

# General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows": European Return Fund 2008-2013

2005/0049(COD) - 20/07/2011 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a Communication on the application of the criteria for the distribution of resources among the Member States under the [External Borders Fund](#), the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals and the [European Return Fund](#), as required by the Decisions establishing the Funds. These were established by the General Programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows for the period 2007-2013 with a total allocation of EUR 4.020 million.

The report presents the approach on the application of the criteria for the distribution of the resources while the accompanying staff working document outlines in detail the results for the Member States. By presenting the data, the methodology used and the results of the application of the criteria, these documents may help inform the thinking of Member States, the institutions and stakeholders on the future of EU funding in the area of the management of migration flows under the next multi-annual financial framework.

For each Fund the annual distribution of the available EU financial resources among the Member States is **based on specific and objective criteria** which reflect the situation of the Member State: e.g. the size of the external borders to be protected and the number of persons crossing them; the number of legally staying third-country nationals to be integrated into society; the number of return decisions to be implemented. The definition of the criteria is the most concrete expression of the principle of solidarity underlying the Funds in the sense that those Member States most affected by the management of migration flows are meant to benefit the most from EU funding. Each year the Commission draws upon both EU statistics from EUROSTAT and ad hoc data supplied by Member States to do the calculations.

This report focuses on the calculations for the financial years 2007 – 2011. The data collection process was reinforced as a result of the entry into force of Regulation No 862/2007/EC (Migration Statistics Regulation).

The basic acts for the four Funds came into force in the summer of 2007, a few weeks before the first calculations for the resources to Member States were due.

Thanks to the preparatory work between the Commission and the Member States on the data for the allocations in anticipation to the entry into force, the Commission was in a position to submit to Member States by July 2007 the information on the allocations for 2007 and 2008. Together with the extrapolations for the period 2009-2013, these figures guided Member States in setting the indicative financial framework as the basis of the multiannual strategy for the implementation of the Funds.

The Commission states that in the course of the 2007-2011 financial years, the principles and work methods for data collection, gradually established and defined each year, have come to bear fruit; the last exercise has shown how they have increasingly simplified and facilitated the work on the calculations. The methodology used has proved effective, and the Commission was able to submit the calculations to Member States in general on time.

The **Migration Statistics Regulation is increasingly the backbone of the system for data collection under the Return Fund and the Integration Fund**. The system put in place for data collection on the

**External Borders Fund, while different, is also proving adequate.** The checks put in place in either system, while not always optimal given inherent limitations in data sources, validation tools and the administrative capacity for data analysis in the EU, form nevertheless a solid basis on which to continue making the calculations for future financial years. In terms of the definitions of the data collection, some differences may remain between the Migration Statistics Regulation and the criteria laid down in the basic acts. In practice, solutions have been found on a bilateral basis and efforts to improve co-operation and exchange of data between Member States and the Commission, including EUROSTAT, will continue. It should be noted that the compilation of European Statistics is a co-operative process that greatly depends on the reliability of the data supplied by national authorities.

Given the particular importance of ensuring the quality of the statistics used for the allocation of the four Funds, a **specific quality assurance programme** has been put in place by EUROSTAT and there will be on going work to continue quality improvements.

While the Commission was in general able to deliver the final calculations on time thanks to all these factors, it has to be recognised that the amount and complexity of the data to be collected and verified each year imposes a recurrent administrative burden on the Member States and the Commission. There may be **more cost-effective ways of ensuring the application of distribution keys** which seek to express the principle of solidarity underlying the Funds.

**The External Borders Fund:** the final distribution of the resources shows that the main beneficiaries of the Fund were the Member States with the highest responsibility in implementing the common policy for the management of external borders:

- Spain, Greece and Italy receive 48% of the Fund's allocation for the period 2007-2011;
- if France, Malta, and Cyprus are added to the three main beneficiaries, the distribution of the Fund shows that 60% of the financial assistance is concentrated on Member States bordering on the Mediterranean sea and the Canary islands area;
- at the same time, Member States having a land border in the East (Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Slovakia) account for 25% of the total allocation;
- the results confirm the purpose of the Fund as an instrument of financial solidarity on integrated border management in the EU.

**The European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals:** the five main beneficiaries are Italy, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany and France, accounting for nearly 70% of the allocations. In light of the size of the immigration to these Member States and the challenges faced by the EU in this area in the period 2007-2010, the results confirm the purpose of the Fund as an instrument of financial solidarity for the development of integration policies in the EU.

**The European Return Fund:** the three main beneficiaries are Greece, United Kingdom and Spain. Together with France, Italy and Germany, these countries account for nearly 67% of the allocations. In light of the size of the migratory pressure on these countries and bearing in mind the shift in flows of irregular entries over the years from the Spanish coast (Canary Islands) towards the Central Mediterranean route to the Greek borders with Albania and Turkey, the results confirm the purpose of the Fund as an instrument of financial solidarity for return management in the EU.

The results of the application of the criteria are generally perceived as satisfactory. The application of the criteria has served the objectives as defined by the European Parliament and the Council in the basic acts establishing the Funds of the General Programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows since they have converged the bulk of the EU resources available around those Member States most affected by the challenges posed by the management of migration flows of third-country nationals into the EU. Under these circumstances, it is not deemed necessary to come forward with proposals to amend the criteria.

