement procedure in

¹²⁹ The difference in implementation is related to the cash surplus of 2018 that agencies returned to DG HOME as assigned revenue in 2019 and which will be used to finance the 2020 EU contribution.

¹³⁰ In 2019, DG HOME revised its Control Strategy on decentralised agencies.

2019. However, ECA once again finds weaknesses in ex-ante verification of costs for deployment of equipment claimed by cooperating countries. In addition, the Agency had established that the new simplified financing scheme based on unit costs for deployment of personnel generates extra profit for the beneficiaries (personnel deployed from Member States), which constitutes breach of the Financial Regulation. Since the Management Board has so far refused to reduce the unit costs and ECA is expected to scrutinize this issue further, DG HOME considers this as a reputational event, bearing reputational risk for HOME as parent DG. DG HOME has taken the following actions:

- Formally supported the reduction of the unit costs in 77th Management Board meeting of 21 November 2019.
- Made oral intervention and a note in the minutes of the Working Group on Budget and Accounts to the Management Board of Frontex of 17 December 2019.
- Sent a formal letter to the Agency Executive Director and the Chair of the Management Board asking for corrective measures.¹³¹

DG HOME notes with some concern that Europol has failed to comply with the Budgetary Authority's instructions on reducing the high number of contract agents, as provided in the Draft Budget 2020 working documents¹³². While ECA has not issued specific recommendations for this issue to Europol, it has repeatedly warned against agencies' over-reliance on external personnel. DG HOME continues to work with Europol on finding a solution for this issue.

The IAS audit on training implementation, knowledge sharing and monitoring of results in Cepol has revealed critical issues affecting the establishment of the Joint Master Programme and very important weaknesses with regard to the legality and regularity of budgetary commitments for the framework partnerships established for residential training.

DG HOME does not have direct responsibility for the above governance-related weaknesses but is engaged in an active dialogue with the agencies. It continues to strengthen monitoring of its decentralised agencies, including exploring additional paths to that end.

Assessment of the functioning of the management and control system

The agencies have not notified of any significant events with possible impact on DG HOME's assurance for 2019.

The relevant information provided by the agencies in relation to the issues identified as a result of the Commission's involvement in the agencies' Management Board is and the results of DG HOME's supervision arrangements are deemed reliable and assessed as sufficient to draw reasonable assurance conclusion. Details on IAS audits will be given by the agencies directly in their Annual Activity Reports, in the framework of their separate discharge procedure.

As concerns delegation agreements with entrusted entities, DG HOME also considers that the level of information received as well as the supervision arrangements are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance.

A table summarising the payments made by DG HOME in 2019, in terms of activities per control system, as well as the key indicators (Residual error rates and cost-efficiency) available for each layer can be found in Annex 10.

The analysis of the results of the control activities implemented by DG HOME in 2019 which are described under each Control Systems in sections 2.1.1.1 to 2.1.1.4 allows DG HOME to state that overall reliable and complete control results are available for each Control System. The second part of section 2.1.1 aims at concluding on the cost-

¹³¹ Ares(2020)1444972 of 9 March 2020.

¹³² Working Documents - Part III - 2020 - Bodies set up by the European Union and having legal personality and Public-private partnership.

effectiveness of these controls and is structured in four sub-sections:

1. Effectiveness of the controls through the analysis of legality and regularity of transactions; fraud prevention, detection and prevention
2. Efficiency of controls
3. Economy of controls
4. Conclusion on cost-effectiveness of controls

1. Effectiveness

➤ Legality and regularity of the transactions

DG HOME is using internal control processes to ensure the adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

The table below provides an overview of the weighted average error rate for the annual expenditure by using the best estimate of the potential error rate for each of the constituent parts of the budget managed by the DG.

The methodology for the calculation of the cumulative detected error rate for the building block 1 and 2 (shared management and direct grants) is detailed in Annex 4. For the building block 3 (procurement), section 2.1.1.3 clarified that no ex post controls were performed on the implemented contracts. However, the audit findings expressed by the other internal or external auditors are taken into account for the assessment of assurance in relation to procurement transactions. ECA assessed the error rate for administrative expenditure below materiality. Consequently, the average error rate is estimated at 0.50%.

Based on the same ECA findings and following the same approach, for other activities¹³³ an average error rate of 0.5% is applied as they were not covered by audits in 2019. These activities are not considered risk-prone in 2019 and it is estimated that the error rate is below the materiality threshold.

In the context of the protection of the EU budget, at the Commission's corporate level, the DGs' estimated overall amounts at risk and their estimated future corrections are consolidated.

For DG HOME, the estimated overall amount at risk at payment for the payments made in 2019 is equal to EUR 26.64 million. This is the Authorising Officer by Delegation's best conservative estimation of the amount of **relevant expenditure**¹³⁴ during the year (EUR 1.69 billion) not in conformity with the applicable contractual and regulatory provisions at the time of payment¹³⁵.

This expenditure will be subsequently subject to ex post controls and a sizeable proportion of the underlying error will be detected and corrected in successive years. The conservatively estimated future corrections for the 2019 payments are equal to EUR 9.70 million. This is the amount of errors that the DG conservatively estimates to identify and correct from controls that will be implemented in the following years.

The difference between those two amounts is the estimated overall amount at risk at closure which is equal to EUR 16.94 million. Detailed calculation is provided in the following table.

2. Efficiency

Regarding the efficiency of controls, DG HOME assessed it based on the "time-to" indicators, which measure the time needed to complete specific procedures. The statistics

¹³³ These include administrative expenditure, various administrative arrangements for AMIF/ISF/SOLID and the annual contribution to EACEA paid by DG HOME.

¹³⁴ "relevant expenditure" during the year; see note 5 to the table.

¹³⁵ "payments made" or equivalent; see note 2 to the table.

based on all payments made by DG HOME in 2019 show that the average **late payment rate** was equal to **12%**, hence slightly increased as compared to 2018 but still lower than in 2017: 18% and in 2016: 22%). The Commission's target rate being 4%, DG HOME is committed to further improve.

In 2019 the average **time to complete a payment** was equal to **32 days** which shows a positive trend as it was 37 days in 2018, 55 days in 2017 and 48 days 2016.

The total payments made by DG HOME in 2019 were higher than in 2018 (EUR 2.15 billion vs 1.85 billion) which shows that in general DG HOME managed its resources and processes more efficiently. A closer look at the control systems allows seizing the areas where major improvements were achieved, and where additional efforts will be needed.

In 2019, DG HOME registered eight exceptions and two non-compliance events: three for shared management, one for direct management – grants research, four for procurement. The reasons for these exceptions were the following: two deviations to the de-commitment procedure, a clearance of accounts decision beyond the deadline for 22 annual accounts; a (late) intervention of the guarantee fund; two late reimbursements of experts, two cases of commitments needed in order to pay (one case relates to administrative credits non available at year N+2 to proceed to the payments, the other case relates to operational credits needed to proceed to the final payment). The non-compliance events relate to an a posteriori amendment to a research procurement contract (re-allocation of funds) and to the conformity clearance for 2016 AMIF Finnish annual accounts. This indicator shows a global slight improvement, as exceptions registered in 2018 were 11.

Control system 1 – shared management

The indicators on efficiency remained steady in 2019: the time to pay pre-financing under AMIF/ISF remained well within the 60-days limit (19 days), and the revision of National Programmes AMIF/ISF (70 in 2019) were further improved compared to previous years. In contrast, the closure of SOLID funds 2007-2014 slowed down in comparison to 2018.

Shared management	Time-to adopt national programmes (revision): ↘ 88 days (95 days in 2018, 107 days in 2017)
	Time-to-pay pre-financings: ↗ 19 days (17 days in 2018, 20 days in 2017; 60 days time-limit)
	Time-to-close: ↗ 394 days (177.5 days in 2018, 252 days in 2017)

Control system 2 – direct management grants

The efficiency indicators show again a deterioration of the situation in "time-to-pay" however, it is still a lot better that in 2016 and 2017. The "time-to-grant" indicator showed significant improvement after a difficult year in 2018, which was due to the very high number of grants signed in that year.

Direct management grants	Time-to-pay (all grants): 40 days (30 in 2018, 52.5 in 2017)
	Time-to-inform (Union actions and EMAS): ↗ 76 days for EMAS, 118 days for Union actions. Values in 2018 were 43 days for EMAS and 151 days for Union actions.
	Time-to-grant* (Union actions): 205 days (260 in 2018, 201 in 2017)
	Time-to grant* for research grants: ↘ 280.5 days (299 in 2018; 243 in 2017; - Horizon 2020 Regulation: 240 days/8 months deadline)

** for non-research grants the time-to-grant includes only the period from the award to the signature of grants, while in case of research grants the time-to-grant includes also the time-to-inform*

Control system 3 – Procurement and Control system 4 – Indirect management

The time-to-pay indicator under direct management-procurement, decentralised agencies and delegation agreements did remained stable compared to 2018.

Procurement: time-to-pay: ↗ **30 days** (**25 days** in 2018, 31 days in 2017)

Decentralised agencies: time-to-pay: **19 days** (19 days in 2018, 22 in 2017)

Delegation agreements: time-to-pay: ↗ **33 days** (29 days in 2018)

Based on the above available information, DG HOME could reach a positive conclusion with regard to the efficiency of its entire control system, taking into consideration the continuously high volume of the transactions processed and their higher value in 2019 as compared to previous years, and the steady nature of the indicators.

3. Economy

The cost of controls has been estimated at DG HOME level and, separately, at the level of Member States and entrusted entities, for shared and indirect management respectively. The costs at DG HOME level are reported in absolute values and as a percentage of the payments made, globally and broken down by relevant control system and step (as described in Annex 5).

The assessment of the economy of the cost of controls has been carried out through analysis of the evolution over time and in relation to the volume of resources managed.

Cost of controls at DG HOME level

DG HOME has analysed the estimation of the cost of control in relation with the value of the payments made in 2019 per control system (Annex 5) and over the last three reporting years, to draw conclusions also on the trend. As a basis for the calculation, DG HOME has quantified the full-time equivalents allocated to the control activities, whilst "other direct costs" are mainly represented by externalised audit work and dedicated IT tools for financial management and control.

As a result, the **total estimated cost of the controls** performed in 2019 by DG HOME has been estimated at **EUR 15.06 million**.

This confirms a positive trend, and a significant decrease if compared with previous years¹³⁶ (below table). The decrease in the cost of controls comes with an increase in the volume of payments made as compared to 2018, hence revealing an improved performance (from 1.04% in 2017 to 0.7% in 2019). This represents a significant gain in efficiency achieved by DG HOME, which is explained by the efforts made to provide guidance to Member States (i.e. on de-commitment procedure for AMIF and ISF national programmes; on eligibility of transport means under ISF-Police; on the possibility to allocate unused amounts to relocation and legal admission for voluntary relocation and resettlement), to decentralised agencies and implementing partners. Further, the internal reorganisation of September 2019 in DG HOME contributed to maximizing efficiency and improving the internal procedures for management and control.

The below table provides exhaustive information on the data analysed by DG HOME to draw this conclusion.

Control system	2019			2018			2017		
	Costs (M€)	Payments (M€)	Costs/payments (%)	Costs (M€)	Payments (M€)	Costs/payments (%)	Costs (M€)	Payments (M€)	Costs/payments (%)
Shared management	5,73	799,63	0,72%	8,43	801,72	1,05%	10,09	737,20	1,37%
Direct management- grants	5,28	401,98	1,31%	6,62	350,56	1,89%	8,11	363,92	2,23%
Direct management - public procurement	1,47	24,29	6,05%	1,96	34,85	5,63%	2,13	45,25	4,70%
Indirect management - Entrusted Entities and Decentralised Agencies	2,58	926,32	0,28%	2,04	658,21	0,31%	2,50	549,02	0,46%
Other	0,00	2,23	0,00%	0,28	8,34	3,32%	0,00	9,95	N/A
Total	15,06	2.154,45	0,70%	19,33	1.853,67	1,04%	22,83	1.705,35	1,34%

¹³⁶ Although analysis of trend over time may be limited by the introduction of a revised methodology.

Costs of controls at Member State level

DG HOME collected the cost of the controls incurred for the implementation of AMIF and ISF for the financial year 2019 by responsible and audit authorities (and delegated authorities when applicable) based on the following types of expenditure:

- Supervision to ensure compliance with the designation criteria (Body referred to in Article 26 of Regulation 514/2014)
- Audit Authority staff costs and other costs (such as overheads, training courses, travel)
- Responsible Authority (and Delegated Authority) staff costs and other costs (such as overheads, training courses, travel).

The cumulative cost of control estimated by the Member States is equal to EUR 28.25 million (EUR 25.99 million in 2018). The total amount of the payments requested by the Member States for the financial year was equal to EUR 990.08 million (EUR 892.33 million in 2018). The ratio of estimated cost of control over the amount of funds Member States managed is equal to 2.85% (2.91% in 2018).

As the amount of payment requested by Member States increased by 11% as compared to the previous year, the percentage has decreased slightly. Thus, the cost of controls incurred by Member States has stabilised as implementation of AMIF and ISF has reached cruising speed with the current financial programming period approaching its end.

Cost of controls at the level of Entrusted Entities

DG HOME did not sign new delegations agreements in 2019. DG HOME reports on the cost of control borne by the entrusted entities at the start of each delegation agreement.

4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, DG HOME has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls.

The positive conclusion was reached on the basis of an estimation of costs of control over the value of the related funds, in the form of indicators and their evolution over time for each distinct control system (Annex 5) using the management indicators reported in detail in Annex 10.

DG HOME has managed to ensure an adequate balance of the following components:

- low error rates (overall total: 1.53%)
- payments made within applicable time limits (acceptable)
- low costs of controls (cost-efficiency indicator of 0.7%, in 2018:1.04%)

Moreover, as reported under 'economy', the implementation pace increased over the last three years, but this did not correspond to an increase in the cost of controls. DG HOME's control environment and control strategy remained stable during the reporting year and the conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls remains unchanged.

As we are approaching the end of the current programming period, DG HOME as well as the Member States and implementing partners are now better equipped to manage and control the funds received from DG HOME. Nonetheless, DG HOME is keen to improve the 'time-to' indicators that don't meet the corporate targets. To this end, the extended use of IT workflow systems (RDIS2 and e-Grants) have already contributed to the improved economy and efficiency of the financial activities carried out in DG HOME.

Based on the results of its control activities carried out in 2019 DG HOME has decided to issue some reservations, which are described in section 2.1.4.

Due to the fact that administrative arrangements, cross sub-delegations and contributions to executive agencies are immaterial (total less than 1% of the total payments of DG HOME), these activities are not detailed further in this report.

Estimated overall amount at risk at closure

DG HOME	"payments made" (FY; mEUR)	<i>minus</i> new prefinancing (in FY; m€)	<i>plus</i> cleared prefinancing (in FY; m€)	= "relevant expenditure" (for the FY; m€)	Average Error Rate (<i>weighted Average Error Rate</i> ; %)	estimated overall risk at payment (FY; m€)	Average Recoveries and Corrections (<i>adjusted ARC</i> ; %)	estimated future corrections [and deductions] (for FY; m€)	estimated overall risk at closure (m€)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Shared management SOLID	3,90	0,00	23,76	27,66	3,40%	0,94	0,90%	0,25	0,69
Shared management AMIF ISF	795,73	361,89	398,92	832,76	1,57%	13,07	0,90%	7,49	5,58
Direct Management – Union actions and EMAS grants	371,14	350,12	154,52	175,53	4,50%	7,90	0,90%	1,58	6,32
Direct Management - Research grants	30,84	19,91	30,36	41,30	3,96%	1,64	0,90%	0,37	1,26
Direct Management - Public procurement	24,29	1,68	1,73	24,35	0,50%	0,12	0,00%	0,00	0,12
Indirect Management - Delegation agreements	221,38	221,37	5,63	5,64	0,50%	0,03	0,00%	0,00	0,03
Indirect Management - Decentralised agencies	704,94	704,94	586,15	586,15	0,50%	2,93	0,00%	0,00	2,93
Other	2,23	2,23	2,12	2,12	0,50%	0,01	0,00%	0,00	0,01
<i>DG HOME payments include DG HOME contribution to EU Trust Fund Africa</i>	<i>(0,00)</i>	<i>(0,00)</i>	<i>(0,00)</i>	<i>(0,00)</i>					
TOTAL	2.154,45	1.662,13	1.203,19	1.695,52	1,57%	26,64	0,57%	9,70	16,94

1) Differentiated for the relevant portfolio segments at a level which is lower than the DG total.

2) Payments made or equivalent, such as after the expenditure is registered in the Commission's accounting system, after the expenditure is accepted or after the pre-financing is cleared. In any case, this means after the preventive (ex ante) control measures have already been implemented earlier in the cycle.

In all cases of Co-Delegations (Internal Rules Article 3), the "payments made" are covered by the Delegated DGs. In the case of Cross-SubDelegations (Internal Rules Article 12), they remain with the Delegating DGs.

3) New pre-financing actually paid by out the department itself during the financial year (i.e. excluding any pre-financing received as transfer from another department). The "Pre-financing" is covered as in the context of note 2.5.1 to the Commission (provisional) annual accounts (i.e. excluding the "Other advances to Member States" (note 2.5.2) which is covered on a pure payment-made basis). "Pre-financings paid/cleared" are always covered by the Delegated DGs, even in the case of Cross-SubDelegations.

4) Pre-financing actually having been cleared during the financial year (i.e. their 'delta' in financial year 'actuals', not their 'cut-off' based estimated 'consumption').

5) For the purpose of equivalence with the ECA's scope of the EC funds with potential exposure to legality & regularity errors (see the ECA's Annual Report methodological Annex 1.1), our concept of "relevant expenditure" includes the payments made, subtracts the new pre-financing paid out [& adds the retentions made], and adds the previous pre-financing actually cleared [& subtracts the retentions released; and any deductions of expenditure made by Member States] during the financial year. This is a separate and 'hybrid' concept, intentionally combining elements from the budgetary accounting and from the general ledger accounting.

6) In order to calculate the weighted Average Error Rate for the total relevant expenditure in the reporting year, the detected error rates have been used – or an equivalent. For low-risk types of expenditure, where there are indications that the equivalent error rate might be close to 'zero' (e.g. administrative expenditure, operating subsidies to agencies), an Average Error Rate of 0.5% has been used as a conservative estimate.

7) Even though to some extent based on the 7 years historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections, which is the best available indication of the corrective capacity of the ex-post control systems implemented by the DG over the past years, the Authorising Officer by Delegation has adjusted this historic average.

Any ex-ante elements, one-off events, (partially) cancelled or waived Recovery Orders, and other factors from the past years that would no longer be relevant for current programmes (e.g. higher ex-post corrections of previously higher errors in earlier generations of grant programmes, current programmes with entirely ex-ante control systems) [have been adjusted] in order to come to the best but conservative estimate of the ex-post future corrections to be applied to the reporting year's relevant expenditure for the current programmes.

DG HOME applied the historic Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections based on the figures 2013 – 2019 to the following control systems: Shared Management SOLID, Shared Management AMIF – ISF, Direct Management grants. For precautionary reasons, the following conservative approach was applied: an Average of Recoveries and financial Corrections of 0% was applied to the following control systems: Direct Management - Public procurement, Indirect Management - Decentralised agencies, Indirect Management - Delegation agreements and Other Expenditure. This is due to the fact that over the period 2013 - 2019, these control systems showed a low recovery orders ratio.

8) For some programmes with no set closure point (e.g. EAGF) and for some multiannual programmes for which corrections are still possible afterwards (e.g. EAFRD and ESIF), all corrections that remain possible are considered for this estimate.

- **Fraud prevention, detection and correction**

Since 2013, DG HOME has developed and implemented its own Anti-Fraud Strategy, elaborated on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. In 2018, DG HOME published a revised Anti-Fraud Strategy, which is valid until the end of 2020. The main objectives of this strategy are: (i) fraud prevention and detection within DG HOME, in relation to Responsible Authorities in Member States, and in relation to decentralised agencies in the area of Migration and Home affairs, as well as (ii) efficient and timely follow-up and reporting on follow-up of OLAF's final reports. The new Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy, published in April 2019, serves the basis for updating the DG's Strategy.

In 2019, a number of actions were implemented. DG HOME continued its awareness-raising efforts on fraud issues by updating its Intracomm page and preparing a communication campaign, which will be launched during the first quarter of 2020. Additionally, to improve internal organisation for prevention and detection of fraud, a functional mailbox for fraud reporting was created. Finally, DG HOME continued working in close collaboration with OLAF and the EC anti-fraud networks, like the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network (FPDnet).

DG HOME continued also to provide information and to collaborate with OLAF selectors and investigators, upon their request.

DG HOME implemented two financial recommendations issued by OLAF following the completion of the investigations: one on a DG HOME funded project financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) for the management of accommodation centres for asylum seekers and refugees in Italy and one on a DG HOME research grant.

In conclusion, the fraud prevention and detection processes work satisfactorily, and therefore contribute to the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives. The deterrent effects of the implementation of DG HOME's Anti-Fraud Strategy represent a benefit which cannot be quantified.

2.1.2 Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance.

2.1.2.1 Audits on DG HOME by the Internal Audit Service in 2019

During the reference period, the IAS performed an audit on DG HOME audit activity and clearance of accounts. The auditors identified several strengths (annual control report supporting the audit opinions, comprehensive audit checklists, weekly meetings to discuss ongoing issues under shared management funds). IAS also issued five recommendations of which three are ranked as "very important":

- Recommendation 1: set up and planning of DG HOME's audit activity. DG HOME should define and communicate the mission statement and mandate of audit function, adjust roles and responsibilities, reporting lines and milestones for the clearance of accounts exercise; update the audit strategies; analyse the resource needs for the audit activity

- Recommendation 2: Execution of the audit plan. DG HOME needs to plan and launch audits as soon as possible in the year after the adoption of the Annual Work programme and review of annual control reports and audit opinions;

harmonize milestones for the audit process steps; ensure that the final audit reports are sent to beneficiaries without delay and that this is monitored by senior management;

- Recommendation 3: Clearance of accounts. DG HOME should ensure that clearance decisions are made on time; it should clarify the procedure for accounts submitted before the year-end; adapt the clearance procedure to new organisational structure and improve the communication between financial units and audit sector (set-up and planning of the audit activity; execution of the audit plan; clearance of accounts).

DG HOME will implement the action plan by latest mid-2020. The audit findings do not put into question the Director-General's declaration of assurance.

More information on these recommendations and their state of play is provided in Annex 10.

The IAS also performed in 2019 two follow up audits:

1) On the coordination and working arrangements with European Union regulatory agencies and bodies in DG HOME: IAS concluded that all recommendations have been effectively implemented.

2) On risk management in DG HOME: IAS concluded that all the recommendations have been adequately and effectively implemented by DG HOME.

With reference to the IAS audit on HR management and staff allocation in DG HOME, DG HOME implemented most of the actions (update of strategy, draft of internal procedures, development of templates). Nevertheless, IAS assessed that there are still some residual risk related to one recommendation (assessed as "important") on the use of developed templates and criteria to support HR decisions) for which the implementation is ongoing.

In its contribution to the 2019 Annual Activity Report process the IAS concluded that the internal control systems in DG HOME are *effective*, except for the observations giving rise to 'very important' recommendations of the Audit Activity and Clearance of Accounts delivered on 28 January 2020 for which an action plan has been submitted to the auditors.

DG HOME has carried out a detailed analysis of the possible impact of the identified issues on the effectiveness of the DG's internal control system, also taking into account the actions already taken to mitigate the related risks. On the basis of this, DG HOME considers that the residual risk related to the above-mentioned recommendations does not affect in a material way the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore the assurance provided in this report.

2.1.2.2 Audits on DG HOME by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) in 2019

1. Annual discharge (DAS)

In its report 2018, ECA presented a dedicated chapter on migration and home affairs (*Chapter 8 Security and Citizenship*). The auditors did not present an error rate for the chapter due to the relatively low level of payments for this policy area in 2018 (around 2% of the EU total).

In relation to the audit of systems the auditors concluded that all the authorities in shared management had developed detailed procedures, which were in general sufficient to address the requirements of the AMIF and ISF regulations. The weaknesses found by the auditors in the work of the Member States' authorities have been followed up in the framework of the clearance of

accounts. In relation to direct management, the auditors concluded that the management of calls for proposals and grant applications are effective.

Nevertheless, ECA identified some weaknesses and issued one recommendation in relation to the management of direct management grants AMIF/ISF. DG HOME has put in place measures to mitigate the potential negative impact of these weaknesses which are described in detail in Annex 10.

The Court reviewed also DG HOME's 2018 Annual Activity Report and found no information that contradicted the auditors' findings.

Regarding the 2017 ECA Report, DG HOME has one open recommendation related to the guidance to be provided to Member States on mitigating the risk related to co-financing rate higher than that initially foreseen when according to national rules VAT could represent part of a co-financing. In response, DG HOME sent a questionnaire to Member States geared to seek information about the existence and use of so-called VAT compensation schemes. Almost all Member States responded to the questionnaire. DG HOME is now analysing the responses and reflecting on a way forward.

In Chapter 5 *Competitiveness for growth and jobs* where the Security research strand of DG HOME is included, there are no issues reported in relation with DG HOME.

2. Performance audits

In 2019, ECA published two Special Reports, which directly concerned DG HOME's activities:

Special Report 20/2019 on "EU information systems supporting border control - a strong tool, but more focus needed on timely and complete data EU Information systems on Internal Security": ECA concluded that the EU information systems are strong tools, but more focus is needed on timely and complete data. Based on this conclusion, five recommendations were issued to be implemented by latest end of 2021.

Special Report 24/2019 on "Asylum, relocation and return of migrants: Time to step up action to address disparities between objectives and results" ECA concluded that there are disparities between the objectives of the EU support and the results achieved. Based on this conclusion, six recommendations (19 sub-recommendations) were issued to be implemented by latest mid-June 2021 by the Commission and relevant agencies.

In addition to the above-mentioned performance audits, ECA published a Briefing paper on "Challenges to effective EU cybersecurity policy". ECA did not issue recommendations.

In relation to the follow-up of recommendations from previous years audits, DG HOME closed the implementation of ECA's recommendations stemming from two Special Reports: "EU support to fight human trafficking in South /South-East Asia" and "Centres of Excellence Initiative (CBRN)-Countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats from outside the EU". Regarding the 2018 Special Report No 13 2018 'Tackling radicalisation that leads to terrorism', ten out of eleven recommendations have been closed. The implementation of the recommendation related to the identification of objectives and indicators is on-going, the full implementation is expected for the end of 2020.

2.1.2.3 Audits on DG HOME by DG BUDGET in 2019 (validation of local systems)

DG BUDG finalized in 2019 two audits in relation to validation of local systems of DG HOME:

- *"Report on the validation of local systems for the identification, registration and*

recovery of receivable amounts in DG HOME": DG BUDG issued four recommendations rated as "important". The implementation is still ongoing, the deadline for implementation is Q4 2020 when DG HOME will assess the implementation.

- *"Report on the registration of legal commitments in DG HOME*": DG BUDG issued two recommendations rated as "important". The implementation is ongoing and needs to be finalized by end 2020.

In conclusion, the findings presented by IAS, ECA and DG BUDGET do not have any impact on the assurance provided in this Annual Activity Report.

2.1.3 Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework (consisting of five Internal Control Components, 17 Internal Control Principles and their main characteristics) **based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.**

DG HOME uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The effectiveness of its internal control system has been assessed by DG HOME following the methodology established in the "Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission".

The assessment has relied on a number of monitoring tools and sources of information including:

- an evaluation of the internal control monitoring criteria for the reference year developed in the context of the Annual Management Plan for 2019 and consisting of quantitative and qualitative indicators in conjunction with pre-set targets and existing baseline values;
- the reported exceptions and non-compliance events;
- the results of the internal control self-assessment (iCAT-survey) which focused on 13 Internal Control Principles, targeted all DG HOME staff and for which the participation was judged sufficient to be representative;
- the results of the monitoring of the implementation of control and anti-fraud strategies;
- the results of the audits performed or followed up by the Internal Audit Service which concluded that the audited internal control systems are effective, except for the observations giving rise to 'very important' recommendations which remain to be addressed, in line with the agreed action plans.
- The European Court of Auditors' findings do not undermine the effectiveness of the internal control system in place (more information is provided in section 2.1.2.2);
- the annual risk management exercise;
- the reports of the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation submitted by each Directorate to the Director-General.

DG HOME has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and

principles are present and functioning as intended. In addition, on Internal Control Principles 3, 4, 9 and 14, even though they are present and functioning well overall, some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified in relation to authorities and responsibilities, competence framework and professional development, assessment of changes, and separate communication lines.

The improvements and/or remedial measures implemented or envisaged are based on the Development Plan for DG HOME and the new working arrangements put in place by the new Director-General in office since January 2020.

2.1.4 Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements already reported above (in sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.3), and the sub-conclusions already reached. It draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

Overall Conclusion

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

With reference to grants research (FP7 and Horizon 2020), DG HOME applied the *de minimis* rules as indicated by central services. Based on the fact that payments for research grants represented 1.43% of 2019 payments and the exposure amounts to EUR 0.45 million (therefore below the threshold of 5%/EUR 5 million), the reservation issued by DG HOME on FP7 in the 2018 Annual Activity Report is not reported anymore in the 2019 Report (despite an error rate of 3.17%) and no reservation is issued for Horizon 2020.

2.1.5 Declaration of Assurance and reservations

DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, the undersigned,

Director-General of Migration and Home Affairs

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation

Declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view¹³⁷.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, including the handover note submitted by my predecessor covering the period 1 January 2019-15 January 2020, and the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

However the following reservations should be noted¹³⁸:

- 1) Shared management – Reservation concerning SOLID funds 2007-2013 in several Member States***
- 2) Shared management – Reservation concerning AMIF and ISF 2014-2020 in several Member States***
- 3) Centralised Direct Management***

Brussels, 24 April 2020

(e-signed)

Monique Pariat

¹³⁷ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

¹³⁸ Based on the de minimis threshold for financial reservations introduced by central services, no reservation is issued for grants research FP7, despite an error rate of 3.17%, as payments are below EUR 5 million (and less than 5% of total 2019 payments).

Reservation 1 – Shared management – SOLID Funds for the period 2007-2013 in several Member States

<p>Title of the reservation, including its scope</p>	<p>Financial quantified and non-quantifiable reservations for management and control systems of the <i>European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF)</i>, <i>European Refugee Fund (ERF)</i>, <i>Return Fund (RF)</i>, <i>External Borders Fund (EBF)</i> for the period 2007-2013.</p> <p>Quantified reservations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concerning the management and control systems for the period 2007-2013 for European Refugee Fund (ERF) - closed Annual Programmes up to year 2013: Belgium <p>Non-quantifiable reservations concerning the management and control systems for the period 2007-2013 for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Fund for the integration of third-country nationals (EIF) – closed Annual Programmes up to year 2013: Austria, Finland, Ireland - European Refugee Fund (ERF) – closed Annual Programmes up to year 2013: Austria, Ireland, Poland - Return Fund (RF) – closed Annual Programmes up to year 2013: Austria, Ireland, Slovakia - External Borders Fund (EBF) – closed Annual Programmes up to year 2013: Austria, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania (Special Transit Scheme), Slovakia, Slovenia
<p>Domain</p>	<p>EBF/ERF/EIF/RF are carried out under "Shared management Responsibility" under DG Migration and Home Affairs 2007-2013 programmes, budget lines 18.03 Asylum and Migration 18.02 Internal Security</p>
<p>Programme in which the reservation is made and total (annual) amount of this programme</p>	<p>18 03 51 Completion of operations and programmes in the field of return, refugees and migration flows 18 02 51 Completion of operations and programmes in the field of external borders, security and safeguarding liberties</p> <p>Payments in 2019 linked to the programmes under reservation – quantifiable only Belgium ERF: EUR 2,134,689.83</p>
<p>Reason for the reservation</p>	<p>Ex post audits carried out by DG HOME have revealed serious deficiencies in management and control systems for the programmes EIF, ERF, RF and EBF in the Member States concerned for the period 2007-2013. In particular these deficiencies refer to high error rates detected through audits of projects; incomplete audit work (i.e. procurement irregularities not detected); deficiencies in management verifications.</p>
<p>Materiality criterion/criteria</p>	<p>The materiality criterion is the cumulative residual error rate, i.e. the level of errors that remain undetected and uncorrected, by the end of the management cycle, at a Member State level. The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate at the level of the specific Member State and Fund is below 2% at the end of the management cycle.</p> <p>Where the residual error rate was above 2% or expected to be above 2%, a reservation was made.</p>
<p>Quantification of the impact (= actual)</p>	<p>Quantifiable reservation: Belgium ERF: from the ex post audit report, the financial impact has</p>

"exposure")	<p>been determined as being 3.18% of the payments and clearings made in 2019 (EUR 5,799,303.33) hence EUR 184,334.98</p> <p>Non-quantifiable reservations:</p> <p>The identified deficiencies have no financial impact as no payment was made by DG HOME in 2019 for the Funds and Member States listed below</p> <p>EIF: Austria, Finland, Ireland ERF: Austria, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia RF: Austria, Ireland, Slovakia EBF: Austria, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania (Special Transit Scheme), Slovakia, Slovenia.</p> <p>The estimation of the (net) amount at risk for the period 2007-2013 is provided in Annex 10.</p>
Impact on the assurance	<p>DG HOME has not been able to obtain reasonable assurance that key elements of the management and control systems of the programmes concerned functioned effectively, to provide reasonable assurance that statements of expenditure are correct and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular.</p> <p>The financial impact will be mitigated through financial corrections applied to past expenditure statements.</p>
Responsibility for the weakness	<p>The expenditure concerned is under shared management in which the Member State is primarily responsible for implementing the management and control systems. Therefore, the designated national authorities of the programmes concerned are responsible for undertaking corrective measures. The Commission supervises the national authorities in this respect (monitoring of execution of the remedial measures).</p>
Responsibility for the corrective action	<p>The reservations for EBF, EIF, ERF and RF are due to ex post audits carried out on the mentioned annual programmes by DG HOME, which concluded that the management and control systems applied by the competent authorities in the concerned Member States worked partially for the mentioned Annual Programmes, with substantial improvements needed.</p> <p>DG HOME has initiated the recovery process for the reservations for Hungary, Poland, Belgium, France individual projects and – in case of system-related findings – on a flat-rate basis.</p> <p>Concerning the ongoing ex post audits for Austria, Slovenia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Ireland, DG HOME will issue recovery orders for the amount paid to Member States and considered as irregular once the audit procedure is completed.</p>

Reservation 2 – Shared management – AMIF and ISF for the period 2014-2020 in several Member States

Title of the reservation, including its scope	<p>Financial quantified and non-quantifiable reservations concerning the management and control systems for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for the period 2014-2020</p> <p>Quantified reservations:</p> <p>Denmark ISF Finland AMIF</p>
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	Finland ISF Germany ISF Iceland ISF Ireland ISF Non-quantifiable reservations: France AMIF France ISF
Domain	AMIF and ISF are carried out under "Shared management Responsibility" under DG Migration and Home Affairs 2014-2020 programmes
Programme in which the reservation is made and total (annual) amount of this programme	Quantifiable reservations: 18 03 01 AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 18 02 01 ISF – Internal Security Fund Payments made in 2019 for the programmes under reservation: Denmark ISF: EUR 0.00 ¹³⁹ Iceland ISF: EUR 925,376.04 Ireland ISF: EUR 1,347,551.14 Germany ISF: EUR 18,739,055.86 Finland AMIF: EUR 4,840,298.11 Finland ISF: EUR 5,078,352.92
Reason for the reservation	Serious deficiencies in management and control systems for these programmes detected by DG HOME and for which there is no assurance that the necessary corrective measures have been implemented to date. These deficiencies mainly refer to the controls carried out at national level by the Responsible or Audit Authority.
Materiality criterion/criteria	In shared management, the materiality criterion is the cumulative residual error rate, i.e. the level of errors that remain undetected and uncorrected, by the end of the management cycle, at a Member State level. The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate at the level of the specific Member State and Fund is below 2% at the end of the management cycle. Where the residual error rate was above 2%, a reservation was made.
Quantification of the impact (= actual "exposure")	Quantifiable reservations: <u>Iceland ISF</u> : Preliminary audit findings following a system audit at the Audit Authority in last quarter 2019 identified serious deficiencies in Key Requirement 11 (adequate system audits) and Key Requirement 12 (adequate audits of expenditure) DG HOME will take and implement the appropriate corrective actions, which may result in individual correction(s) or flat-rate correction(s) once the contradictory procedure is finalised. DG HOME will propose and monitor corresponding system improvements. The financial impact has been determined as being 5% of the relevant expenditure in 2019 (EUR 1,383,711.84) hence EUR 69,185. <u>Ireland ISF</u> : Preliminary audit findings following a system audit at the Audit Authority in last quarter 2019 identified serious deficiencies in Key Requirement 11 (adequate system audits), Key Requirement 12

¹³⁹ In 2019 no payments were made for Denmark ISF, but clearings of EUR 412,711.98 were made.

	<p>(adequate audits of expenditure) and Key requirement 14 (adequate procedures for providing reliable audit opinion and audit reports in the management and control system). HOME will take and implement the appropriate corrective actions, which may result in individual correction(s) or flat-rate correction(s) once the contradictory procedure is finalised. DG HOME will propose and monitor corresponding system improvements.</p> <p>The financial impact has been determined as being 5% of the relevant expenditure in 2019 (EUR 1,873,931.94) hence EUR 93,696.</p> <p><u>Germany ISF</u>: Preliminary audit findings following a system audit at the Audit Authority identified serious deficiencies in Key requirements 11 (adequate system audits), Key Requirements 12 (adequate audits of expenditure) and Key requirement 14 (adequate procedures for providing reliable audit opinion and audit reports in the management and control system). DG HOME will take and implement the appropriate corrective actions, which may result in individual correction(s) or flat-rate correction(s) once the contradictory procedure is finalised. DG HOME will propose and monitor corresponding system improvements.</p> <p>The financial impact has been determined as being 5% of the relevant expenditure in 2019 (EUR 26,643,451.86) hence EUR 1,332,172.</p> <p><u>Denmark ISF</u>: from a system audit performed in the last quarter 2018, the preliminary audit findings suggest serious deficiencies in the management and control system and especially in the audit work of the Audit Authority. As the audit procedure is not completed, DG HOME estimates a residual error rate of 5% on the relevant expenditure (payments and clearings made by DG HOME) for 2019 (EUR 412,711.98), corresponding to EUR 20,635.</p> <p><u>Finland – AMIF/ISF</u>: the system audit by DG HOME has revealed serious deficiencies in management and control systems for these programmes and especially in the audit work of the Audit Authority. DG HOME estimates a residual error rate of 5% on the relevant expenditure for 2019:</p> <p>AMIF EUR 10,995,873.95, actual exposure of EUR 549,793. ISF EUR 8,865,881.12, actual exposure of EUR 443,294.</p> <p>The reservation is quantifiable as the deficiencies are linked to payments made in previous and current reporting years, and for which the corrective measures have not yet been implemented.</p> <p>Non-quantifiable:</p> <p><u>France AMIF and ISF</u>: The information submitted by France during 2019 (in particular the financial year 2018 annual accounts and the associated audit opinions and Annual Control Report issued by the Audit Authority provided clear evidence that there are serious deficiencies in key elements of the systems without adequate corrective measures taken. The level of error reported by the AA is well above the materiality level for both National Programmes.</p>
Impact on the assurance	Through its audit work, DG HOME has not been able to obtain reasonable assurance that key elements of the management and control systems of the programmes concerned functioned effectively, to provide reasonable assurance that statements of expenditure are correct and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular.
Responsibility for the	The expenditure concerned is under shared management in which the Member State is primarily responsible for implementing the

weakness	management and control systems. Therefore, the designated national authorities of the programmes are responsible for undertaking corrective measures. DG HOME supervises the national authorities in this respect through monitoring of execution of the remedial measures – action plan following the issuing of the final audit report to come.
Responsibility for the corrective action	The reservations for AMIF/ISF result for system audits carried out on the mentioned annual programmes by DG HOME, which concluded that the management and control systems applied by the Danish and Finnish competent authorities worked partially for the mentioned Annual Programmes, with substantial improvements needed. Whilst Finland has initiated supplementary audits and is close to finalising its final report to the Commission, the audit procedure for Denmark is still on-going. If necessary, DG HOME will launch a conformity clearance procedure and if the outcome of the contradictory procedure requires so, a recovery order will be issued by DG HOME for the amount paid to Member States and considered as irregular by DG HOME. For other Member States, the contradictory procedures on the audit findings are in preparation or are still ongoing without final conclusions.

Reservation 3 – Centralised direct management

Title of the reservation, including its scope	Financial reservation due to the financial risk corresponding to the residual error rate in the non-audited population of grants in the programmes 2014-2020 managed by DG Migration and Home Affairs (non-research grants)
Domain	Centralised direct management – non-research grants
Programme in which the reservation is made and total annual amount of the programme	18 02 – Internal Security, 18 03 – Asylum and Migration and 18 06 – Anti-Drug Policy. Total payments related to directly managed grants in 2019: EUR 371.14 million
Reason for the reservation	At the end of 2019, the residual error rate is not below the materiality threshold.
Materiality criterion/criteria	The materiality criterion is the cumulative residual error rate, i.e. the level of errors that remain undetected and uncorrected, by the end of the management cycle. The control objective is to ensure that the residual error rate on the overall population is below 2% at the end of the management cycle.
Quantification of the impact (= "actual exposure")	The estimated multiannual residual error rate for DG HOME directly managed grants (except research) for 2019 is 4.11% for the programming period 2014-2020. The maximum impact is calculated by multiplying the multiannual residual error rate by the sum of direct management payments based on cost statements actually processed and pre-financings cleared in 2019 (EUR 175.53 million). The estimated impact in 2019 is EUR 7.21 million.
Impact on the assurance	Legality and regularity of the affected transactions, i.e. payments made during the year. The assurance is affected within the scope of the quantified budgetary impact.

<p>Responsibility for the weakness</p>	<p>The main reason for errors are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programmes managed by DG HOME under the previous and current programming periods targeted relatively new policy areas and new beneficiaries who needed to adapt to EU rules. - The complexity of the eligibility rules as laid down in the Financial Regulation, based on the reimbursement of actual eligible costs declared by the beneficiaries; - The additional complexity of having customised rules per programmes (prior to 2018); - The fact that there are hundreds of beneficiaries and co-beneficiaries, and not all can be fully controlled. <p>The different control provisions set out by DG HOME, along with the audit certificates on financial statements (asked more frequently since annual work programme 2011) and ex post audits, can mitigate these risks to a certain extent, but can never be carried out on 100% of the cost claims received.</p>
<p>Responsibility for the corrective action</p>	<p>DG HOME continues in its endeavours to reduce errors in particular through the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streamline and harmonise procedures regarding monitoring and final payment - Simplification of financial circuits - More frequent (systematic in certain programmes) request for audit certificates accompanying the cost claim <p>DG HOME's auditors finalized 39 audit reports in 2019. The audit coverage for 2007-2013 programming period was 30% and for 2014-2020 programming period was 26%.</p> <p>The ex post audit plan for 2020 foresees 30 audits of grants. This will allow to increase the audit coverage to almost 34% of the auditable population, which should have a direct impact on the reduction of the residual amount at risk.</p>

2.2 Other organisational management dimensions

2.2.1 Human resource management

At the end of 2019, DG HOME had 590 staff members (compared to 564 in 2018). A **reorganisation** took place in September 2019 with the purpose of **maximising efficiency** and **enhancing synergies** between different strands of policy work. Moreover, by increasing the number of units from 20 to 25 and hence reducing their size, the reorganisation aimed at **facilitating interaction** between middle managers and their teams. Freed resources were used to **reinforce priority areas**, in particular areas linked to management of financial resources and Agencies. The changes also responded to the recommendations made by the Internal Audit Service as well as the results of the 2018 Staff Survey for DG HOME, which showed a growing need to find new ways to cope with the high workload.



Despite the increase in staff numbers, the **workload remained high** in 2019. Negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council were intense and the budget managed by DG HOME increased. At the same time, the area of home affairs remained under tight scrutiny of the Budget Authority and the auditors

(Internal Audit Service and Court of Auditors).

By the end of the year, 50% of the middle management positions were held by women (compared to 42% in average in the Commission). On 1 January 2020, the Europe for Citizens' programme was transferred to DG JUST, and with it four posts.

In line with the 2016 Action Plan to address audit recommendations, DG HOME prepared an **HR strategy**, which was endorsed by management in March. Moreover, as follow-up to the 2018 Staff Survey, management endorsed a **Development Plan** in July. The Plan includes 42 proposed actions within four priority areas, identified following input from staff members who volunteered to identify actions needed to respond to the concerns raised by staff in the Survey.

A full refurbishment/renovation of the DG HOME premises started in May 2019 with the aim to improve the wellbeing of staff, and will run until March 2020.

Several actions were identified in the Development Plan to improve recognition and feedback through better **internal communication**. Each Directorate appointed Ambassadors to a Steering Committee set-up in June to monitor the implementation of the actions. The newly created communication unit put forward an **internal communication strategy**, which was adopted by DG HOME management in February 2020.

Internal communication work focussed on ensuring that there was a vertical spread of knowledge in the DG and on tapping into the wealth of experience amongst staff. For this purpose, DG HOME organised **twenty-eight lunchtime seminars**. Information was also regularly disseminated on DG HOME's Intranet.

Supporting different professional **networks** has also been a priority for the internal communication team of DG HOME (e.g. Assistants' Network, Blue Book Trainees).

2.2.2 Better regulation

In 2019, DG HOME's work in relation to the better regulation agenda mostly focussed on evaluations, since there were no new legislative initiatives proposed that would have required impact assessments.



In 2019, three evaluations relating to Security and one to Migration were finalised and linked Staff Working Documents adopted¹⁴⁰. Four other evaluations, mainly in the field of Security, are expected to be finalised in 2020¹⁴¹.

All DG HOME's activities were based on the rules of Better Regulation and

¹⁴⁰ Fitness checks on Legal Migration (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/swd_2019-1055-staff-working-part1.pdf); European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20190514_sw-d-2019-174-commission-staff-working-document_en.pdf); European Critical Infrastructure (ECI) Directive (2008/114) (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20190723_sw-d-2019-308-commission-staff-working-document_en.pdf); and EU-Western Balkans Action Plan against firearms trafficking (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20190627_sw-d-2019-282-commission-staff-working-document_en.pdf).

¹⁴¹ Relating to the Schengen Facility of Croatia; Council Directive 2004/82/EC on the obligation of carriers to communicate passenger data; the EU Drugs Strategy 2013-2020 and the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2017-2020; and European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN).

in all cases it was ensured that the evaluations were based on sound evidence, collected by using appropriate methodology and ensuring the engagement of all relevant stakeholders. Consultation activities were widely used in order to obtain the opinion of the general public¹⁴² or of specific stakeholders¹⁴³ for the purpose of evaluation activities. All consultation activities are reported extensively in the Synopsis Report on consultation activities, which is part of the Staff Working Document according to the rules of Better Regulation.

2.2.3 Information management aspects

In 2019, DG HOME continued its work to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Regulation for EU institutions¹⁴⁴ and with the Commission's 2018 Data Protection Action Plan¹⁴⁵. A complete **inventory of the DG's data processing operations** was established as required under point 3.2 of the Action Plan. Four existing legacy notifications were converted into records under the new Regulation and these records were filled in by the controller units. The remaining three notifications are either obsolete and will be archived, or are based on model notifications which will be replaced by corporate records. In addition, a **record on the information exchange system for the European Migration Network (EMN-IES)** was established and submitted to the Data Protection Officer via the Data Protection Records Management System.

In the context of the establishment of the records, the **compliance with the general principles** of the Regulation was assessed in accordance with points 1.1 and 1.2 of the Action Plan. This assessment confirmed also that no **restrictions of data subjects' rights** are required in the context of the DG's processing operations (point 4.2 of the Action Plan). Moreover, the **privacy statements** for the DG's processing operations were updated and included in the relevant records (point 4.1 of the Action Plan). These privacy statements were consistently communicated to the relevant data subjects by electronic means, in accordance with Articles 14-16 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

In addition, an **information session** for the DG's Management was organised, with the presence of the Data Protection Officer. This possibility for exchange on data protection was well attended and appreciated by senior and middle management.

2.2.4 External communication activities

DG HOME deals with a big number of media requests, and produces a substantial amount of factsheets (47 factsheets in 2019) and other press material.

The DG's policies featured in the corporate communication campaign *EU Protects*¹⁴⁶ that began in October 2018. In 2019, DG HOME's work was featured in the video stories showcasing 'ordinary heroes' behind: combating radicalisation, Protecting the Maritime Borders (with Frontex) and The Journey of an Asylum Seeker, as well as visual stories: Land Border protection (with Frontex), Tackling Cybercrime - Ransomware (with Europol), Sham marriages (Europol) and European Arrest Warrant/SIRENE (with DG JUST).



¹⁴² Public consultations were used for all concluded and on-going evaluations, with the exception of the evaluation of the EU-Western Balkans Action Plan against firearms.

¹⁴³ Targeted consultations were used extensively in all evaluations.

¹⁴⁴ Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

¹⁴⁵ C(2018) 7432 of 7.11.2018.

¹⁴⁶ https://europa.eu/euprotects/content/homepage_en

The anti-radicalisation video took third place in the category "Solidarity" at the **Act Responsible Awards at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity**. The videos on fighting trafficking in human beings and on the anti-radicalisation were among the three videos awarded **Silver Lion at Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards**. The campaign has given DG HOME more visibility and outreach, which would not have been possible given our limited human and financial resources. The #EUProtects theme was used for DG HOME's stand at the Open Day held on 4 May.

In 2019, DG HOME published the results of the **Special Eurobarometer on Internet Security** and conducted a **Flash Eurobarometer on Corruption** and a 2019 edition of the **Special Eurobarometer on Cyber Security**. These were done in close cooperation with the Eurobarometer unit at DG COMM.

The **EU Immigration Portal**¹⁴⁷ provides practical information on EU and national immigration procedures and policies to prospective migrants. The **European Website on Integration**¹⁴⁸ provides a 'one-stop-shop' for bringing together information and good practices on immigrant integration from all Member States, targeting policy makers and practitioners working on integration in Europe.

The **social media coverage was strongly reinforced** in 2019. The number of Twitter followers reached 22,600 (representing a 37% increase compared to 2018), and we achieved 5,200,000 impressions (a 125% increase).

The **infomigrant project** continued throughout 2019 with Deutsche Welle, France Media Monde and ANSA to provide an information portal for migrants. The project was launched in 2017 and is reaching, through the platform and the various social media sites, an average of



over 5 million people per month of which 89% reside outside of the EU.

Work continued in 2019 to streamline the content on the DG HOME part of the Europa website, which will undergo migration to the new Commission website in 2020. In mid-2019, DG HOME **launched the EUROPA look and feel** on its entire website. This made the website compliant with current standards, and made the mobile version of the website much more accessible.

DG HOME stepped up its work on establishing information and awareness raising and was present in the **Visitor Centre** to deliver information to groups of visitors. In total, over 100 presentations were covered by DG HOME on both migration and security.

¹⁴⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/immigration/>

¹⁴⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home>