General programme "Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows": External Borders Fund 2007-2013

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The Commission presents an ex post evaluation reports for the period 2011 to 2013 of actions co-financed under the framework programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows'.

This consists of four instruments (the 'SOLID Funds'): the **External Borders Fund (EBF),** the European Refugee Fund (ERF), the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF) and the European Return Fund (RF).

The aim of the SOLID General Programme was to provide financial support to Member States to help them better manage the Union's external borders, and better implement the common policies on asylum and migration.

This summary concerns the European Borders Fund (EBF), which was established with the aim of **managing the EU external borders**, with a focus on efficient organisation of controls and management of the flows of persons, uniform application of EU legislation by border guards and improvement of consular services. It was allocated a total of EUR 1 097 million under the SOLID Funds and had an average absorption rate of 87% under the 2011-13 annual programmes.

Overall, Member States considered the EBF objectives **relevant** in view of their needs related to the management of the EU external borders and the processing of Schengen visas The report makes the following points on the EBF:

- in both 2007-10 and 2011-13, the **highest allocations of funding** went to the same three Member States: Italy, Spain and Greece. In addition, **the EBF was flexible enough** to respond to the changing needs induced by the beginning of the migration crisis by allocating additional resources to the Member States affected via emergency actions;
- the EBF made a **crucial contribution** to the application of the Schengen acquis considering both the increase of migration flows experienced since 2011 and the financial constraints faced by many Member States at the time. The EBF 2011-13 actions made a positive contribution towards a progressive establishment of a common integrated border management system by **promoting harmonised checks on persons at border crossing points** through training programmes, the construction and upgrading of the crossing points and the acquisition of vehicles, vessels and aircrafts used for border patrols. However, only few Member States reported that Fund support was essential for the acquisition of state-of-the-art technology at the EU external borders;
- the Fund helped **tackle the fragmentation of Member States information exchange systems** by supporting the development at the national level of EU systems such as VIS and SIS II and EUROSUR. In a context where national funding was scarce, the Fund helped ensure that these systems became operational, as it contributed to the finalisation of their building blocks;
- for both the 2007-10 and 2011-13 periods, the EBF moderately contributed to the development of **consular cooperation** between Member States and third-countries.
- overall, **EBF investments** were considered to be sustainable: most of the assets acquired and the knowledge generated were still being used at the time of the evaluation. Many activities

implemented under ISF built on the results of the EBF. A few specific projects faced financial constraints and therefore raised sustainability concerns, such as the deployment of immigration liaison officers in third countries;

- EBF investments were found to be **complementary and coherent** with activities funded under other EU Funds, with European Border and Coast Guard Agency activities, as well as with national investments. EBF added value has been assessed as being particularly high in Member States with limited financial resources or facing tight budgetary constraints.

The report makes certain observation common to all four funds. In the case of the EBF, the main findings have already been taken into consideration under the Internal Security Fund (ISF), which succeeded the EBF. The report notes in this respect that the absence of effective **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**, common to all Member States, was a critical issue for the evaluation of the SOLID Funds, and was addressed for ISF and AMIF (which succeeded the ERF, EIF and RF), with a first list of common indicators included in the legal base and a common monitoring and evaluation framework. Furthermore, **additional flexibility** has been built in to the allocation mechanism for funds, but the unbalanced distribution key remains an important issue, which would still need to be addressed in the next multiannual financial framework.