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REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

on interim evaluation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund

{SWD(2018) 339 final} - {SWD(2018) 340 final} - {SWD(2018) 341 final}

1 INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the results of the interim evaluation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund as required by Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014[1].

The evaluation covers this Regulation and:

- the Specific Regulation (EU) No 513/2014 establishing as part of the Internal Security Fund the instrument for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime and crisis management (ISF-P)[2];
- the Specific Regulation (EU) No 515/2014 establishing as part of the Internal Security Fund the instrument for external borders and visa (ISF-BV)[3]; and
- the Specific Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)[4].

Hereinafter ISF-P, ISP-BV and AMIF are referred to collectively as 'the funds'.

The evaluation assesses the performance of the funds against the evaluation criteria defined in the better regulation guidelines and in accordance to Article 55 of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014: (i) effectiveness, (ii) efficiency, (iii) coherence, (iv) relevance and (v) EU added value, (vi) sustainability, and (vii) simplification and reduction of administrative burden. This report is based on the findings of three interim evaluations for the funds accompanying this report.

The evaluation covers the period between 1 January 2014 and 30 June 2017 and reports on all national programmes, Union actions and emergency assistance financed under the funds. The Member States and countries participating in the funds vary from fund to fund in accordance with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. All EU Member States except Denmark participate in AMIF. All EU Member States, except Ireland and the United Kingdom, and also Switzerland, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway, who are associated with the Fund because they fully implement the Schengen *acquis*, participate in the Internal Security Fund Borders and Visa. Finally, all EU Member States, except Denmark and the United Kingdom, participate in the Internal Security Fund Police.

Prior to the current funds, the EU provided financial support under the 2007-2013 programming period through the General Programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows' (SOLID)[5] with a total contribution of almost EUR 4 billion, to support the

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1 Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 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 L 150 of 20 May 2014).

2 Regulation (EU) No 513/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing, as part of the Internal Security Fund, the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management and repealing Council Decision 2007/125/JHA (OJ L 150 of 20 May 2014).

3 Regulation (EU) No 515/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing, as part of the Internal Security Fund, the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa and repealing Decision No 574/2007/EC (OJ L 150 of 20 May 2014).

4 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 of 20 May 2014).

5 COM(2005) 123.

development of common policies in the areas of asylum, return and integration, external borders and visa. In addition, the EU provided support to the area of combating terrorism, organised crime, different types of trafficking and security risks, through the programme 'Security and Safeguarding Liberties' (SSL) (almost EUR 800 million).

The following table presents an overview of the current and the previous funds, and their evolution:

Table 1: Summary overview of home affairs Funds and programmes during 2007-2013 and 2014-2020

General programme	**Policy area**	**Fund / specific programme budget, participation & objectives**	
		Previous Funds (2007-2013)	**Current Funds (2014-2020)**
General programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows *(93 % to 96 % shared management; remainder under centralised direct management)*	Asylum	European Refugee Fund (ERF III) EUR 614 million[6], All Member States (Member States) except Denmark ▪ Support and encourage Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons ▪ Emergency measures to address sudden mass influx of migrants and asylum seekers	Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) EUR 3 137 million (initial) All Member States except Denmark ▪ Strengthen and develop all aspects of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) ▪ Support legal migration to the Member States and promote effective integration of third-country nationals ▪ Strengthen fair and effective return strategies and help combat illegal immigration ▪ Strengthen solidarity and responsibility-sharing between Member States, particularly those most affected by the migratory flows
	Integration of third-country nationals, legal migration	European Fund for the integration of third-country nationals (EIF) EUR 825 million, All Member States except Denmark ▪ Support the integration of third-country nationals into European societies	
	Return	European Return Fund (RF) EUR 676 million, All Member States except Denmark ▪ Improve return management ▪ Encourage the development of cooperation between Member States and countries of return	
	Integrated border management and visa	External Borders Fund (EBF) EUR 1 820 million, All Member States (including Romania & Bulgaria and the Schengen associated states from 2010) except the UK and Ireland ▪ Financial solidarity among Schengen countries ▪ Manage efficient controls and the flows at the external borders ▪ Improve management of the consular authorities	Internal Security Fund (ISF) EUR 3 764 million (initial) ISF Borders and Visa All Member States except Ireland and the UK plus the Schengen associated states Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway
General programme Security and Safeguarding Liberties *(centralised direct management)*	Prevention of and fight against organised crime	Specific programme Prevention of and Fight against Organised Crime (ISEC) EUR 600 million, All Member States ▪ Crime prevention, law enforcement, witness protection and support, victims protection	▪ Ensuring a high level of security in the EU and facilitating legitimate travel ▪ Visa and support integrated border management ISF Police All Member States except Denmark and the UK ▪ Ensure a high level of security in
	Combating terrorism and other security-related	Specific programme Prevention, Preparedness and Consequence Management of Terrorism and Other Security-related Risks (CIPS) EUR 140 million, All Member States	

[6] After adoption of EASO; takes account of Decision No 458/2010/EU amending the ERF basic act.

	risks	▪ Protection of citizens and critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks and other security incidents	the EU, fight against crime, manage risks and crisis

2 THE FUNDS AND THEIR STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

The funds are implemented using the shared, direct and indirect management modes: under shared management by the Member States; directly by the Commission in direct management; or indirectly by entrusting a part of the budget implementation task to a third party (indirect management). The multiannual national programmes for AMIF and ISF were prepared through a policy dialogue at the beginning of the programming period and adopted by a Commission decision. The national programmes are amended regularly by the Member States and are approved by a Commission decision. For direct and indirect management the Commission adopts annual work programmes to implement the budget.

2.1 AMIF

AMIF was designed to promote the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common EU approach to asylum and migration. During the implementation period under review, the migration conditions changed drastically due to the sudden and unexpected increase in migratory pressure on the EU's southern and south-eastern external borders.

AMIF's general objective is to be achieved through: (i) strengthening and developing the Common European Asylum System by ensuring that EU legislation in this field is efficiently and uniformly applied; (ii) supporting legal migration to EU Member States in line with the labour market needs and promoting the effective integration of third-country nationals; (iii) strengthening fair and effective return strategies, which help combat irregular migration and emphasise the sustainability and effectiveness of the return process; and (iv) making sure that EU Member States which are most affected by migration and asylum flows can count on solidarity from other EU Member States.

State of implementation

The total resources for AMIF's implementation period 2014-2020 have been initially estimated at EUR 3 137 million, In response to the unforeseen needs triggered by the migration crisis of 2015 and 2016, this budget was substantially increased reaching EUR 6 888 million of programmed commitments to support relocation and resettlement, integration and return and to prepare the implementation of the revision of the Dublin Regulation. These amounts were channelled through the national programmes, the Union actions and emergency assistance.

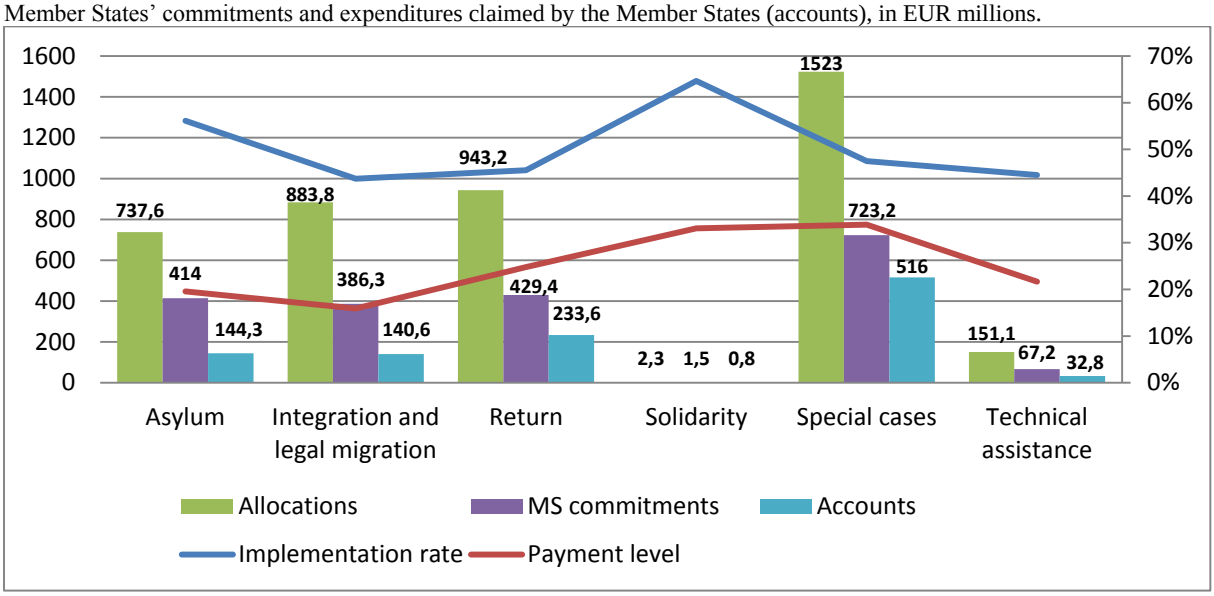
As a result, current AMIF resources are approximately as follows:

- EUR 5 391 million or 78 % programmed for the national programmes;
- EUR 462 million or 7 % for the Union actions other than emergency assistance;
- EUR 1 029 or 15 % for emergency assistance.

Under shared management, Member States have allocated 17 % (EUR 738 million) to the asylum objective, 21 % (EUR 884 million) to the integration and legal migration objective, 22 % (EUR 943 million) to return measures, 0.1 % (EUR 2.3 million) to the solidarity objective, 36 % (EUR 1 523 million) to resettlement and relocation, and 4 % (EUR 151 million) to technical assistance. These allocations (EUR 4 241 million) do not yet take into consideration the resources linked to the revision of the Dublin Regulation, which are still to be committed.

Taking into consideration the annual accounts for 2017 submitted by the Member States in mid-February 2018, the overall level of payments is at 25 % (EUR 1 068 million) of the global allocations, while the implementation rate[7] amounts to 48 % (EUR 2 022 million).

Figure 1: Implementation and payments rates by specific objective and based on global allocations for national programmes, Member States' commitments and expenditures claimed by the Member States (accounts), in EUR millions.



By the end of 2017, EUR 462 million had been allocated through direct and indirect management to Union actions and the European Migration Network's activities covering the entire programming period 2014-2020. 24 % of this amount was allocated to projects covering the specific objectives of asylum and solidarity, whereas the remaining 76 % was assigned to projects covering the specific objectives of legal migration, integration and return.

2.2 ISF-BV

ISF-BV aims to ensure a high level of security in the EU while facilitating legitimate travel, and achieve these two objectives through (i) uniform and high-level control of the external borders and (ii) the efficient processing of Schengen visas.

[7] The implementation rate describes the progress made by the Member States in launching specific actions and projects to implement their national programmes on the ground (commitments linked to a contract). However, the implementation rate does not indicate the level of completion of the launched actions and projects. Furthermore, as Member States are free to choose when to submit payment claims (accounts), the level of payments does not reflect the progress made by the programmes on the ground.

Since 2009, applications for EU visas have risen by 50 % combined with increased costs for processing visa applications. The EU's common visa policy has also been affected by the migration crisis with increased pressure on consular staff worldwide and the increasing need for cooperation on irregular migration and return. Applying common visa standards has become essential as people holding a visa or residence permit in the Schengen area can move freely from one Member State to another. Thus, all Member States share a common interest in ensuring that the visa policy is efficiently and securely applied. Therefore, the ISF-BV supports through this specific objective the capacity building of the Member States in order to sufficiently implement the common visa policy.

Efficient border control is crucial to ensuring free movement of EU citizens and third-country nationals such as businessmen, tourists or other persons legally present on the EU territory as well as ensuring internal security. As peripheral Member States control a significant length of the EU's external borders, their responsibilities for border control have become overwhelming. In this regard, the ISF-BV supports through fulfilling this specific objective the further harmonisation of border management, and the sharing of information among Member States as well as between Member States and the European Borders and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA). In addition, the ISF-BV contributed to increased solidarity and responsibility-sharing among the Member States especially through co-financing of equipment to be made available in EBCGA operations, but also through the introduction of automated border control gates and the continuous development of EUROSUR.

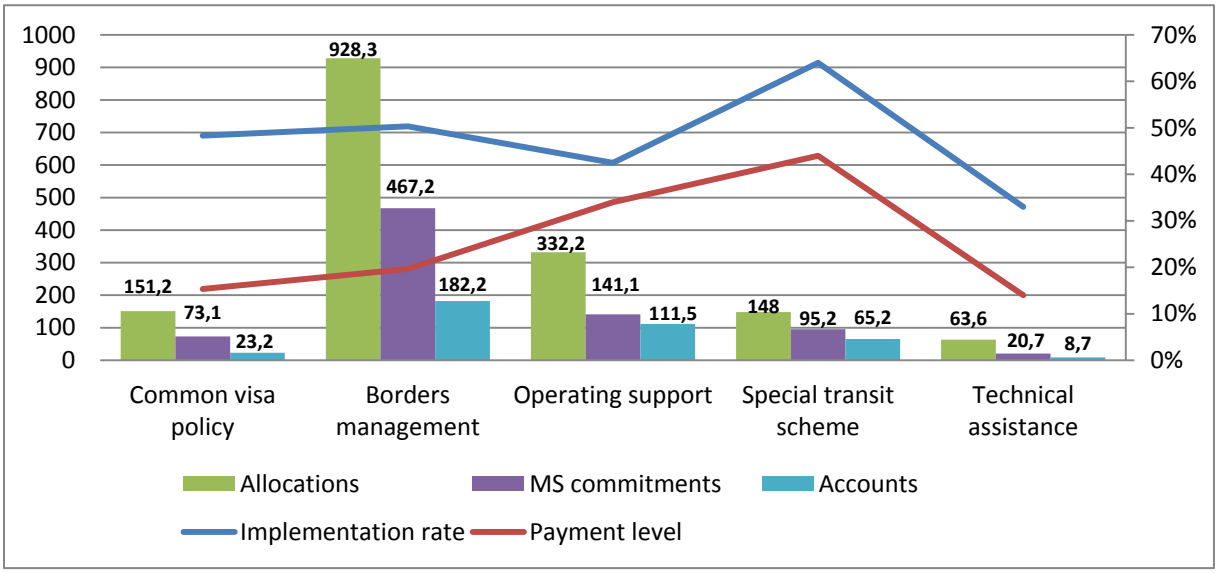
State of implementation

The total resources for ISF-BV's implementation over the period 2014-2020 have been initially estimated at EUR 2 760 million. This was later reprogrammed to EUR 2.61 billion to take into account the increased allocation for EMAS and Frontex equipment (see below), and the transfer of some part of the funds allocated to the IT systems supporting the management of migration flows at the external borders (e.g. Entry/Exit system, European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)) to EU-Lisa. Around 65 % of the total (EUR 1.6 billion) is allocated to national programmes. However, the amount for the Special Transit Scheme for Lithuania remains untouched. In response to unforeseen needs caused by the migration crisis, the amount allocated for emergency assistance significantly increased from an initial 1.3 % to 14.8 % of the total Fund. On the other hand, Union actions have decreased by a quarter to facilitate the increase in emergency assistance funds. The Member States have received an additional amount of EUR 192 million to purchase equipment to be used in EBCG-A joint operations.

Member States have allocated 9 % (EUR 151 million) to the common visa policy objective, 57 % (EUR 928 million) to the borders management objective, 21 % (EUR 333 million) to operating support, 9 % (EUR 148 million) to the Special Transit Scheme and 4 % (EUR 64 million) for technical assistance (Figure 2).

Taking into consideration the annual accounts for 2017 submitted by the Member States in mid-February 2018, the overall level of payments is at 24 % (EUR 391 million) of the global allocations, while the implementation rate amounts to 49 % (EUR 797 million).

Figure 2: Implementation and payments rates by specific objective and based on global allocations for national programmes, Member States' commitments and expenditures claimed by the Member States (accounts), in EUR millions



For direct management, by 30 June 2017, 123 actions (46 emergency assistance and 77 Union actions) have been financed for a total amount of EUR 383 million in the 2014-2017 annual work programmes. Emergency assistance funds have been availed of by seven Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, France, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia), one EU Agency (European Asylum Support Office) and one international organisation (UNHCR). Union actions have been provided through grants (7 in total in both visa and borders) and procurements (70 in total of which more than half were Schengen evaluations).

Within the period 2014-2017, the Commission delegated the budget implementation tasks to three entities: eu-LISA for 'Smart Borders Pilot' testing phase; the International Centre for Migration Policy Development for the 'Mobility Partnership Facility'; and UNHCR for 'Support to Greece for the development of the hotspot/relocation scheme as well as for developing asylum reception capacity'.

2.3 ISF-P

ISF-P aims to ensure a high level of security in the EU through supporting the fight against crime and managing risks and crises effectively. The Fund has two specific objectives: (i) crime prevention and (ii) managing risks and crises.

Through the objective of crime prevention, the ISF-P is supporting the fight against all forms of crime, including terrorism and organised crime and helping to increase coordination and cooperation among several law enforcement authorities at national and EU level as well as Europol and other international organisations.

Through the objective of managing risks and crises, the ISF-P ensures that all Member States' capacity is strengthened, improved and efficient in order to manage security-related risks effectively. Moreover, this objective focuses on the need to prepare critical infrastructures and people for any attack, particularly terrorist attacks. There has also been good progress towards rolling out the systems that will implement the Prüm Council Decision on automated data

exchange, the Passenger Name Record Directive, biometric data capture and exchange as well as the interconnection with the systems of Justice and Home Affairs agencies such as Europol.

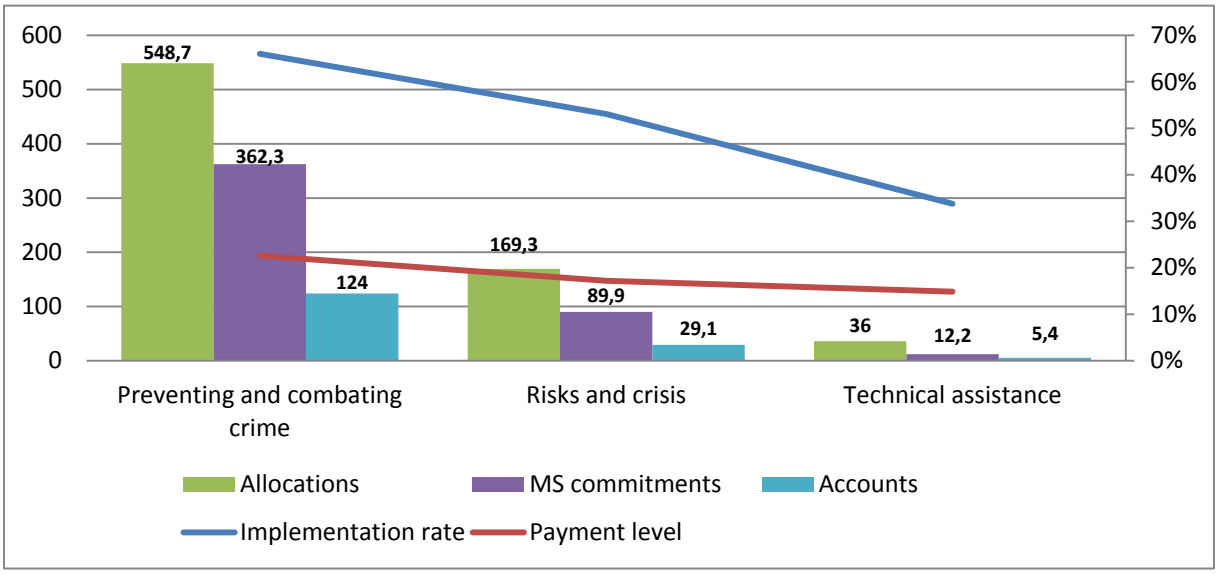
State of implementation

The total resources for the ISF-P's implementation over the period 2014-2020 have been initially estimated at EUR 1 004 million. In response to the unforeseen security threats of recent years, the budget was increased through a top-up of EUR 70 million to support the Member States in implementing the Passenger Name Record Directive and another top-up of EUR 22 million for developing information exchange and interoperability tools.

Under shared management, Member States have allocated 73 % (EUR 549 million) to the crime prevention objective and 22 % (EUR 169 million) to the objective of managing crises and risk while the remaining 5 % (EUR 36 million) is for technical assistance.

Also, taking into consideration the annual accounts for 2017 submitted by the Member States in mid-February 2018, the overall level of payments is at 21 % (EUR 158 million) of the global allocations, while the implementation rate reaches 62 % (EUR 464 million).

Figure 3: Implementation and payments rates by specific objective and based on global allocations for national programmes, Member States' commitments and expenditures claimed by the Member States (accounts), in EUR millions



For direct management a total amount of EUR 122.5 million was allocated for Union actions and EUR 6.5 million for emergency assistance in the annual work programmes 2014-2016[8]. Furthermore, EUR 118.5 million of that combined total amount (EUR 129 million) was implemented under direct management and EUR 10.5 million under indirect management. Nine calls for proposals were launched in the first three years and nine direct grants were awarded, for a total of EUR 12.6 million. Emergency assistance was awarded in 2016 and 2017 to five projects to Belgium (2), France (1) and to Europol (2).

[8] The annual work programme 2017 was adopted in September 2017 and is therefore outside the evaluation period.

3 INTERIM EVALUATIONS

3.1 Limitations

The evaluation is taking place only three years after the funds began and only two years after they were effectively implemented due to the late adoption of the legal acts. Most projects, which are mainly multiannual, are still ongoing, making their assessment very challenging. Thus, the interim evaluation is not able to produce a full picture of the results and impacts or draw final conclusions.

Another limitation is the lack of benchmarks to compare performance, mainly because AMIF and ISF are the first home affairs programmes to have a common monitoring and evaluation framework[9] and a set of indicators (common, result and impact). Overall, the quality of the data and the quality of the Member States' annual implementation reports have also been lacking, in part because the common monitoring and evaluation framework with its indicators and all the guidance on evaluation only became available later on in the process (early 2017).

3.2 Evaluation of AMIF

In terms of **effectiveness,** AMIF has played an important role in improving asylum systems and strengthening reception capacity in the Member States. The migration crisis, led Member States and the Commission to prioritise investments in the area of asylum, in particular to improve accommodation infrastructure and services in order to accommodate the large inflows of refugees and asylum applicants. For example, between 2013 and 2017, the number of people in target groups provided with Fund assistance increased from 18 944 to 184 122. In addition, the number of people trained by the Fund increased from less than 1 000 in 2015 to 7 031 in 2017.

The Fund also registered significant progress with regard to the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied minors (the number of places adapted for this group rose from a low 183 places in 2014 to 17 070 places in 2017), and refugees and asylum seekers coming from regions like the north and the Horn of Africa, due to its better equipped external dimension (16 actions in various countries received EUR 30 million through two regional development and protection programmes). However, there is limited evidence of increased capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate asylum systems. While the EU resettlement programme has been making big progress so far, the Fund has only made a limited contribution towards establishing, developing and implementing national resettlement programmes. By the end of 2017, almost 26 000 people have been resettled under both the EU resettlement scheme and the EU – Turkey statement on legal admission (out of 74 000 in total). Today, 81 % of the 27 Member States who used AMIF are implementing resettlement, compared to only 15 % in the previous funding period.

AMIF has made good progress on integration issues. Mainly short-term integration measures (introductory courses on civic orientation, languages, etc.) have been prioritised over long-

[9] 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 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 L 33 of 8 February 2017).

term measures (pre-vocational training, further education, etc.). For example, 1 432 612 third-country nationals received integration assistance through the Fund so far, while the proportion of those who received long-term residence status also increased from 30 % in 2013 to 44 % in 2016. On legal migration objective, only limited progress has been made so far, likely due to the contextual factors.

The need for fair, sustainable and effective return strategies has been an objective of growing importance in most Member States, and both the voluntary and forced return supported by the fund have steadily increased. The number of returnees whose return was co-financed by the Fund increased from 5 904 in 2014 to 39 888 in 2015, falling to 36 735 in 2017; the number of people who returned voluntarily assisted by the Fund increased tenfold, and the number of removals co-financed by the Fund increased from a low 10 in 2013 to a peak of 6 065 in 2016.

The strengthening of solidarity and responsibility-sharing between Member States was achieved mainly through emergency assistance, the relocation mechanisms, and the EU resettlement programmes.

AMIF emergency assistance has been an essential instrument in supporting Member States in the 2015 migratory crisis and its follow-up. It proved being a powerful tool for strengthened solidarity and it has facilitated a swift and more targeted response to the crisis.

Concerning **relevance,** the evaluations of the SOLID programme found that further progress in aligning priorities with needs was required especially in the area of asylum. AMIF corrected this shortcoming and it has proven to be sufficiently flexible, broad and all-encompassing in responding to different needs, and most national programmes are still in line with the Member States' needs. However, Member States faced changing and diverse needs during the implementation period that possibly call for the allocation arrangements to be adapted over the implementation period. This could be achieved, for instance, by adapting the allocation key and a stronger mid-term review.

Measures were taken during the Fund's design, planning and programming stages to ensure **coherence** and complementarity with other EU financial instruments and with relevant key EU policy strategies. During the implementation stage, the Commission services actively cooperated among them and with the Member States, mainly in ad-hoc settings, to ensure that EU funds with similar objectives were used in a coordinated way. On a national level, the vast majority of Member States ensured coherence and complementarity by establishing coordination mechanisms, mainly monitoring committees involving different authorities involved in implementing the Fund.

However, room for improved communication appears to exist in relation to internal coherence (among AMIF instruments) because beneficiaries are not very aware of Union and emergency assistance actions. Nonetheless, there is little evidence of non-coherence, overlaps and duplications, both internally and externally.

Overall AMIF has generated significant **EU added value**, despite the relatively small size of the funds compared with the significant challenges imposed by the crisis that occurred during this period. The main EU level benefit arises from the transnational dimension of certain actions (specific actions, Union actions and the European Migration Network) as well as EU level burden-sharing, supported in particular by emergency assistance and the relocation mechanism under national programmes, both of which are solid proof that the principle of solidarity was applied.

AMIF brought significant EU added value in terms of: (i) it ensured the effective and efficient management of migratory flows at EU level (volume effects); (ii) it optimised procedures related to migration management and increased know-how and capacity built (process effects); (iii) it allowed Member States to reach a wider volume of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and third-country nationals (scope effects); (iv) it introduced innovations that were created at national and European level (role effects), albeit to a lesser extent.

The absence of AMIF funding would have been detrimental to the quality of the EU's response to the migration crisis and the ability of the Member States to cooperate and implement solutions. An interruption in the support would likely have led to (i) reduced scope and quality of the actions implemented, (ii) delays in implementation or (iii) even an interruption in the actions, including on applying the principles of solidarity and mutual trust.

Sustainability has been ensured by AMIF through checks mechanisms set in place at programming and implementation stages across most instruments, although this was ensured to a lesser extent by emergency assistance due to the nature of the actions. There is room for improvement for taking into account sustainability criteria when designing the interventions of AMIF, but also to systematically capture and transform lessons learnt into national legislation, practice and procedures, in order to avoid recurring financing of the same (less innovative) products.

The sustainability of the actions' effects is likely to differ depending on the focus areas (integration and asylum outcomes are likely to last if they address longer-term needs, while return outcomes are more sustainable if they are based on voluntary return schemes and are supported by efforts for reintegration).

3.3 Evaluation of ISF-BV

As regards **effectiveness**, ISF-BV is considered effective in both the areas of common visa policy and integrated border management. This Fund helped to (i) facilitate legitimate travel by boosting Members States' national capacities by co-financing Member States to purchase equipment to check the authenticity of documents used for visa applications, the development of information system for coordinating visa applications and (ii) procure security equipment for consular representations in third countries. Despite the recommendation in the *ex post* evaluation of the External Borders Fund to increase the co-financing rate, the Fund's contribution towards consular cooperation was limited in many Member States due to the delays in starting the implementation. The development of a common visa policy was also supported through the establishment and operation of IT systems, with particular regard to the national Visa Information System.

The Fund contributed towards the effectiveness of external border controls by supporting measures focused on the purchase, modernisation, upgrade and replacement of border control and surveillance equipment (e.g. document checking devices, communication equipment). Border management capacity was addressed through the introduction of automated border control (ABC) gates that speed up the checks at the border-crossing points that are linked to national and international IT systems making information exchange more efficient. A key contribution towards the achievement of a common visa policy was provided through the development of VIS. Training also supported harmonisation of practices on visa issuance, by providing consular staff with technical and up to date information on subjects related to visa and related systems.

The Fund has supported the implementation of integrated border management, as per Article 3.2b of the ISF-BV Regulation, in an effective manner despite the migration and security crisis. So far around EUR 200 million has been spent on specific actions to support the purchase of the European Borders and Coast Guard Agency equipment by 14 Member States, to be used in the European Borders and Coast Guard Agency coordinated joint operations. This increased solidarity among Member States and it helped in the development of EUROSUR and border management IT systems.

The Fund facilitated cooperation among Member States and between Member States and the European Borders and Coast Guard Agency, which included the purchasing of equipment to be used in the European Borders and Coast Guard Agency operations.

Regarding direct management, it is very difficult to draw any conclusions on the effectiveness of the action grants awarded under Union actions or emergency assistance since very few actions have been completed in the period covered by the interim evaluation. Emergency assistance has been used in seven Member States, mainly in Greece, Italy and Bulgaria, and played an important role in addressing the emergency needs at beginning of the period and in bridging the funding gap until the adoption of national programmes (for example, in the case of one Member State, the amount of emergency assistance support in the years 2014-2017 was three times higher than the allocation from the national programme covering the whole period 2014-2020).

The Fund's original rationale and objectives are still **relevant** in the aftermath of the migratory crisis. Appropriate mechanisms to address the changing needs have been put in place during both the programming and the implementation stages. The flexibility offered by the Fund, consisting of transfers of money between different objectives, helped to address these changing needs. However, Member States would need even more flexibility, which could be achieved through minimum allocations of funds to objectives no longer being imposed and the number of national objectives being reduced.

The Fund is considered to be **coherent** with other EU and national interventions. Coherence and complementarity with other EU financing instruments were ensured through coordinating mechanisms at the programming stage, which were then put in place at the implementation stage. Most Member States adopted different coordinating mechanisms to ensure coherence with similar interventions carried out under other EU funds. No overlapping has been found between the ISF-BV and national interventions in the field of visa and borders. The coherence in implementation with other EU programmes could be improved. Since the EU's Customs 2020 programme and ISF-BV share common objectives on both security issues and training, potential areas for synergies have been noted. However, coordination between the two initiatives could be improved.

The Fund ensured **EU added value** through innovative investments in infrastructure and equipment. It supported cooperation between Member States. Training activities enabled by the Fund contributed to the harmonisation of practices between Member States. A higher EU added value could have been expected in the areas of consular cooperation, cooperation with third countries and IT systems.

Since large-scale IT systems need huge investments, it is likely that, without an EU intervention, national IT systems would have continued to be diverse, thus affecting the EU's capacity to achieve the overall objectives in its border and visa policy. In the field of visa, the use of new technologies added value in terms of efficiency in processing visas, improving the

exchange of data and information within and between Member States. In the field of borders, the EU added value resulted in interoperable modern technologies being developed, which improved the efficiency and speed of the Schengen Information System and the Visa Information System. This strengthened the interconnection with the Schengen partners, which contributed to stronger border checks and monitoring. Therefore, investments in upgrading the IT systems interoperability are deemed necessary.

The **sustainability** of actions funded by ISF-BV relies on the continuity of EU funding as national funding appears to be insufficient to ensure the same level of investments. In particular, investments in infrastructure, facilities, and IT systems have relatively high sustainability, as they usually require smaller maintenance costs compared to the initial investments. Training activities also play an important role in ensuring the sustainability of actions in the long term.

3.4 Evaluation of ISF-P

It is worth noting that ISF-P is the first EU funding programme to address police cooperation, the fight against serious organised crime and terrorism, and crises and risks management that is also implemented through shared responsibility with the Member States (shared management mode), as the previous funds CIPS and ISEC were only implemented directly by the Commission (direct management).

The Fund has been mainly **effective** and has contributed to improving security in the EU through preventing and combating cross-border, serious and organised crime, including terrorism, as well as through helping coordination and cooperation between law enforcement authorities. Cooperation took place through the exchange of information on cross-border crime, the establishment of transnational networks and projects, and the participation of Member States in joint investigation teams and in the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) Policy Cycle. National actions financed by ISF-P have also contributed to improving human capabilities and human resources, especially by financing training and hiring of additional staff.

In terms of results, the above actions funded under shared management contributed to actions to disrupt of organised crime groups, especially through (i) seizures of cash (over EUR 1.6 billion); (ii) the taking down of websites; (iii) arrests; (iv) seizures of stolen goods (over EUR 90 million in value); and (v) seizures of drugs such as heroin and cocaine (over 4 million).

The Fund has also helped to improve the capability of Member States to manage security-related risks and crises effectively and, to a lesser extent, protect people and critical infrastructures against terrorist attacks and other security-related incidents.

Available evidence indicates that the Fund has contributed to boosting Member States' capabilities to develop comprehensive threat and risk assessments, although the number of ISF-P funded projects at national and EU level is relatively low. Projects have, for example, focused on: protecting critical infrastructure; developing information systems and knowledge on explosives; training on the identification of possible "foreign fighters"; and developing analyses on CBRN-E (Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear explosives) threats.

The coordination and cooperation among Member States, Europol or other relevant EU bodies was facilitated through developing information systems, interconnections between databases and law enforcement applications, and developing platforms to exchange information. In

particular, Member States used the Fund to comply with their obligations related to implementing EU legal instruments such as the Prüm Treaty and the Passenger Name Record Directive.

With regard to Union actions, several actions have been funded in the area of early warning and cooperation on crisis prevention: e.g. the ATLAS network, which aims to strengthen the preparedness and effectiveness of special intervention units through exercises and other cross-border exchanges, including in crisis situations and in the acquisition and sharing of tactical equipment to support special operations.

In spite of the funding available under ISF-P, limited progress has been achieved by the Member States in terms of (i) strengthening Member States' administrative and operational capability to protect critical infrastructure, (ii) the protection of victims, and (iii) developing training schemes and exchange programmes. In addition limited progress has been achieved in terms of cooperation with third countries and international organisations, although most projects regarding these operational objectives are still ongoing. In terms of protecting victims, the actions implemented have focused on the trafficking of human beings, followed by victims of terrorism and of child abuse, domestic violence, drug trafficking and financial crimes.

The Fund's original rationale and objectives are still **relevant** in the aftermath of the migratory and security crisis. Appropriate mechanisms to address the changing needs have been put in place both at the programming and implementation stages. In their national programmes, Member States identified the relevant policy areas that were included in the EMPACT Policy Cycle. However, some also choose to focus on an area that presents challenges for them: drugs, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime, financial crime or corruption.

The flexibility offered by the Fund, consisting of transfers of funding between different objectives, helped to address the changing needs. However Member States would appreciate even more flexibility that would result from minimum allocations of funds to objectives no longer being imposed and the number of national objectives being reduced.

The Fund is considered to be **coherent** and its objectives are complementary to other national policies. The Fund's coherence and complementarity with other EU financing instruments were ensured during the design, programming and implementation stages. Coordinating mechanisms were put in place to ensure coherence and complementarity at the implementation stage. The monitoring committees and the responsible authorities play key roles in ensuring coherence and different implementation modes have been complementary to each other. However, there appears to be some room for improvement in relation to EU agencies and to internal coherence as there is little awareness among beneficiaries about the actions and projects carried out within the ISF framework.

Overall, the Fund has ensured **EU added value** in terms of improving cross-border cooperation, the exchange of knowledge and best practices, trust among Member States' law enforcement authorities and the application and implementation of key EU policies (process effects).

The Fund has helped to broaden the scope and improve the quality of the actions in terms of investments in under-prioritised or highly specialised areas. The purchase of state-of-the-art equipment has boosted the capabilities of the national authorities to carry out specialised

interventions with a wider scope. The Fund has also enabled the broadening of the types of knowledge exchange and law enforcement trainings (scope effects).

The Fund has proved that it contributed to the harmonisation of EU level research on crime prevention, as well as enabled increased investments and focused on long-term measures in this area. It has also enabled high-volume investments, especially in IT systems, training and specialised equipment (volume effects).

The absence of ISF-P funding would have been detrimental to both the quality of the EU response to cross-border cooperation and to the ability of the Member States to implement innovative solutions (role effects).

During the former financing period, the ISEC and CIPS programmes had a strong transnational dimension as transnational cooperation was a prerequisite for funding. However, the geographical distribution of coordinating and partner organisations that received funding was highly uneven and concentrated in a few Member States. By establishing the shared management mode in ISF-P (initially 60 % of the total programme and over 70 % after the top-ups), ISF-P had a better geographical reach across all Member States, though Union actions are still characterised with the same geographical imbalance that existed in the previous funds

The Fund's **sustainability** has been ensured through the alignment and complementarity of its actions with actions developed in response to national priorities or EU requirements. Comprehensive measures and mechanisms ensuring sustainability have been put in place at programming and implementation stages both under shared and direct management. However, the ongoing implementation of most projects makes it difficult to establish whether the effects on the target groups and on specific areas will really last.

3.5 Efficiency, simplification and reduction of administrative burden

Concerning **efficiency**, overall and in the limits of available data, the evaluation indicated that the results of the funds were achieved at reasonable costs in terms of both human and financial resources. However, most Member States face problems with the EU guidance, common indicators and the reporting/monitoring calendar. Despite simplification improvements, the perceived administrative burden can be considered as a factor that undermines efficiency.

The single set of procedures laid down in the Horizontal Regulation (EU No 514/2014) for all areas covered by the funds and for both AMIF and ISF was found to have led to **simplification**. The simplified cost option was used in only a few Member States who acknowledged its efficiency in **reducing the administrative burden**. However, measures implemented by the funds for simplification and to reduce administrative burden have only partially achieved their intended goals. In spite of simplification improvements, there is little evidence at this stage that the administrative burden has been significantly reduced. Monitoring, reporting and verification measures are still perceived as burdensome and Member States have asked for further guidance on complying with EU requirements. The reporting requirements and the irrelevance of some common indicators were also reported as adding to the administrative burden.

4 MID-TERM REVIEW

This report on interim evaluation includes, in line with Article 57 of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014, an assessment of the mid-term review planned for all three funds.

The overall process was launched June 2017 with a needs assessment questionnaire sent to the Member States. The objective was to allow Member States to consider if and to what extent the national programmes might need a revision and also to assess their (financial) needs for the remaining period 2018-2020. The questionnaire was accompanied by a memo outlining the main developments in EU policies over recent years, which should be taken into account when considering the future needs. The Commission then carried out a detailed analysis of the Member States' replies and bilateral dialogues were organised between the Commission and most Member States to discuss in detail the state of implementation of the funds, the expressed needs and the outlook for the final years.

Following these discussions, a specific extra allocation of EUR 128 million for the national programmes, to be distributed in the framework of the mid-term review, was only intended for the borders and visa instrument, in compliance with the legal base of this instrument. This was due in particular to the fact that no extra funding was planned for AMIF and ISF-P and because most of the national programmes of the Member States under these two funds have been revised repeatedly over recent years due to the migration and security crisis.

In conclusion, the mid-term review allowed for the realignment of national programme priorities to the new policy initiatives and for the adaptation to the new situation in the security, borders and migration areas. However, it was most relevant for ISF-BV where an extra financial allocation was made available, which allowed for a renewed focus on certain specific priorities and needs at Member State level. Furthermore, the Member States financial needs expressed in this context (request for extra funding in the 2019 draft budget for the area of return and hotspots) will be carefully assessed in the course of the annual budgetary procedures.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

5.1 Effectiveness

The Funds have been deemed mainly effective and proved overall to be important instruments in handling the difficult situation in terms of migration and security, despite the significant increase in the challenges that they needed to address.

AMIF proved to be an important instrument in handling the difficult situation, by providing both short-term emergency support to and more long-term capacity building of the asylum, integration and return. AMIF especially contributed to strengthening Member States reception and processing capacities when confronted with the challenging migration flows. While there has been limited progress so far in the area of legal migration, Member States have made moderate progress in the integration area, including in capacity building. Short-term integration measures have been prioritised over long-term, the results of which are not yet visible as integration is a long-term process. The Fund has helped to steadily increase the return rates.

ISF-BV proved its effectiveness by helping to facilitate legitimate travel The Fund's contribution towards consular cooperation and strengthening cooperation with third countries was limited. It also supported the development of a common visa policy through training and the establishment and operation of IT systems (particularly the Visa Information System).

ISF-P contributed to enhancing security in the EU by strengthening the Member States' capabilities to prevent and combat cross-border, serious and organised crime, including terrorism, through: (i) actions targeting financial and economic crime, cybercrime and drug trafficking, (ii) investment in IT systems and operational equipment, (iii) cooperation among Member States such the participation in joint investigation teams; and (iv) the EMPACT Policy Cycle.

In the field of security-related risks and crises ISF-P has helped to enhance Member States' capacity to manage effectively the security-related risks and crises through (i) the development of comprehensive threat and risk assessments, (ii) the establishment of sector-specific early warning systems, (iii) cooperation mechanisms and (iv) the upgrading and procurement of equipment allowing for a better response to crisis or emergency situations.

5.2 Efficiency

Available data suggests that the results of the Funds have been achieved overall at a reasonable cost in terms of both human and financial resources, with some limitations. Efficiency was ensured through considerable knowledge and expertise gained through experience from previous projects and the flexibility of the national programmes.

There are also a number of issues that Member State considered to negatively affect efficiency: the requirement to allocate minimum percentages to national objectives; complex and recurrent reports; insufficiently developed common indicators; and the misalignment of monitoring and reporting calendars.

Overall, the emergency assistance actions and the Union actions as well as indirect management actions have achieved their objectives at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources.

5.3 Simplification and reduction in administrative burden

AMIF and ISF have led to simplification relative to the past, although there is little evidence at this stage to show that the administrative burden has been significantly reduced. The multiannual programming enabled emerging needs to be addressed throughout the seven-year timeframe and large investments to be managed in the long term. Overall, most of the innovative measures (e.g. simplified cost options, multiannual programming, simplified management and control system) have been deemed particularly beneficial and led to simplification, though further guidance was requested (e.g. the simplified cost option is perceived as positive yet its benefits have not been made clear to beneficiaries who, therefore, are reluctant to use it). Despite the improved simplification, national rules and procedures applicable under the national programmes appeared to have led to a moderate amount of administrative burden. As regards direct management, procedures were shown to be appropriate, clear, and transparent, without creating additional burden for Member States or beneficiaries.

5.4 Relevance

The funds, their priorities and objectives as set out in the Specific Regulations, as well as within the annual work were shown to be still relevant. They addressed the Member States' needs in spite of diversity and changes in the national contexts. Due to the migratory and security crises, it is worth noting that significant budget reinforcements were needed, with the available budget of EUR 6.9 billion for the 2014-2020 programming period being raised to EUR 10.8 billion. The emergency assistance (at a higher scale than originally intended) has helped ensure the funds' relevance.

The main mechanisms identified to ensure the funds' relevance included (i) the policy dialogue[10] and the consultative method adopted during the programming stage, (ii) the monitoring role played by both the responsible authorities and the monitoring committees, (iii) the possibility of making budgetary adjustments and transfers, and (iv) the mid-term review.

Despite the evidence gathered on the funds' relevance, it has been noted that more flexibility is needed as far as the implementation of the national programmes is concerned. The main issue was found around the fragmentation of actions under multiple national objectives that prevented the pooling of resources around key priorities and made it difficult to implement cross-objective projects. Furthermore, fixing allocations at the beginning of the programming period, on the basis of statistical data, does not reflect changes in Member States' needs during the implementation period.

5.5 Coherence and complementarity

The funds have been coherent and complementary to other funds and initiatives and no overlaps and duplications have been found. The internal instruments (national programmes, emergency assistance, etc.) complement each other as well as other EU funding instruments (such as the European Structural and Investment Funds - ESIF) and national budgets.

Most Member States have adopted different coordinating mechanisms at the implementation stage to ensure the funds are coherent and are complementary to similar interventions carried out under other EU funds. These mechanisms include inter-institutional exchange of information and cooperation among authorities responsible for different EU funds and specific institutional arrangements to ensure their coordination and synergies. The monitoring committees and the responsible authorities play a pivotal role in ensuring synergies and avoiding overlaps and double-funding, through regular cooperation with other national institutions implementing other funds (including EU funds) and with counterparts in other Member States.

As regards direct management, both emergency assistance and the Union actions show coherence with and complementarity to actions supported by other EU funds or actions supported by EU Agencies. However, it was found, that there is some room for improvement

[10] The policy dialogues with Member States have been put in place for the first time for the preparation of the multiannual national programmes for AMIF and ISF. They have been an important element in launching the process of designing national programmes. This allowed for a holistic approach of all elements of national programme of a Member State with a comprehensive discussion of the EU policy objectives and national priorities.

since project beneficiaries were not very aware about other actions carried out globally under the funds.

5.6 EU Added value

Overall, and notwithstanding their relatively small size compared to the challenges imposed by the crisis, the Funds have generated significant EU added value by (i) supporting actions with a transnational dimension, (ii) burden-sharing between Member States, (iii) boosting national capacities, (iv) optimising procedures related to migration management, (v) ensuring synergies, (vi) increased cooperation among actors dealing with visa processing, (vii) sharing of information and best practices, (viii) cross-border projects, (ix) trust among law enforcement authorities, and (x) staff training, etc. Without the funds the quality of the EU response to the migration crisis and security challenges would have been reduced (e.g. with fewer staff and reduced services, the ability of the national authorities to provide effective assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and other third-country nationals would be constrained).

From a financial point of view, without these EU Funds, national funding would not have enabled the effective and efficient implementation of the actions i.e. in the area of resettlement, counterterrorism or borders equipment including for the EBCG-A. Actions would have been implemented with much more difficulty and not on the scale or in the timeframe actually planned due to insufficient national resources.

As regards direct management, without the resources provided for emergency assistance and Union actions, national funding alone would have resulted in a much more difficult and smaller scale implementation, with a lower general impact. The main advantages entailed by these measures included higher cooperation both across and within Member States, including the sharing of information, know-how and good practices. This allowed for a timely and efficient handling of migration flows and related emergencies.

Actions funded under indirect management provided EU added value by strengthening existing synergies between stakeholders at different levels (international, EU, Member States), therefore developing a coherent EU response to emerging challenges.

5.7 Sustainability

Sustainability has been addressed by all of the Fund's delivery mechanisms, although to a lesser extent by emergency assistance due to the emergency nature of the actions.

Concerning AMIF, the sustainability of effects lasting after the intervention ends varies across its different instruments and the Member States:

- integration and asylum outcomes are likely to last longer, if from the outset they address longer-term needs; and
- return outcomes are sustainable if they are based on voluntary return schemes and are supported by efforts at reintegration.

Regarding ISF, many actions are long-term actions by their nature, since they are generally designed to remain operational beyond the Fund's support (investments in infrastructure, facilities, and IT systems). Other actions (training and cooperation mechanisms) have

contributed to the sustainability of actions through improving expertise, knowledge, and the qualifications of staff involved in managing and implementing projects.

Financial sustainability (actions that can continue after the funds' financing ends) also varies. Some actions like the multiannual or train-the-trainer projects appear to be more self-sustainable, while others appear not to be self-sustainable (e.g. the European Migration Network). Furthermore, the sustainability of certain other actions (Union actions, national programmes, emergency assistance) depends on their level or priority and/or urgency and the availability of alternative resources.

5.8 Issues for future consideration

- The holistic design and structure of the funds' mechanisms (i.e. national programmes aiming to build long-term capacities, emergency assistance aiming to alleviate immediate pressure, and Union actions clearly and logically designed to support each other) should be maintained and used as a model for the future programming period. The separation between external borders and visa should also be maintained.
- In order to increase the Fund's effectiveness and to enable Member States to prioritise some objectives that could lead to better results, the national programmes should be more focused.
- Future Funds (and their scope) need to be designed in such a manner that enables them to address a comprehensive set of needs, as well as ensure flexibility if there are changes. The fragmentation of national programmes under several objectives with minimum percentages of funding should be reconsidered in order to increase flexibility.
- The scope of ISF might need to be adapted further in the future to cater for the new policy initiatives to strengthen operational cooperation and exchange of information.
- The multiannual programming should be maintained for the future financing period.
- An emergency instrument should be maintained and its ability further strengthened so it can respond rapidly and efficiently to changing circumstances.
- A full common monitoring and evaluation framework should be devised early on in the design phase to ensure a consistent and uniform monitoring of progress and effectiveness from the outset. This should include better defined indicators with baseline and target values, and simplified processes, guidance and calendars.
- A system to distribute funds (the allocation key and mid-term review) should be adaptable in order to respond appropriately to changing needs.
- Further efforts to improve cooperation, coordination and strategic steering in implementing the funds, their different types of actions, and other EU level initiatives should be made.
- Providing support through the funds and all their instruments should be continued, sending a clear message on the importance of solidarity and cooperation between Member States.
- Sustainability, both in the sense of financial sustainability and the sustainability of effects, should be taken into account at the project design and selection stage.