

Civil Society Statement and Recommendations on the future EU funding in the area of migration and asylum 2014-2020

March 2012

On the occasion of the European Parliament's Hearing on "EU Funding on Migration, Integration and Asylum - Testing the Added Value"¹, a coalition of CSOs active in the area of migration and asylum are presenting a number of key joint recommendations on the European Commission's proposals for funding EU policies in the area of Home Affairs².

Home Affairs funding as a tool to protect the human rights of migrants and refugees

For the next Multiannual Financial Framework (period 2014-2020), the European Commission is proposing to increase the overall Home Affairs budget to €10.7 billion and to reduce the number of funds to two: the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Internal Security Fund. This proposed reduction to a two pillar structure should ensure simplification and flexibility, however it remains unclear how the resources will be allocated between policy areas covered by the funds. We strongly believe that sufficient resources need to be allocated to develop common European asylum policies, which reflect the highest international standards and strengthen integration policies. In the area of returns, sufficient funding should be allocated for independent monitoring of return operations, for the promotion of voluntary return as the preferred option, and for the sustainability of returns. Funding in the area of border controls should support the implementation of protection sensitive procedures at borders and points of transit and should be allocated with a clear commitment to protect the human rights of migrants, both women and men.

We call on the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that resources within the new Home Affairs Funds are allocated to various policy areas in a way that fully takes into account the EU and the Member States' commitments to protect and ensure the human rights of migrants.

Civil society is involved in the development of national programmes

In many Member States, civil society organisations provide much needed assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and other categories of migrants, such as legal and social assistance. CSOs that work for and with refugees and migrants on a daily basis or represent their voices, have a thorough understanding of their needs and the challenges migrant women and men face, and are well placed to identify which actions are needed in order to address these challenges. CSOs are instrumental in ensuring cooperation and mutual understanding between service providers and the migrants they assist.

This wealth of CSO experience and knowledge should feed into the programming of the funds targeting refugees and migrants. CSO involvement would be beneficial to both the authorities and the CSOs, as it would ensure that the right actions are undertaken and reduce any gaps between identified priorities and the needs of refugees and migrants on the ground.

¹ This cross party hearing is co-organised by the office of Jean Lambert (MEP) and the Justice and Home Affairs Section of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and takes place on 7 March 2012.

² Proposal from the European Commission for a Regulation laying down general provisions on the Asylum and Migration Fund and on the instrument for financial support for police cooperation, preventing and combating crime, and crisis management (COM(2011) 752 final); Proposal from the European Commission for a Regulation establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund (COM(2011) 751 final); Proposal from the European Commission for a Regulation establishing, as part of the Internal Security Fund, the instrument for financial support for external borders and visa (COM(2011) 750 final).

While we welcome the inclusion of the partnership principle in the European Commission's proposals, it should be noted that the way this principle has been implemented has varied substantially from one country to another. Only a few Member States' authorities are engaged in permanent dialogue with civil society organisations for the development of national programmes.

We call on the European Parliament and the Council to strengthen the partnership principle in the future Asylum and Migration Fund by making it mandatory for relevant state authorities and bodies to include CSOs and migrant organisations in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the multi-annual programmes.

Civil society has access to funding

EU funding is instrumental for civil society's work and is often one of the primary sources of funding available for CSOs working in the area of migration and asylum. CSOs often depend on this funding in order to be able to provide their invaluable services and support to migrants and refugees on a daily basis. However, there are many obstacles for CSOs of all sizes to apply for current EU Home Affairs funding, such as the co-financing requirements, administrative burdens, as well as limitations with regard to the supported target groups. We welcome the fact that the European Commission's proposals address some of these obstacles, as outlined below.

The European Commission proposes to increase the amount of EU contributions to 75% (and 90% in some cases) of the total eligible expenditure. The proposals also envisage various concrete measures to reduce the administrative burden, such as the adoption of a common regulatory framework, easier rules on the eligibility of expenditure and a move to multiannual programming. All these changes are welcome, and if adopted, will significantly reduce the administrative burden for the Commission, the Member States and the beneficiaries, and allow for the support of a wider range of projects and organisations.

We also welcome the reduction in the number of funds to a two-fund structure. This should allow civil society organisations to carry out activities with fewer restrictions regarding target groups. For example, the European Integration Fund currently excludes refugees and asylum seekers from its scope. This creates many difficulties for CSOs, which are running activities based on the needs of migrants rather than on their immigration status. This approach further results in effectively fostering the integration of some, while excluding others.

We call on the European Parliament and Council to support the changes brought by the proposals to the extent that they reduce the administrative burden, facilitate access to EU Funding for a wide range of – big and small – CSOs and support actions with wider target groups to avoid differentiations being made based on legal statuses. Such changes can significantly improve the quality of actions developed by CSOs and positively impact on the situation of all migrants on the ground.

Funding for the external dimension of asylum and migration

To date, funding for the external dimension is only available under the EU external aid instruments. This is based on the understanding that these instruments serve the needs of third countries to meet their migration and refugee protection challenges in the framework of development and in partnership with the European Union. The creation of an external dimension strand within the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Internal Security Fund, in addition to the existing external aid instruments, marks a more Eurocentric shift in the approach: EU internal migration and asylum priorities, which may not necessarily reflect the needs of the

partner countries, can now affect cooperation with them. Moreover, it becomes possible for individual Member States to use funding as leverage and to pursue cooperation with specific third countries, which they would otherwise pursue bilaterally. In addition, this may not necessarily reflect the priorities of the Union or the EU development objectives for the same third countries. We are concerned to what extent the new funding structure will actually serve to address the needs of migrants, refugees and other vulnerable persons living in third countries. We also question whether the current proposal for an external dimension strand within Home Affairs funding is consistent and coherent with the EU's overall relations and long standing development and humanitarian policy, and whether it contributes to making the EU a truly global actor in refugee protection and migration governance.

Practically speaking, the existence of both internal and external instruments may lead to overlaps, confusion and possibly more gaps between actions in the same areas. It is unclear where the line can be drawn between 'development' and 'non development' activities when it comes, for example, to capacity building for the authorities and civil society of third countries.

We call on the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that the external dimension strand in the Asylum and Migration Fund is fully coherent with the external aid instruments and the EU development policy. We also call for safeguards to be put in place to prevent Member States from using this strand of funding to pursue national interests, and for a mechanism that will ensure transparency about Member States' bilateral cooperation, and coordination with actions under the Migration and Asylum Fund and actions under the external aid instruments. The external dimension strand of the Asylum and Migration Fund should primarily be driven by a spirit of solidarity and responsibility sharing with third countries.

Asociación Comisión Católica Española de Migración (Accem)	France Terre d'Asile
Association Primo Levi (France)	Freedom from Torture (UK)
Asylkoordination (Austria)	Greek Council for Refugees
Asylum Aid (UK)	Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (Turkey)
Bulgarian Red Cross	Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
Caritas Luxembourg	Hungarian Helsinki Committee
Caritas Sweden	International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (CEAR)	International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN)
Italian Council for Refugees (CIR)	Immigrant Council of Ireland
Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries (COSPE)	International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
Civil Rights Program Kosovo	Irish Refugee Council
Croatian Law Centre (HPC)	Jesuit Refugee Service Europe
Danish Refugee Council	Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS)
Dutch Council for Refugees	Czech Organisation for the Aid to Refugees (OPU)
Embrace Community Support Centre (UK)	Swiss Refugee Council
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)	Red Cross EU Office
European Network against Racism (ENAR)	British Refugee Council
European Women's Lobby (EWL)	Rescate (Spain)
Finnish Red Cross	Romanian National Council for Refugees
Finnish Refugee Advice Centre	Soze (Czech Republic)
Forum Réfugiés (France)	Welsh Refugee Council

