

# Labour Market Integration of Refugees: EU Funding Instruments

### KEY FINDINGS

- In the medium term, the **European Social Fund** (ESF - DG EMPL, EUR 86.4 bn 2014-2020) will gain increasing importance for the integration of refugees. For the initial phase of reception the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF - DG HOME, EUR 3.1 bn) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD - DG EMPL, EUR 3.8 bn) support Member States within the scope of their budgets.
- As part of the **European Agenda for Migration**, the Commission has been promoting a **flexible and effective use of the existing funds** for refugees and called not to lose sight of other disadvantaged groups. It remains to be seen to what extent Member States will adjust their multi-annual planning. A number of countries consider that the existing programmes are flexible enough.
- The Commission has implemented a number of activities to enhance the **effectiveness of European funding** 2014-2020 as regards monitoring of complementarity, building up result-oriented evaluation, streamlining and simplification. Nevertheless, there are indications that pre-financing and co-financing (in particular under the ESF) continue to be relevant obstacles for NGOs.
- In a situation of increasing need for resources to manage migration both at the external borders and through reception and integration in the destination countries, first ideas have been floated by a minister and a think tank to create **additional European funding instruments**, such as a Common European Refugee Integration Fund targeted at municipalities. So far, this has not triggered a more concrete policy debate.

This is the first of three briefing notes being prepared by Policy Department A to support the work of the Employment Committee with regard to current migration issues, covering different dimensions of integration policies at European and at national level:

1. Labour Market Integration of Refugees: EU Funding Instruments
2. Labour Market Integration of Refugees: European Networks and Platforms
3. Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Lessons learnt and good Practices.

This first briefing focuses on the funding instruments available, their flexibility to react, coordination, recent developments in measuring their effectiveness.

## 1. CONTEXT: FIRST ESTIMATIONS OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

Even if most of the policy debate addresses the management of migratory pressures at the borders, in parallel labour market integration and social inclusion have recently been receiving increasing attention, as a considerable proportion of refugees, having crossed EU

borders will be granted the status of beneficiaries of international protection and stay for longer:

- either as **refugee** due to a high individual risk of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group,
- or as beneficiaries of **subsidiary protection**, because the person in case of return would face a real risk of suffering serious harm due to torture or armed conflicts<sup>1</sup>.

In the third quarter of 2015, the **number of applicants** went up in most EU-Member States. The highest number of first-time applicants (108 000) was registered in Germany and Hungary, followed by Sweden (42 500), Italy (28 400) and Austria (27 600). These five countries accounted for more than 75 % of all applications, while in a number of East European countries less than 100 asylum seekers applied (Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia). At the same time, for a high number of applications (around 808 000) decisions were pending end of September 2015.

According to the autumn economic forecasts by the European Commission, 3 m arrivals could be expected in the EU over the period between 2015 and 2017 if the level of inflow in 2016 remains at the level of the third quarter 2015 and assuming a gradual normalisation in 2017. Due to limitations in the availability and reliability of data these figures should, however, be interpreted with great caution<sup>2</sup>.

A considerable proportion of asylum seekers will need integration measures as almost half of the **applications** are **recognised** at the first instance either as refugee or as subsidiary protection, while the share is between 87 and 98 % in case of applications from Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis and 70 % for Afghans<sup>3</sup>.

The additional **public spending** needed in 2015 - 2016 for first reception services and support including housing, food, health and education, is estimated to be considerable in some Member States while moderate additional spending can be expected for many. According to first (tentative) estimates by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), short-term fiscal costs may reach 1.0 % in Sweden, 0.6 % GDP in Denmark, 0.4 % in Germany, 0.3 % in Austria and Finland and more than 0.2 % in Italy and the Netherlands. These costs burden the public purse even if taking into account that they may have a positive impact on the aggregate domestic demand for housing, food, health and education<sup>4</sup>.

According to an estimation by the Cologne Institute for Economic Research for **Germany** alone, costs for social assistance and housing account for EUR 17 bn in 2016 and for EUR 22 bn if adding a lump sum of EUR 5 bn for language and integration courses, education and training<sup>5</sup>.

**Investments into the human capital** are nevertheless considered as key. There is a widely shared consensus in research that over the medium and longer term a positive economic impact can only be achieved if refugees are well integrated into the labour market<sup>6</sup>.

## **Use of EU funds for refugees: Increasing political relevance**

Effective integration therefore is a component of European migration policies, even if not being at the forefront of the broader policy agenda. The **European Agenda on Migration** adopted by the Commission in May 2015 combines external and internal policies for migration management. It sets four key priorities for the medium to longer term:

1. Reducing incentives for irregular migration.
2. Saving lives and securing external borders.
3. Strengthening the Common European Asylum Policy with a view to solidarity and a better implementation of a number of Directives.
4. Developing a new policy on legal migration in view of the future demographic challenges.

Within the fourth pillar on a new policy for legal migration, a small section is dedicated to **integration policies**. It sets out that funding is provided by three European funds: the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the European Social Fund (ESF)<sup>7</sup>.

**Communication: European Agenda on Migration: A new policy on legal migration**  
(May 2015)

*"Our migration policy will succeed if underpinned by effective integration policies. Although the competence lies primarily with the Member States, the European Union can support actions by national governments, local authorities and civil society engaged in the complex and long term process of fostering integration and mutual trust. [...] Funding is provided by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). But the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) can also be of particular importance".*

In his **State-of-the-Union Speech 2015**, the Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called for a true European refugee and asylum policy and together with a new permanent relocation mechanism called for a further approximation of asylum policies after the refugee status is granted: *"Member States need to take a second look at their support, integration and inclusion policies. The Commission is ready to look into how EU Funds can support these efforts. And **I am strongly in favour of allowing asylum seekers to work and earn their own money whilst their applications are being processed**"<sup>8</sup>.*

**Communication: Managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration** (September 2015)<sup>9</sup>.

*"The dominance of the migration issue rightly points to the need to reinforce the core EU funding on these issues. But it is also the case that a **variety of support, both funding and operational, can already be drawn upon by Member States in need**. In cases where this requires re-programming of existing plans, this option exists precisely to allow Member States to react to circumstances such as the migrant crisis."*

In September 2015, the Commission defined priorities for action in a situation of increasing migratory pressure. Among these it called upon the Member States to systematically use the possibility of re-programming of existing plans in order to react to the changing circumstances<sup>10</sup>.

During the following months, several Directorates-General specified in a series of papers how to use different EU funds for the integration of refugees within the scope of the budget allocations agreed:

- In a statement of 23 September, the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Cretu, set out that the Commission is open to change programmes agreed with the Member States for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in order to better accommodate (more) actions to support the integration of refugees<sup>11</sup>.
- On 25 September, the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Marianne Thyssen, hosted a meeting with the managing authorities of the ESF and the FEAD to discuss similar proposals on the revision of their cohesion policy programmes and to clarify synergies between the AMIF, ESF and FEAD. Member States were called upon to analyse current challenges<sup>12</sup>.
- In November 2015, DG Migration and Home Affairs published a paper on Synergies between AMIF and other EU funding instruments providing an overview of the relevant priorities which can be used in six European funds to support reception and integration of asylum seekers and other migrants (Internal Security Fund (ISF) - borders and visa, ESF, ERDF, EAFRD, EMFF and FEAD)<sup>13</sup>.
- In December 2015, this guidance paper has been complemented by a Commission fact sheet summarising the contribution of European Structural and Investment

Funds to the Commission Priority "Migration". This paper gives an overview of how to use ESF, ERDF, EAFRD and EMFF for the purpose, in contrast to the more short-term-oriented use of AMIF.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. OVERVIEW OF EU FUNDS FOR INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

Looking at the funding instruments mentioned above, three EU programmes highlight marginalised communities, such as migrants from a **regional or sector perspective**:

- **European Regional Development Fund** (ERDF - DG Regional and Urban Policy, EUR 183 bn 2014-2020)

The ERDF focuses on infrastructure developments, on structural, medium and long-term measures by redressing regional imbalances in the Union. This fund can finance measures in several fields, such as social, health, education, housing and childcare *infrastructure*. It cannot specify support for target groups, however, as the Commission underlines, it can be used for programmes from which refugees (and migrants) may benefit. For example, it is within the remits of this fund to strengthen the institutional capacity of public administration and services including those dealing with the integration of migrants (supporting also actions under the European Social Fund). Moreover, it is possible on a case-by-case basis to support *emergency measures* such as building up reception capacities for migrants (thus supporting the AMIF).

During the last programme period, the ERDF has, for example, financed 99 projects in Italy for setting up multifunctional centres for legal migrants in Italy, promoted coexistence in a multicultural neighbourhood in Spain and a multi-functional educational and care centre in a disadvantaged urban district in the Netherlands<sup>15</sup>.

In the paper of November 2015, mentioned above, the Commission sets out the possibility to use two **specific funds** with a view to certain sectors and areas:

- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development** (EAFRD - EUR 95 bn, DG Agriculture and Rural Development)

This fund provides medium-term assistance in housing, health care, education and employment in rural areas with a view to marginalised communities. It can take into account the specific needs of refugees and be used for vocational training and skills acquisition actions in the different sectors of activity in rural areas.

- **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund** (EMFF - EUR 6.4 bn, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries).

Under this fund, Member States could provide professional training, start-up support and even reception of asylum seekers, not only within, but also beyond the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

Further programmes that can be used for social inclusion are the **Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme** focusing among others, on addressing issues relevant to migrants, such as discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance, and multinational research projects under **Horizon 2020** in the area of "Societal challenges" which include issues such as migration, border controls and security.

### Key to integration: AMIF, ESF and FEAD

Three EU funding instruments have a relevant social inclusion and employment component whilst differing in terms of financial volumes, mission and time horizons for eligibility:

1. Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF - DG Migration and Home Affairs).
2. European Social Fund (ESF - DG Employment and Social Affairs).
3. Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD - DG Employment and Social Affairs).

**Table 1: Integration of refugees: Comparison of AMIF, ESF and FEAD**

Aspects for comparison	AMIF	ESF	FEAD
Budget 2014-2020	<b>EUR 3.1 bn</b>	<b>EUR 86.4 bn</b>	<b>EUR 3.8 bn</b>
Co-funding rate	75 % (95 % in specific cases)	50 - 85% (95% in specific cases)	Up to 85 %
Mission	Broad promotion of integration Shorter-term perspective	Improve employment opportunities (and social inclusion) Longer-term perspective	Alleviation of worst forms of poverty, exclusion Shorter-term perspective, except social inclusion
Objectives / strands	1. Strengthening Common European Asylum System (min. 20 %) 2. Legal migration and <b>integration</b> 3. Return strategies 4. Specific actions and Emergency assistance	1. Sustainable and quality employment 2. Social Inclusion (min. 20 % MS envelope) 3. Education and training 4. Institutional capacity authorities, stakeholders, public administration	1. Food or basic material assistance 2. Social inclusion outside active labour market measures
Timeline for eligibility	After arrival	Eligible after legal access to labour market (Exception: vocational training, children education - possible after arrival depending on national conditions)	Food / Material assistance after arrival Social inclusion after application
Target group(s)	Third-country nationals including asylum seekers after arrival	EU and third-country nationals having access to the labour market	Criteria for most deprived to be defined by Member State
Examples	Beyond reception: Language courses, training - general country information	Focus on labour market integration, integration strategies, not actions to promote dialogue between migrants and receiving countries	Social inclusion: General training, info, bringing clients to services

**Source:** Own compilation based upon Commission papers and EPRS briefing notes on AMIF, Cohesion Funds.

The **AMIF**, run by DG Migration and Home Affairs of the Commission, plays a major role in the first stages. It promotes the management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. Integration of refugees is one of its four strands. Member States have an obligation to allocate at least 20% of the total basic allocation for their national programme to the

specific objective on asylum, and at least 20% to the specific objective on legal migration/integration as requested by the Parliament<sup>16</sup>.

Actions covered under this fund include a wide range, reaching from improvement of accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers or information campaigns in non-EU countries to education and language training or staff training on relevant topics. Furthermore, the AMIF includes an element of solidarity as it offers the possibility of emergency funding (6 % of the total amount of the AMIF budget) which can be granted by the Commission to countries under high migratory pressure<sup>17</sup>.

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ecre), a network of NGOs supported by the Commission, welcomed the new set-up of the fund as it includes asylum seekers and refugees within the eligible target group of integration activities<sup>18</sup>.

The **ESF**, run by DG EMPL, is one of five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Its main objective is to improve the employment opportunities of workers living in Europe and to integrate disadvantaged people by investing in skills, employment and social services. The ESF can provide support to reinforce the capacity of public administrations and also of stakeholders that provide support to asylum seekers, such as non-governmental organisations. This support can be funded under the institutional capacity and public administration thematic objective or also under Technical Assistance in the case of stakeholders<sup>19</sup>.

Third-country nationals can fully benefit from support if they have been granted access to the labour market. Asylum seekers and refugees, are explicitly mentioned in the ESF Regulation as one of the target groups that may receive support by the ESF. This would be once they acquire the status of refugee, or at the latest nine months after having applied for it in compliance with Directive 2013/33/ EU on reception standards. Periods vary among Member States and these can also define a shorter period<sup>20</sup>.

In fact, this remains a challenge as many Member States did not adequately transpose the Directive so far. In September 2015, the Commission launched an infringement procedure by sending out letters of formal notice to 19 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FR, DE, EL, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SI, ES, SE). Taking into account that this Directive is not applicable in DK, IE and UK, access to labour market may thus turn into a major obstacle for integration<sup>21</sup>.

The third fund, **FEAD**, run by DG EMPL was established with the specific objective to alleviate the worst forms of poverty in the EU such as homelessness, child poverty and food deprivation, thus contributing to eradicate poverty in the Union in line with the targets set by the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>22</sup>.

The exact group or groups of people to be targeted is identified at the national level, according to the definition of 'most deprived persons' as set out in Article 2(2) of the FEAD Regulation. Therefore, the eligibility of asylum seekers depends on the way Member States define the type of assistance and who may benefit from this fund. Also, the duration of the social and material assistance is chosen by Member States. Depending on the criteria used to identify the FEAD recipients, it is possible for asylum seekers to receive assistance.

Looking at longer term integration, the **ESF has the potential to become the most important fund for labour market integration** and social inclusion of refugees for two reasons: In addition to specific measures for refugees, these can benefit from other measures under the ESF for disadvantaged groups or unemployed once having acquired the necessary language skills. They may also benefit from a higher level of service quality in the context of institutional capacity building.

Second, in financial terms the ESF offers more opportunities to support larger-scale programmes for integration than the AMIF and the FEAD (although the budget for AMIF had been increased by EUR 0.8 bn for the programming period 2014-2020). The ESF accounts for EUR 86.4 bn of the EU budget, which are complemented by national contributions.

Following a request by the European Parliament, a minimum of 20% is allocated to social inclusion. The current allocation to vulnerable groups, including asylum-seekers and refugees, is around 21 bn. ESF minimum allocations range from EUR 20 m for Luxemburg and EUR 106 m for Malta to EUR 13.2 bn for Poland and EUR 10.5 bn for Italy. AMIF budget allocations range from EUR 10 m in Bulgaria and Estonia to 310 m in Italy (prices 2014) taking into account the particular position of insular societies; FEAD budget allocations range respectively from EUR 3.9 m in Cyprus, Denmark, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands and the UK to a high of EUR 563 m in Spain and EUR 670 m in Italy (2015 prices) taking into account indicators of poverty. Only a part of this budget will be reserved for integration in the AMIF and for refugees in the FEAD where it is up to the Member State to define the target groups<sup>23</sup>.

### **Programmes for refugees, though few changes so far to react to changing circumstances**

A number of EU Member States, affected by a high inflow of refugees have programmes for refugees in place under **ESF** being considered by the Commission as good practices:

- *Germany* has recently launched a model programme "Early intervention" to be rolled out in 2016, ensuring early skills assessment and support for acquiring skills following the third month of registration.
- According to the ESF online database, many other countries have set up measures supporting immigrants, such as a local support centre, a Pilot service (Lotsendienst) for migrants and a counselling centre for foreign qualifications in Germany, a Coaching project for labour market in Sweden, support for migrant entrepreneurs in Belgium or projects to boost employability of female immigrants in France.

Looking at the first phase of receiving and integrating refugees, the AMIF offers the possibility to apply for emergency funding (6% of the total amount), the Commission has awarded **emergency funding under AMIF** in 2014 and 2015 to a number of countries particularly affected by the inflow or transit of refugees (e.g. EUR 10 m for Slovenia in November 2015, EUR 3.8 m for an emergency day accommodation centre in Calais, France, EUR 13.7 m for projects in Italy). A further EUR 80 m were planned to be made available through the AMIF by end of 2015<sup>24</sup>.

According to information from the Commission, a few countries intend to amend their Operational Programme including asylum-seekers as one of the target groups (e.g. the Czech Republic). *Slovenia* has already asked for an amendment of the **FEAD OP** to add basic material assistance to food aid in the context of the refugee crisis.

As regards the ESF, according to information from the Commission **no or only modest use has been made** so far of the possibility to draw upon remaining resources from the 2007-2013 programme period or to submit a request for amendment of the Operational Programmes. There are indications that most Member States consider the ESF programmes flexible enough to integrate interventions for refugees as long migrants are mentioned as an eligible group in the country programme. The Netherlands have adjusted national ESF related rules in order to include refugees allowed to enter the labour market.

Another possible reason why Member States did not submit requests for amendments could be that the deadline was too tight to submit an application for remaining resources from the 2007-2013 period and that in general, changes in the Operational Programme may be administratively heavy.

### **Creating additional funding mechanisms - at the stage of shaping ideas**

Funding issues in the field of integration may gain increasing importance in the future as there is evidence that the integration of refugees takes more time compared to working immigrants and will therefore require considerable investments to avoid social exclusion and its harmful consequences for the people affected, the economy and the society as a whole<sup>25</sup>.

At the same time, refugees are concentrated in a handful of destination countries so that European solidarity has turned into an issue of policy debate. For example, pointing to the fact that only a few countries are confronted with most of the burden, Austria has just asked the Commission for a much higher amount of emergency funding accounting for EUR 600 m to cover costs for reception. This exceeds by nearly ten times the amount allocated to Austria within the AMIF budget for the whole period of 2014-2020<sup>26</sup>.

The Commission as well as NGOs point to the risk of tensions which will have to be balanced when shaping funding in the future: to provide the necessary support for refugees while not reducing it for other disadvantaged groups, such as long-term unemployed and NEET youth. As Commissioner Thyssen put it in a speech to ESF management authorities in September 2015: *"We must not lose sight of the unemployed or vulnerable people in Europe, who are equally in need of our support, but not in the limelight: Nor can we ignore the fact that many of our Member States are under tight budgetary constraints. Money is an issue [...]."* Similarly, NGOs have expressed concerns that specific funding for refugees may create tensions as they are perceived to be on the expense of support for other vulnerable groups<sup>27</sup>.

Hitherto, the Commission's priority is to *"make sure that the EU Funds are responsibly, effectively and efficiently spent"*<sup>28</sup>.

However, there are diverging views. Recently suggestions have been brought forward to create additional European funding mechanisms:

A European think tank has suggested setting up a **Common European Refugee Integration Fund**. This fund takes as starting point that over the whole process of reception and integration, a considerable part of costs for infrastructure and services has to be borne by the local level. It also intends to create financial incentives based upon solidarity. The fund should provide local public services with a monthly lump sum payment for each refugee registered in their locality, which in an ideal scenario would more than compensate for additional costs. In the short term, this fund should be financed by national contributions, to be integrated later on into the next Multiannual Financial Framework as a priority. According to the analyst, such a fund would help to increase the capacity of mainstream local services thus providing an incentive for local authorities to register refugees. While some countries need support, not being able to provide sufficient funding to local services themselves, it would also compensate for the concentration of refugees in a small number of destination countries, such as Germany and Sweden. Eligibility should be dependent on participation in EU-level agreed asylum and refugee policies<sup>29</sup>.

At the Economic and Social Affairs Council on 15 January 2016, the German Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, proposed to introduce a **European petrol tax** to finance management of irregular migration with a view to protecting external borders and to improve the situation in the countries of origin, recalling a suggestion made earlier but not then backed by the German government. Such a reform would imply legal changes, as the power to levy taxes is hitherto a national competence<sup>30</sup>.

While there is consensus that that the *"the refugee crisis is on such a large scale that it will require much more than currently allocated"*, as Commissioner Pierre Moscovici put it in January 2016, he also stressed that there are different options, ranging from a new European fund for integration to a Europe-wide additional petrol tax or issuing a eurobond<sup>31</sup>.



### 3. EFFECTIVENESS OF EUROPEAN FUNDING: COORDINATION, EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND SIMPLIFICATION

A report issued by the **European Court of Auditors**, acknowledging overall positive results of many projects, highlighted a number of weaknesses in the funding system for refugees (2007-2013) to be addressed: insufficient coordination with other EU funds (e.g. ESF), a lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, excessive administrative burden given the budget involved, and implementation delays in the Member States<sup>32</sup>.

#### Intensified coordination of funding programmes

The new regulation has considerably strengthened **monitoring of complementarity** of funding. The AMIF regulation says that *"actions financed under the Fund should be specific and complementary to actions financed under the European Social Fund"* and asks the Member States to set up *cooperation and coordination mechanisms with the ESF management authorities* (22). Article 14 on the Preparation and approval of national programmes lays down the duties of the Member States and of the Commission at the operational level: Each proposed national programme has to describe the mechanisms that ensure coordination between different EU instruments. The Commission shall examine the complementarity with support provided by other Union Funds and in particular with the ESF. The dedicated parts of the regulations had been supported or specified by the European Parliament<sup>33</sup>.

Similar rules apply to the ESF stemming from the Common Provisions Regulation for ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) covering equally the ERDF, ESF, EARDF and EMFF. Furthermore, these principles have also shaped the Regulation for the FEAD (Regulation EU 223/2014) adopted later in March 2014. *The Commission and the Member States shall ensure, taking account of the specific context of each Member State, that support is complementary to other instruments of the Union"*. Member States should specify in their operational programmes concrete arrangements for the effective coordination of the ESIF Funds as well as for the FEAD with other relevant funds.

The **Commission checks all draft Operational Programmes** for the AMIF comparing these with ESF Operational and regional programmes according to information from DG Home. Furthermore, the Commission plans to monitor the functioning of the concerned processes and mechanisms in the annual implementation reports to be sent from 31 March 2016.

Furthermore, the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, has **enhanced coordination across Directorates-General** creating an inter-service working group on Funding within the Inter-Service Group "Integration of third-country nationals". The Inter-Service Group has been set up in November 2015 bringing together desk officers from relevant Directorates-General, such as Employment and Social Affairs, Education and Culture, Regional Policies, Justice and Research and may become a more permanent structure.

#### Evidence-base: Building up result-oriented monitoring

In the current funding period 2014-2020, **frameworks for monitoring and evaluation** have become more result-oriented (ESF and FEAD). Annexed to the ESF-Regulation (1304/2013) is a set of Common output and result indicators for ESF investments. In addition to output indicators, such as the number of participants including a breakdown by age, sex, education, foreign background and migrants, Member States have to report on short-term and longer-term results. These include the transition rates from a measure to job search, education/training, and employment immediately after a measure ends and six months afterwards with a view to employment or an otherwise improved labour market situation.

The AMIF regulation stipulates that *"a common monitoring and evaluation framework shall be established with a view to measuring the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, added value and sustainability of the actions and the simplification and the reduction of administrative burden, in the light of the objectives"* (Regulation 514/2014, Art. 55). The Commission is currently preparing this framework of indicators with help from experts in the Member States. The common framework will be enforced by the adoption of a Delegated Act planned for mid-2016 (in compliance with Art. 55 of the Regulation No 514/2014).

Furthermore, an **Evaluation Network** for AMIF and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) has been established by the Commission to implement monitoring, evaluation and exchange of good practice and also to enhance coordination with other EU funding with impact and results in the policy areas covered by AMIF and ISF, such as the ESF.

Beyond contributing to the effectiveness of programmes funded by the EU, result-oriented monitoring has a further advantage: It allows for collecting and analysing **evidence-based good practices and meta-analysis**, thus providing the basis for mutual learning and impulses for evidence-based policymaking in the Member States as well as at European level.

### **Simplification, though challenges for civil society organisations remain**

The revision of the Financial Regulation (2012) and the **reduction and streamlining of funds** coupled with **multiannual programming** in the programme period 2014-2020 should lead to improvements for beneficiaries and reduce the administrative burden for the Commission and for national authorities, as two recent studies for the European Parliament acknowledge<sup>34</sup>. An example is the AMIF established in 2014, replacing the previous European Refugee Fund, European Integration Fund and the European Return Fund by a single instrument. Similarly to ESF, multi-annual planning has been introduced.

Due to the revision of rules, smaller entities can benefit from **lighter procedures for grants up to EUR 60 000**, such as lighter documentation requirements and the possibility to accept co-financing in kind (e.g. through the work of volunteers) as well as a number of simplifications in the financial procedures.

Current provisions for a **more binding partnership principle** may contribute to a stronger involvement of NGOs. The Commission shall ensure that the operational or national programmes are prepared, programmed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in partnership with authorities of different level involving also NGOs.

However, a number of **obstacles** remain, **mainly of financial nature**. The Social Platform recently called upon the Commission to make funding in the field of migration and integration easier and the Council of Refugees and Exiles warns that co-financing requirements can be difficult to fulfil. Organisations need to find up to 50 % of the costs of the projects under the ESF, often from private sources in case governments do not provide it. Over the last years this has proven increasingly difficult in a context of budget constraints<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, the Youth Employment Initiative under the ESF has shown that low pre-financing rates can be another hurdle for NGOs and other entities to use European funds, in particular in countries with less wealthy economies<sup>36</sup>.

- 1 Directive: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011L0095&from=EN>.
- 2 [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/eu/forecasts/2015\\_autumn/box1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2015_autumn/box1_en.pdf).
- 3 <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7105334/3-10122015-AP-EN.pdf>.
- 4 <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>.
- 5 <http://www.iwkoeln.de/infodienste/iw-kurzberichte/beitrag/fluechtlinge-folgen-fuer-arbeitsmarkt-und-staatsfinanzen-263939>.
- 6 [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/eu/forecasts/2015\\_autumn/box1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2015_autumn/box1_en.pdf).
- 7 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication\\_on\\_the\\_european\\_agenda\\_on\\_migration\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf).
- 8 [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-15-5614\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-5614_en.htm).
- 9 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/communication\\_on\\_managing\\_the\\_refugee\\_crisis\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/communication_on_managing_the_refugee_crisis_en.pdf)
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Contact: [Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu](mailto:Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu)

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