



November 2012

## **Financing immigration management in times of crisis: The civil society concerns on the 2014-2020 EU budgetary framework in the migration/asylum field**

**Karolína Babická**

### **Abstract:**

The commentary resumes the recent discussion about the EU funding of migration, asylum and internal security. This text emerged as a comment by [Caritas Europa](#) on the Home Affairs budget proposal in the next MFF.

\*\*\*

On 29 June 2011, the European Commission presented its [proposal](#) for the EU Multiannual financial Framework (MFF) for 2014-2020. Negotiations are currently ongoing in the European Parliament and in the European Council and the final shape of the Horizontal Regulation<sup>1</sup> and the specific Regulations<sup>2</sup> is unclear at the current moment.

The civil society organisations have commented heavily on the current MFF proposal, see for example the [NGO statement](#) from March 2012, the [Christian group comments](#), April 2012 or the [ECRE comments](#) from August this year.

The budget proposed for Home Affairs for 2014-2020 forms about 1% of the whole EU budget and will hopefully be higher than until now. Currently the European Commission proposes an overall Home Affairs budget of €10.9 billion for the period 2014-2020.

The new structure of the funds will be merging the current funds into two main ones – the Asylum and Migration Fund (€3.8 billion) will be merging the Refugee fund, The Return Fund, the European Integration Fund and the Internal security fund (€4.6 billion) will encompass police cooperation, preventing crime and crisis management as well as borders

---

<sup>1</sup> A Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council 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 (hereinafter referred to as “Horizontal Regulation”)

<sup>2</sup> Inter alia: A Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund – COM (2011) 751 final (hereinafter referred to as “AMF Regulation”).

and visa. The rest of the budget would be assigned to IT systems (€0.8 billion) and to EU Agencies, such as FRONTEX, EASO and EUROPOL (€1.57billion).

Having a bird-eye view at the current proposal, we can find human rights protection elements mainly in the Asylum and Migration Fund and possibly in some of the work of the EU agencies, but the **vast majority of the budget is dedicated to rather security oriented and border management issues**. This is also linked to the actual objective of the fund which is the **Effective management of migration flows**.

There are four main focus areas of the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF): (1) the Common European Asylum System, (2) Integration and legal migration, (3) Return and (4) Solidarity and responsibility sharing. Within those the Commission proposed some mandatory objectives to be followed by every member state, such as resettlement of voluntary return. Caritas Europa welcomes this emphasis, but regrets that also forced return or detention of migrants can be funded under the AMF. **We would like to see more support for resettlement actions by Member states, funding allocated to forced return monitoring and evaluation and support to alternatives to detention**, as well as financial support for family reunification and the improvement of asylum systems in the EU Member States.

The new structure of the funds will bring more flexibility, which is positive, for example in terms of target groups, as it will be possible to fund more cross-cutting issues. However this flexibility does not seem to have very strict limits. It will in principle be on individual Member States to decide on how the funds will be allocated. Apart from some already mentioned mandatory areas there are **not enough guarantees for fair distribution of funding among the different policy areas**.

The Commission has also introduced a **partnership principle**, advising governments to consult civil society organisations in their countries while preparing their multi-annual programmes; the principle is thus not mandatory. To be aware of the needs and challenges of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in each country, NGOs and international organisations need to be consulted. That is why NGOs are proposing a rather permanent dialogue with civil society organisations in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the multi-annual programmes at the national but also EU level.

Another important issue criticized by NGOs and several MEPs is the **inclusion of the external dimension** strand in the AMF. There are already EU's external aid instruments in place that follow the needs of third countries. Inclusion of the external dimension in the home affairs budget might create confusion and overlaps and might rather serve the Member states needs than the needs of the third countries. Caritas Europa calls for transparency in cooperation with third countries, in particular in relation to readmission agreements.

The new structure is likely to have a lot of positive impact on the asylum and migration funding, but the flexibility should not be at the expense of basic human rights safeguards. We

can see a **trend in EU policy focusing more and more on border control, securitization and migrant criminalization**, that mirrors partly also in the focus of the funding. Caritas Europa hopes that the EU will manage to stand up to its fundamental values, support democracy and protect human rights.

**About the author:**

*Karolína Babická works as migration and asylum policy and advocacy officer in a pan-European Brussels-based NGO. She holds a PhD in international law from Charles University in Prague and Odysseus Network Certificate in EU Migration and Asylum Law*