General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows": European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals, 2007-2013

2005/0048(CNS) - 05/12/2011 - Follow-up document

In accordance with the requirements of Council Decision 2007/435/EC, the Commission presents a report on the results achieved and on qualitative and quantitative aspects of implementation of the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007- 2009.

It recalls that for the period 2007-2013, the EU established the General Programme “Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows” with a total allocation of EUR 4 032 million, consisting of **four Funds**. One of these is the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals, established for the period 2007 – 2013 with an indicative total budget of **EUR 825 million**.

The report presents results achieved by the annual programmes 2007, 2008 and 2009 based on reports from Member States in the first half of 2010, together with information available to the Commission in the first quarter of 2011.

Budget implementation: the reporting period 2007-2009 covers 29 % of the overall reference amount of the Fund, with a total of EUR 239.9 m in EU appropriations available for both shared and direct management actions. For national programmes run under shared management, during the first three years of the Fund’s implementation, 78 annual programmes were approved, committing a total of some EUR 223.1 m. The five main beneficiaries were Spain (EUR 34.7 m), the United Kingdom (EUR 34.3 m) Germany (EUR 33.6 m) and Italy (EUR 30 m), followed by France (EUR 18.2 m,). Together, they received about 68% of the total amounts allocated to national programmes in the reporting period. When the resources provided under the annual programmes by the national budgets and by the beneficiaries are added to the contribution from the Fund, the total costs of all operations to be funded amounted to about € 371 m over the three-year period 2007-2009.

Implementation: by 30 June 2010, a total of 1949 projects had been funded by the Fund in Member States under the first three annual programmes 2007, 2008 and 2009. This is equivalent to an average, at EU level, of 75 funded projects in each Member State for the three annual programmes, albeit with significant differences from one Member State to another.

Assessment: the following assessment can be made in the light of the Fund’s implementation during the three first years of the 2007-2013 multiannual programmes:

1. Once the **implementation problems for the 2007 and 2008 annual programmes were cleared up**, the majority of Member States have been able to catch up and have implemented annual programmes from 2009 with no major delays. This does not exclude some residual difficulties, which the Commission is looking into with the Member States concerned. Projects completed so far generally meet their planned targets and, at least from the 2009 annual programme, most Member States expect to achieve the programmes’ objectives.

2. The **Fund has gained acceptance in most Member States**, and among project implementing organisations especially. This is evidenced, in particular, by the very high response rate to calls

for proposals from the 2009 annual programme and the range of organisations involved in the Member States.

3. The Fund has **filled a gap**. It is perceived in most Member States as bringing genuine value added, whether Member States had previous experience with the integration of third-country nationals or not. On the other hand, the Fund's programming and implementation framework seems to be **too complex** given the types of actions funded, the beneficiary organisations involved and the high number of projects.

4. In order to meet Member States' concerns, the Commission undertook in 2011 a significant revision of the implementing rules for all four Funds in the General Programme. The largest part consists of a **substantial simplification of the eligibility rules**, with the new rules applicable from the implementation of the 2011 annual programmes (at the latest) and, subject to full compliance with the principles of equal treatment, transparency and non- discrimination, even to projects funded under the 2009 and 2010 annual programmes.15 Member States have welcomed the revision. Further suggestions for improvement from the Member States will be considered in the context of the proposals which the Commission will make this year on the future financial instruments in the area of Home Affairs, as part of the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework applicable from 2014.

In the two remaining years of the current programming period, **the Fund's budget appropriations are expected to increase hugely,** to reach EUR 162.5 m for 2012 and EUR 182.5 m for 2013 (that is, in total for the two years, 42% of the Fund's allocation for the whole period 2007-2013), compared to EUR 131.5 m in 2011 and EUR 110.5 m in 2010.16 Against this background, the Commission intends to discuss with Member States the best possible use of the resources available, in the light of policy and implementation needs in the coming years. In the Commission's view, **there are four main areas which would merit further action and focus:**

- **boosting the active participation of third-country nationals and the receiving society** in the integration process, in the context of the 'two-way process': promoting comprehensive integration programmes, and third-country nationals' involvement in relevant consultative bodies and networks; enhancing third-country nationals' participation in collective life; enhancing the public's perception of migration, including knowledge of the contribution made by migration to the receiving society itself etc;

- **increasing the effectiveness of integration measures which address the specific needs of vulnerable groups** (women, young people and children, unaccompanied minors with a legal status, the elderly, victims of trafficking etc.): enhancing educational opportunities for children; promoting women's role in integration, fostering their autonomy in society and improving their knowledge of rights and their participation in public life; promoting integration of unaccompanied minors who have been granted a legal status etc;

- **fostering integration at local level and a bottom-up approach to integration**, as well as multilevel cooperation between the different levels of governance involved in devising integration strategies and measures: supporting integration processes at local level, including partnerships involving all stakeholders concerned; improving local integration of third-country nationals in housing, schools, social assistance, health, education; supporting inclusive neighbourhoods and bottom-up initiatives for local integration etc;

- **developing, in countries of origin, pre-departure measures** supportive of integration, without making third-country nationals' admission conditional on participation: information on, for example, visas and work permits, and on the language, institutions and values of the receiving country; vocational training to match skills with the actual needs of the receiving country's labour market etc.

The Commission will examine with Member States how the priority areas could be given more support in the remaining annual programmes, starting with the 2012 annual programmes, which Member States have to submit by 1 November 2011.