

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

In a nutshell

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund co-finances national and EU actions that aim at promoting the efficient management of migration flows, as well as the implementation, strengthening and development of a common EU approach to asylum and migration.

EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) heading and policy area

Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship)
Home affairs

2014-20 financial envelope (in current prices and as % of total MFF)

Commitments: €3 137.42 million (0.29%)

2014 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €403.26 million (0.28%)
Payments: €165.82 million (0.12%)

2015 budget (in current prices and as % of total EU budget)

Commitments: €416.74 million (0.29%)
Payments: €336.58 million (0.24%)

Methods of implementation

Shared management (Member States for national projects), *direct management* (European Commission for Union actions, emergency assistance, the European Migration Network and technical assistance) and *indirect management*.



In this briefing:

- EU role in the policy area: legal basis
- Objectives of the Fund
- Funded actions
- Assessment of the Fund/actions and implementation
- Other EU programmes and action in the same field

EU role in the policy area: legal basis

Traditionally, EU Member States have developed their own policies for asylum and immigration from non-EU countries. The need for greater coherence, also in light of evolutions such as the removal of internal border controls across most of the EU in the Schengen area, has **made the case for increased cooperation**, especially since the Amsterdam Treaty (1999). However, experts consider that progress has been slow, with difficulties in reaching agreement, and a resort to opt-outs in some cases.

Title V of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) on freedom, security and justice sets the EU's competence in developing a **common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control**, based on solidarity between EU countries and fairness to non-EU nationals (Article 67(2) TFEU). The principle of solidarity is further detailed in Article 80 TFEU, which says that the implementation of this EU policy is governed by fair sharing of responsibilities and its financial implications between Member States. Most instruments relating to asylum, migration and border checks (Articles 77-80 TFEU) are subject to the ordinary legislative procedure, with the European Parliament (EP) and the Council acting as co-legislators on an equal footing.¹ In addition, the Lisbon Treaty made legally binding the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), which includes provisions on the right to asylum (Article 18).

In April 2014, as a measure relating to this policy area, the EP and the Council adopted [Regulation \(EU\) No 516/2014](#), establishing a specific EU funding programme dealing with asylum and migration² for the 2014-20 period: the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The Regulation notes Articles 78(2), and 79(2) and (4) TFEU as legal basis of the Fund, but not Article 80 TFEU. This appears to reflect the fact that in this policy area **fair sharing of responsibilities and of their financial implications remains a controversial issue**, with Member States showing different standpoints. The EP, which had supported explicit inclusion of Article 80 TFEU in the legal basis, accepted the final text to allow the Fund to start functioning, but reaffirmed its view on the correct legal basis in a declaration accompanying the adopted text. As regards the countries which have different opt-out provisions concerning Title V TFEU, **Denmark** does not take part in the AMIF, while **Ireland** and the **United Kingdom** do.

Objectives of the Fund

The AMIF aims to contribute, through financial assistance, to the efficient management of migration flows and to the implementation and development of a common EU approach to asylum and migration. The Fund reflects efforts to simplify and streamline the implementation of the EU budget in the area of home affairs, since it replaces three separate funding programmes that operated during the 2007-13 period under the umbrella of the general programme SOLID (Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows): the European Refugee Fund (ERF), the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF) and the European Return Fund (RF).

The AMIF has **four common specific objectives**: 1) strengthening and developing the establishment of the **Common European Asylum System (CEAS)**;³ 2) supporting **legal migration** to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs and promoting the **effective integration** of third-country nationals; 3) enhancing **fair and effective return strategies** with a view to countering **illegal immigration**; and 4) increasing **solidarity and responsibility-sharing** between the Member States, with particular focus on those most affected by migration and asylum flows.

To achieve these objectives, the AMIF can co-finance actions not only in the **participating Member States** but also in relation with **third countries**. Initiatives need to be coordinated, and consistent with the EU's external action and the measures supported by related funding instruments.

Funded actions

For the 2014-20 period, around 88% of the €3.1 billion resources of the AMIF are allocated to Member States that adopt **multiannual national programmes** and implement the Fund under **shared management**. In general, the maximum EU co-financing rate for national projects is 75% (90% in specific cases). Each EU country needs to devote at least a given share of the resources that it receives to certain objectives. For example, a minimum 20% of the national allocation assigned, taking into account statistical data on migration flows (see table 1),⁴ must be spent on actions aimed at strengthening and developing the CEAS. Departure from this target requires proper justification in the national programme and is not allowed for those EU countries that are affected by structural deficiencies in the area of accommodation, infrastructure and services. In absolute terms, the UK gets the largest national allocation, followed by Italy, France, Greece and Spain.

The remainder of the Fund is implemented through **direct management** (European Commission) or, in some cases, **indirect management** (e.g. by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development or ICMPD) to support transnational actions or actions of particular interest to the EU ('Union actions'), **emergency assistance**, **technical assistance** and the **European Migration Network**, which the Council [established](#) in 2008 with the task of providing reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum topics.

The three predecessors to the AMIF offer examples of the range of actions that can be co-financed.⁵ As for **asylum-seekers** and **refugees**, measures aim to ensure full and effective implementation of the CEAS. Past projects included: support

Table 1 – National allocations based on statistical data: 2014-20 breakdown in million euros (with rounding)

	Minimum amount	% average 2011-13 allocations ERF+EIF+RF	Average amount based on 2011-13 data	Total for 2014-20
AT	5	2.65%	59.53	64.53
BE	5	3.75%	84.25	89.25
BG	5	0.22%	5.01	10.01
CY	10	0.99%	22.31	32.31
CZ	5	0.94%	21.19	26.19
DE	5	9.05%	203.42	208.42
EE	5	0.23%	5.16	10.16
ES	5	11.22%	252.10	257.10
FI	5	0.82%	18.49	23.49
FR	5	11.60%	260.57	265.57
EL	5	11.32%	254.35	259.35
HR	5	0.54%	12.13	17.13
HU	5	0.83%	18.71	23.71
IE	5	0.65%	14.52	19.52
IT	5	13.59%	305.36	310.36
LT	5	0.21%	4.63	9.63
LU	5	0.10%	2.16	7.16
LV	5	0.39%	8.75	13.75
MT	10	0.32%	7.18	17.18
NL	5	3.98%	89.42	94.42
PL	5	2.60%	58.41	63.41
PT	5	1.24%	27.78	32.78
RO	5	0.75%	16.92	21.92
SE	5	5.05%	113.54	118.54
SI	5	0.43%	9.73	14.73
SK	5	0.27%	5.98	10.98
UK	5	16.26%	365.43	370.43
Total	145	100.00%	2 247.00	2 392.00

Data source: Regulation (EU) No 516/2014

and practical assistance to unaccompanied minors (Belgium); improvement of reception conditions (Estonia); and mental health services for asylum-seeking children who have been victims of torture (Finland). In the fields of **legal migration** and **integration**, initiatives seek to support the national integration strategies of Member States, as well as their national legal migration strategies. Examples of financed actions are: 'learning cafes', providing support to immigrant children with school work and personal development (Austria); language education and intercultural mediation for newly arrived migrants (Italy); and raising awareness of the risks of female genital mutilation with a view to preventing this practice, particularly within sub-Saharan immigrant communities (Spain). As regards **irregular immigration** and **return**, support can go to voluntary return schemes, forced return operations, mechanisms for monitoring forced returns, investment in detention facilities and development of alternatives to detention. Past actions included: voluntary assisted return and reintegration programme for irregular migrants (Ireland); training for officials to improve the skills needed to escort irregular immigrants during the forced return process (Latvia); and strengthening cooperation with third-country diplomatic missions (Romania). **Actions with a transnational or EU-wide dimension** can promote practical cooperation between relevant authorities in different Member States.

For 2014 and 2015, the European Commission has put aside €50 million to address urgent and specific needs of Member States through the AMIF. In 2014, four proposals were awarded **emergency assistance**: establishment of an emergency day accommodation centre for irregular migrants in Calais, France (with the EU contribution amounting to €3.78 million); consolidation of reception capacities in respect of migratory flows reaching strategic border points on [Italian territory](#) (€1.71 million); capacity-building of asylum reception and human resources aiming to respond effectively to migration pressure in Hungary (€1.25 million); and addressing needs related to the mass arrival in Cyprus of third country nationals who may be in need of international protection (€0.97 million). In [February 2015](#), the European Commission allocated €13.7 million in emergency funding to Italy to help the country tackle the high influx of asylum seekers.

Resettlement, relocation and specific actions

In line with the EP's efforts to strengthen tools promoting solidarity between EU countries, the AMIF endows resettlement, relocation and specific actions with €360 million for 2014 to 2020. In addition to the national allocation detailed in table 1, for example, Member States receive a lump sum for each person resettled on their territory from a third country under the Union Resettlement Programme (Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014). Along the same lines, a Member State accepting the transfer of beneficiaries of international protection from another EU country (relocation) is entitled to receive a lump sum for each person relocated (Article 18 of the Regulation).

Assessment of the Fund/actions and implementation

In 2012, the **European Court of Auditors** (ECA) issued a [special report](#) on the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the European Integration Fund (EIF). Most of the projects audited by the Court **gave positive results**. However, the overall success of the ERF and the EIF could not be assessed due to **lack of proper monitoring and evaluation systems**. The effectiveness of the Funds, said the ECA, was hindered by a series of factors, such as: **excessive administrative burden** in comparison with the size of the budget; **implementation delays** at EU and national level; and **insufficient coordination** with

other funds such as the European Social Fund, which supports integration measures on access to the labour market. Recommendations included simplifying programming rules and enhancing management systems. In its reply, annexed to the report, the Commission said that, while elements could be improved and were being improved, the **Funds were deemed effective by stakeholders**.

The Commission accepted most of the Court's recommendations, indicating that the proposals for the next generation of Funds contained **provisions aimed at addressing related issues**. For example, the rules of the AMIF adopted by the EP and the Council in April 2014 show **simplification efforts**, with national programmes now covering the entire period of the Fund (instead of also having annual programmes, as was previously the case) and subject to a mid-term review (see below). The preparation, implementation and monitoring of national funding programmes requires the involvement of relevant public authorities at national, regional and local level, and, where appropriate, of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations and social partners.

In addition, the Commission presented results and challenges of past actions in ex-post evaluations. For example, as regards the European Return Fund (RF), the Commission [deemed](#) the implementation of its 2008-10 programmes 'quite satisfactory' overall, reporting that the RF generally contributed to **strengthening the scale, duration and sustainability of both voluntary and forced return activities**. The Commission added that the RF also provided support to the implementation of the EU's Return Directive in line with the EP's position that had unlocked negotiations in the Council on the latter, making a political link between EU co-financing of return activities and the adoption of common standards for these activities.⁶ The evaluation again noted issues relating to the excessive administrative burden, but said at the same time that the five largest beneficiaries of the Fund (United Kingdom, Greece, France, Spain and Italy) were rather successful in managing it, with an average implementation rate of 83%.

In the [impact assessment](#) accompanying its proposals for the 2014-20 generation of home affairs funds, the Commission highlights other challenges that it sought to address with the AMIF. These include the need to **enhance emergency mechanisms to respond to crises and increase their flexibility**, since the one available under the ERF had shown a number of weaknesses.

In 2012, commenting on the overall Commission proposal, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) welcomed the efforts to simplify the framework and increase its flexibility. After stressing that EU funding should complement national funding and not replace it, the UNHCR formulated a series of recommendations, including the need to further strengthen indicators for the objectives of the new Fund and to ensure coherence with other EU tools.

In **2018**, the European Commission and the Member States are to carry out a **mid-term review** of the AMIF, taking into account policy developments and the interim evaluation reports prepared by EU countries on the implementation of their national programmes. This could lead, where necessary, to a revision of national programmes. The assessment of the mid-term review will be part of an **interim evaluation report** that the Commission is to submit to the EP, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions by **30 June 2018**. An **ex-post evaluation report**, including an assessment of the results of the AMIF, is due by **30 June 2024**, following the closure of the national programmes.⁷

EUREMA, a pilot project for intra-EU relocation

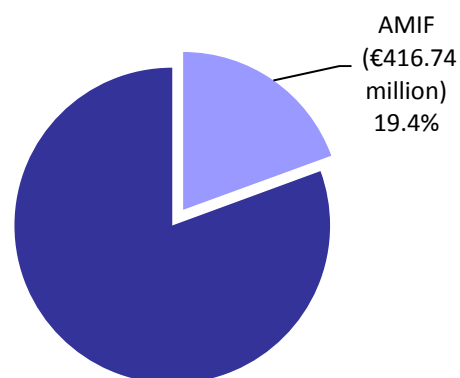
Transnational actions financed under the ERF included EUREMA, a pilot project for relocation from Malta. The European Commission [notes](#) that relocation is a concrete tool of solidarity between EU countries, but also controversial. In 2012, the European Asylum Support Office or EASO (see below) produced a [report](#) on EUREMA, with mixed views from respondents. The scheme offered a framework to prepare and implement intra-EU relocation. Under the first phase of the scheme, which took place in 2011, 227 protected persons were relocated from Malta to other EU countries (out of the ten Member States that had pledged places for this phase, six eventually received relocated persons). Participating countries identified a number of areas needing improvements, including: funding and administrative requirements of the pilot project; legislative obstacles to relocation in some participating countries; administrative procedures for the transfer of protection; and lack of a central coordinating entity. Most respondents to the survey considered that participation in a relocation scheme should remain voluntary and based on a political decision. The AMIF seeks to strengthen the tools promoting solidarity between EU countries, including through provisions on resettlement and relocation (see box above).

Other EU funds and action in the same field

The EU's other main programme in the area of home affairs is the **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**, with maximum resources amounting to €3.76 billion for **2014-20**. The ISF has two components, of which the **'instrument for financial support for external borders and visa'**⁸ is endowed with **€2.76 billion** and tackles issues often closely related to asylum and migration topics. In addition, over the same period, almost **€0.14 billion** are earmarked for **IT systems (Visa Information System and Schengen Information System)** allowing national authorities to cooperate on border management by sharing relevant information.

In a context of increasing challenges in the policy area of home affairs, the **European Parliament** has, on many occasions, called for an integrated EU approach for migration, asylum and external borders, endowed with sufficient resources as well as appropriate tools to handle emergency situations. An example is provided by the [2011 resolution on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework \(MFF\) for 2014-20](#), where the EP noted the relatively small share of the EU budget devoted to home affairs. Some progress was achieved against the backdrop of the difficult negotiations on the MFF: although lower than the amount initially proposed by the Commission (€3.8 billion), the €3.1 billion available under the AMIF for 2014-20 still represents an increase from the €2.1 billion that its three predecessors had for 2007-13. Along the same lines, the financial envelope supporting actions for external borders was increased by around 45% in current prices from the previous period. Together, the AMIF and the instrument for external borders account for around 0.5% of the 2014-20 MFF. An [EP resolution of 17 December 2014](#) reiterates the call for a **holistic EU approach to migration** and for **enhancing fair sharing of responsibilities and solidarity** towards the EU countries with the highest numbers of refugees and asylum. It also recommends, in this context, an

Figure 1 – Security and citizenship heading of the 2015 EU budget: share of the AMIF



Data source: Based on European Commission data.

analysis of how the home affairs Funds are spent. Improving the management of migration is an explicit priority of the Juncker Commission, which is expected to present the [new European Agenda on Migration](#) in May 2015.

Furthermore, **external action funding programmes** may also [support](#) activities relating to migration and asylum, and notably their external dimension, with a view to strengthening cooperation with third countries. For instance, the **Development Cooperation Instrument** can tackle migration and asylum issues under geographical programmes and, in addition, its thematic programme '**Global Public Goods and Challenges**' has an indicative financial allocation of about **€0.36 billion** specifically devoted to asylum and migration for 2014-20. Examples of past interventions include capacity-building projects and financial aid to third countries facing a refugee crisis.

In addition to funding programmes proper, the EU may have **pilot projects** and **preparatory actions** in the field of asylum and migration, often launched on the initiative of the EP. A recent example is an **initiative supporting victims of torture** through rehabilitation centres and multidisciplinary assistance. Launched as a pilot project in 2011, it is now a preparatory action endowed with €0.5 million in commitment appropriations for 2015.

As regards **decentralised agencies**, in 2010 the EP and the Council established the [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\)](#), with a view to promoting practical cooperation among EU countries on asylum, supporting those under particular pressure in this field and contributing to implementing the CEAS. Located in Malta and fully operational since 2011, EASO has a budget of **almost €15 million** for **2015**. In February 2015, EASO was carrying out support programmes for Bulgaria, Greece and Italy. The related field of border management is covered by the activities of the [European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders \(Frontex\)](#), which was established in 2004 and is located in Warsaw. This year, Frontex's allocation from the EU budget is set at **€106.1 million**,⁹ being one of the few expenditure items for which, in the context of the [tough negotiations leading to the adoption of the 2015 EU budget](#), the two arms of the budgetary authority could agree on an increase in comparison with the initial Commission proposal. This strengthening of resources is in line with the EP position and last year's political guidelines of the new Commission President, which specifically referred to the annual budget of **Frontex**, deeming it insufficient to carry out its tasks relating to securing the EU's common borders.

AMIF: possible transfer of commitment appropriations from 2014 to 2015-17

The late adoption of the 2014-20 MFF led to delays in the adoption of the legal acts and rules for a number of EU Funds, including the AMIF. As a result, a share of the 2014 commitment appropriations of the EU budget was neither used nor carried over. When this concerns programmes under shared management, a revision of the MFF Regulation is required to allow the transfer of relevant allocations to subsequent years. On this basis, in January 2015 the European Commission put forward a [proposal](#) for a revision of the MFF together with [Draft Amending Budget No 2](#) to the 2015 budget. For the **AMIF**, if approved as such, the amendments will translate into an **increase of its 2015 commitments appropriations to €486.01 million** (or 0.3% of the amended budget), as well as into some transfers to the 2016 and 2017 budgets.

Endnotes

- ¹ A special legislative procedure applies in some areas, including support to Member States facing emergency situations with a sudden inflow of non-EU nationals (after consulting the EP, the Council may adopt provisional measures).
- ² A different EU funding programme deals with actions relating to external border control: the Internal Security Fund (ISF). In addition, [Regulation \(EU\) No 514/2014](#) lays down general provisions on the AMIF and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management, which is the other part of the ISF.
- ³ The EU has been working on the creation of a CEAS since 1999, with a view to granting fair and equal treatment to asylum-seekers across the Union. In 2013, the EP and Council completed adoption of the CEAS, whose backbone is provided by five legislative acts. New versions of the five acts apply from December 2013 (the [Qualification Directive](#) setting common grounds for granting international protection) and July 2015 ([EURODAC](#) on the EU asylum fingerprint database; [Dublin III](#) identifying the Member State in charge of handling an asylum request and governing relations between EU countries in this field; the [Reception Conditions Directive](#); and the [Asylum Procedures Directive](#)). The revised rules got [mixed reactions](#), with the EP [credited](#) for improvements to the texts, but [some stakeholders](#) finding the changes still limited, e.g. in Dublin rules assigning the handling of most asylum applications to the first country of entry into the EU. This provision [is often said](#) to lead to a higher burden on Member States neighbouring non-EU countries, notably those on the EU's southern and eastern borders. According to a recent analysis (['Reforming the Common European Asylum System: legislative developments and judicial activism of the European Courts'](#), Velluti S., 2014, XI - 110 p.), despite progress in the legislative framework, the standard of protection is still uneven across the EU and judicial developments may play a significant role in the future of EU asylum law.
- ⁴ Statistical data on migration flows determine the allocation of €2 392 million, while an additional €360 million are assigned to Member States on the basis of other mechanisms relating to specific actions, the Union Resettlement Programme and the transfer of beneficiaries of international protection from one EU country to another (see also box on resettlement, relocation and specific actions).
- ⁵ The Commission website includes a [database](#) with 2007-13 projects.
- ⁶ However, the April 2014 evaluation of the Commission ([COM\(2014\) 230](#)) indicates as a matter of concern that the United Kingdom had so far still not opted into the Return Directive despite being the largest beneficiary of the Return Fund.
- ⁷ See also: ['Review Clauses in EU Legislation – A Rolling Check-List'](#), European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2014, p. 51.
- ⁸ Participating countries are all EU Member States (except Ireland and the United Kingdom), as well as the Schengen Associated Countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).
- ⁹ Taking into account contributions from Ireland, the United Kingdom and Schengen associated countries, the total budget for Frontex in 2015 amounts to [€114 million](#).

Disclaimer and Copyright

The content of this document is the sole responsibility of the author and any opinions expressed therein do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. It is addressed to the Members and staff of the EP for their parliamentary work. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

© European Union, 2015.

Photo credits: © DWerner/ Fotolia.

eprs@ep.europa.eu

<http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)