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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER**

**Final evaluation of the European Refugee Fund for the period 2000-2004**

## FINAL EVALUATION

### OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND FOR THE PERIOD 2000-2004

#### COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

##### Overview

The European Refugee Fund was established by Council Decision 2000/596/EC of 28 September 2000, for the period from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2004 "to support and encourage the efforts made by the Member States in receiving and bearing the consequences of receiving refugees and displaced persons". The Fund is designed as an instrument to allocate resources fairly and proportionately to the burden on each Member State by reason of its efforts in receiving refugees and displaced persons.

The financial reference amount for implementing this Decision was estimated at EUR 216 million for the five-year period<sup>1</sup>. Compared with other Community instruments, the annual amount (some EUR 40 million) was relatively small.

The target groups for the Fund's operations are as follows:

- any third-country nationals or stateless persons having the status defined by the Geneva Convention and permitted to reside as refugees in one of the Member States;
- any third-country nationals or stateless persons enjoying a form of international protection granted by a Member State in accordance with its national legislation or practice;
- any third-country nationals or stateless persons who have applied for one of the forms of protection described above;
- third-country nationals or stateless persons benefiting from temporary protection arrangements in a Member State;
- persons whose right to temporary protection is being examined in a Member State.

Measures entitled to support from the Fund cover three areas:

- conditions for reception;
- integration of persons whose stay in the Member State is of a lasting and/or stable nature;
- repatriation,<sup>2</sup> provided that the persons concerned have not acquired a new nationality and have not left the territory of the Member State.

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<sup>1</sup> Indicative amount

<sup>2</sup> The Fund only finances voluntary return.

95% of the budget appropriations were allocated to the Member States for carrying out national programmes cofinanced by the Union and implemented under shared management. The remainder, i.e. up to 5% of resources, could be used for Community actions implemented directly by the Commission, in particular, innovatory action or action of interest to the Community as a whole, steps to promote cooperation at Community level, as well as assessment and technical assistance.

All the Member States of the Union as constituted before 1 May 2004 participated in implementing the Fund, with the exception of Denmark in accordance with the Protocol on the position of Denmark annexed to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community. Since 1 May 2004, the new Member States that have joined the EU have been eligible to receive aid from the Fund. The Czech Republic did not wish to make use of it but it is now participating in the second phase of the European Refugee Fund covering the period 2005-2010.

On completion of the 2000-2004 programme, the Commission assigned independent experts to carry out a final evaluation.<sup>3</sup> This evaluation was conducted on the basis of full documentation made available to the contractor by the Commission, a detailed questionnaire sent to all those in charge of the funded projects, talks with the national authorities responsible for implementing programmes under shared management and contacts with project leaders and non-governmental organisations active in the Fund's areas of activity.

The figures collated for this study were used in the analysis given below and are generally average values which, for lack of space, cannot always reflect deviations from the Community trend. Wherever possible, slight variations or divergences from average results have been mentioned.

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<sup>3</sup> The study carried out by the contractor is available at the following Internet address [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/refugee/funding\\_refugee\\_fr.htm#](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/refugee/funding_refugee_fr.htm#), then click on "Evaluation". The opinions expressed in this study do not necessarily reflect the Commission's position.

## Key data

The total number of commitments made under the European Refugee Fund for the 2000-2004 period amount to 187.541.160,68 EUR, consuming nearly all the budgetary allocation. Over the whole period, the national programmes represent 95,2% of the funds and Community Actions represent 4,8%. These percentages are in line with those established in the Council Decision.

The table below contains the annual budgetary commitments for the national programmes, the Community actions and the European Refugee Fund as a whole.

**EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND**  
**ANNUAL BUDGETARY COMMITMENTS**  
**FOR 2000-2004**  
Amounts in €

Year	National programmes	Community actions	Total for the European Refugee Fund
2000	24.005.994,82	1.263.999,68	25.269.994,50
2001	32.479.952,50	1.704.143,61	34.184.096,11
2002	42.826.949,22	1.775.122,73	44.602.071,95
2003	40.157.450,01	2.070.491,21	42.227.941,22
2004	39.143.506,90	2.113.550,00	41.257.056,90
2000-2004	178.613.853,45	8.927.307,23	187.541.160,68

### *National programmes cofinanced by the European Refugee Fund*

Over the whole period 2000-2004, EU funds committed for national programmes amounted to EUR 178 613 853.45. The difference with the total amount of the European Refugee Fund commitments is equal to the amount of the commitments for Community actions (EUR 8 927 307.23).

The amounts committed each year for national programmes were: EUR 24 005 995 for 2000 programmes, EUR 32 479 953 for 2001 programmes, EUR 42 826 949 for 2002 programmes, EUR 40 157 450 for 2003 programmes and EUR 39 143 507 for 2004 programmes (these concerned the enlarged Union). The table below sets out the amounts committed for the national programmes of each Member State.

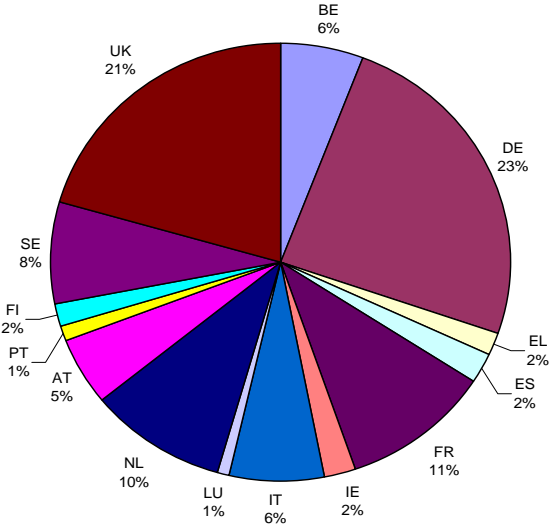
### Commitments of the European Refugee Fund for national programmes, per Member State and per year

Commitment per Member State	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007*	TOTAL 2000 - 2004	TOTAL 2000 - 2007
Germany	6.218.898.77	8.391.364.30	10.324.674.58	9.935.791.60	8.113.021.93	6.808.594.52	5.740.645.75		<b>42.983.751.18</b>	<b>55.532.991.45</b>
Austria	912.382.09	1.454.753.68	1.938.106.21	2.007.650.38	2.230.280.21	2.742.218.08	3.846.031.28		<b>8.543.172.57</b>	<b>15.131.421.93</b>
Belgium	1.223.201.55	1.869.724.55	2.729.082.53	2.381.191.60	2.131.527.03	1.708.787.99	1.776.562.59		<b>10.334.727.26</b>	<b>13.820.077.84</b>
Spain	745.290.55	837.462.10	933.063.85	786.229.10	665.287.27	828.501.41	859.539.41		<b>3.967.332.87</b>	<b>5.655.373.69</b>
Finland	651.386.00	673.605.00	671.256.00	524.730.29	392.632.81	576.732.16	765.446.81		<b>2.913.610.10</b>	<b>4.255.789.07</b>
France	2.255.053.80	3.156.227.70	4.133.680.00	5.067.825.42	4.041.961.16	4.419.370.47	4.030.904.13		<b>18.654.748.08</b>	<b>27.105.022.68</b>
Greece	652.057.17	629.043.03	535.611.36	439.481.17	459.296.30	738.841.43	816.091.64		<b>2.715.489.03</b>	<b>4.270.422.10</b>
Ireland	632.205.18	709.109.67	965.573.27	981.675.33	919.090.69	1.037.486.23	1.093.828.73		<b>4.207.654.14</b>	<b>6.338.969.10</b>
Italy	1.956.104.78	2.741.880.68	3.460.943.09	2.396.267.75	741.665.14	1.763.702.74	2.053.628.78		<b>11.296.861.44</b>	<b>15.114.192.96</b>
Luxembourg	528.971.74	480.528.81	411.194.85	299.703.18	171.647.79	398.036.69	456.620.40		<b>1.892.046.37</b>	<b>2.746.703.46</b>
Netherlands	2.984.948.74	3.642.649.54	4.175.006.40	3.239.737.01	2.972.102.53	2.481.878.07	2.471.049.17		<b>17.014.444.22</b>	<b>21.967.371.46</b>
Portugal	534.238.01	518.815.68	457.005.68	304.394.29	123.369.56	317.204.29	316.952.82		<b>1.937.823.22</b>	<b>2.571.980.33</b>
United Kingdom	2.902.639.84	4.819.118.07	8.764.928.09	8.923.100.66	10.877.220.93	8.739.301.59	9.713.045.19		<b>36.287.007.59</b>	<b>54.739.354.37</b>
Sweden	1.808.616.60	2.555.669.69	3.326.823.31	2.869.672.23	2.691.651.76	2.929.516.46	3.904.398.26		<b>13.252.433.59</b>	<b>20.086.348.31</b>
Hungary					824.724.64	1.064.593.65	979.609.02		<b>824.724.64</b>	<b>2868927.309</b>
Lithuania					154.927.86	573.217.83	607.775.87		<b>154.927.86</b>	<b>1335921.559</b>
Slovenia					343.443.67	573.652.24	584.197.32		<b>343.443.67</b>	<b>1501293.228</b>
Cyprus					168.058.60	647.118.56	908.577.92		<b>168.058.60</b>	<b>1723755.084</b>
Poland					440.490.02	890.515.65	1.162.043.64		<b>440.490.02</b>	<b>2.493.049.31</b>
Estonia					101.264.04	501.165.50	501.107.84		<b>101.264.04</b>	<b>1.103.537.38</b>
Latvia					95.628.95	501.174.78	501.345.60		<b>95.628.95</b>	<b>1.098.149.33</b>
Slovakia					372.374.00	1.099.450.43	1.360.927.53		<b>372.374.00</b>	<b>2.832.751.96</b>
Czech Rep					0.00**	1.322.783.90	1.224.732.11		<b>0.00</b>	<b>2.547.516.01</b>
Malta					111.840.01	536.748.47	613.261.96		<b>111.840.01</b>	<b>1.261.850.44</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24.005.994.8</b>	<b>32.479.952.5</b>	<b>42.826.949.22</b>	<b>40.157.450.0</b>	<b>39.143.506.90</b>	<b>43.200.593.1</b>	<b>46.288.323.78</b>	<b>71.370.000</b>	<b>178.613.853.4</b>	<b>339.472.770.37</b>

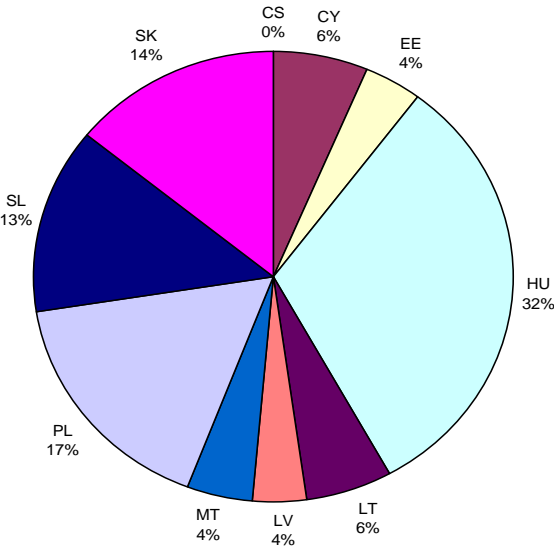
(\*The figures for 2007 are based on the 2007 preliminary draft budget. \*\*The Czech Republic chose not to use its 2004 allocation)

The Commission distributed funds among the Member States according to the breakdown given in the Council Decision establishing the European Refugee Fund. The breakdown takes account of the number of persons in the above target groups, together with the appropriate weighting coefficients. It is the tangible expression of the principle of solidarity and sharing of the financial burden that underpinned the Fund's establishment.

**Breakdown of ERF allocations 2000-2004 for the 14 Member States of the Union as constituted before 1 May 2004 as a percentage of the total allocation for these Member States**



**Breakdown of ERF allocations 2000-2004 for the 10 new Member States that joined the Union on 1 May 2004 as a percentage of the total allocation for these Member States**



The breakdown of programme expenditure and the Community contribution between the three measures was as follows for the whole period:

- reception: 46 %
- integration: 32 %
- repatriation: 22 %

As regards the target groups, apart from integration measures which concern persons whose stay in the Member State is of a lasting and/or stable nature, the other measures made no distinction between persons that have obtained protection and those that have applied for it.

A total of 2 050 projects were funded. Of these, 1 107 (54% of the total) concerned reception, 760 (37%) integration and 183 (9%) repatriation. The breakdown in number of projects is similar to that of allocations, the main difference being repatriation for which the cost per project is usually higher than for the other measures.

Considering the Fund's relatively limited resources during this period, the number of persons directly affected by the operations funded under the projects was remarkably high – estimated at over 600 000 persons. It appears from the data provided by the project leaders, that the number of beneficiaries directly involved in each of them was often very high. For all the national programmes, 65% of the projects affected more than 100 beneficiaries each. Some 25% of all the projects in each case actually concerned more than 500 persons.

#### *Community action*

Directly managed by the Commission, these actions were implemented by means of five calls for proposals published each year in the period 2000-2004. In total, 53 projects, lasting up to 12 months (from 2000 to 2002), and then lasting up to 18 months (2003 and 2004) were funded for a total Community contribution of EUR 8 927 307.23 and a total cost of EUR 11 828 568.42 (average rate of Community contribution of 75.4 %).

The projects funded generally involved a transnational partnership (4 partners on average). The actions carried out concerned skills acquisition, awareness raising and analysis and evaluation.

### **Setting up national programmes**

#### *National context*

Implementing the Fund through national programmes co-financed by the Community meant that it was possible to tailor the relative scale of the measures and the choice of the practical actions involved to the specific situation of each Member State as regards the refugee issue, while remaining within the common framework laid down by the Council Decision.

In the Union as constituted before 1 May 2004, the role played by the programmes varied widely from one Member State to another, depending on each one's experience and resources in the area of activity covered by this instrument. Some Member States have been carrying out operations for a long time with substantial budgets. The Fund made it possible to support



many non-governmental organisations alongside and complementary to well-developed public structures: it had a complementary or multiplier effect.

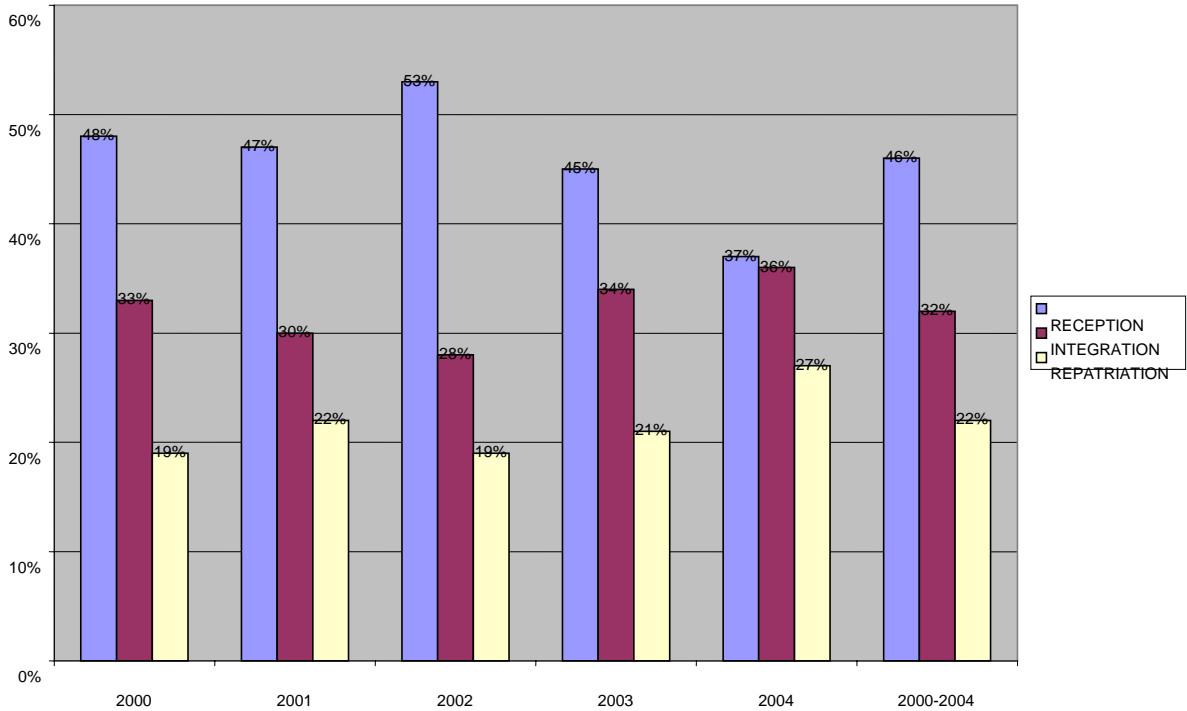
Other Member States, on the other hand, did not have any organised structure when the Fund was set up. In this case, it meant that a rapid response could be given to priority needs for which no well-established public action yet existed and the Fund played a structuring role. In Italy, for example, the Fund helped to set up an effective reception, integration and repatriation system, which until then had not existed, by involving the local authorities (municipalities) which are statutorily responsible for this..

A high percentage of project leaders were aware of the strategy of the programme co-financed by the Fund in their respective Member States: 85% knew about it and 68% said that they were familiar or very familiar with it. The Fund is therefore not just a source of financing: its approach and objectives are recognised. Clearly this is partly the effect of the involvement of the stakeholders concerned in the consultation process leading to the establishment of the programmes, a process required by the rules. Despite this, a still significant percentage (16%) considered the national strategy not geared or poorly geared to the needs of the target groups. The quality of programmes can therefore only gain from more efforts to take on board the needs expressed by those working on the ground.

Although the breakdown of resources between measures under national programmes, measured over the whole of the period 2000-2004, generally shows little variation from the average breakdown referred to above, some Member States do have a different breakdown. For example, Finland and Spain attached more importance to integration.

In several Member States, the national strategy evolved over time: hence the share allocated to integration sometimes increased, although there appears not to be a significant change.

**Breakdown of the amounts allocated to each type of measure (Reception, Integration, Repatriation) per year for the 14 Member States of the Union as constituted before 1 May 2004 ERF 2000-2004**



**Breakdown of the amounts allocated to each type of measure (Reception, Integration, Repatriation)  
by Member State, ERF 2000-2004**

<b>2000-2004</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Integration</b>	<b>Repatriation</b>
<b>BE</b>	47%	44%	9%
<b>DE</b>	56%	21%	23%
<b>EL</b>	78%	22%	0%
<b>ES</b>	27%	49%	24%
<b>FR</b>	85%	11%	5%
<b>IE</b>	37%	51%	12%
<b>IT</b>	57%	31%	12%
<b>LU</b>	37%	54%	9%
<b>NL</b>	38%	34%	28%
<b>AT</b>	53%	23%	24%
<b>PT</b>	63%	6%	32%
<b>FI</b>	12%	72%	17%
<b>SE</b>	38%	43%	18%
<b>UK</b>	15%	45%	39%
<b>EU 14</b>	46%	32%	22%

The most striking trend is the increase in the share of funding allocated to voluntary return over the period 2000-2004, even though it is less than a quarter of the allocations on average. As these actions are, by their nature, more difficult to implement than reception or integration operations, it is often the successful completion of a few projects that subsequently encourages development of this measure. For example, a successful operation in this field in Bavaria served as a model for similar measures organised by other German Länder.

In most of the new Member States that joined the Union on 1 May 2004, the experience had less impact because it was limited to a period of seven months. In these countries, most of the amounts allocated by the Fund were used for the rapid development of reception capacities as both the quantity and quality of existing infrastructure was inadequate.

The positive aspect that emerges from the above is that the European Refugee Fund has proved to be a flexible instrument, which can be tailored to the needs and specific situations of each Member State and even support the establishment of an organised system that was previously inadequate or non-existent. Conversely, it seems that the priorities in the different annual programmes were often dictated more by the need at the time in the Member State concerned than by a medium and long-term strategic approach. By contrast, the approach taken in the new programmes for the period 2005-2010 specifically provides for the establishment of multi-annual programming, together with strategic guidelines, coordinated with the regulatory instruments of the Community asylum policy and thus accompanying implementation in each Member State.

### *The role of the Commission*

Under shared management, the Commission's main responsibilities are to appraise the programmes submitted by the Member States and then to deal with their approval, monitoring, evaluation and all financial and control aspects. The evaluation exercise has identified several areas where it plays a key role and has drawn the following conclusions:

#### - Assistance for the Member States:

Close cooperation, acknowledged by both sides, has developed between desk officers at the Commission and their opposite numbers at national level. However, in order to meet the heavy demand from the national authorities, tools or methods need to be developed to help them carry out the tasks for which they are responsible. For example, tasks connected with project management, monitoring and control and evaluation and also establishing a multiannual strategy, project selection procedures and so on.

#### - Dissemination of experience:

The body of experience accumulated during implementation of the European Refugee Fund from 2000 to 2004, and which its successor will produce during the period 2005-2010, mean that the Commission will have to set up information and communication tools to raise the visibility and profile of the many examples of best practice.

#### - Financial rules:

The Community rules to ensure that national programmes are properly implemented – that have come in for criticism – must reconcile the Commission's responsibility for implementing the budget and compliance with the financial rules with their suitability for the size of the programmes concerned.

#### - Checking of the management and control systems:

Implementation of the programmes co-financed by the Fund carried with it the obligation for the Member States to have an effective management and control system, encompassing all the responsibilities conferred on them in the context of shared management (for example, project selection, financial operations, monitoring, control and evaluation), that would offer the Commission reasonable assurance that the funding was being used in accordance with the rules. Several Member States were unable to set up a system with the required qualities from the outset. As a result of this situation, the Commission issued a set of recommendations whose implementation is jointly monitored.

## Projects financed under national programmes

### *General features*

In view of the very large number of projects, a summary description of the measures financed by the Fund is not feasible.<sup>4</sup> From the project leaders' answers to the questionnaire sent to them, it would appear that the most frequent activities concern:

- Social services/help with administrative and legal formalities
- Individual professional advice
- Assistance in finding a job
- Language training
- Courses to support integration in the host society
- Sports or leisure activities
- Development of information material about integration
- Development of strategies or methodologies
- Food, clothing and other forms of basic physical aid
- Discussion networks or groups for persons directly targeted by the ERF
- Financial aid

In practice, a wide variety of areas is covered as allowed by the rules, provided that the activities comply with eligible measures.

Activities carried out can benefit both persons belonging to the target groups and the structures designed to help them. The second category includes, for instance, continuing training for the staff of the relevant organisation, strengthening their administrative means, setting up documentation centres, support for exchange networks and so on. The two types of activity are mutually supportive. This is particularly the case in Member States which have focused on using the Fund as a means of setting up or structuring the provision of services for refugees.

In most Member States there are a large number of projects (sometimes several hundred) and they reflect the structure of the organisations implementing the projects, which are usually small. Arithmetically, it is the biggest Member States that have the most projects so that Germany and Italy alone account for 50% of all the projects.

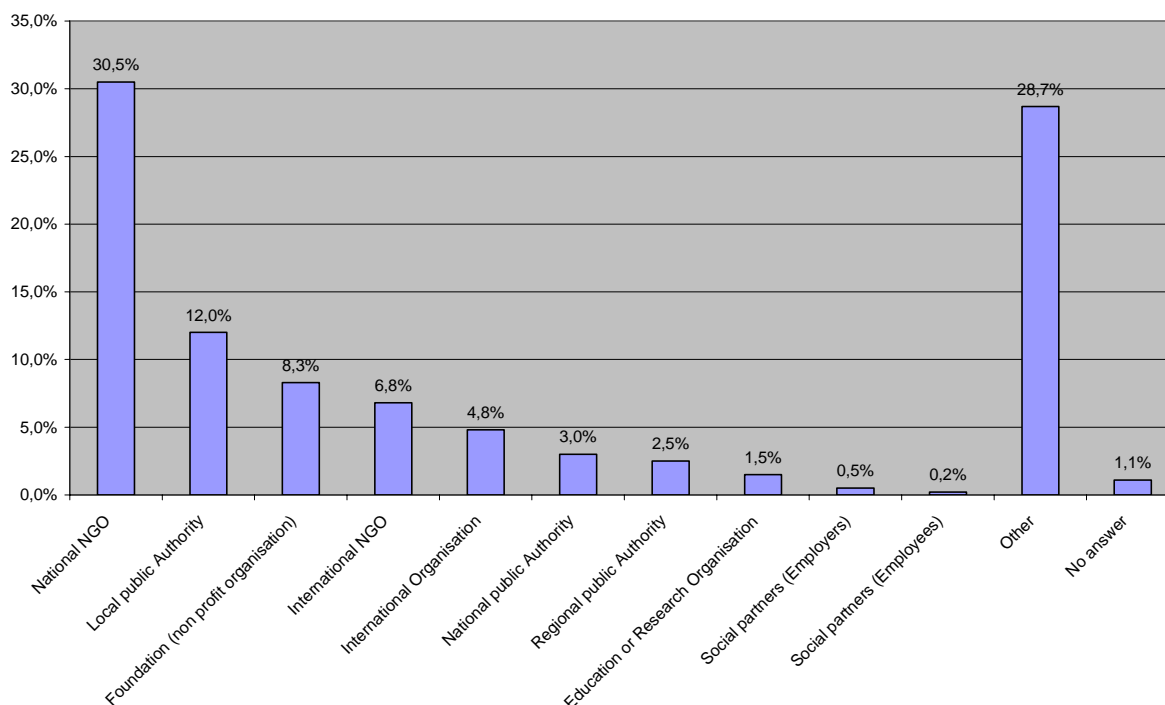
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<sup>4</sup> The evaluation study referred to in the first part contains a set of fact sheets presenting projects in each Member State considered to be examples of best practice, i.e. projects managed efficiently by their leaders and implementing particularly interesting operations.

## *Project leaders and beneficiaries*

The bulk of the organisations that organise projects (2/3 of project leaders) are NGOs, including associations, voluntary, religious or charitable organisations. In France, this sector covers 94% of project organisers and 80% in Germany and Ireland.

### **Status of organisations implementing projects, ERF I 2000-2004**



The second most important group among project leaders is the local public authorities, which represented some 12% of the total. The reason for their position is the institutional role they play in the reception and integration of refugees. This is particularly true in Italy (58% of project leaders), in Finland and in Sweden (some 50 %).

It is interesting to note that projects often involve a partnership: this is the case in the UK, Sweden, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland and Belgium, where over half of the projects are organised by a group of partners.

Under the rules of the European Refugee Fund, as regards target groups, special attention should be given to groups of vulnerable persons. This was indeed the case. Thus 72% of the projects financed included women among the beneficiaries, 47% traumatised persons and 44% young people.

### *Implementation of the planned measures*

Generally speaking, the vast majority of project leaders (94%) consider that most if not all the measures they had planned were implemented. In 72% of cases initial planning was adhered to, and any changes made were only minor. This very positive overall assessment needs to be qualified in some Member States, such as Sweden.

### *Achievement of objectives*

While it can be said that the planned measures were generally implemented as intended, it is also true to say that the desired objectives were achieved. The percentage of project leaders that claim to have achieved some or all of their objectives is comparable (91%). Taking these two indicators together (activities carried out and objectives achieved) the percentage remains close: some 85% of the projects seem to have been completely or largely successful in their actions.

There is a distinction between the measures financed by the Fund: while the projects covering reception or integration had good results, the most successful were those that combined these two measures. Conversely, projects involving repatriation proved to be more tricky to implement: two-thirds of project leaders in this field consider that they did not carry out all the activities planned and/or did not achieve the hoped-for results. This is hardly surprising as it is a measure which by its very nature is less obvious to the beneficiaries concerned, who prefer to settle in the host country. It is also a measure that until recently had not been part of the normal activities of project leaders, which focused more on the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

With the results available it is not possible to establish a harmonised balance-sheet of activities because when preparing their activities or during implementation, the project leaders did not have a set of common indicators that were comparable between Member States and which could have been measured at the end of the projects. Even less satisfactory is the fact that although most of the organisations carrying out the projects had tools to ensure the quality of the work done (self-assessment, training etc), a large number of projects had not established at the outset a basic diagnosis including quantified indicators.

### *Conditions for the projects' success*

The most successful projects, in terms of keeping to planned progress and attainment of objectives, were those that combined careful preparation, good planning and the establishment of an initial diagnosis with indicators. These projects were subsequently unaffected or little affected when implemented by unforeseen factors (delays, changes in administrative structures or partners, costs not budgeted for, external environment etc).

### *Overall assessment*

The general conclusion is that the vast majority of the projects financed by the European Refugee Fund under national programmes can, subject to the usual qualifications, be considered successful from the point of view of implementing the planned measures and achieving the desired objectives. The resources provided by the Fund, in relation to the project to be implemented, are deemed adequate: almost 90% of project organisers consider that the results could not have been achieved with fewer resources; almost 80% consider that the same means could not have achieved better results.

More generally, it seems that the Fund is recognised by these organisations, not only as a source of funding but also as an intervention whose political framework and aims are judged very positively.

### *Shortcomings*

The main objections raised by the project leaders included the following:

- The duration of projects limited to one year under the 2000-2004 programme, was considered to be inappropriate for activities that are mainly constant over time (assistance for people) and must therefore continue. This duration also meant that small structures were forced to assume the administrative burden of preparing a new file each year in order to continue activities under a future call for proposals, with no guarantee of success.
- The administrative obligations resulting from the use of public funding (national and Community) were considered to be excessive for small structures, such as financial or technical reports or evaluation.
- Most of the organisations found that many projects were under way in the Union in similar areas and they regretted not having the means to pool their experiences and achievements.
- Lastly, in some Member States the role played by the responsible national authority is not seen as positive, either because it did not provide the support expected or because of burdensome administrative rules. Note, however, that this is a minority position and that in most Member States the responsible authority by contrast is held in remarkably high esteem (70% positive opinions) – a figure that should be compared with people's usual opinion of the administration.

### **The Community actions<sup>5</sup>**

The projects selected for funding by the Community actions are as diverse as the projects financed in the framework of the national programmes: By nature, these projects are nearly always unique<sup>6</sup>.

The projects are characterised by their innovative aspects, in terms of content, target groups and especially partnership, frequently transnational (up to 15 partners) often including international organisations.

The majority of project leaders were non-governmental organisations and they focused specifically on particular target groups: women, youths, unaccompanied minors, vulnerable persons, persons who have been resettled.

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<sup>5</sup> More information concerning projects financed by the Community actions is available on the following Internet website [http://ec.europa.eu/justice\\_home/funding/refugee/funding\\_refugee\\_en.htm#](http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/refugee/funding_refugee_en.htm#), followed by 'Community actions'

<sup>6</sup> The evaluation study mentioned in the first part includes a series of descriptive documents concerning some particularly interesting projects financed by the Community actions.

Almost all the appropriations available for the Community actions were used up (95,4 %), the remaining difference is determined by the requests for financing by the project leaders. The Community contribution per project was between EUR 40.000 and EUR 400.000. Projects with a shorter duration (12 or 18 months) are finalised or about to be finalised and will have used 96% of the appropriations allocated.

Overall the implementation of the projects is satisfactory: 76% of project leaders consider that they have reached the specified objectives. The most commonly encountered difficulties concern co-operation within large partnerships, the absence of certain data or information for projects focused on carrying out analyses, the difficulties arising when implementing actions targeting specific groups of persons. It is due to the innovative nature of these actions which brings an element of risk: The extent of implementation achieved reveals the interest for the projects.

As with projects funded in the framework of the national programmes, it is regretful that a large number of project leaders had not carried out a basic analysis with various indicators allowing the quantification of the progress made in comparison with the situation at the start of the projects.

Two important loopholes deserve to be underlined with regard to the "pilot" role which the Community actions are to play:

- First of all, it appears that a lot of project leaders for projects financed in the framework of national programmes were not aware of projects implemented in their Member State through the Community actions.

- Moreover, the experiences resulting from these innovative projects could not have been analysed and disseminated as much as they should have in order to be accessible to all interested organisations and authorities. The extent to which these new approaches have been taken into account in national programmes, which have far greater financial resources, was therefore limited.

The evaluation carried out by these independent experts confirms the quality of these projects and the benefits they can bring to all the national programmes. It is estimated that the financial resources allocated are too limited and an increase is recommended, insofar as where actions allow the possibility for new types of intervention or new approaches.



## **Impact, added value and complementarity of the European Refugee Fund**

The impact of the implementation of the Fund during the period 2000-2004 must be appreciated in the light of its financial allocation which is on the whole relatively limited during these five years. If the very concrete results could be measured at the level of the persons pertaining to the groups targeted by the Fund and the organisations supporting them, the impact in a more global context can only be qualitative.

Having reached directly more than 600.000 persons, the European Refugee Fund has contributed to overcome their isolation. It has given them social, material and medical assistance in difficult circumstances. It has improved their chances of employment, their knowledge of languages and training. It has enabled them to be more organised and responsible.

At the level of the organisations that are implementing projects, the perception of the Fund is very positive (refer to above). They agree with the principles on which their intervention is based. Two-thirds consider that the projects could not have been implemented without the help of the Fund. The Fund has also reinforced their organisational capacity and their capacity to act and, through this, improved their credibility vis-à-vis their interlocutors.

In the context of the Member States, of whom some have far greater financial resources in the area of asylum, the Fund contributed to raising the awareness of the necessity to accompany, by coherent and targeted measures from one Member State to another, the progressive establishment during this period of a common asylum policy under Community rules.

In more concrete terms, some of the successful projects were followed as an example and disseminated on a larger scale. For example, in Luxembourg, actions implemented with the help of the Fund have inspired the adaptation of the national regulation and have led to a close collaboration of the project leader to the implementation of the mechanism. In Finland, a model for child integration and for cooperation between parents and school staff was used as an example by many schools and by social organisations. In Greece, a service designed to help in job searching is from now on used by the employers. In a more ambitious manner, the Fund clearly contributed in Italy in the setting up of National Action Plan for the reception and integration of refugees.

It is true that these results could have been without doubt more important if a bigger effort could have been made to organise and value as largely as possible the information on the successful projects and on the best practices identified throughout the period.

In terms of complementarity the Fund has been involved in a field where the other Community tools had a rather low level of intervention. The more involved in this matter was the Community initiative programme EQUAL, which has a section concerning the asylum seekers. A practical approach – close cooperation between the concerned departments of the Commission on the one hand, connection of the responsible authorities for the two instruments in the Member States on the other – enabled to establish, each programme after another, measures aimed at avoiding doubling and at ensuring coordination. Such a complementarity has reinforced the efficiency of the Community action.

## Conclusions and perspectives

The evaluation study contracted to independent experts positively judges the first phase of the implementation of the European Refugee European from 2000 to 2004. The data included in previous paragraph underline the high level of realisation in comparison to the committed resources and stress the favourable judgment of the community intervention by the organisations involved. This first step enabled to reinforce the programme for the period 2005 – 2010 and to establish a new framework, the "Solidarity and migratory flows management" programme, which will follow with substantially more credits.

Several of the recommendations resulting from the analysis or stated in different contexts are already taken into account, particularly in the framework of the second phase of the Fund for the period 2005 – 2010. The following elements are some examples of this:

- The Fund can from now on finance multi-annual projects, the community intervention for an action being limited to three years.
- The credits for technical assistance available for Member States in the frame of the national programmes have been significantly increased in order to give Member States the appropriate technical means for the realisation of their tasks in the framework of shared management.
- The share of the Community actions was increased from 5% to 7% maximum of the resources of the Fund in order to reinforce the role which can play these innovative actions in the search of solutions for refugees.

In the short and mid term view, actions on the following aspects are planned:

- in response to the request expressed by Member States, the Commission departments plan on organising training activities for the authorities responsible for the implementation of the national programmes. The objective is to provide with practical tools and to share a common approach in the concerned fields.
- During the second semester 2006, the Commission departments intend to discuss with the Member States on a common evaluation frame for the second phase of the Fund, which will focus in particular on the implementation of common indicators and methods applicable at the level of the projects, of the Member States and of the Union.

There are still subjects to be deepened in order to increase the efficiency of the interventions, such as:

- Mechanisms of collection and dissemination of information and experience should be set up, both at the level of the Commission departments in charge of the Fund as well as at the level of the responsible authorities in each Member State.
- A better articulation must be established between the Community actions and the national programmes in order to spread and add value to these programmes the achievements of the Community actions.
- Implementation procedures should be simplified, with the view of reconciling, on the one hand, the responsibility of the Commission in the implementation of the budget as well as the

respect of the financial regulation, and on the other hand, the suitability to the dimension for the programmes concerned.