



EU funding for asylum and migration policies

UNHCR Statement on the adoption of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

On 14 April 2014, the European Union adopted the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), representing a total value of 3.1 billion EUR for the next seven years (2014-2020) and replacing in a single fund the previous Integration, Refugee and Return Funds. The reduction in the number of funds, a simplified and flexible approach compared to the modalities of previous funds, as well as multi-annual programming should help ensure the better use of funds by Member States and maximize the impact to beneficiaries.

Despite cuts to the EU budget, the AMIF represents an increased amount to be spent on asylum and migration issues compared to the combined total of the previous three funds (3.1 billion EUR compared to 2.1 billion EUR in previous combined funds). Out of 3.1 billion EUR, 2.7 billion EUR will be allocated to the national programmes of Member States, which will complement their own domestic budgets dedicated to these areas and should lead, inter alia, to improved asylum systems and integration policies.

Overall, the AMIF modalities will help ensure a fair and transparent allocation of resources between the following four specific objectives:

1. To strengthen and develop all aspects of the Common European Asylum System;
2. To support legal migration to Member States in line with their economic and social needs, and promote effective integration;
3. To enhance fair and effective return strategies, which contribute to combating illegal immigration; and
4. To enhance solidarity and responsibility sharing between Member States.

In the field of asylum, the AMIF should help EU Member States to ensure uniform and high-quality asylum policies and procedures, as well as higher standards of international protection and the promotion of good practices. This will be achieved through financial assistance for the proper implementation of the recast asylum *acquis*, including through training of staff, establishing adequate reception conditions, ensuring access to fair procedures for asylum applicants, fostering efficient integration practices, increasing the number of resettlement places, and fully respecting the rights of refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection.

UNHCR in particular welcomes the following elements of the AMIF Regulation:

- Fair allocation of the funds between asylum, migration and integration policies, with a minimum of 20 per cent of funds to be spent by Member States on asylum and integration.
- All actions supported under the Fund shall be implemented in full compliance with **human rights** and respect for human dignity, in line with the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- Beneficiaries of international protection will have equal access to **integration** programmes made available to other third country nationals, while their specific needs will continue to be taken into account.
- Particular attention is placed on the specific needs of the **most vulnerable** among asylum-seekers and refugees, such as unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking.
- A compulsory **Partnership Principle** with civil society actors, international organisations and social partners. Civil society actors and organizations who provide first line assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees, as well as asylum-seekers and refugees themselves, are often best placed to know of gaps in asylum systems and where funding should be placed in priority. It is therefore important for these actors to participate, jointly with the authorities, in the assessment of needs to define common objectives regarding the use of EU funds. UNHCR thus calls on each Member State to submit a national multi-annual programme for the use of AMIF **only following in-depth consultations with such partners to address jointly identified key gaps in the national asylum system**. Regular consultations should also be held under the Partnership Principle to ensure the best possible use of AMIF funds in line with the national situation, priorities and needs.
- **Increased co-funding** to 75 per cent (and even up to 90 per cent in certain circumstances, such as when submitted projects meet AMIF pre-defined strategic priorities). This will be significant for civil society actors, but also for national, regional and local public authorities who directly implement the funds.
- Regular **monitoring and evaluation** mechanisms on the use of AMIF funds by way of quality indicators. UNHCR recommends that the Partnership Principle may also be called upon for evaluating the use of AMIF funding and as a basis to include civil society organisations in the meetings of the **Monitoring Committee** that Member States must put in place.
- The call for **coherence with EU external actions and foreign affairs**, as AMIF-funded actions will focus on non-development-oriented measures and will complement the financial assistance provided through traditional external aid instruments.

- The explicit possibility to finance **alternatives to detention**, as it is UNHCR's position that detention should be avoided and used only as a measure of last resort. UNHCR encourages Member States to prioritize the use of funding to promote alternatives to detention over opportunities to finance detention centres for asylum-seekers, including as a more cost effective measure.
- Financial incentives to **increase Member States annual resettlement quotas**. UNHCR calls on Member States to make full use of the possibilities available under the AMIF to illustrate greater solidarity and burden-sharing with host countries, and which can also contribute to the objective of 20,000 resettlement places to be available in Europe on an annual basis by 2020.
- The inclusion of **stateless persons** and persons with undefined nationality as beneficiaries of AMIF funds. UNHCR invites Member States to make full use of this possibility for actions to prevent and reduce statelessness as well as to identify and protect stateless persons.