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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

on the Ex Post Evaluation of the European Refugee Fund 2011-2013 and 2007-2010

Accompanying the document

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions

Ex post evaluation reports for the period 2011 to 2013 of actions co-financed by the four Funds under the framework programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows'

{COM(2018) 456 final} - {SWD(2018) 333 final} - {SWD(2018) 335 final} - {SWD(2018) 336 final}

1 Contents

2 Introduction

This staff working document reports on the *ex post* evaluation assessing the results and impacts of actions co-financed by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) under the annual programmes implemented by the 27 participating Member States[1] (including emergency measures), and of the Community actions, in the period 2011-2013[2]. Actions under national programmes financed during this period were implemented from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2015.

The *ex post* evaluation assessed ERF in the light of its relevance (whether its objectives matched with societal needs), effectiveness (to what extent objectives have been achieved), efficiency (to what extent costs were proportionate the achieved benefits), sustainability of effects after the intervention ended, coherence between the actions financed by the instrument and complementarity to other interventions, and the added value of intervening at EU level.

The results of this evaluation will complement the interim evaluation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)[3], the successor of the Return Fund, Refugee Fund and Integration Fund for the period 2014-2020. The interim evaluation of the AMIF is due in 2018[4]. The Commission will submit an interim evaluation report of the Fund by 30 June 2018 to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. This interim evaluation report will be based on the interim evaluation reports provided by the Member States on the implementation of the actions and progress towards achieving the objectives of their national programmes to be submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2017. The interim evaluation report which the Commission will submit will also include an assessment of the mid-term review carried out by the Member States and of the implementation of the emergency assistance grants and Union actions. The results of the interim evaluation together with the results of the present evaluation will contribute to the shaping of the future policies under DG HOME responsibility, especially to the preparation of the new funding instruments in the framework of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020.

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1 Denmark does not participate in accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of the Protocol on the position of Denmark, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty establishing the European Community. Croatia participated as from 2013 only, upon accession to the EU.

2 The annual programmes implemented by the Member States under the ERF 2008-2010 annual programmes are already covered by the ERF 2008-2010 *ex post* evaluation. The evaluation also covers the 2008-2010 Community actions.

3 Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (OJ L 150, 20.5.2014, p. 168).

4 Part of the interim evaluation is the mid-term review of the AMIF national programmes of the Member States (Regulation (EU) No 514/2014, Article 15) which will take place in 2017 and 2018. The purpose of the mid-term review is for the Commission and the Member States to review the national programmes and assess the need for a possible revision of the programme, in the light of developments in Union and national policies through a questionnaire and bilateral dialogues with the Member States. In addition if the need arises, the results of the mid-term review of the national programmes may support requests for additional funding made by the Commission to the budgetary authorities for the remaining implementation period.

3 Background to the initiative

In the years 2000, the European Union had on average received around 300 000 asylum applications a year. In this light a first tangible expression of solidarity in the field of asylum at EU level was the creation of the ERF in 2000[5], which has been instrumental in laying the foundations of collective action by the European Union for the reception of asylum applicants and persons requiring international protection as part of a comprehensive approach. The first ERF ended in 2004 and was followed by a second phase[6] (ERF II) in 2005 - 2007.

A number of crucial requirements in the field of EU asylum policy were identified in 2005 in an impact assessment[7]. The **main problem** to be addressed was to translate into practice the principle of solidarity[8] between Member States in the EU asylum policy and was defined as follows:

How to implement the principle of solidarity in managing people flows by ensuring a fair share of responsibilities between Member States as regards the burden arising from the implementation of common policies on asylum and immigration and on the management of the external borders?

The 2008-2013 ERF[9] (the subject of the current *ex post* evaluation and hereinafter referred to as 'ERF') is the third phase of solidarity in the field of asylum and is one of the four EU funding instruments[10] established in 2007 as part of the framework programme on solidarity and migration flows[11] and of a wider EU policy framework which also included the European Asylum Support Office Agency (EASO), the Dublin Regulation[12], the EURODAC system[13]

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5 Council Decision 2000/596/EC of 28 September 2000 establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2000-2004 - OJ L 252, 6.10.200, p.12., with a EUR 216 million budget.

6 Followed by ERF II, for 2005-2007, with a budget of EUR 114 million (Council Decision 2004/904/EC)

7 Annex to the General Programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows – Extended impact assessment 2005 – SEC(2005) 435 of 6/04/2005.

8 Including share of financial responsibility.

9 Established by Decision No 573/2007/EC of the European Parliament of the Council of 23 May 2007 establishing the European Refugee Fund for the period 2008 to 2013 as part of the General programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows'.

10 The General Programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows" (SOLID) consisted of four instruments: External Borders Fund (EBF), European Return Fund (RF), European Refugee Fund (ERF) and European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF).

11 Commission Communication establishing *A framework programme on solidarity and the management of migration flows for the period 2007-2013* (COM(2005) 123 final).

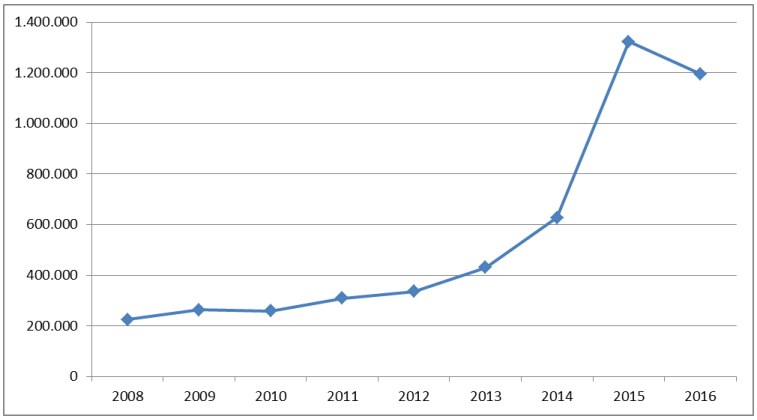
12 Dublin II Regulation - Council Regulation (EC) No. 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national & Dublin III Regulation - Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person.

13 Established by Council Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000 of 11 December 2000 concerning the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention (OJ L 316, 15.12.2000, p. 1) and Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (OJ L 50, 25.2.2003, p. 1).

and emergency measures[14]. Since 1999, the EU has been working to create a common European asylum system (CEAS)[15] affecting the obligations of Member States with regards to the reception of asylum applicants and asylum procedures, the integration of refugees and the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Moreover, the EU has adopted several legislative measures[16] harmonising common minimum standards for asylum. These measures (the asylum *acquis*) aimed at ensuring an equal treatment of asylum applicants in an open and fair system.

One of the characteristic of the period[17] was the sudden and unforeseen increase of migratory pressure which started already in 2012 and led to a drastic increase in the number of asylum applications in the European Union, with great variation across Member States. The number of asylum applicants in 2014 reached 600 000 persons and were mainly concentrated in Germany (173 100), followed by Sweden (75 100), Italy (63 700), France (59 000) and Hungary (41 300).

Figure 1: Number of asylum applicants in the 28 Member States (period 2008-2016)



Source: Eurostat data as of 07.03.2017
http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctza&lang=en

4 The ERF as funding instrument

The general objective reflected into the Impact Assessment[18] underpinning the SOLID Funds was to support the development and implementation of the CEAS on the basis of solidarity between Member States, and to promote balance in Member States' efforts to bear the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons, taking account of the relevant

14 Taken pursuant to Council Directive 2001/55/EC to provide temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of refugees.

15 The CEAS provides common minimum standards for the treatment of all asylum applicants and applications. It consists of a legal framework covering all aspects of the asylum process and a support agency, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

16 The revised Asylum Procedures Directive, the revised Reception Conditions Directive, the revised Qualification Directive, the revised Dublin Regulation and the revised Eurodac Regulation.

17 Implementation period from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2015.

18 Annex to the General Programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows – Extended impact assessment 2005 – SEC(2005) 435 of 6/04/2005.

Community legislation. The general objective of the ERF[19] does not fully capture this idea and limits its expression "*to support and encourage the efforts made by the Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons taking into account of Community legislation on those matters*". The Fund acted as a financial solidarity mechanism to support Member States that, on behalf of the EU, bear a substantial long-term financial burden under the CEAS.

The ERF's general objective was not translated further into specific and operational objectives in the legal base. Instead, the legal base identified five policy areas and within each policy area defined concrete eligible actions. The five policy areas are the following: i) reception conditions and asylum procedures, ii) integration of target groups iii) enhancement of MS' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies, iv) resettlement and v) transfer of target groups. The intervention logic of the ERF's legal base is therefore not consistent with the wider policy objectives.

The definition and scope of the policy areas was linked to the scope of the Common European Asylum System. Therefore the evaluation assimilated the five identified policy areas to specific objectives and the eligible actions within the policy areas as operational objectives. In consequence, the effectiveness of the ERF was evaluated against these five policy areas.

Furthermore, the absence of clearly defined objectives in the legal base led to the lack of EU targets linked to operational objectives to measure the results of the ERF. Therefore, to assess the effectiveness of the Fund, the evaluation had to rely mainly on programme targets set by Member States in their annual programmes which reflect first and foremost national needs and are assessed in the evaluation against interviews with stakeholders. This, combined with the absence of a baseline[20], proved to be strong limitation in terms of methodology.

To compensate for the absence of clearly defined objectives and targets and in accordance with the Decision establishing the ERF[21], the Commission adopted Strategic Guidelines[22] which identified three priorities[23] and seven specific priorities (between 2 to 3 specific priorities per priority). The three main priorities were:

- Priority 1: Implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives.
- Priority 2: Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims for

[19] Article 2(1) of Decision No 573/2007/EC: "The general objective of the Fund shall be to support and encourage the efforts made by the Member States in receiving, and in bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons, taking account of Community legislation on those matters, by co-financing the actions provided for in this Decision".

[20] Due to strong opposition from MSs.

[21] Article 17 of Decision 573/2007/EC.

[22] Commission Decision of 29 November 2007 implementing Decision No 573/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the adoption of the strategic guidelines 2008 to 2013 (notified under document number C(2007) 5738), OJ L 326, 12.12.2007, p. 29.

[23] Commission Decision of 29 November 2007 implementing decision No 573/ 2007/ EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the adoption of the strategic guidelines 2008 to 2013).

international protection and to underpin administrative structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States.

- Priority 3: Actions helping to enhance responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries (optional)

The specific priorities were defined to target particular actions for which the Member States could request an EU co-financing rate of 75%[24] (See Section 7). Each action planned in the annual programme should be programmed under one of the priorities set in the Strategic Guidelines. As the Strategic Guidelines did not set any threshold per priorities, Member States could distribute their annual allocation as they wished provided that the MSs target the available resources to the first two priorities, the third one being optional.

However, the funding priorities contributed to the confusion of the intervention logic as the first priority had a very wide scope, equivalent more or less to the general objective of the Fund. This issue was addressed under AMIF which shows a clear intervention logic and simpler articulation, with one general objective, translated into four specific objectives, accompanied by examples of actions. Under AMIF, also a common monitoring framework has been developed to enable tracking of progress[25].

5 Evaluation questions

This evaluation assessed the ERF against the five mandatory evaluation criteria laid down in the Commission *Better Regulation Guidelines* (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value). In addition, the co-financed actions were also assessed for their sustainability and complementarity. To assess these seven criteria, thirteen evaluation questions were defined (see Annex 6).

6 Method

This evaluation relies on an external study carried out between April 2016 and March 2017. The methodology combined desk research, on-site visits, and qualitative and quantitative analysis. It required a systemic summary of the evidence regarding the implementation of the Fund, most of the information being provided by the Member States' national evaluation reports (NERs) and annual programmes (APs). The APs set out the operational objectives through actions for each year and the NERs provided information on outputs relating to the operational objectives, results on the specific objectives and impacts as regards the general objective.

[24] Article 14.4 of Decision 573/2007/EC.

[25] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/207 of 3 October 2016 on the Common monitoring and evaluation framework provided for in Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament ad of the Council laying down general provisions on the asylum, migration and integration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management, OJ, 8.2.2017, L 33, p.1.

Consultations took place with a broad range of stakeholders (more than 120), including 27 responsible authorities (RAs), 88 beneficiaries, 5 EU officials and case-study respondents. The methodology combined interviews and case studies[26] (each involving a site visit). The case studies illustrate an in-depth analysis of Member States' national programmes and have facilitated the understanding of success stories and failures. The results of the case studies were integrated in the replies to the evaluation criteria. An internet based public consultation was also carried out (a detailed analysis of its outcome is attached in Annex 2).

Information was triangulated to ensure validity and robustness. The financial data extracted from SFC[27] and ABAC[28] and presented in the document was updated in January 2017.

6.1 Limitations

The evaluation process has encountered some difficulties. In particular, the assessment of effectiveness and efficiency was hindered, to a certain extent, by the absence of comparable quantitative data. For annual programmes, it is due to the fact that the reporting requirements in the Fund Regulation did not stipulate that RAs should collect the data that would be required to conduct an assessment of effectiveness and efficiency[29]. Furthermore, it has been difficult to measure efficiency, as no clear trends could be established due to the large diversity of projects, which could not be compared and/or the lack of ex ante targets to measure efficiency. Therefore, the assessment of efficiency had to reply on more qualitative data collected through the stakeholder consultations and the national evaluation reports.

Indicators and quantitative targets were set by Member States through their annual programme when selecting the actions supported by the programme for each year. For each action proposed, Member States defined independently the expected quantified results. In consequence, there was a multitude of indicators across Member States with no harmonization and a limited assessment on the side of the Commission representing a limitation for the evaluation.

Most of the Member States achieved their quantitative targets related to a number of asylum seekers and refugees to be received and/or integrated. On the contrary, what was missing was the qualitative analysis of the results. For instance, under Priority 1, how the reception and integration and asylum procedures would be improved. Furthermore, given the absence of agreed benchmarks, Member States had different understandings of what to record in the NERs[30]. It is likely that Member State evaluation experts dealing with NERs misunderstood the exact meaning of some indicators with the result that sometimes the data reported was not comparable between Member States. To mitigate this problem to the extent possible, RAs were provided with guidance on the interpretation of the indicators on an *ad hoc* basis at their

[26] AT, BE, BG, FR, IT, SE and UK.

[27] System for Fund Management 2007 (SFC) is an online monitoring tool managed by the Commission services and used for certain funding programmes, where Member States can upload implementation reports and financial information.

[28] ABAC is the Commission's accrual-based online accounting system.

[29] This is explained by the fact that the Better Regulation agenda, which formalised the criteria of the evaluations to be carried out by the Commission, was adopted after the ERF was established.

[30] Some Member States recorded the total compound number relating to an indicator in a given year (i.e. the total for the year in question and all the previous ones), while others provided only the additional number for that year (i.e. the change in the number). Some were not consistent in the units used for the indicators.

request during the implementation of the annual programmes, and this was then made accessible to all RAs.

To partly overcome these limitations, different approaches/mitigation strategies were taken by the evaluator. For the effectiveness and efficiency, the analysis was restricted to being based primarily on stakeholders' assessments, gathered through interviews and a phone survey with beneficiaries and RAs. The potentially positive stakeholder bias was corrected by looking at past achievement of predecessor programmes and the judgment of the evaluators. Overall, the availability, robustness and reliability of the data were sufficient to generate findings.

To improve transparency and accountability in the future, the Commission has developed a specific common monitoring and evaluation framework[31] and prepared a document to guide RAs in their AMIF evaluation exercise. Further details on the methodology can be found in Annex 3 and in the relevant parts of the document.

7 Management modes of the RF

The actions co-financed under the ERF were implemented through two different management modes:

7.1 Shared management: Multiannual and Annual Programmes of the Member States

Programming: Under the shared management mode, MSs hold the primary responsibility for the implementation and management and control of the interventions of the Fund. Under this management mode, the Fund is implemented on the basis of strategic multiannual programmes adopted for each Member State covering the 2008-2013 programming period. In addition, annual programmes were negotiated each year with each Member State within the framework set by the multiannual programme to implement the annual financial allocation granted to each of them.

Calculation of the annual financial allocation[32] for each Member State: to express solidarity with the Member States who bear, for the benefit of the EU, a heavier financial burden, the Fund basic act lays down the two objective criteria to be taken into consideration for the calculation of the annual allocation, i.e. the total number of refugees, TCNs enjoying subsidiary protection and resettled persons admitted in a given MS over the previous three years and the total number of asylum applicants, persons who have applied for subsidiary protection and TCNs enjoying temporary protection in a given MS over the previous three years.

The provisional allocations were communicated to the Member States the year before (by 1st July each year[33]) the adoption of the annual programme in question and were based on

[31] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/207 on the common monitoring and evaluation framework provided for in Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management.

[32] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 13.

[33] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 20.2

average figures over the previous three years (e.g. allocation for the 2013 AP were communicated in 2012 and were based on data of 2009, 2010 and 2011).

Content of the Annual Programme: The annual programme sets out the actions to be implemented in the Member State and indicates their purpose, scope, beneficiaries (public authorities in charge of return, NGO's, international organisations etc), expected results and financial allocation (EU and national co-financing). Each action is then implemented by one or more project(s) on the ground. In the shared management context, the projects are selected by the competent national authority (i.e. the Responsible Authority (RA)). Member States are therefore independent and only ex post assessment is carried out by the Commission at the time of submission of the closure report of the AP in question. The target group for the Fund comprises any third-country national (TCN) or stateless person having the status defined by the Geneva Convention and who is permitted to reside as a refugee in one of the Member States, any third-country national or stateless person enjoying a form of subsidiary protection within the meaning of Directive 2004/83/EC, any third-country national or stateless person who has applied for one of the forms of protection described in points (a) and (b), any third-country national or stateless person enjoying temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2001/55/EC and any third-country national or stateless person who is being or has been resettled in a Member State[34].

During the eligibility period of each annual programme, Member States were entitled to request a **revision of their annual programme** to adjust the actions to the changing migration flows and/or emergency situations. Member States could not however request additional funding for the implementation of a specific AP.

The **EU co-financing rate** is set at 50%. This rate may be increased to 75 % for projects addressing specific priorities identified in the Strategic Guidelines as well as for projects implemented by the Member States covered by the Cohesion Fund[35].

Technical assistance: Member States were entitled to use the funds allocated to the AP to finance "*preparatory measures, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and control measures as well measures for the reinforcement of the administrative capacity for the implementation of the Fund*"[36]. For the AP 2011 to 2013, the technical assistance was set at 4% of the total annual amount of funding allocated plus EUR 30,000.

Closure of the Annual Programme: The eligibility period of each annual programme was set at two years and a half (e.g. 2013 annual programme ran from 1 January 2013 until 30 June 2015). After the end of eligibility period, the Member States submitted a final report, which included an audit report. The part of the annual allocation not spent – if any – after the end of the eligibility period was lost for the Member States and for the Commission.

Emergency assistance[37]: In addition, to top up the allocation provided to their annual programmes, the Commission was entitled to provide "assistance to Member States for the implementation of emergency measures aimed at addressing situations of particular pressure". According to the basic act of the Fund, "Such situations are characterised by the sudden arrival at particular points on the borders of a large number of third country nationals who

[34] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 6.
[35] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 14.4.
[36] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 16.
[37] Decision No 573/2007/EC, Article 5.

may be in need of international protection, which place exceptionally heavy and urgent demands on the reception facilities, the asylum system or infrastructure of the Member State(s) concerned and may give rise to risks to human life, wellbeing or access to protection provided under Community legislation." The duration of these actions could not exceed 6 months.

Over the period, the Commission allocated EUR 66 385 316 to emergency assistance which is equal to 18% of the total programmed budget dedicated to annual programmes (EUR 22 803 735 in 2011, EUR 10 202 335 in 2012 and EUR 33 379 246 in 2013). Overall, 51 emergency measures were implemented between 2011 and 2013 in 11 Member States faced with particular pressure.

7.2 Direct management: Annual Work Programmes of the Commission

Under this management mode, up to 10% of the RF's available resources could be used to finance transnational actions or actions of interest to the EU as a whole, which were managed by the Commission (**Community actions**).

Each year the Commission adopted an **annual work programme** (AWP) specifying how the objectives of the ERF were to be pursued for the implementation period, taking into account the policy context. The AWPs were mainly implemented via grants, for which the Commission then launched calls for proposals defining the eligible actions. Calls for proposals were addressed to public authorities from the Member States participating in the Fund, International Organisations and NGOs registered in one of the Member States. The ERF Community Actions were co-financing (up to 90% of the total eligible costs of the action) transnational projects aiming at developing methodological tools (i.e, facilitating integration and identifying alternatives to detention), addressing the needs of vulnerable people (in particular unaccompanied minors and victims of torture), and strengthening responsibility sharing between Member States through resettlement and relocation mechanisms. Furthermore, two grants aiming at reforming and setting up a new Greek asylum system were also directly awarded to UNHCR to support the emergency situation related to the asylum system in Greece.

8 Implementation – state of play

The ERF was launched in 2008 with an available financial envelope of EUR 628 million. The allocation for 2011-2013 was EUR 386.2 million, of which EUR 373.5 million was under shared management (including emergency measures with EUR 68 million funded to 10 Member States) and EUR 12.7 million under direct management for Community Actions. The table below shows the EU distribution of financing to the different management modes during the period under assessment.

Table 1: Total programmed EU contribution for ERF, 2011-2013 (EUR)[38]

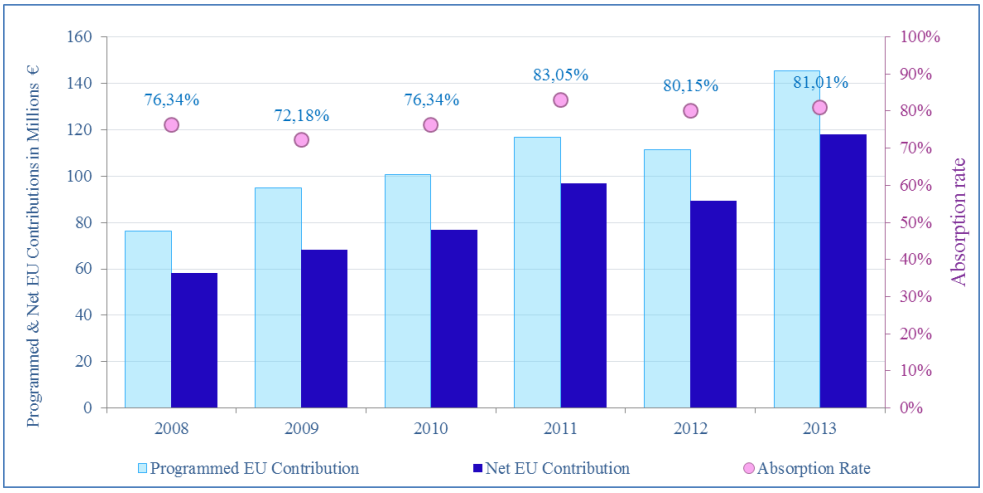
	2011	2012	2013	Total
Shared management (via national programmes)	116 722 757	111 259 303	145 463 497	**373 445 557**
Direct management (via Community actions)	3 953 032	4 214 040	4 545 211	**12 712 283**
Total ERF EU budget	**120 675 789**	**115 473 343**	**150 008 708**	**386 157 840**

A) Implementation through shared management

Finding 1: Absorption rates are good and remain stable at 81%

As illustrated by figure 2, the programmed EU contribution rose gradually by 24 %, from EUR 117 million in 2011 to EUR 145 million in 2013 due to new challenges to be addressed in the area of asylum. The average absorption rate remained stable across the period, at 81%.

Figure 2: Programmed and net EU contributions and absorption rates by year, ERF shared management, 2011-2013



Source: European Commission data as of 31.12.2016 (ABAC/SFC)

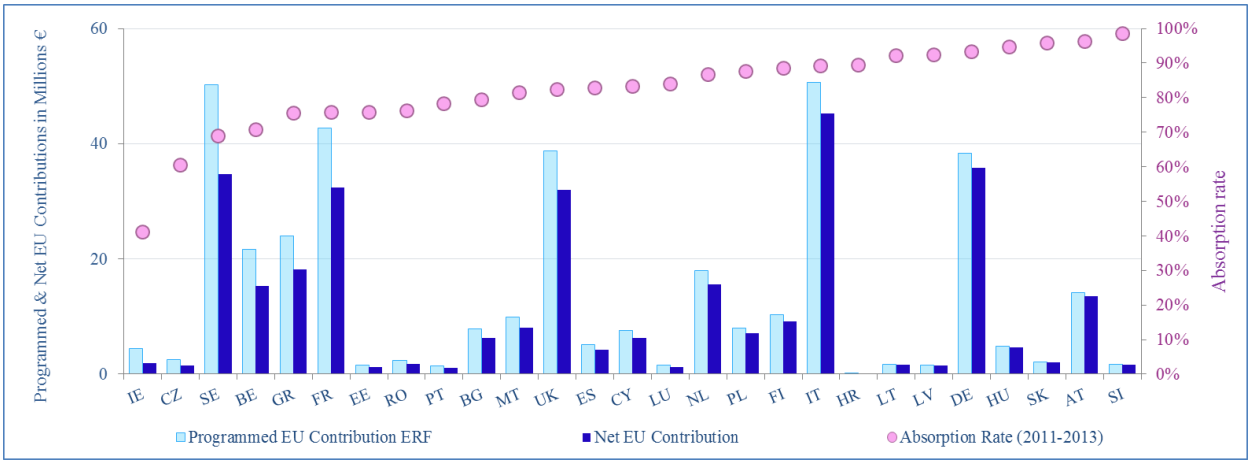
Under the shared management mode, Member States hold the primary responsibility for the implementation and management and control of the interventions of the Fund. Member States implement programmes at national level and allocate these funds to end recipients which are public authorities, NGOs or international organisations.

Actions under national programmes were implemented from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2015. It should be underlined that some national programmes were not yet closed when the evaluation was carried. Member States demonstrated through the level of their absorption rate the ability to perform effective programming and involve national stakeholders in the

[38] The Fund's contribution to projects in Member States is set at maximum 50% of the total eligible costs of an action and at 75% for Member States covered by the Cohesion Fund and for projects reflecting specific priorities mentioned in the strategic guidelines. For projects carried out under direct management, the contribution may amount to 90% of the total eligible costs of a project.

implementation of projects. The ERF absorption rate ranged from 72 % to 84 % in 2007-2013 and was 81 % overall for 2011-2013. No particular correlation could be identified between absorption rate and geographical location, country size or share of the ERF. Nevertheless, as highlighted in Figure 3, the absorption rate of most Member States is above 70 %, with the exception of the Czech Republic (60 %) and Ireland (with an under-performing rate of 41 %[39]). According to these Member States, these low absorption rates were due to the need for beneficiaries to co-finance 25 % of the projects themselves as it was not financed by the national budget of the Member State, which appeared to be a constraint for most stakeholders[40].

Figure 3: Programmed and net EU contributions and absorption rates by Member State, ERF shared management, 2011-2013 (including emergency assistance)



Source: European Commission data as of 31.12.2016 (ABAC/SFC)

In the NERs and case studies, stakeholders cited the following obstacles to achieving a 100 % absorption rate:

- secondary impacts of the financial crisis affecting the capacities of beneficiaries to co-finance projects themselves;
- Member States with relatively underdeveloped asylum systems having to build capacity;
- greater migratory pressure and related conflicts which became protracted; and
- administrative delays, which resulted in agreed deadlines being missed.

Finding 2: 'Sharing the burden' – the distribution of ERF funding follows partially the trends in asylum applications across Member States because of a delay of three years compared to the trend in asylum applications

The total ERF contribution varied significantly across Member States. Five Member States[41] account for almost 59 % of the total programmed and the total final EU contributions. Funds were allocated on the basis of the methodology set out in Article 13 of Decision No 573/2007/EC. The annual allocation for each Member State took account of the target

[39] Ratio between the final EU contribution and the Programmed EC contribution.
[40] NGOs, International Organisations.
[41] IT, SE, FR, UK and DE.

groups (asylum applicants and resettled persons) and the Eurostat statistics available for the last three years.

Because of this method, the allocated budget for the Member States shows a delay of three years compared to the trend in asylum applications. This weakness was mitigated to some extent by the allocation for emergency measures to support Member States subject to particular and urgent pressure. The countries most affected by the sudden arrival of migrants[42] saw their allocations increase by 97 % over the 2011-2013 period thanks to EU funding for emergency measures and partly to the annual calculation of their allocation (See section 7).

Finding 3: Due to the absence of a threshold, EU funding was concentrated on Priority 1

In the period 2011-2013, funds were allocated to the three funding priorities[43], plus technical assistance, emergency measures and resettlement activities. In 2011-2013, over 90 % of projects were implemented under priority 1 (including emergency measures), 8 % under priority 2 and less than 2 % under priority 3. The countries that focused more on the implementation of field and concrete support for asylum applicants[44] addressed urgent day-to-day issues[45].

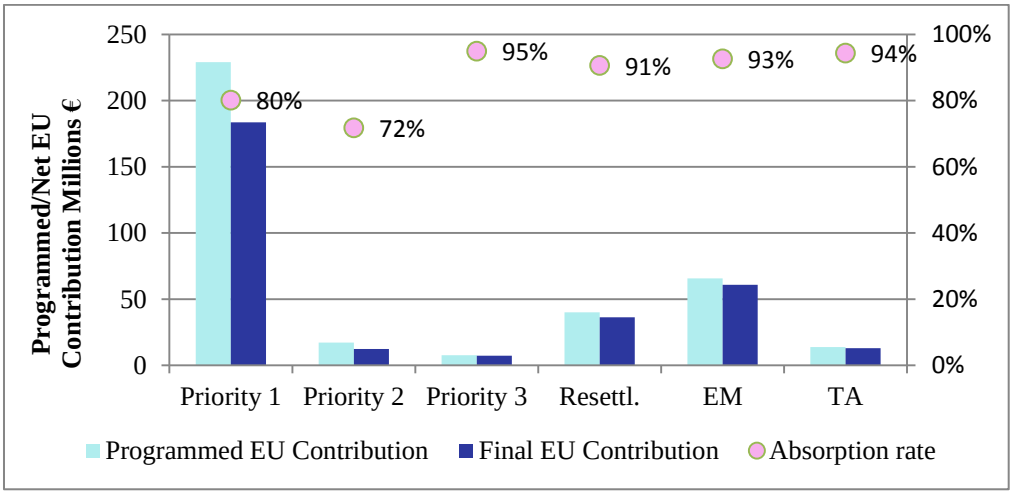
[42] BG, CY, DE, EL, FR, HU, IT, MT and NL.

[43] (1) Implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives; (2) Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve the quality of procedures for the examination of claims for international protection and to underpin administrative structures in an effort to respond to the challenges brought forward by enhanced practical cooperation with other Member States; (3) Actions helping to enhance responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries (optional priority).

[44] EL, IT, LU, SV and HR only implemented projects under priority 1.

[45] Improvement of the accommodation facilities, psychological and social support, legal assistance.

Figure 4: Programmed and final EU contribution by priority, 2011-2013



Source: European Commission data as of 27.02.2017 (SFC2007)[46]

The number of emergency measures (EM) programmed between 2011 and 2013 (accounting for 18 % of the ERF envelope) varied greatly among Member States depending on geographical location and/or the extent of asylum pressure faced by the Member State. Italy was the main beneficiary of emergency measures between 2011 and 2013, with 45 % of the total allocation.

In total, 9 058 persons were resettled by 12 Member States in 2011-2013 using ERF assistance. Numbers varied significantly between Member States, ranging from six in Czech Republic to over 4 400 in Sweden. In comparison to the period 2008-2010[47], the overall number increased slightly over 2011-2013. Of those resettled, 5 133 belonged to particularly vulnerable groups[48].

B) Implementation through direct management

Community actions were implemented through direct management. Around 3.2 % of available ERF funding was used to finance these transnational actions or actions of interest to the European Union. The total programmed EU contribution under direct management was EUR 12.7 million, of which EUR 11.5 million was allocated to Community actions and EUR 1.2 million spent on procuring studies[49]. The envelope was 40 % smaller than that for the previous (2008-2010) period, due to the creation of EASO in 2010.

Of the 15 projects selected[50] between 2011 and 2013, 14 closed[51] projects were chiefly concentrated in 2011 and 2012. Absorption rates ranged between 17 % and 99 %. The average

46 Source: SFC2007 (27.02.2017). These data were aggregated manually.
47 4 378 persons were resettled from 2008 to 2010.
48 Women at risk and unaccompanied minors.
49 Study on the feasibility of developing Eurodac into a supporting tool for the CEAS, Study on the implementation of the Qualification Directive and Study on the implementation of the CEAS.
50 Grant agreements signed between the European Commission and awarded beneficiaries.
51 Projects are regarded as closed/completed once the technical implementation report has been received and approved and final payment (and de-commitment, if applicable) has been made.

absorption rate per project (87 %[52]) is higher than for shared management. Rates increased over time for projects under direct management, suggesting that stakeholders developed greater expertise in the course of the ERF cycle.

9 Answers to the evaluation questions

9.1 Relevance

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

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

Main conclusions: Overall, Member States confirmed that the formulation of ERF funding priorities and eligible actions reflected their needs. In the context of greater asylum flows, the emergency measures were particularly relevant to address immediate emergency situations. However, the need for greater solidarity and responsibility-sharing between Member States could have been better translated into clear objectives and priorities at EU and national level. Furthermore, ERF annual programmes sometimes lacked a strategic approach. The design of the allocation system (based on historic inflows) did not always properly reflect Member States' actual needs in view of fast changing refugee trends. However, Member States that had to face the highest migration pressure, such as EL, BG, IT and MT, counter balanced this lack of flexibility of the Fund by making use of the Emergency Measures mechanism. This lack of flexibility of the distribution key is an issue which would need to be addressed in the future Multiannual Financial Framework[53].

Relevance of ERF funding priorities

The underlying purpose of the ERF was to improve solidarity between Member States, help them to share the burden of receiving asylum applicants and address the need to harmonise asylum systems in line with the development of the CEAS.

During the period under evaluation, most Member States had pressing needs to improve reception conditions for asylum applicants and to facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. The need to develop reception conditions with higher standards, fairer and more effective asylum procedures and the importance of raising EU citizens' awareness of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum applicants was underlined in the 2005 impact assessment and constitutes an important element of the CEAS.

The ERF priorities responded to most of the needs during the implementation period. One of the major characteristics of the period was the sudden and unforeseen increase of migratory pressure, which led to a drastic increase in the number of asylum applications in Europe, with great variation across Member States. The ERF responded well to this crisis. However, the evaluation showed that the lack of harmonised asylum systems, in line with the development

[52] See Annex 6 for more details on programmed and awarded contributions for ERF direct management.

[53] The issue seems to be still valid under the AMIF, although specific actions and emergency assistance have helped to introduce more flexibility.

of the CEAS, emerged as a key problem. National differences in legal frameworks related to asylum remain, despite the CEAS, and continue to lead to secondary movements[54] between Member States, of asylum applicants.

The solidarity dimension (the need for a 'balance of effort' between Member States) could have been strengthened through clearly formulated priorities of the ERF. As a result, these dimensions were insufficiently translated into the Member States' annual programmes which focussed on the national needs; for instance, few actions related to the transfer of persons (relocation) and implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

Relevance of ERF-eligible actions

All Member States confirmed that the ERF actions met their identified needs in the field of asylum. The diversity of eligible actions[55] ensured that almost all needs, at both EU and national level, were addressed adequately and that new challenges could be met. Member States[56] were also provided with financial incentives to design and implement a resettlement strategy (see Effectiveness of the ERF at results level under section 9.2 for more details about these incentives). The evaluation study assessed that these additional financial incentives were to some extent effective in fostering responsibility-sharing. This can be evidenced in the fact that the number of persons resettled in this way doubled in the 2011-2013 period compared to the 2008-2010 period[57]. The United Kingdom and Finland particularly underlined in their national evaluation reports the positive impact of these forms of support on their implementation of resettlement. Such incentives could have also been used for priority 2 measures and the transfer of persons (relocation); for the latter, the voluntary mechanism was only partially relevant as very few actions related to relocation were implemented

Overall, the limitation of resources was a problem for Member States – especially those facing a high influx of refugees, for which the new challenges were not matched by an increase in the allocated budget. The allocation mechanism was based on historic (previous three years') inflows and did not reflect Member States' current and evolving needs. As showed on the graph below, Member States that received, generally speaking and in absolute terms, the smallest number of asylum seekers tended to have nonetheless high levels of programmed budget.

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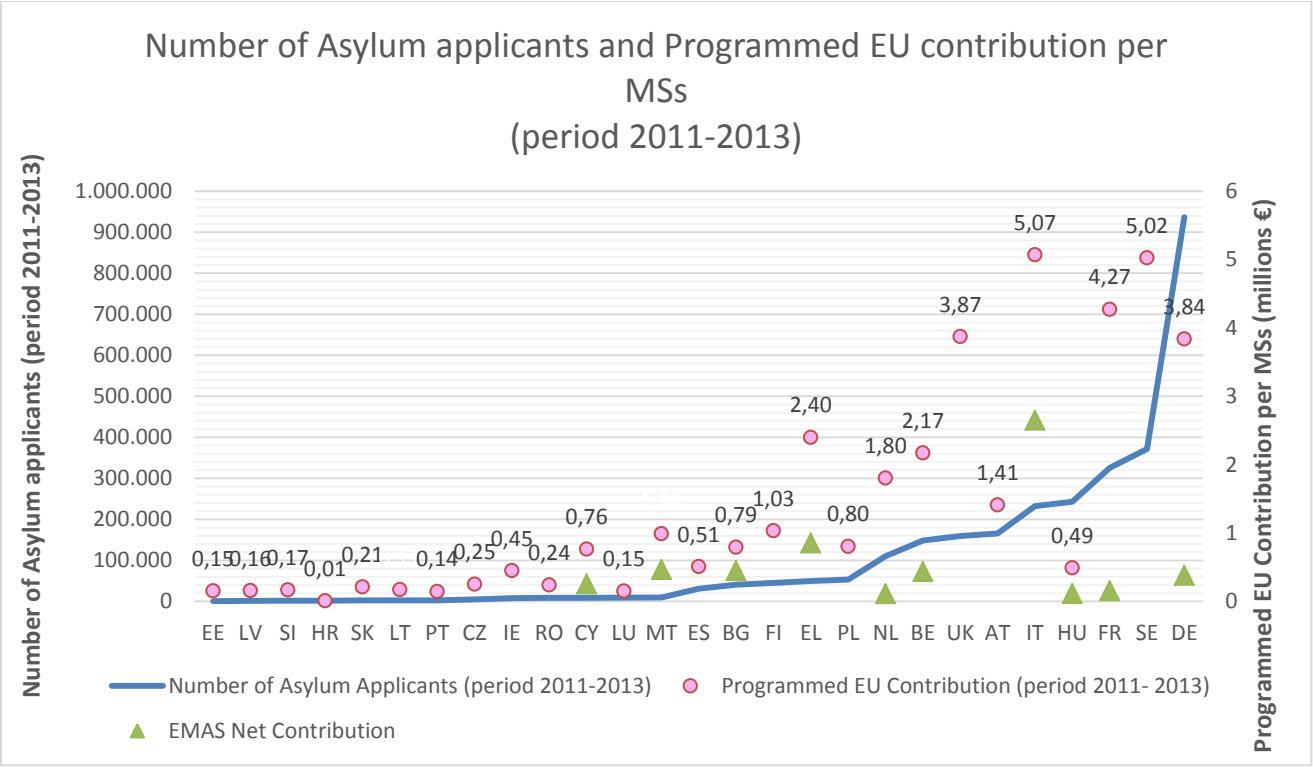
54 According to the Dublin system, asylum applicants cannot choose the EU country where their application will be processed. However, some migrants seek to avoid registration and fingerprinting and then move on to the country where they wish to get asylum and settle which create an incentive for asylum shopping. These secondary movements create imbalances in the distribution of asylum applicants and place disproportionate pressure on the favoured destination countries.

55 31 eligible actions grouped into five categories relating to the ERF's specific objectives:
(i) reception conditions and asylum procedures;
(ii) integration;
(iii) enhancement of Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies;
(iv) resettlement; and
(v) transfer of people (relocation).

56 UK and SE were the main beneficiaries of the resettlement programme.

57 9 058 persons were resettled in 2011-2013 compared to 4 378 resettled in 2008-2010.



For instance, HU and IT received the same number of asylum applicants (around 240 000 applications in each Member State) whereas the programmed EU contribution was much higher in IT. As another example, DE was the country with the higher number of asylum applicants, namely around 936 000 applications were submitted, but the programmed EU contribution in DE and UK was the same, whereas the UK received only 160 000 asylum applicants.

The allocation system was a problem of the Fund's legal base. The Fund thus lacked flexibility in adapting quickly to changing Member State needs. However, Member States that had to face the highest migration pressure counter-balanced this lack of flexibility by making use of the Emergency Measures mechanism. Indeed, as it can be seen from the graph above, the countries most affected by the sudden arrival of migrants, such as EL, BG, IT and MT, saw their allocations increase by 97 % over the 2011-2013 period.

Flexibility was also ensured through the possibility for the Member States to modify their national programmes at any time and to reallocate Funds in the area which required a stronger financial support.

Under the AMIF, the distribution key for the basic allocation to Member States is based on the 2011-2013 allocation for the ERF, the EIF and the RF. A certain flexibility of the funding instrument can be assured by the resources allocated to specific actions[58] and emergency

[58] Article 16 and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014. An additional amount can be granted to Member States provided that the additional amount is earmarked as such in the national programme and that it is used to implement the specific actions set in Annex II to the Regulation. These specific actions mainly include actions implemented by more than one Member State (joint action) in the field of integration, joint return operations, joint initiative in the field of legal migration, joint reintegration projects etc.

assistance. However, during the 2015/2016 crisis, the lack of flexibility to modify the distribution key or to shift funds from one Member State to another was apparent. The 2015/2016 migrant crisis showed that at a political level, several Member States have largely rejected the idea of responsibility-sharing of asylum applicants developed by the European Commission. For the future multiannual financial framework, the allocation key must be more flexible, for example by providing the legal basis for regular updates or limiting the basic allocation and keeping a 'reserve' that can be distributed later during the implementation of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Relevance of priorities in the annual programmes

Overall, Member States considered the annual programmes as reflecting their immediate national needs and some of them based their own priorities on the ERF priorities.

Although all three priorities were of interest to all Member States, 91 % of the total programmed budget was allocated to priority 1, which corresponds to the 'implementation of the principles and measures set out in the Community acquis in the field of asylum, including those related to integration objectives. This was the priority best aligned with national needs. Central and Eastern Europe Member States[59], where reception capacities were less developed, used priority 1 to improve reception capacities and conditions. Member States with existing reception capacities focused their budget on priority 1 due to the high number of asylum applicants with basic needs.

Five Member States made significant use of priority 2[60]. Only the UK dedicated over 10 % of its budget to projects under priority 3[61]. While the proportion of funds allocated to priorities 2 and 3 was relatively small, Member States still found them to be of relevance.

9.2 Effectiveness

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

Main conclusions: Overall, the ERF was evaluated as having been effective at national level, especially for newer Member States, where it enhanced the capacity to establish national asylum systems. The evaluation showed that, in the EU-15 Member States, the ERF was particularly effective in improving reception conditions for asylum applicants and the integration of beneficiaries of international protection but with some difficulties in implementation. The progress registered by the Fund in the areas of relocation and resettlement was marginal.

Some limitations emerged when it came to assessing the overall effectiveness of the ERF at

[59] SI, EE, HU, LT, CZ, SK, HR, CY and BG.

[60] Development of reference tools and evaluation methodologies to assess and improve procedures for examining claims for international protection and to underpin administrative structures in response to the challenges of greater cooperation between Member States.

[61] Actions helping to enhance responsibility-sharing between Member States and non-EU countries (optional priority).

EU level. The ERF monitoring and evaluation system did not allow for a detailed follow-up and assessment of the performance of the Fund[62]. Set indicators were rather weak and monitoring data were not fully reliable.

Complications as regards the construction and implementation of a CEAS also remain. The ERF had only moderate impact in terms of improving solidarity and responsibility-sharing. A better cooperation between the Member States with a centralised and harmonized EU asylum system should, in the future, lead to a more effective and coherent EU framework in the area of asylum.

Effectiveness of the ERF at output level

The evaluation concluded that all Member States, with some minor exceptions[63], achieved their quantitative targets[64]. In some cases, targets were over-achieved due to the rise in asylum flows and the fact that a wider target group benefited from the projects' outcomes.

However, the effectiveness and impact of the ERF projects was difficult to measure in qualitative terms since Member States took different approaches (see section 6 on methodology).

Several sources suggest that the projects in the new Member States focused more on filling gaps and addressing asylum applicants' basic humanitarian needs, mainly accommodation. Conversely, in the EU-15 Member States, projects mainly involved activities to improve the well-being of those in the target groups.

Activities to encourage participation by target groups and to improve the professionalism of project beneficiaries were organised. However, the effectiveness of the Fund was hampered when the implementation of projects faced certain internal and external difficulties, namely the long pre-financing period and insufficient capacity among ERF beneficiaries to handle delays in receiving the funding. The lack of interest among target groups themselves was also a problem in seven Member States[65]. Finally, the economic crisis (which accompanied the asylum crisis between 2011 and 2013) with cuts to public resources, higher unemployment and discrimination against refugees all had a negative impact on project implementation and generated among stakeholders the feeling of a degree of under-achievement.

Effectiveness of the ERF at priorities and policy areas level

Effectiveness as regards reception conditions and asylum procedures

EQ1A: To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 actions contribute to the reception conditions

62 Under the AMIF, the European Commission is making considerable efforts to address this issue by developing a common monitoring and evaluation framework with active cooperation of the Member States.

63 UK and LU.

64 Indicators mostly related to a number of asylum seekers and refugees to be received and/or integrated, and did not detail qualitative aspects under Priority 1 (how the reception and integration and asylum procedures would be improved) or expected progress under Priority 2 (what is expected from the development of tools and methodologies and from the improvement of administrative structures).

65 BG, FI, FR, LU, PT, RO and UK.

and asylum procedures?

Main conclusion: In the NERs, all Member States confirmed that the ERF provided a high level of support for the improvement of reception conditions of asylum applicants and asylum procedures. On the other hand, the sharp increase in asylum flows in some cases reduced the quality of the services provided.

The improvement of reception conditions in Member States was one of the main areas of focus of the ERF. Of the projects co-financed by the ERF, 47 % concerned reception capacities, reaching almost two thirds of asylum applicants[66]. All Member States stated clearly in their NER that the ERF provided strong support in this area. The main results of the improvements to reception conditions and asylum procedures were as follows:

- measures relating to accommodation, i.e. the creation and enlargement of reception centres, had a visible impact, with a total of 87 000 beneficiaries. ERF funding was used to increase accommodation capacities in eight Member States[67], improve safety and modernise accommodation centres;
- improved social assistance and legal procedures (measures that directly facilitated the processing of asylum claims through social, legal and administrative counselling for around 662 000 beneficiaries). Emergency measures reduced the backlog in asylum applicants procedures in Greece; and
- medical and psychological care for asylum applicants proved to be a strong source of additional support for health insurance systems, reaching around 269 000 people.

Overall, quantitative targets (set in the multiannual programmes by the Member States at the start of the Fund) were over-achieved in all areas (total achievement rates amounted to 140 %), notably because of the increase in migration flows. Moreover, the migration crisis presented a stronger impact in 2014, when it was no longer possible to modify the targets set in the NPs (the latest adoption was in 2013), hence the overachievement mainly refers to the last year of implementation of the Fund. Complementary data and information were collected by the evaluators through interviews with the national authorities and key stakeholders, to complete the picture and carry out also a qualitative assessment.

With the overachievement some difficulties arose, since the planning phase of the project cycle management proved to be more complicated and the values of qualitative indicators may have been reduced (i.e. in AT, it was the case of projects aiming at providing social counselling as the number of asylum seekers was higher than planned: while the number of persons assisted increased, the number of hours of assistance delivered per person could not always be offered as planned).

Effectiveness as regards integration of people in the target groups

[66] Over a million new migrants entered the 27 Member States between 2011 and 2013.
[67] EL, FR, LT, RO, BE, BG, CY and LU.

EQ1B: To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 actions contribute to the integration of persons referred in Art 6 (target group)[68]?

Main conclusions: Stakeholders assessed the ERF's contribution to integration as positive. Several highlighted that refugees encountered difficulties in entering the labour and housing markets due to a deteriorating social and economic environment.

Improving the process of integrating refugees was another main priority of the ERF. The Fund supported 42 % of all integration projects supported by the Fund, which involved social assistance with administrative/judicial formalities, counselling and legal aid, and language training; these reached more than 95 000 people[69]. Member States' NERs gave a mostly positive assessment of the ERF contribution to changes and improvements in the field of integration.

As regards integration, the evaluation highlights projects with a focus on:

- recognising refugees' competencies and skills;
- organising common activities with local communities and raising awareness among EU citizens; and
- facilitating refugees' entrepreneurship.

The main outputs of integration measures were as follows:

- social counselling contributed to the integration of over 95 000 refugees in 21 Member States. Such measures were particularly relevant in PL, FR and AT, with 45 000 final beneficiaries (asylum applicants) assisted through activities such as cultural dialogue with civil society, language training, sport events, cooking and cultural events;
- accommodation projects benefiting over 61 000 refugees were very positive considering the difficulty for them to enter the housing market; and
- a Community action was aimed at developing an UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) online integration tool containing data pertaining to refugee integration and designed to facilitate the exchange of information and raise awareness.

On each topic, the number of target group people reached exceeded what was planned (overall achievement rates: 138 %), except in FI, PO, LU and the UK.

Some Member States stressed the possible existence of specific obstacles to integration linked to the social and economic environment, including access for beneficiaries of international

[68] The target groups comprise the following categories: (a) any third-country national or stateless person having the status defined by the Geneva Convention and who is permitted to reside as a refugee in one of the Member States; (b) any third-country national or stateless person enjoying a form of subsidiary protection within the meaning of Directive 2004/83/EC; (c) any third-country national or stateless person who has applied for one of the forms of protection described in points (a) and (b); (d) any third-country national or stateless person enjoying temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2001/55/EC; (e) any third-country national or stateless person who is being or has been resettled in a Member State.

[69] To be compared with 73,000 new asylum applications accepted during 2011-2013. France, Greece, Germany, and Hungary were the MS having the higher number of beneficiaries in absolute data.

protection to the labour (AT, DE, LV, PT, SK) and housing markets (NL), so that integration measures were considered as particularly relevant by those Member States.

Effectiveness as regards enhancing Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies

EQ1C: To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 actions contribute to the enhancement of Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in the light of their obligations under existing and future Community legislation relating to the common European asylum system (in particular practical cooperation activities between Member States)?

Main conclusions: The Fund did not prove to be widely effective as regards enhancing Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies. Successful projects strengthened cooperation between Member States in the field of country of origin information (COI). Community actions could have been more often used as a tool to strengthen the cooperation between Member States, although the creation of EASO in 2011 led to a progressive transfer of these activities.

In most Member States, projects focused on improving the quality of asylum procedures (103 projects), evaluating asylum policies and procedures (40) and measures to collect/share country of origin information (32). These projects were those mentioned most often by Member States[70]as having been the most effective. They aimed to improve access to and the sharing and quality of information in Member States and typically encouraged stronger and new forms of cooperation between Member States. For example, under the MedCOI Community action, three Member States[71] developed a sustainable medical database. The ERF supported Finland's Tellus project, which contributed in an initial phase to the launch of the EASO COI portal, which is now accessible to all Member States. The EASO Agency was set up in 2011, its main priority being to enhance practical cooperation among Member States on asylum by facilitating the exchange of information. This implies that some activities financed under the ERF Community Actions, in particular support of transnational cooperation between Member States on asylum related issues, were progressively transferred to EASO.

A number of Member States also focused efforts on elaborating new methodologies[72] and monitoring and improving procedures[73]. The ERF contributed to improve Member States' capacity to evaluate their asylum policies and to elaborate new methodologies, replacing individual practices, for working with the most vulnerable asylum applicants. It also contributed to improve their capacity to adapt national legislation more rapidly to the Community *acquis*. As an example, FR's project to modernise the EURODAC system was considered a time-saving investment which led to FR adapting promptly to the Dublin II

[70] AT, BG, CY, DE, EE, FR, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT and SI.
[71] AT, BE and NL.
[72] DE, IT, LT, LU, NL and SI.
[73] MT, PT and RO.

Regulation[74] and helped improve the productivity and stability of its national asylum system. BG, DE, BE, DE and RO were of the opinion that seminars and training courses had improved the skills and knowledge of a wide range of staff.

Notwithstanding the above positive outcomes, action to improve Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies could have been more effective: priority 2 accounted for only 7% of total programming. As regards the shortcomings identified, all interviews done during the evaluation highlighted that the significant and unpredictable increase in the number of asylum applicants led Member States to focus on short-term effects at the expense of long-term impact. They also pointed out that Member States' cooperation was insufficiently developed to ensure effectively the development of future legislation pertaining to the CEAS[75]. National projects and Community actions were perceived by the persons interviewed as potentially strong tools for cooperation and methodological progress, but insufficiently used.

Stakeholders' consultations also showed that Community actions could have been more effective. In particular, over half the respondents lacked knowledge of them and some beneficiaries considered that the funding was somewhat low in the light of the high level of competition in the project management area and in the organisation of projects.

Effectiveness as regards the resettlement of persons (Article 6(e)) — priority 3

EQ1D: To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 actions contribute to the resettlement of persons referred to in Article 6(e)?

Main conclusions: During the 2011-2013 period, the ERF better contributed to resettlement activities compared to the previous period (2008-2010), mainly because the financial allocation was higher. However, it emerged that resettlement operations remained marginal at EU level, with only a third of Member States participating. The European Commission, under AMIF Regulation, took specific measures with the aim of promoting the resettlement, such as increasing the lump sum granted per resettled person.

Under the ERF several aspects of resettlement have been agreed at Union level for the purpose of providing targeted financial incentives, namely through common resettlement priorities and lump sums for each resettled person. Between 2011 and 2013, a total of 9 058 people were resettled by 12 Member States[76] using the ERF, with four[77] using the ERF exclusively to implement such operations, and with a number of resettled people increasing over time[78]. Compared with 2008 - 2010 the number of resettled people doubled. One of the

[74] Council Regulation (EC) No. 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national.

[75] The CEAS foresees the establishment of a fully efficient, fair and humane asylum policy which functions effectively both in times of normal and in times of high migratory pressure. It ensures a fair allocation of asylum applications among Member States and provides for a common set of rules at EU level to simplify and shorten the asylum procedure, discourage secondary movements and increase the prospect of integration.

[76] BE, CZ, DE, FR, FI, ES, HU, IE, NL, PT, SE and UK.

[77] BE, DE, HU and PT.

[78] 2 463 in 2011, 2 786 in 2012 and 3 809 in 2013.

main reason being that, for Member States receiving the fixed amount for resettlement for the first time, EUR 6 000 was allocated per resettled person instead of EUR 4 000[79]. Also, EUR 5 000 per resettled person was allocated for Member States that had received the fixed amount for resettlement once in the previous year. The UK and FI which have actively implemented the resettlement, underlined the increase in the fixed amount per resettled person as a significant incentive.

In addition to the funding of resettlement, ERF projects in some Member States[80] funded preparations for resettlement or aimed to establish and develop resettlement programmes.

Although the ERF provided incentives for some Member States to conduct resettlement operations, it also appeared that these were too marginal at EU level. A significant number of Member States[81] did not implement any resettlement projects. This is also true of Community actions, under which only one resettlement project was financed. For several Member States, resettlement was not considered as a priority, with therefore a lack of interest to engage in or to develop resettlement activities further. Increased migratory pressure might also have been considered by Member States as a reason not to engage more in resettlement.

The European Commission has promoted the principle of resettlement in the AMIF Regulation[82] with the progressive establishment of a Union Resettlement Programme. The Fund should provide targeted assistance in the form of financial incentives: EUR 6 000 or EUR 10 000 for each resettled person. In addition, the AMIF legal basis provides that the budget allocated to each national programme for the purpose of resettlement could not be used for other purposes[83], i.e. the MS could not request to move this budget to other regular actions[84]. The European Commission, in cooperation with the EASO should monitor the effective implementation of resettlement operations supported under the Fund. For the period 2014-2016, Member States reported the resettlement of over 16 000 people.

Effectiveness as regards the transfer of persons under international protection (relocation)

EQ1E: To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 actions contribute to the transfer of persons falling within the categories referred to in Article 6(a), (b) and (c)?

Main conclusions: The ERF had a very limited impact as regards the transfer of persons

79 Decision No 281/2012/EU (revising Decision No 573/2007/EC) increased the fixed amount for Member States resettling people for the first time.

80 BE, BG, HU, NL, RO, SE and UK.

81 AT, CY, EE, EL, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, SI and SK.

82 According to Article 17 (3) of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

83 Regulation (EU) No 516/2014, Article 17.9, last sentence of the paragraph: "Those amounts shall not be transferred to other actions under the national programme".

84 In 2016, the Commission proposed a regulation establishing a Union Resettlement Framework and amending Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 . The aim of the legislative proposal is to create a more structured, harmonised, and permanent framework for resettlement across the Union with the view to create a more robust and collective approach. The objective is to reduce the divergences among the national resettlement practices and put the Union in a stronger position to also achieve its policy objectives globally. It would allow the Union to make a single pledge to contribute to global resettlement initiatives. The proposal foresees that Member States will be entitled to EUR 10 000 from the Union's budget for each resettled person.

benefitting from international protection (relocation). At the level of Member States through the ERF, no transfer of persons under international protection took place, and only one Community action has been financed over the period. As a consequence of this underperformance under ERF, the European Commission took specific measures under AMIF with the aim of responsibility-sharing between Member States on relocation.

Member States' projects involving the transfer of persons benefitting from international protection were under-developed and the evaluation clearly assessed them as marginal. The main objective of responsibility-sharing between Member States was not achieved. Part of the reasons which explain the limited impact is the considerable increase in arrivals of the number of refugees and the newer Member States' relative lack of experience of managing projects in the field of relocation. However, there was also very limited political interest from the side of Member States to engage in transferring beneficiaries of international protection. In the absence of any obligation, this made it very difficult to achieve meaningful results. More, the ERF did not foresee any additional financial incentive for intra-EU transfers of persons under international protection as it was the case for resettlement.

This explains why the European Commission financed through ERF Community action the EUREMA project, which provided an organised framework for preparing and implementing relocation and thus partially achieved planned outputs. It was innovative in that it fitted into the framework of a previous pilot project and relocated 264 people. Unexpected positive results were observed enabling Member States to learn lessons for the future as regards improving and facilitating relocation.

In the AMIF Regulation[85], the European Commission has promoted the principle of relocation by fixing financing resources which could not be transferred to other actions under the national programmes of the Member States. By blocking financial resources specifically dedicated to relocation, the system will probably be more effective than under the ERF.

Effectiveness as regards emergency measures

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

Main conclusions: All stakeholders agreed that the emergency measures were highly effective in meeting the specific urgent needs of Member States facing high migration pressure, which arose mainly from external factors (increase in the number of asylum applicants) and so could not be addressed in full in the national programmes. The rapid reaction of the European Commission with fast awarding of EU funding was highlighted as positive.

In 2011-2013, a total of 11 Member States facing urgent needs implemented 51 emergency measures using a programmed budget of EUR 67.1 million. The aim was to provide assistance in fast-moving circumstances with a focus on immediate results.

[85] According to Article 18 (3) of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

As first countries of arrival in the Mediterranean, Italy and Greece were the main beneficiaries of emergency measures. Malta and Cyprus also received assistance following an important influx of migrants into these Member States in order to complement their small national allocations, which were too low to address this sudden arrival of migrants. The additional assistance represented 71 % of Cyprus's 2013 budget and 76 % of Malta's. Most of the measures were implemented in 2013, in response to the EU's asylum crisis, and concerned eight Member States[86] with immediate needs.

Funding for these types of action was assessed case by case. The main actions focused on:

- improving accommodation capacities and renovating reception centres;
- recruiting additional staff in the main institutions dealing with reception and asylum procedures;
- medical and psychological assistance;
- providing for basic needs; and
- legal assistance and translation services.

Generally, emergency measures were perceived as very effective and described by some Member States[87] as success stories. This is explained by the fact that the measures are designed to cover specific needs that are easily quantifiable (e.g. the number of additional places in reception centres or the procurement of new medical tools/instruments/equipment), allowing some Member States to extend economies of scale with greater effectiveness and efficiency in a short (six-month) timespan. All the interviewees[88] saw the rapid implementation of the emergency measures as having been essential in meeting the urgent needs. The evaluation also pointed out that the European Commission responded well by being very reactive to this type of difficult situation. Respondents underlined that the situation would have been worse without the additional assistance provided through emergency measures. On the other hand, three Member States[89] considered the short timeframe for the implementation of measures as having reduced their effectiveness as the requirement to spend a large amount of money within a short timeframe proved difficult. ….

Even if the political context was difficult, the AMIF instrument through its emergency assistance has provided as from 2015 strong support to the Member States most affected by the 2015 migrant crisis. With the arrival in the second half of 2015 of more than 1 million third-country nationals via the Western Balkan route, the mechanism was flexible enough to provide at short notice financial assistance to address urgent and specific needs in the event of an emergency situation[90]. For the period 2014-2016, EUR 498 million have been awarded to 14 Member States[91], 2 EU agencies[92] and 2 international organisations[93] through AMIF

86 IT, EL, MT, CY, FR, DE, HU and BG.
87 BE, CY, EL and MT.
88 Responsible authorities and beneficiaries.
89 BG, EL and HU.
90 'Emergency situation' means a situation resulting from a heavy migratory pressure in one or more Member States characterised by a large and disproportionate inflow of third-country nationals, which places significant and urgent demands on their reception and detention facilities, asylum systems and procedures.
91 AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, FI, FR, DE, EL, HU, IT, NL, SI and SE.
92 EASO and EUROPOL.
93 UNHCR and IOM.

emergency assistance[94]. Greece, the country most affected by the migrant crisis, is the main beneficiary of emergency assistance.

Effectiveness of the ERF for the development of a common approach for asylum

The ERF supported Member States in the field of asylum and contributed to the development of reception conditions for asylum applicants and the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. It has had a direct effect on the field, supporting over a million people through over 1 500 projects, with an estimated coverage of 56 % of all asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

However, while EU funding was effective in achieving progress under the various ERF specific objectives, its implementation was not accompanied by the development of a common approach of Member States in the processing asylum applications across Europe. As described earlier, for instance, Central and Eastern Europe Member States[95] used the ERF mainly to increase and improve reception conditions, since these were insufficiently developed (due to relatively low numbers of asylum applicants in the past). The ERF contributed to a certain extent to the implementation of the asylum '*acquis*' in the Member States. The main focus was on the implementation of the Reception Conditions Directive[96]. The ERF had little direct influence as regards responsibility-sharing between Member States, especially regarding the transfer of persons under international protection (relocation).

Although the results and achievements of the ERF were assessed differently from one Member State to another, the evaluation identified several trends at EU level:

- The ERF played a crucial role in the context of the asylum crisis that started in 2012 and provided essential support in situations that called for the adoption of emergency measures. Community actions helped in urgent situations requiring prompt and fast intervention (in Greece). In that regard, it was also mentioned during the interviews that the Fund contributed to the development of a European approach and to the enhancement of cooperation, for example by developing constant dialogue amongst experts.
- The ERF played a key role in encouraging decision-makers to involve the Member States in resettlement operations, as confirmed by Member States that received a fixed amount per resettled person.
- The ERF gave valuable support to Member States' efforts in financing operational and locally based projects focusing on reception conditions for asylum applicants and the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. Through concrete actions, the ERF contributed to a certain extent to the implementation of the asylum package and raised reception standards and living conditions for asylum applicants;

[94] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/financial_support_to_mms_under_amif_and_isf_en.pdf

[95] SI, EE, HU, LT, CZ, SK, HR, CY and BG.

[96] Council Directive 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers. In the meantime this Directive has been repealed and replaced by DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU of the European parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast).

- The ERF had a limited impact on the development of interaction and practical cooperation between Member States. The ERF funded a few large transnational projects that brought clear results but practical cooperation remained overall limited following the creation of EASO which was entrusted with some practical cooperation tasks from 2010 (leading to the reduction of the CAs' envelope in order to free up resources for funding the EASO), as well as by the emphasis put on emergency measures as from 2013. In addition, the results of Community actions were not sufficiently disseminated at EU level and among national stakeholders.
- The ERF had a very limited impact in involving Member States in actions involving the transfer of people under international protection.

Effectiveness of the principle of solidarity

The principle of solidarity, common to the four SOLID Funds has two components: the solidarity between Member States and the financial solidarity.

In terms of **solidarity between Member States**, while the EC made significant efforts to advocate for solidarity and a common EU approach in response to present and future migration challenges, this vision was not always shared by all EU Member States to the same extent. The objective of the ERF was to support and encourage through a solidarity mechanism the efforts made by the Member States in receiving and in bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons. The ERF had a slow start due to Member States willing to protect their sovereignty on managing asylum related issues. When the priorities were set, the enhancement of responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries remained optional following bitter discussion with Member States. Whilst the experience under ERF showed the need to increase the solidarity amongst Member States, this remains a difficult subject: the current discussion on the proposal for a revised Dublin regulation shows that consensus on solidarity matters is far from being achieved.

As explained above (see section 9.1 on Relevance), in terms of **financial solidarity,** the initial allocation key, which is the first means to achieve solidarity, showed its limitation in the context of the crisis. For this reason, the use of emergency measures proved to be crucial for those Member States which were subject to acute and urgent migration pressure. Emergency measures partially counter-balanced the lack of flexibility of the distribution key. Indeed, the countries most affected by the sudden arrival of migrants saw their allocations increase by 97 % over the 2011-2013 period thanks to EU funding for emergency measures and partly to the annual recalculation of the distribution key. This illustrates how the financial solidarity was achieved.

9.3 Efficiency

EQ 3: To what extent were the effects of the ERF achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources?

Main conclusions: Although the inconsistency of monitoring data restricted the extent to which it was possible to assess the cost-effectiveness of the ERF, the evaluation concluded that the actions were implemented efficiently for the most part. Management and control systems, such as internal organisation and a clear distribution of tasks within the responsible administrations for managing the Fund, contributed greatly to this result and their benefits

were acknowledged by the Member States.

However, the evaluation showed that the annual programming requirements and the complexity relating to the existence of separate funds[97] led to a high administrative burden. Small Member States had to deal with a combination of high administrative costs and small programmes. Lack of experience and resources also contributed to the high administrative burden.

Efficiency of ERF programme management

Overall, RAs considered the ERF costly to manage, although the most experienced Member States were able to reduce the administrative burden. The evaluation estimated that the administration of national programmes required an average of 0.32 full-time equivalent (FTE) per EUR 1 million of ERF programmed funding. The figure varies a lot between Member States though (from 0.06 FTE in FR to 2.97 FTE in LV), and is lower for the Member States with the largest ERF programmes. This average is consistent with the estimate for the cohesion policy[98] (0.44 FTE).

The EU contribution was also a factor explaining the varying proportions of the ERF budget dedicated to management. The Member States with larger ERF programmes were also those where the smallest percentage of the EU contribution was dedicated to fund management due to a critical mass effect. The main time-consuming tasks (56 % of the RAs' workload) were those relating to ERF management, i.e. project selection, control and verification of deliverables. The workload relating to the preparation of the programmes was estimated at a fifth of the total.

All Member States pointed to the high administrative burden of ERF management (i.e. the burden linked to multi-annual and annual programming, and addressing asylum and migration issues via three different funds which under the current AMIF has been overcome) but RAs regarded most of the requirements as legitimate, in that they ensured the robustness and reliability of the ERF management and control systems. The evaluation showed that, for half of the Member States[99], the administrative burdens, especially verifications by the RAs, were the most problematic. Some Member States tried to use the same human resources for the ERF as for the other SOLID funds, in order to reduce the administrative burden and secure efficiency gains. In Member States with less experience of managing EU funding, many costs arose from the need to build technical and administrative capacities.

In some cases, the perception of a high administrative burden applied more at national than at EU level. For instance, FR and SE faced financial difficulties (gaps in EU reimbursement)

97 For the period 2007-13, almost EUR 4 billion was allocated for the management of the Union's external borders and for the implementation of common asylum and immigration policies through the General Programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows" (SOLID). This General Programme consisted of four instruments: External Borders Fund (EBF), European Return Fund (RF), European Refugee Fund (ERF) and European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF).

98 The governance and administrative structures and costs at national and regional levels for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) programmes over the 2007-2013 programming period were reviewed in 2010.

99 AT, BE, BU, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FI, LT, PT, SE, SI and UK.

following a misleading interpretation of 'eligible costs'. Other Member States[100] had difficulties due to the long pre-financing phase, which caused cash-flow problems for beneficiaries waiting for EU reimbursement, or the lack of a clear distribution of responsibilities (BE).

Efficiency of the ERF for beneficiaries

Time-consuming arrangements for (bi-annual) reporting and payment delays were mentioned by some countries as affecting the efficiency of the Fund. On the other hand, administrative burden is often linked to institutional learning. The evaluation showed that beneficiaries' size, nature and experience of managing EU finding influenced their ability to meet the ERF requirements. Member States and RAs convey the European Commission's requirements to national beneficiaries, including small organisations, and to build capacity to respond properly to the requirements. Overall, the estimated cost of meeting the European Commission's administrative requirements is evaluated as high, but reasonable as compared with other EU funding.

Cost-effectiveness of projects

The quantitative data on ERF reported in the NERs do not adequately reflect the actual performance of ERF actions in the Member States, but 22 Member States considered the costs incurred as reasonable. The data cannot support any clear conclusion, given the lack of comparability across projects and the shortcomings of the available indicators when it comes to measuring results and impacts.

Each project targeting asylum applicants or persons benefiting from international protection (priority 1) reached an average of around 700 final project beneficiaries, with an average budget of EUR 150 000. The average committed cost per beneficiary (including emergency measures varied widely between Member States (from EUR 9 065 in the UK to EUR 37 in SL). This is probably related to the range and the nature of the activities carried out under the projects. For instance, UK policy in 2011-2013 was focused on resettlement and integration. By nature, this involves high-value projects benefiting a relatively small number of people.

For priority 2, the average cost of a project was EUR 123 553 and for priority 3 it was EUR 301 037.

Member States receiving a high number of asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection have relatively low budgets per project beneficiary (e.g. only EUR 44 for EL). This is linked to the nature of the projects: these Member States target projects enhancing reception conditions or meeting the basic needs of asylum applicants. The discrepancies put a question mark over the reasonability of costs and the relevance of the allocation system. In HU, for example, the national budget allocated to asylum issues was reduced for political reasons and the ERF became more important in terms of meeting asylum applicants' needs.

[100] AT, BE and LT.

9.4 Sustainability

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

Main conclusions: The evaluation concluded that the sustainability of the projects' results funded under the 2011-2013 ERF depended on the type of action funded. In general, the ERF led to the consolidation of sustainable relationships with stakeholders, but the most sustainable actions (presenting structural effects) were Member States' investments in reception capacities. For other types of project, certain conditions regarding the selection of sustainable projects could have been set in order to produce sustainable effects. As for the sustainability of projects after the end of ERF funding, this was more questioned. The selection phase of AMIF projects involved sustainability as criterion for awarding a project.

Sustainability of results and impacts

The sustainability of a project is linked to its nature, impacts and results. The creation of reception capacities is highly sustainable, especially for Member States that lacked them previously. Analysis of the NERs and interviews with RAs and beneficiaries reveal that actions aimed at empowering target groups, those resulting in greater capacities to receive asylum applicants and those resulting in a concrete change of practice are considered among the most sustainable. Actions to improve the drawing-up of studies and to develop platforms, websites and new tools or methodologies have also proven to be sustainable, since the outputs and materials can continue to be used, provided they are updated and maintained.

Projects focusing on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection are considered less sustainable in transit Member States, where beneficiaries of international protection like asylum applicants tend to seek to move on to another country.

Sustainability of projects

The implementation of ERF projects produced side-effects that improved project sustainability. Thirteen Member States[101] highlighted the importance of capacity-building among stakeholders in the field of asylum as a key factor, since expertise favours actions' long-term effectiveness. Some Member States[102] commented that the implementation of ERF-funded projects favoured a 'culture of cooperation' among stakeholders.

However, the sustainability of projects after the end of ERF funding is uncertain. Beneficiaries' capacity to sustain the projects' effects is not ensured without the support of EU funds. A total of 13 Member States[103] stressed that national beneficiaries rely heavily on EU funds to implement projects. Moreover, some RAs replicate projects over the years in order to ensure a type of sustainability of their effects.

For the AMIF during the selection phase of projects by the responsible authority, the sustainability is now included as a criteria leading to the award decision. Through the

[101] AT, FR, DE, EL, ES, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, RO and SE.
[102] BG, DE, IE, EL, ES, IT, MT, NL, PL and UK.
[103] AT, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, LU, LV, SK and UK.

guidance document set by the common monitoring and evaluation framework, Member States will have to report on the measures adopted to ensure sustainability.

9.5 Complementarity and coherence

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

Main conclusions: The evaluation concluded that, in most Member States, the ERF was implemented in coherence with, and complemented, other actions relating to asylum, although there may have been some overlaps between actions or EU agencies. There was however a general lack of awareness at national level of the outputs of Community actions and this might have led to a certain risk of incoherence.

Coherence and complementarity at national level

Of the 27 Member States concerned, 26 affirmed that the ERF was used in coherence with, and complemented, other sources of funding, thanks to active cooperation between the ERF RAs and the government authorities responsible for managing other EU funds. Also, in most Member States, coordination between the ERF and other SOLID funds was ensured by the fact that they were managed by a single RA.

However, some risks of duplication were identified. The EIF, the European Social Fund and a significant number of organisations that operate in the field of asylum at both EU and national level may have created overlaps. Nevertheless, RAs addressed these risks through organisational measures, e.g. adopting national asylum strategies and close cooperation between the stakeholders responsible for managing various funds.

Lastly, many Member States pointed out that Member States' coordination arrangements were subject to demanding control requirements from the Commission.

Coherence and complementarity at EU level

At EU level, the coherence of ERF interventions with those implemented by other organisations (e.g. EASO) and the extent to which ERF Community actions and national projects complemented each other was not raised as an issue. As Community actions and national actions are not supposed to target the same objectives, the risk of overlaps was limited. Nonetheless, stakeholders[104] consulted underlined their lack of awareness about the outputs of Community actions. This was a limit to RAs' ability to create transnational networks and capitalise on previous outputs when selecting national projects, which in turn could lead raising a potential risk of incoherence between Community and national actions.

Although it remained a theoretical concern as the evaluation could not confirm it, overlaps and duplications with EASO might have occurred since parts of the agency's mandate were at the time still covered by Community actions. However, the risk of inconsistency in terms of mandate and action remained low, as EASO operated from a 'continuous activity'

[104] Respondents to the e-survey.

perspective, while the ERF was project-based. It would have been desirable to involve EASO in the selection of priorities for Community actions.

9.6 EU added value

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

Main conclusions: The evaluation concluded that all Member States considered that the EU funds allowed for funding innovative projects or projects aimed at specific target groups which, without the ERF, would not have been implemented. In addition, the added value of the ERF was crucial for Member States with less developed asylum systems. For some priorities, it is questionable, however: there was no added value as regards Member States' cooperation and exchange of best practices.

According to the ERF Decision[105], the expected added value of the Fund was 'to promote a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons', since this objective could not be sufficiently achieved by the Member States acting alone. Added value brought in by the Fund was therefore assessed as regards the financial impact of the funding ("financial added value") and the added value resulting from greater cooperation and more effective practices within Member States.

Financial added value

The financial added value of the ERF was widely recognised by beneficiaries and RAs. All 27 Member States confirmed that it would not have been possible to implement additional projects and actions without the support of the Fund. Three quarters of the beneficiaries involved in the *ex post* evaluation survey confirmed this. A total of 13 Member States stated that the ERF was used to target types of service that go beyond what the state is responsible for or able to deliver. In some Member States[106] with less developed or recent asylum systems, where asylum issues were not a priority and national resources were limited[107], the ERF contributed significantly to the establishment of national asylum systems. In most other contexts, it provided an opportunity to finance innovative projects by testing new methodologies or facilities[108], to enlarge the scope of activities by financing additional services outside the remit of the state or to focus more on specific target groups.

Finally, the importance of ERF funding as a proportion of a Member State's total asylum budget tended to follow two trends. In Western and Northern Member States with mature asylum systems, it was very low (e.g. less than 3 %) as it only financed a small fraction of the overall costs for Member States of running their asylum systems. For other Member States, it reached up to 50 %, indicating clear and vital added value. In these Member States, the ERF played a crucial role in the modernisation of the asylum system: it allowed the introduction or improvement of structures in compliance with the EU asylum *acquis* and it is reasonable to

[105] Established by Decision No 573/2007/EC of 23 May 2007.
[106] BG, HR, EE, HU, LV and SK.
[107] This was due to budget cuts and financial constraints.
[108] NL, UK and IT particularly insisted on the experimental aspect of ERF-funded projects.

assume that much less or nothing would have happened without the ERF. In a system of 'perfect' solidarity, the ERF should probably have to finance all costs related to maintaining the asylum systems, however, this would mean that the annual budget of the ERF should have been much more important.

Added value in terms of cooperation and exchange of best practices

The assessment of the added value of the ERF in terms of development of deeper cooperation between stakeholders in the field of asylum was mixt[109]. According to the interviews with RAs, only a few networks were created or sustained through ERF funding and the sharing of best practices was not as widespread or intensive as expected. Some Member States[110] did not see the ERF as a tool to foster cooperation and responsibility-sharing. Nevertheless, some said that the ERF had influenced the design of their national policies.

On the other hand, according beneficiaries, the ERF brought added value to project beneficiaries in terms of professionalisation[111] of organisations, improved knowledge of asylum issues, and recognition and legitimacy due to the European dimension of the ERF. According to 19 Member States[112], the Fund enabled national project beneficiaries to improve their internal processes, enhance their projects and budget management skills, and implement new evaluation methodologies.

10 Conclusion

Throughout this evaluation, the ERF 2011-2013 actions have been assessed on the basis of their contribution to the establishment of the burden sharing and solidarity system required by Member States for receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons.

Over this period, the ERF was implemented in a rapidly changing context which posed many challenges, and was shortly followed by a severe and unexpected migratory and humanitarian crisis in the Member States. In this context, the ex post evaluation provides evidence that the ERF responded effectively to those challenges and delivered a wide range of results. The ERF has been effective at Member States level to implement the operational aspects of the European asylum system by increasing the capacities of the Member States. In some Member States with less developed or recent asylum systems, where asylum issues were not a priority and national resources were limited, the ERF contributed significantly to the establishment of national asylum systems. The Fund provided an opportunity to finance innovative projects by testing new methodologies or facilities, to enlarge the scope of activities by financing additional services outside the remit of the state or to focus more on specific target groups. However, the Fund contributed only partially to the development and implementation of EU policy and legislation in the field of asylum due to the fact that following the unexpected

[109] Based on assessment by 18 Member States.
[110] BE, CY, EE, ES, HU, IT and MY.
[111] The benefit for beneficiaries that was cited most often.
[112] AT, BE, BG, HR, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, EL, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, MT, NL, PL and ES.

migratory crisis, Member States focussed their efforts on the basic needs of the asylum applicants. The allocation system was also not relevant to the EU needs of convergence, solidarity and development of the CEAS. It relied on historical flows of asylum applicants. It should be pointed out that the effectiveness of the Emergency Measures mechanism mitigated this inconsistency. They played a key role in providing support to those Member States facing the greatest migration pressure.

Furthermore, the ERF contributed to the increase of the Member States' capacities and appropriate infrastructures, especially in Member States, which lagged behind in terms of asylum policy development.

The evaluation helped to identify some lessons for the future, most of them have been addressed under AMIF.

First of all, the **formulation of Priority 1** was broad and covered potentially all types of needs. This created an unbalanced uptake at national level for the other priorities of the Fund. Under the AMIF Regulation, the article related to Reception and Asylum Systems is still broad. However, Member States indicated their priorities in the National Programmes that were adopted after policy dialogue with the European Commission. Compared to the ERF programming period, in AMIF the setting-up of the national programmes is the result of the outcomes of a policy dialogue between the European Commission and the Member States.

Another issue identified during the evaluation was the **absence in the ERF of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.** The European Commission has addressed this issue for the 2014-2020 programming period by developing a common monitoring and evaluation framework.

Regarding **efficiency**, the evaluation identified the lack of efficiency of funding to support less experienced Member States or those facing difficulties in the implementation of their management and monitoring systems. In consequence, in the context of AMIF, more emphasis on strategic programming was put through a closely follow-up of those Member States facing difficulties in the implementation of the funds. Furthermore, the AMIF foresees the organisation of a mid-term review of the multiannual national programs where the situation of each Member State is reviewed in the light of the interim evaluation reports and in the light of developments in Union policies in the Member State concerned.

Finally, **the administrative burden** of the ERF was perceived as high. Improvements were made for the 2014-2020 programming period by the creation of only one fund that covers all migration matters, the adoption of one single multiannual programme and the alignment of the eligibility rules on the national rules of the Member State. These latter are also encouraged to use the simplified costs options.

Another lesson from the evaluation was the **solidarity dimension**. When the ERF priorities were set, the enhancement of responsibility sharing between Member States and third countries remained optional. For this reason, certain issues related to resettlement and

relocation were already addressed under AMIF by removing the optionality and by putting this specific objective at the same level as the others. However, the current discussion on the proposal for a revised Dublin regulation shows that consensus on solidarity is difficult to achieve and that improvements are still needed. This issue should be addressed where possible during the current programming period or during the next MFF.

Lessons learnt

As stated above, the allocation mechanism of the ERF was based on historic inflows and did not take enough into account evolving needs of the Member States. Under AMIF, the distribution key is still based on the 2011-2013 allocation for the ERF, the EIF and the RF although more flexibility is ensured by a much more important envelop allocated for emergency assistance.

Moreover, as explained in section 5, the logical framework of the ERF was not well designed: the articulation between general objective and eligible actions, on the one hand, and between them and the priorities (and specific priorities) on the other hand, remained confused. Whilst the logical framework has been better defined with the AMIF, under each specific objective there is still the possibility for Member States to avoid investments in areas less "attractive". This issue should be addressed in the new generation of funds post 2020.

Finally, as enounced above, AMIF successor should pronounce and fund increasingly the activities that promote solidarity within the EU to jointly stem the challenges resulting from high migration.

The interim evaluation of AMIF will be completed in 2018 and will inform if the identified weaknesses have been addressed properly. The interim evaluation is expected to have an impact on the implementation of the AMIF in the remaining spending period 2019-2020. If not, this input will be taken up in the design of the post 2020 instruments.

11 **ANNEX 1 —** Procedural information

Leading DG	DG HOME
Participating Units of DG HOME	A2 – Legal Affairs C3 – Asylum C4 – Migration management support E1 – Union Actions E2 – National programmes for South and East Europe, evaluation, AMF/ISF Committee E3 - National programmes for North and West Europe, budget, MFF, agencies
Participating DGs	Secretariat General DG BUDG DG JUST Legal service (SJ)
Roadmap approval	December 2015
External consulting firm specialised in evaluation	Contract signed in April 2016 with consortium of: Ernst & Young Special Business Services (lead partner) Center for International Legal Cooperation Rand Europa Community Interest Company
Number of steering group meetings	6
Last deliverable handed in	March 2017
Approval of the final report by Steering Group	March 2017
RSB consultation	
Agenda planning	2016/HOME/081

Changes in response to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board's recommendations (Ares(2017)287965 of 8/06/2017)

Main considerations	
Explicitly acknowledge that the intervention logic is weak, and that this makes it harder to evaluate the programme's results.	Section 4 ‘The ERF as funding instrument
Clarify how the evaluation assessed the Fund's effectiveness in the absence of specific EU-level objectives and targets.	Section 6 ‘Method’ and Section 9.2 ‘Effectiveness’
Demonstrate how the ERF applied the solidarity principle in practice.	Section 7.1 ‘Shared management: Multiannual and Annual Programmes of the Member States’ and the explanations related to the

	allocation key
Show the extent to which emergency measures contributed to the Fund's flexibility.	Section 9.1
Streamline and harmonise the conclusions, and indicate lessons that are relevant for future action	Conclusion

12 ANNEX 2 — Stakeholders' consultation

Overview

In order to inform the *ex post* evaluation of the European Refugee Fund (ERF) 2011-2013, several stakeholders were consulted through open public consultations conducted by the European Commission and other stakeholder consultations carried out by the external evaluator, in the framework of its contract with the European Commission.

This annex provides an overview of the consultation processes and the type of stakeholders consulted, and presents the results of these consultations. These results have been compiled and summarised from the responses received by the European Commission to its public consultation, and from the final evaluation report of the ERF submitted to the European Commission by the external evaluator. The stakeholder consultations presented below have met the European Commission's general principles and minimum standards for stakeholder consultation[113].

The public consultation conducted by the European Commission

Between 10 May 2016 and 9 August 2016, the European Commission held an Internet-based open public consultation on the ex-post evaluation of the ERF 2011-2013 in the form of an online questionnaire. Contributions were sought in particular from individuals (experts, beneficiaries), local and national Member State authorities, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, social partners and civil society, academic institutions, international organisations, and EU Institutions and Agencies. The final number of respondents was very small: 12 participants from eight Member States[114]. This is clearly a limitation of the public consultation. Eight representatives of a non-profit organisation, two representatives of a public authority, one representative of an academic/research institution and one representative of a private company.
A limitation to take into consideration is the fact that the information available on the identities of the participants is based on self-reported values which cannot be verified.

The consultations conducted by the external evaluators

The external evaluator conducted several types of stakeholder consultations, including: 8 case studies, 4 types of face-to-face or telephone interviews, and 2 e-surveys targeted at 2 specific types of stakeholders. This section provides an overview of each type of consultation, as well as possible difficulties or limitations encountered. The design of these consultations was informed by previous desk research carried out by the external evaluator. When relevant, findings from this desk research will also be presented, particularly those of the National Evaluation Reports (NERs).

[113] See European Commission Better Regulation guidelines (SWD(2015)111).
[114] AT, BG, CY, HU, IE, LV, MT and SK.

1. Case Studies

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the ERF's implementation at the national level, 8 case studies were completed on Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom. As part of these case studies, interviews with organisations benefitting from the ERF were carried out. The following activities were carried out for each case study country:

- Austria: 10 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July 2016;
- Belgium: 10 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in September 2016;
- Bulgaria: 12 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July 2016;
- France: 11 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July and September 2016;
- Hungary: 11 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July 2016;
- Italy: 9 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July 2016;
- Sweden: 9 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in August 2016;
- United Kingdom: 11 interviews conducted during a field visit which took place in July 2016.

2. Interviews

Interviews with Responsible Authorities (RAs): 19 telephone interviews with RAs were initially planned, but only 17 of these were conducted. In addition, two Member States[115] provided written feedback.

Interviews with EU-level stakeholders: 3 interviews were conducted in September 2016 with officers from the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). Two other stakeholders initially contacted declined interview requests or suggested another stakeholder, and there were no replies to interview requests sent to members of the LIBE Committee, ECRE and the European Union (EU) Council.

Interviews with other International Organisations: field visits were carried out to Member States selected for case studies, which provided an opportunity for the external evaluator to meet local branches of UNHCR and/or IOM. A complementary interview was carried out with the UNHCR representation in Brussels.

Beneficiaries of the 5 Selected Community Actions (CAs): Following the initial selection of 5 CAs, interviews were conducted with 13 organisations: all the selected CA project leaders were interviewed as well as a selection of co-beneficiaries in 8 Member States chosen for the case study visits.

[115] MT and RO.

Difficulties encountered regarding the availability of key stakeholders: the external evaluator encountered challenges with the scheduling of interviews and case study field visits, due to the fact that interviews took place during the vacation period. Some Member States also faced work overload, or had particular national contexts which limited interview availabilities of RAs. The external evaluation team had to postpone some case study field visits and phone interviews with RAs until after the summer break, between the end of August and the beginning of September. In addition, given high staff turnover rates in national administrations and beneficiary organisations, the external evaluation team sometimes encountered difficulties finding the appropriate.

3. E-Surveys

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

1) **E-survey targeting beneficiaries of CAs (leading partners) for 2008-2013:** this e-survey was open between 11 July and 1 September 2016 and sent to 56 leading partners. Responses from 17 participants were received, 13 of which were exploitable for analysis.

2) **E-survey targeting all beneficiaries of the Annual Programmes for 2011-2013 in the 8 case study countries**: this e-survey was open between 29 September and 20 October 2016. 64 participants provided responses out of the total 276 who received the e-survey invitation. 55 of these responses were exploitable for analysis.

Results

The most relevant results of the consultations carried out by the European Commission and the external evaluator are grouped in this section and presented according to the following evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coherence and complementarity, and EU added value.

Relevance

Generally, the RAs and beneficiaries consulted found that the actions funded by the ERF were relevant (ERF objectives corresponded to their needs) both at EU level and for individual Member States. Question 10 of the Commission's public consultation asked participants whether, in their opinion, the projects and activities supported or financed by the ERF in their country of residence addressed the needs of the potential beneficiaries. 50% of respondents replied "Yes" and the other 50% replied "Generally yes, but with some problems". Some of the problems highlighted by these respondents for this period were:

- small associations were said to have difficulty fulfilling all the requirements or "rules" of the projects;
- there was thought to be a lack of financial resources at times, for example, sometimes resources were insufficient in relation to the number of applicants or potential beneficiaries;

- limiting the eligibility for funding to TCNs was thought to exclude naturalized citizens of immigrant origin;
- it was also mentioned that the limited implementation period in relation to a large gap time period resulted in the development of a belief from the side of the target group that the projects did not make any difference to their lives;
- the amount of resources available was limited compared to the increasing number of asylum-seekers arriving in Member States from 2013 onwards.

The problem highlighted by Member States was the restrictive definition of the target group of the fund, which was found to create difficulties for beneficiaries[116] in implementing projects. An additional problem mentioned by national authorities was the fact that the amount of resources available was limited compared to the increasing number of asylum-seekers arriving in Member States from 2013 onwards.

Effectiveness

In the area of effectiveness, the two most relevant questionnaire questions in the European Commission's public consultations were questions 2 and 5. Question 2 asked participants whether the result(s) sought in the general objective of the ERF had been achieved in the respondent's country. Question 5 asked whether, based on respondents' experience, the actions financed by the ERF in their country were consistent with the general and specific objectives of the fund.

For question 2, the vast majority of participants considered that the general objective of the ERF had been achieved in their country at least to some extent. For question 5, the majority of participants found that actions financed under the funds were indeed consistent with the fund objectives. However 50% of respondents thought this was so to a limited extent.

Results from other stakeholder consultations provide additional details regarding whether the results sought in the general objective of the ERF have been achieved in the respondent's country. One of the main specific objectives of the ERF was the improvement of reception conditions. In the NERs, Member States reported that the ERF brought strong support to the improvement of reception conditions of asylum applicants or other persons seeking protection. This support was mainly dedicated to providing social assistance, counselling and legal aid and language/interpretation assistance (38% of operations), as well as bringing medical and psychological care (19%) and providing accommodation infrastructures and services (15%).

Regarding integration, which was the second main area of focus, in Member State NERs, the ERF contribution to changes and improvements in the field of integration was mostly positively assessed. The ERF supported 904 operations in this field, i.e. 42% of all operations co-financed by the ERF in the Member States from 2011 to 2013, which reached more than

[116] FI, NL.

95,000 persons in total. Except for Finland, Poland, Luxembourg and the UK, all Member States reached their targets.

Regarding resettlement, according to the NERs, resettlement measures increased from being implemented by 9 Member States in 2008-2010 to being implemented by 12 Member States in 2011-2013[117]. The total number of people resettled doubled from 4,378 in 2008-2010 to 9,058 over 2011-2013.

Efficiency

Regarding efficiency, the most relevant question in the Commission's public consultations was question 11, which asked whether participants considered that the effects of the actions carried out under the ERF were achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources deployed. The vast majority of respondents found that the effects of the actions carried out under the fund were achieved at reasonable cost at least to some extent. They found that the effects of the actions carried out under the fund were achieved at reasonable cost at least to some extent.

The results of other stakeholder consultations provide additional insights to the responses provided by the respondents to the public consultation (see above). The costs incurred to achieve national programmes and project outputs were assessed by the vast majority of Member States (22) as reasonable compared to observed results or to the costs engaged to implement projects (according to NERs).

All Member States claimed that the administrative burden related to the management of the ERF was high, but they also found that it was justified to ensure reliable management. Issues highlighted by several Member States as contributing to the administrative burden of the ERF were the burden linked to multi-annual and annual programming, and the burden linked to the division of asylum and migration issues into three separate funds, which was said to encourage the multiplication of administrative requirements. These issues have been under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (2014-2020).

Sustainability

Regarding sustainability, the most relevant question from the Commission's public consultations was question 16. Under this question participants were asked whether, after the end of the project supported by the ERF, the services/assistance had remained available. There were very few responses to question 16. The majority of respondents reported that services/assistance ended after the end of the project in their country.

Interviews with RAs and beneficiaries revealed that the actions viewed as being more sustainable were: actions resulting in the increase of capacities for the reception of asylum-seekers, particularly for Member States with low capacity beforehand (e.g. BG); projects

[117] BE, CZ, DE, FR, FI, ES, HU, IE, NL, PT, SE, UK.

aimed at the elaboration of studies, the development of platforms, IT tools and methodologies[118]; and actions aimed at empowering target groups, such as educational or language training, workshops, or counselling sessions to help refugees find employment or accommodation; actions resulting in a concrete change of practice, such as improvement in asylum procedure[119]. Projects focused on the integration of refugees were reported as having the most fluctuating sustainability, and being highly dependent on the socio-economic context of Member States[120].

Coherence and Complementarity

The most relevant question from the Commission's public consultations regarding coherence and complementarity is question 12. This question asked participants whether they considered that projects and actions supported by the fund were coherent and complementary to other actions in the same field funded by other EU financial instruments and national resources of the Member States. Over 50% of respondents considered that only few actions were coherent and complementary to others. One of the respondents which considered this also reported that in his/her experience, in comparison with TCNs, refugees have higher needs and face stronger barriers to access the job market and integrate into Irish society. He/she thus considered that specialised and tailored intervention strategies should be designed for this particular target group so that they may successfully secure employment.

Regarding coherence and complementarity at national level, in their NERs, 26 Member States out of the total 27[121] that participated in this fund reported that the ERF 2011-2013 was used in coherence and complementarity with other mechanisms and actions implemented. Regarding risks of duplication and overlaps, some Member States thought that this was more likely for the European Integration Fund (EIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), and they sought to address these risks through organisational corrective actions. At EU level, coherence between Community Actions and national actions was not raised as an issue by stakeholders, since these actions do not target the same objectives. However, interviews with RAs and beneficiaries revealed a lack of knowledge of the outputs of ERF Community Actions, which reduces the possibilities for synergies.

EU Added Value

Regarding EU added value, Question 1 of the Commission's public consultations asked participants whether they considered that the implementation of the ERF in their country had affected positively the work of the public administrations in the field of asylum. Question 13 asked participants whether they considered that the contribution of the fund had been crucial to the implementation of EU policies in their country in this field. 50% of respondents to question 1 thought that this was to a great extent. Regarding question 13, 50% of respondents

[118] IT, BG, CZ, ES, FR, DE, NL, PL, AT, BE, SE.
[119] PT, EE, DE, FI.
[120] AT, DE, LV, PT, SK, NL.
[121] AT is the exception.

thought that the contribution of the ERF "made a huge difference". Some respondents provided specific reasons for this:

- A participant considered that changes had been made and new ideas implemented thanks to the fund's contribution, but that the results and the level of change had not been assessed at national level, or there were no relevant available publications.

Overall, the responses of Member States (NERs) were very positive regarding the EU added value of the ERF. Reports from 27 Member States (NERs) and the majority of responses to interviews conducted at national level by the external evaluators suggest that the ERF brought a more or less significant financial added value, as it enabled the implementation of additional projects that would probably not have been financed by national public resources or other sources of financing. The additional funding provided by the ERF to national beneficiaries was the most cited nature of added value resulting from the EU intervention during interviews with RAs and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries of Community Actions also found the added value to be strong (only 1/13 respondents believed that projects could be implemented without the ERF). In many Member States facing budget constraints and with relatively little experience with asylum issues, the ERF was found to have helped compensate the lack of national resources, either because of budget cuts and financial constraints, or because asylum issues remained at the bottom of the countries' list of priorities. This was the case in “new” Member States, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia, where the ERF contributed extensively to the development of an asylum system and corresponding facilities, and where nothing was previously needed or foreseen.

Regarding cooperation and exchange of best practices, 18 Member States declared in their NERs that the ERF allowed for the development of deeper cooperation between the different stakeholders working in the field of asylum. But this finding is contradicted by interview responses from RAs, who considered that few networks were created or sustained through ERF funding. Member States also reported in their NERs that the ERF brought some unexpected "soft" added value to international organisations and beneficiaries in terms of professionalization, expertise and recognition.

13 ANNEX 3 — Methodology

Study conducted by external evaluators

The evaluation relied on a supporting study conducted by an external company. It was decided to rely on an external study so as to obtain a robust and impartial overview of the Fund. A number of elements ensured the high quality of the study:

- A regular and transparent dialogue took place between the European Commission sand the external evaluator;
- The terms of reference of the contract were clearly set out and respected;
- The Fund's management modes were clearly distinguished in the methodology;
- The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach in order to address the evaluation questions more fully and to ensure all relevant stakeholders were consulted;
- All data sources were assessed for validity and presented data are clearly labelled.
- Triangulation analysis was elaborated.

Communication between the European Commission and the external company

The study's progress was followed by an Inter-service Steering Group (ISSG) comprised of officials from the SG, SJ, DG BUDG, DG REGIO, DG HOME (particularly Units A2, C3, C4, E1, E2 and E3). Four meetings took place between the contractors and the ISSG and structured feedback (in both directions) was provided on a weekly basis throughout the duration of the contract. This two-way dialogue was enriched by the active participation in the ISSG of policy and implementation units and shadowed by horizontal units and the Secretariat General. The quality assessment of the overall process (external contractor's work and report) took place with the participation of the ISSG (A2, C3, E2 and SG); the other members were consulted by email.

Phases

The structuring feature of the external evaluation was the segmentation of the tasks into clearly defined phases which were closely observed by all parties. These phases had been determined in the Terms of Reference. Adherence to the Terms of Reference made the study itself more efficient and transparent.

Data sources and quality

The information analysed by the contractors through desk research can be grouped into two categories:

1. Documentation relating to implementation – legal acts; high-level contextual documents; programme documents (Annual Work Programmes) and addition evaluation documents (National evaluation reports for shared management and technical implementation reports for direct management);

2. Statistical data – this includes:
    - Official statistics from Eurostat, EASO and UNHCR;

- Financial data extracted from ABAC for ERF and all SOLID Funds in order to present Programmed and Net EU contributions and absorption rates;
- Financial data extracted from SFC2007 to present the breakdowns by Priority and Specific Priority;
- Financial data extracted from SFC2007 to present Programmed and Net EU contributions and absorption rates for Annual Programmes;
- Financial data for direct management were provided by the Eurpean Commission. Figures presented are the sum of the cost claims minus the ineligible costs.

Open Public Consultation

Between 10 May 2016 and 9 August 2016, the European Commission also held an Internet-based public consultation on the ERF 2011-2013 in the form of an online questionnaire. Contributions were particularly sought from: individuals (experts, beneficiaries), local and national Member State Authorities, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, social partners and civil society, academic institutions, international organisations, and EU Institutions and Agencies. The final number of respondents was small: twelve participants from eight Member States[122]. This means that contributions are not representative of the targeted stakeholders, but the results provide additional insights. Eight representatives of a non-profit organisation, two representatives of a public authority, one representative of an academic/research institution and one representative of a private company.

Analysis

Three different levels of analysis were undertaken by the external company:

1. Descriptive analysis, at two levels, to provide context and a basis for the development of other types of analysis:
    - EU level: Different official documentation, such as the Decision establishing the ERF, as well as interviews with DG HOME were analysed and used to describe the context of the ERF, such as the objectives it was aiming to achieve and the type of actions eligible for funding under the ERF.

    - Case studies: The analysis of the data collected relating to the national actions as part of the case studies (all programmatic documents, national evaluation reports and interview notes) was carried out and described according to the intervention logic elements, as well as all the evaluation criteria in the case study reports. The case studies were selected according to four fixed criteria to improve representativeness (Objectives, Priorities, types of intervention); relevance (external borders and migratory pressure); solidarity (where investments exceed input) and coverage of the evaluation questions in the national evaluation reports.

2. Thematic analysis: For this analysis, N-vivo, a qualitative analysis tool, was used to encode and subsequently analyse the information from the national evaluation reports

[122] AT, BG, CY, HU, IE, LV, MT and SK.

and relevant interviews (EU level and interviews with RAs). The encoding was done according to a Coding Framework which included all the different intervention logic elements, as well as all the evaluation criteria, and allowed for the creation of "sub-nodes" as further themes emerged from the analysis. Through the encoding, trends and themes emerged across the participating countries under the different evaluation criteria and ERF objectives and priorities. In addition, quantitative data collected was analysed, such as the context and effectiveness indicators from the final closure reports submitted by the Member States (as presented in the SFC 2007 database) and national evaluation reports. This quantitative analysis also allowed for key messages to emerge from the data (such as type of priority receiving the most funding).

3. Comparative analysis: Building on the descriptive and thematic analysis, a comparative analysis was undertaken, comparing the findings from different participating countries under each of the evaluation criteria. The comparative analysis allowed the study team to assess the extent to which the research findings were coherent. The case studies were also included in the analysis and used to illustrate certain findings.

4. Interviews: Over 120 interviews were organized by telephone and in person by the contractor to gather additional input from several stakeholder groups (European Institutions, EU Agencies, national responsible authorities and other stakeholders).

Assessing the Impacts of the ERF

Evaluating the impacts of the ERF at national level is more complicated as it requires experiment conditions with a matched control where ERF was not utilised. In order to mitigate this, the study used information from the case studies and interviews, as well as the evaluators' own judgment.

14 ANNEX 4 — List of evaluation questions

Theme 1 Effectiveness

1. To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contributed to the achievement of the objectives defined in Articles 2 and 3 of Decision No 2007/573/EC and to the priorities defined by the Strategic guidelines (Decision No 2007/815/EC)?

a) To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contribute to the reception conditions and asylum procedures?

b) To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contribute to the integration of persons referred to in Art 6 (target group)?

c) To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contribute to the enhancement of Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in the light of their obligations under existing and future Community legislation relating to the Common European Asylum System (in particular practical cooperation activities between Member States)?

d) To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contribute to the resettlement of persons referred to in Article 6(e)?

e) To what extent did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions contribute to the transfer of persons falling within the categories referred to in Article 6(a) and 6(b) and 6(c)?

2. To what extend did the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) emergency actions contributed to the achievement of these same objectives and to the priorities?

Theme 2 Efficiency

3. To what extent were the effects of the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions achieved at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources deployed?

Theme 3 Sustainability

4. To what extent have the positive effects of the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions lasted after the interventions were terminated?

Theme 4 Relevance

5. To what extent did the ERF objectives correspond to the needs related to receiving, and in bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons by the Member States?

6. To what extent did the ERF actions correspond to the needs related to receiving, and in bearing the consequences of receiving, refugees and displaced persons by the Member States?

Theme 5 Coherence and complementarity

7. To what extent were the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions coherent with and complementary to other actions related to asylum, financed by other EU financial instruments and from national resources of the Member States, including the activities of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), supporting EU Member States on asylum?

Theme 6 EU added value

8. What is the additional value resulting from the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions compared to what the Member States would be able to carry out through investments necessary for the implementation of the EU policies in the field of asylum without the support of the ERF 2011-2013 (or 2008-2010) actions?

15 ANNEX 5 — List of abbreviations and country codes

ABAC	Accrual Basic Accounting
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AP	Annual Programme
AWP	Annual Work Programme
CA	Community Action
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
COI	Country of Origin Information
EAC	European Asylum Curriculum
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EBF	European Borders Fund
EC	European Commission
EIA	Extended Impact Assessment
EIF	European Integration Fund
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERF	European Refugee Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISF	Internal Security Fund
ISSG	Inter Service Steering Group
MPI	Migration Policy Institute
MS	Member State(s)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RA	Responsible Authority
RF	European Return Fund
SFC 2007	System for Fund Management 2007
SOLID	Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows

List of country codes

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CH	Switzerland
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France

HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom