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WORKING PAPER

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WORKING DOCUMENT

From:	Presidency
To:	Ad Hoc Working Party on JHA Financial instruments
Subject:	Compilation of replies from Member States on the questionnaire on the Asylum and Migration Fund.

With reference to the Ad Hoc Working Party on JHA Financial instruments meeting on 20 July 2018, delegations will find a compilation of replies from Member States on the questionnaire on the Asylum and Migration Fund.

CROATIA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: positive
- Art.2: positive
- Art.3: positive
- Art.4: positive
- Art.5: positive
- Art.6: positive

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.7: positive
- Art.8: positive
- Art.9: positive

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.10: positive
- Art.11: positive
- Art.12: positive
- Art.13: positive
- Art.14: negative

We believe that introducing such a condition of 10% of payments made by 2024 would limit MS when qualifying for additional funding.

- Art.15: positive
- Art.16: positive

What about persons who have been resettled, but have fled to another Member State?

How long do MS have to keep the data on resettled persons and the date of their resettlement?

- Art.17: positive
- Art.18: positive

We welcome the introduction of operating support in the Fund. However, we think that 10% of the total amount allocated to the national programme is insufficient for this purpose, in particular having in mind state budget restrictions, both in Croatia and some other Member States facing considerable migratory pressure. Increasing the available amount for operating support would significantly help maintain adequate conditions for reception and accommodation of third-country nationals.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: positive
 - Art.20: positive
 - Art.21: positive
 - Art.22: positive
 - Art.23: positive
 - Art.24: positive
 - Art.25: positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: positive
 - Art.27: positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: positive
 - Art.29: positive
 - Art.30: positive
 - Art.31: positive
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: positive
 - Art.33: positive
 - Art.34: positive
 - Art.35: positive
- ANNEX I: negative

The proposed criteria are not adequate; for ex. initiating the procedure for granting international protection represents equal costs and administrative burden for MS regardless of whether the procedure resulted in granting of international protection or not. Therefore, we believe that the number applications made should be given more importance than the number of those granted.
- ANNEX II: positive
- ANNEX III: positive
- ANNEX IV: positive
- ANNEX V: positive
- ANNEX VI: positive

We propose including the running costs of reception and accommodation centres.

- ANNEX VII: positive
- ANNEX VIII: positive

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

Yes

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? [**ANNEX I**] If no, please elaborate:

Yes

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

As already stated in the above comment to Annex I, we believe that the proposed criteria are not adequate: for ex. initiating the procedure for granting international protection represents equal costs and administrative burden for MS regardless of whether the procedure resulted in granting of international protection or not. Therefore, we believe that the number applications made should be given more importance than the number of those granted.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? ([**ANNEX I**], **1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

Yes

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

In principle, it was proposed for the ESF+ to provide for long-term social and economic inclusion of third-country nationals, while the AMF would focus on short-term integration measures related to reception (support to specific needs of MS, language learning, civic orientation courses) as well as the development of national integration strategies and enhanced capacities of MS.

The Republic of Croatia does not support separation of integration measures in two different funds. We believe that all integration measures should be dealt with by AMF. It has not been specified how to differentiate between short-term and long-term integration in practice.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? **(Art.4(3))** If yes, which?

No

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? **(Art.14 in particular number (2))**

Yes, we believe that it is not necessary to introduce such a condition of 10% of payments made by 2024 when granting additional funding to MS because in practice an MS might not receive the necessary funding in time.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? **(Art.18)**

We welcome the introduction of operating support in the Fund, but we think that 10% of the total amount allocated to the national programme is insufficient for this purpose, in particular having in mind state budget restrictions, both in Croatia and some other Member States facing considerable migratory pressure. Increasing the available amount for operating support would significantly help maintain adequate conditions for reception and accommodation of third-country nationals.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? **(Art.28-31)** If no, please elaborate:

No, we believe that more frequent reporting would create additional administrative burden.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? **(ANNEX VIII)**

Yes

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

The use of SCOs will not reduce the administrative burden. Detailed analysis and guidelines on the use are necessary. Clear guidelines will most certainly be useful to MS when using SCOs. The new Financial Regulation and the draft proposal for CPR should extend the use of the simplified forms of grants such as lump-sums, flat rates and unit costs. New forms of payments are also introduced based on the results achieved.

The Republic of Croatia still believes that AMIF should not be regulated by the provisions of CPR (thus SCOs would still not be used) as it is a specific area difficult to regulate by provisions which are also common to funds such as the Cohesion Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Yes, we support the harmonisation of the financial year and the calendar year.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

As already stated above, we believe that AMF should not be part of the new proposal for CPR. Should it be covered by the provisions of the new CPR, we support the introduction of the single audit approach.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

The Republic of Croatia did not have any problems in communicating with audit authorities. However, we welcome a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for those authorities.

CZECHIA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: negative

The CZ disagrees with the omission of term “Integration” from the name of the Fund. The CZ considers integration of TCNs a crucial part of policy in the area of migration. It is necessary to send a signal towards public that the integration is supported by the EU. Moreover AMIF is well established now and generally accepted, the change in removing “I” might be interpreted as the integration is no longer supported by the EU.

- Art.2: The CZ would welcome definition of the term “early integration” if this term remains in the text of the regulation which the CZ does not support (see below).

- Art.5: The CZ would like to receive more information on the proposal of the EC on opening the AMF to the third countries. Especially as regards the concrete mechanisms how would this system work.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.9: The CZ would welcome more clarification on paragraphs 3 and 4 (infringement). The CZ would suggest changing wording from “affected by a reasoned opinion” to “affected directly by a reasoned opinion”.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.11: negative

The CZ does not support the wording in paragraph 2. There is no reason for giving the remaining amount to the EC. The whole amount should be distributed among member states, if some MS will not be eligible for additional top-up of allocation, the amount should be redistributed among the remaining MS.

- Art.12: negative

The CZ disagrees with paragraphs 6 and 7. The CZ strongly supports the current mechanisms for AMIF 2014-2020. The new proposal would mean huge impact on flexibility of the national programme and increase of administrative burden (fixing the co-financing rate in the programme). It gives to the EC more power than it had in 2014-2020. The paragraph 7 is especially dangerous as it suggests that the co-financing rate could be calculated only from the public resources (letter b). This new set up would also mean increase of administration with reporting to the EC, currently for aMIF 2014-2020 only EU contribution is reported, which makes the reporting easy and clear. The new regulation would require reporting all resources of the project in order to calculate the co-financing. The CZ suggests changing the wording of this article to be in line with article 16 of Horizontal regulation 514/2014. The CZ sees no reason for changing a good practice.

- Art.13: negative

The CZ strongly disagrees with the wording of paragraph 7 and requests to delete this paragraph. The CZ thinks that higher co-financing rate for actions in Annex IV are sufficient tool to motivate MS and beneficiaries to implement them. The wording of par. 7 saying “*The MS shall **in particular** pursue actions (...) listed in Annex IV*” extremely limits the national programmes and it goes against the previous articles which listed numerous actions in Annexes II and III.

Scrutiny reservation on the role of agencies in the process. The CZ sees the role of agencies as going above their position based on current or proposed legislation.

As regards paragraph 3 the CZ suggest change of wording from “ensuring that the actions implemented with the support of the Fund are compliant with the relevant Union acquis and agreed Union priorities” to “ensuring that the actions implemented with the support of the Fund are compliant with the national programme”. The agencies are consulted during the drafting of the programme and after its adoption it should no longer be put under question if the approved actions are in line with Union acquis.

The CZ would like to ask the EC to present the list of legislation which it considers to be “relevant EU acquis” and to explain the difference between “Union acquis” and “Union values”.
- Art.14: positive
- Art.15: The CZ would welcome more specific rules for implementation of specific actions, for example in a form of EC’s implementing regulation. The specific actions are in general good concept. However based on current experiences from 2014-2020 period it lacks clear rules for implementation, especially as regards the jurisdiction of MS’ RAs, the responsibilities, the legal basis for controls and the usage of common rules.
- Art.16: The CZ suggest removing the wording “*targeted Union resettlement scheme*” as this term is not anymore used in the draft regulation on resettlement framework.

The CZ would welcome definition of the term “effectively resettled” in the article 2 in order to remove any doubts on future eligibility.
- Art.17: The CZ suggests bracketing whole article and suspending its negotiation till the time when the new Dublin regulation is finalized.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: The CZ puts for discussion to redraft paragraph 1 c) from “heavy migratory pressure in third countries, including where persons in need of protection may be stranded due to political developments or conflicts, notably where it might have an impact on migration flows towards the EU.” to „heavy migratory pressure in third countries, notably where it might have an impact on migration flows towards the EU“. The CZ considers current wording to limiting when not covering for example natural disasters.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.30: The CZ suggest to align the duties for managing authorities of AMF and other Funds. The Commission introduced CPR in order to align rules. The proposed CPR means huge increase of administrative burden. More over compared to other funds article 30 gives to managing authorities other duties – in other Funds there are no annual performance reports, only final one. Combing CPR and article 30 means, that AMF managing authority will report to EC 6 times per year + annual performance report + 4 request for payment + Accounts. The CZ suggests to remove the duty to submit annual performance report.
 - Art.31: positive /negative?
We put for discussion if the EC should have power to change the monitoring indicators during the programming period. Change of indicators during the implementation might cause huge troubles of lacking data or data not be comparable.
- ANNEX I: Neutral position, without the statistical data it is not possible to assess the position.
- ANNEX II: The CZ suggests removing the word “early” from “early integration measures”. The integration is long term process and it does not make any sense to limit it only to early stages. Integration is a complex process and non-complex financing of action could have very negative impact. Based on the last statement of the EC it was explained that “early integration” will not be interpreted with a time parameter however with a type of actions. It was also mentioned that from the view of DG HOME nothing changes compared to AMIF 2014-2020. That is why the CZ considers the word “early” as redundant and possibly problematic for future interpretation by different control bodies. The scope of the Fund is clearly set up by actions mentioned especially in Annex 3 and the word early is not necessary. In case the EC will insists on its position it is crucial for CZ that the term “early integration” is defined in article 2 clearly stating that it is not based on time parameter.

The CZ will request the EC to clarify the differences for financing actions from AMF and ESF+.
- ANNEX III: The position towards the early integration measures the same as in Annex II.

The CZ will request the EC to explain why in the part of Asylum there is mentioned only material assistance, compared to AMIF 2014-2020 where there was more types of assistance.

- ANNEX V: CZ considers some indicators as unmeasurable
 - SO2 – 2 – should all persons receive questionnaires? How long after the assistance should the benefit occur? We consider this indicator as highly problematic),
 - SO3 – 1 – the RA does not have access to databases which contains such information.

The CZ is against the attempt of the EC to use Funds as Trojan horse for information from not fully related areas.

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

Considering the general increase of Funding the CZ supports the proposal of the Commission for division 60 to 40.

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? [**ANNEX I**] If no, please elaborate:

The CZ supports the EC proposal. The statistical data should be the newest available. To consider for funding in years 2021-2027 data from 2015 seems unfortunate.

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

The CZ considers the prefinancing rate to low. This position will be expressed within the negotiations on CPR.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

The measures are in general sufficient. The CZ appreciates that they are clearer than for 2014-2020. The limitation of support only to early integration measures is considered problematic (see above).

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

See above

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

The CZ supports the current wording.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

The CZ supports the current wording.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

No. The new system extremely increases administrative burden without explaining why. The EC never presented any analyses showing, that the current system is insufficient. The EC never mentioned that there are any problems with the reporting. The CZ suggest deleting the duty to have an annual performance report (see article 30). During the negotiations on CPR the CZ will propose decreasing the number of reports per year.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

The missing guidelines are alpha and omega of SCOs options. The CZ does not think that proper reaction for not enough usage of SCO is to make them compulsory. MS have been asking the EC to provide guideline since the beginning of the implementation but we still have not received anything valuable. The CZ considers compulsory usage of SCO as unfortunate solution.

ESTONIA

In general, we support the Commission's proposal. However, the Estonian Government has not yet confirmed our official positions. Therefore, we can bring out our preliminary comments and questions about the regulation. In general, we welcome the increase of the financing the migration and asylum policy. In addition, we can in principle support the structure for using the Fund's resources and that similar activities to the current period are also covered in the new regulation.

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):
 - Art.1: In general positive.
 - Art.2: In general positive. However, in Art(2) both definitions of „humanitarian admission“ and „resettlement“ have been brought out in the meaning of EURF. Art 9 (General provisions on the implementation of the thematic facility) only mentions „resettlement“ among the thematic components. We would like to clarify whether there is a deliberate distinction that only the term „resettlement“ has been used and this is a priority ahead of the „humanitarian admission“ or still both reception forms are covered? If both reception forms should be covered then also both terms should be used throughout.
 - Art.3: In general positive. However, regarding the Art 3 (2a) there is a question whether also the landing sites in third countries are meant under the CEAS external dimension?
 - Art.4: In general positive.
 - Art.5: In general positive?
 - Art.6: In general positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):
 - Art.7: In general positive
 - Art.8: In general positive
 - Art.9: In general positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.10: In general positive
 - Art.11: In general positive
 - Art.12: In general positive
 - Art.13: In general positive. We support that the draft regulation does not set mandatory levels for Member States in terms of the specific objectives of the Fund. It should provide Member States with the necessary flexibility to achieve the results of EU policy objectives.
 - Art.14: In general positive.
 - Art.15: In general positive.

- Art.16: In general positive. We have a proposal that instead of „*resettled persons*“ the term „*admitted persons*“ should be used to cover both forms of reception.
- Art.17: Analysis reservation, as the Dublin Regulation has not been agreed yet.
Art 17 (5): Here it has to be clear that the allocation will be gained by the MS who is organising the transport (the sending and not the receiving MS).
- Art.18: In general positive. However, we would like to clarify whether it is also possible to use the operating support to cover the maintenance costs of IT systems.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: In general positive.
 - Art.20: In general positive.
 - Art.21: In general positive.
 - Art.22: In general positive.
 - Art.23: In general positive.
 - Art.24: In general positive.
 - Art.25: In general positive.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: In general positive.
 - Art.27: In general positive. Still, we would like to clarify what is meant by the “*actions awarded a Seal of Excellence certification*“ in Art 27 p 2 and who is giving out the award and evaluates the actions.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: In general positive.
 - Art.29: In general positive.
 - Art.30: In general positive.
 - Art.31: In general positive.
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: In general positive.
 - Art.33: In general positive.
 - Art.34: In general positive.
 - Art.35: In general positive.

- ANNEX I:

In general, we welcome the new regulation, also the proposed structure and distribution key of using the funding. However, we still need to make sure that the percentages and the statistics for allocations would not put Estonia in an unequal position compared to other MSs.

Annex I p(2) refers to the criteria in the area of asylum that will be taken into account and shall be weighted accordingly. In point 2(c) the term „resettled“ should be replaced with the term „admitted“.

It could be difficult to differentiate the percentages as in Estonia all resettled persons will be granted the status defined by the Geneva Convention or subsidiary protection.

Could you please explain why the persons being resettled are considered separately from the total number of persons granted international protection.

Annex I p(3)(b) - The criteria for the allocation concerning the 60% in proportion to the number of third-country national who have obtained a first residence permit is problematic. Estonia is among the MSs who is issuing the smallest number of first residence permits while the number of third-country nationals staying legally in the country is quite remarkable.

For the majority of third-country nationals, who have stayed and worked in a country less than a year, has been issued a visa and not a residence permit (which is a base for allocation criteria). Therefore, we are in favor of the exclusion which does not count among the first residence permits those permits that have been issued for the aim of working and are valid less than a year. In this way, the statistical figures of other MSs would be more equal with the numbers of Estonia, especially of those countries where the number of residence permits with the validity less than a year is remarkable.

Annex I p(3)(c) – We would like to clarify why the calculations exclude the persons arrived under the Mobility and Researchers Directive.

- ANNEX II: In general positive.
- ANNEX III: In general positive.

Questions:

1. Could you please specify whether the IT and ICT systems are also eligible under AMF, e.g. does the p (1)(b) cover also the IT/ICT systems as it is not mentioned specifically?
2. In p (2)(b) it is brought out that the Fund shall support the conducting of the asylum procedures. Could you please specify what is covered by that?
3. In p(1)(e) it is stated that the Fund shall support the assistance and support services consistent with the status and the needs of the person concerned. Could you please clarify whether it is possible to cover the costs of improving the conditions of reception and detention, for example the social assistance, counselling, medical or translation services (also at the detention centre). The assistance and support services have been brought out in Annex III but only under the policy objectives and not specifically under each specific objective. Therefore we would like to clarify if these services are still covered similar to the current period.

4. Integration target group (e.g. Annex III p (3)(a)) – As integration is a two-way process, it is not reasonable only to offer activities to or inform the third country nationals, therefore it is necessary to clarify whether it is possible also to involve the locals etc to some activities.
5. In p 4(d) it is brought out that the information and awareness-raising campaigns should be organized to inform employers and irregular migrants about their rights and obligations. We suggest that also the persons who carry out the migration monitoring activities (e.g. in universities, local municipalities etc) should be taken into account. In addition, the Fund should support the controls based on the IT solutions through which it would be possible to offer the information exchange between the private and public sector to prevent the illegal migration more efficiently.
6. In the area of legal migration it would be important to have the possibility to use the financing also to promote the migration of the qualified persons/entrepreneurs/investors from the third countries to the EU and to bring it out more specifically under p 3. We would prefer that the wording of the actions supported under the specific objectives would make it clearer that the Fund's resources can also be used to strengthen and implement policies to promote legal migration. Due to the importance of corresponding IT developments for the implementation of a number of key qualifying migratory legislation, we need to emphasize that the implementation measures should also include the development of IT systems for the support of legal migration and the developments for cross-usage of databases.

The p(1)(c) in Annex III should be worded as follows:

*(c) the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies and procedures including on collection, ~~and~~ exchange **and analysing** of information and data, development **of IT systems and cross-usage of databases** and application of common statistical tools, methods and indicators for measuring progress and assessing policy developments;*

To the p(3) in Annex III should be added following point:

- *measures that support the enhancement of legal migration procedures and capacity-building, including the development of IT systems and the support of the cross-usage of databases.*
- ANNEX IV: In general positive.
- ANNEX V:

We support the approach whereby the use of Union funds must generate significant added value in the EU and be effective, efficient and coherent with other EU policies. We consider it important that the output and performance indicators of the implementation of the Asylum and Migration Fund be relevant and enable to assess the Fund's progress in achieving the objectives set out in the Regulation.

Question: Under the specific objective 1 p(2) the indicator „number of persons in the reception system as compared to the number of asylum applicants“ is brought out. We would like to clarify whether it should be a comparison between the asylum applicants and persons granted the protection even if both of them are actually in the application process?

- ANNEX VI: In general positive.

Questions about the table 1:

1. I. CEAS code 006 – should the term „admittance“ be used instead of the term „resettlement“? Or should the term „humanitarian admission“ additionally be included?
2. I. CEAS and III. Return – the special needs/vulnerability has been covered by different level of detail. In the field of return the „vulnerable persons/UAMs and in the field of CEAS the children in migration and persons with special reception and procedural needs have been brought out. Therefore we would like to clarify why in the field of CEAS the broader term („children in migration“) has been used or there is a specific reason for a broader definition to cover also the victims of human trafficking, if needed?

- ANNEX VII:

In general positive. However, we would like to clarify whether it is also possible to use the operating support to cover the maintenance costs of IT systems as it is not clearly brought out in Annex VII.

- ANNEX VIII:

We support the approach that the use of Union resources should create significant added value in EU and be effective, efficient and coherent with other EU policies. We consider it important that the output and performance indicators of the implementation of the AMF be relevant and enable them to assess the progress of the fund in achieving the objectives set out in the Regulation.

The list of core performance indicators in Annex V contains some indicators for which it is unclear what value does collecting the specific indicator will give to the fund's performance. For example the indicator 2 under specific objective 1 “Number of persons in the reception system as compared to the number of asylum applicants”. In EE the asylum applicants are also a part of the reception system, therefore it is difficult to make a comparison between the target groups mentioned in the formulation of this indicator.

Detailed questions on the proposal:
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1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? **(Art. 8-11)** If your answer is no, please elaborate:

The Principle of Subsidiarity is in general adequately recognized.

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? **[ANNEX I]** If no, please elaborate:

We have not taken the official position yet. In general, we are not against that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission.

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

In general, the allocation process and the pre-financing will be adequate.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**[ANNEX I], 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

In general, we welcome the new regulation, also the proposed structure and distribution key of using the funding. However, we still need to make sure that the percentages and the statistics for allocations would not put Estonia in an unequal position compared to other MSs. (See also the answer for a question about Annex I).

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

We support that similar activities to the current AMIF financing period will also be financed in the new AMF period. However, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of strengthening the funding of IT and ICT systems, support services of asylum and return and enhancement of legal migration procedures.

In Annex 3 p1(e) it is stated that within the policy objective referred to in Art 3(1), the fund shall in particular support assistance and support services consistent with the status and the needs of the person concerned, in particular the vulnerable groups. However, in the list of specific objectives set out in points 2 and 4, the specific support services offered to the asylum and return of the target are not brought out. Therefore, we would like to see a more specific wording in the regulation that all support services (including services provided at the detention centre, translation, counselling, health services etc) are covered by the new regulation. Also, the regulation does not outline the funding of the IT and ICT systems and in Annex VII the possibility of operating support to cover the maintenance costs of IT and ICT systems has not clearly foreseen.

In addition, we see that the wording of the actions supported Under the specific objectives would make it clearer that the resources could also be used for strengthening and implementing policies to promote legal migration.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

We support the Commission's proposal that integration activities are covered by the regulation. We consider it important that the AMF will complement the ESF+ and ERDF to support the adaptation and integration activities. However, it is important to distinguish between long-term and short-term integration when it becomes dependent on which fund's resources it is possible to finance these activities. For Estonia, it is important that immigrants, irrespective of the of the legal basis for staying in the country, can move from the adaption and welcoming services to the integration services, regardless of the source of financing.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? **(Art.4(3))** If yes, which?

We do not have a specific need for naming specifically the target groups referred to in Art 4(3).

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? **(Art.14 in particular number (2))**

We do not have a specific position regarding this article.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? **(Art.9)** If no, please elaborate:

We welcome the Commission's proposal to increase the funding of migration and asylum policies from the Union budget and, in principle, agree to use the proposed structure of funds. We can support the reduction of the thematic funding in favor of national programs.

The funds will be allocated similarly to the current period in the frame of shared management (through national programs) and as the European Commission's direct and indirect support. At the same time, 60% of the funds are planned to be allocated to national programs and 40% of the funds are left to the thematic facility. We believe that the proposed structure of the fund will provide sufficient flexibility in order to be able to resolve important issues that are not always possible to predict at the beginning of the financial period, while allowing the Member States to decide which activities will meet the cross-border objectives. The proportion of the thematic facility is relatively high, but this will in most cases add resources to the Member States' programs in every two years and the facility will be deployed so that resources can be allocated more easily to the Member States, as appropriate, rather than based on a certain distribution key. If the proposal for increasing the allocation for Member States' programs will be made, we are ready to support it, as increasing the national allocations makes it easier to plan the scope of the measures supported by the fund.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? **(Art.18)**

We welcome the possibility to use the operating support of 10%. However, it is important that also the maintenance costs of the IT and ICT systems could be covered under the operating support as it is not specifically mentioned in Annex VII.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? **(Art.5,6)** If no, please elaborate:

In general, the external dimension is important for us.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

We support the annual reporting obligation brought out in Article 30. However, the Article 37(1) in CPR stipulates the obligation of reporting cumulative data by the managing authority every 2 months (i.e. 6 times per year) and article 92(1) foresees an obligation to submit additional documents for each accounting year. In addition to that, article 36(6) foresees annual performance report for the AMF, the ISF and the BMVI (which should be approved by the monitoring committee).

Our proposal is to decrease the administrative burden of the Member States foreseen in article 37(1) significantly (limit reporting cumulative data to Commission to 1-2 times a year) and to add an exception so that this obligation would not apply to the AMF, the IMF and the BMVI (considering that the reporting obligation to COM is covered by art 36(6) and 92(1) of the CPR).

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

We support an approach whereby the use of Union funds must generate significant added value in the EU and to be effective, efficient and coherent with other EU policies. We consider it important that the output and performance indicators of the implementation of the Asylum and Migration Fund be relevant and enable them to assess the progress of the Fund in achieving the objectives set out in the Regulation.

The list of core performance indicators in Annex V contains some indicators for which it is unclear what value does collecting the specific indicator will give to the fund's performance. For example the indicator 2 under specific objective 1 "Number of persons in the reception system as compared to the number of asylum applicants". In EE the asylum applicants are also a part of the reception system, therefore it is difficult to make a comparison between the target groups mentioned in the formulation of this indicator.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

Art 48(1) stipulates that where the total cost of an operation does not exceed EUR 200 000, the contribution provided to the beneficiary from the ERDF, the ESF+, the AMF, the ISF and the BMVI shall take the form of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates, except for operations for which the support constitutes state aid.

This requirement may not prove effective for the AMF (especially training projects, forced return and assisted voluntary return projects) in smaller member states where the target group tends to be rather small. Simplified cost options are effective in case of large target groups. In case of small target groups, simplified cost options may not be sufficient for covering all costs incurred.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Yes, the regular calendar year would lead to less administrative burden but as we understand the accounting year has already been regulated in the financial regulation.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

In general, we support the approach.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

No problem has occurred and the definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities is clear.

FINLAND

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: positive /negative?

n/a

Should the name of the Fund contain also integration or does the concept of migration include it? If the proportionate allocation for integration measures increase or at least remain on the former level, it could be meaningful to keep the "I" also in the name of the Fund. The name discussion apparently has some "political dimensions".

- Art.2: positive /negative?

n/a

The definition of a vulnerable person could be further elaborated.

- Art.3: positive /negative?

The current formulation is clear and highlights well the aim of the Fund. If integration is added to the name of the Fund, it could be purposeful in that case also to revise this article so that it would mention the integration as it is not necessarily included in the implied definitions of "management of migration flows" and "admission to the union area".

- Art.4: positive /negative?

The contents of the Annex II could also be included directly in the regulation as an own (or three) article(s)? That could possibly help to solidify the content of the regulation and make the structure somewhat more transparent and discernable.

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

The inclusion of the target groups could be considered under this article (or even under an own article).

A small addition to the paragraph 3 if it remains; "and in accordance with the definitions set in the Article 2 of this regulation" could be considered.

- Art.5: positive /negative?

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

The article is purposeful as it lays down the framework for association but leaves the specific contents and conditions open. In this situation more detailed provisions would prove impractical as e.g. the Brexit is still in process.

- Art.6: positive /negative?

The fourth paragraph could be further clarified vis-à-vis "legal entities established in third countries".

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

The scope of the article as such is sufficient as the provisions enable different parties to participate in the actions through the Fund.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):
 - Art.8: positive /negative?
We support the overall division illustrated in the paragraph 2 as it guarantees the flexibility in unexpected situations. Moreover, there should be sufficient resources for e.g. resettlement and other mechanisms.
Questions and comments?
The percentage should be in brackets.
 - Art.9: positive /negative?
Well-functioning thematic facility brings common added value for the area covered by the Fund.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.11: positive /negative?
The proportions of the amounts to be allocated to the national programmes seem to be purposeful.
 - Art.12: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
The proposed financing rates seem to be purposeful.
 - Art.15: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
We are in favor of the possibility to implement specific actions also as national projects as it is now described in the first paragraph.
 - Art.16: positive /negative?
See below.
Article 16 now only includes persons resettled in accordance with the Union resettlement schemes. It should include also persons resettled in accordance with national resettlement programmes in order to be in line with Article 17 of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework which states that “Member States shall receive for each [...] person admitted in accordance with Article 2 (a) and (b) [...] a lump sum of EUR 10,000 and, within the limits of the resources available, a lump sum of EUR 6,000 for each resettled person in accordance with national resettlement schemes [...]”.

All resettlement efforts of the Member States should be supported in order to both highlight resettlement as a safe and considerable way to offer international protection to the most vulnerable persons but also to raise the global role of the EU as a leading actor when it comes to resettlement. Thus, also the national resettlement efforts should be acknowledged and fully compensated through AMF.

Questions and comments?

This Article is conditional upon acceptance of the relevant provisions of the proposed Resettlement Regulation and the article needs to be aligned accordingly.

- Art.17: positive /negative?

See below.

Questions and comments?

This Article is conditional upon acceptance of the relevant provisions of the proposed Dublin Regulation.

With respect to Art 17 paragraph 2: According to Dublin Regulation Article 34c paragraph 3 the amount of EUR 10 000 is doubled in case of voluntary allocation and allocations carried out on bilateral basis. This should be added in the proposed paragraph, provided that this provision is included in the Dublin Regulation.

With respect to Art 17 paragraph 3: “A Member State referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall receive an additional contribution of EUR [10 000] per applicant who has been granted international protection for the implementation of integration measures.” Dublin Regulation refers to a lump sum of EUR 20 000 for the implementation of integration measures. This should be amended in the proposed paragraph, provided that this provision is included in the Dublin Regulation.

Reporting requirements in respect of this Article should be as simple as possible in order to avoid creating administrative burden for the MS concerned.

- Art.18: positive /negative?

We see the use of operating support in the areas of asylum and return as an important and welcomed tool to guarantee the capacity of the respective systems.

Questions and comments?

The proportionate share of operating support could be even higher than the proposed 10% of the total allocation.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):

- Art.19: positive /negative?

There is a spelling mistake in the first sentence of the English version of the regulation .

- Questions and comments?
- The word "Union" is to be deleted.
- Art.20: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
Adoption process of the work programme for the union actions should be clarified and made transparent.
 - Art.22: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
Bracketing seems to be inconsistent between the proposals for fund regulations (AMF, BMVI, ISF).
 - Art.24: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
The current formulation is somewhat unclear (referring to the "other than those mandated by the Union").
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
As discussed in the ad hoc working group meeting, flexibility and reaction capacity must be ensured.
 - Art.27: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
Examples of practical implementation of such actions should need further clarification. More information needed when it comes to the second paragraph. How this would operate in reality?
 - Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.29: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
The reference to the CPR art. 40 is missing.
 - Art.30: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
The first paragraph misses an explicit definition of the period that the reports - submitted each year by February 15 - cover. The paragraph implies that the cut-off date is June 30 but this should be further clarified.

- ANNEX I: positive/ negative?
The inclusion of resettled persons as an allocation criterion is welcomed as the resettlement efforts directly reflect the solidarity towards the most vulnerable persons and even other MS by reducing incentives for irregular migration. The weight of this criterion could be even higher than the proposed 10% of the asylum criteria (thus 3% of the total).
Questions and comments?
The criterion for resettlement includes i.a. a note "-- are being resettled". How this is to be verified on the basis of the statistical data produced by Eurostat if the actual resettlement has not taken place yet?
- ANNEX II: positive/ negative?
Questions and comments?
The current formulations are quite inclusive which leaves the definition of activities to the National Programmes.
- ANNEX III: positive/ negative?
Questions and comments?
The current formulations are quite inclusive which leaves the definition of activities to the National Programmes.
- ANNEX IV: positive/ negative?
We support the general approach for the higher co-financing rates for especially NGOs as the national pre-financing rules at least in our case somewhat confine the group of possible beneficiaries.
- ANNEX V: positive/ negative?
Questions and comments?
Same persons will inevitably be counted twice in the indicators (first under the SO1 and then SO2 or SO3) but this will not necessarily be a problem as such.
- ANNEX VII: positive/ negative?
Questions and comments?
It should be clarified whether the development and use of IT systems relevant to the policy objectives can be covered by operating support. We strongly advocate for this approach.

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

As the allocations for the national programme increase as compared to the current MFF, we see it rather positive that the Commission ensures the flexibility to face even unexpected situations by reserving a significant amount of funds for the thematic facility. Thus, although it's important to guarantee the sufficient resources for the national programmes, it's equally important that the thematic facility has sufficient funds e.g. for the resettlement as stipulated in the article 16 of the regulation.

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? **[ANNEX I]** If no, please elaborate:

We feel that the figures of the 2015-2016 crisis should be taken into account *in some way*. For a small country like Finland, the proportionate changes were enormous and posed a severe challenge for our reception capacity. In terms of preparedness and capacity building, we inevitably need to acknowledge also the major trends of the past influx of migrants.

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

We would support a higher pre-financing rate.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**[ANNEX I], 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

It is welcomed that resettlement is taken into account as separate criterion under the asylum criteria. This is also in line with the common solidarity efforts and benefits especially those Member States who have participated in the resettlement programme.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

We are generally happy with the structure. The national programmes will define the actions to be funded on a national level.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

We emphasize the need to support the early integration measures through the Fund but in a way that ensures the synergies and continuity of the actions. However, it's indispensable to avoid overlaps between the different instruments.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

Please see the comments under the article 4 above.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

We do not see this being a huge problem. The operating support helps even the slower MS to reach the 10% milestone.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

The principle of reserving sufficient funds to face unexpected situations and ensure flexibility is - in the light of the current MFF - understandable. However, as the actual contents of the thematic facility, the breakdown of funding or the other details are all but clear yet, it is rather early to comment usefulness of this mechanism.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

As commented already before, we are very much in favor of the operating support to be used in AMF and would see even a higher percentage beneficial.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? (**Art.5,6**) If no, please elaborate:

We support the general aim of the Fund to support the implementation of the common asylum and migration policies taking into account also their external dimensions. As the root causes are for the most part affected by the external instruments, complementarity and synergies play a key role for achieving effectiveness with the common efforts.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

Of course, there should be a trend to decrease and at least not to increase administrative burden but this being said, the question of the pros and cons of the new reporting system is very difficult to comment on without a fully knowledge of its various practicalities. As it seems that the pre-financing rates drop significantly, shorter frequency in payments is without a doubt quite rational. Simultaneously, extensiveness of these regular reports is not known yet.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

n/a

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

We are in favor of using SCOs and we have had a good experience of using them during the current MFF. They help to reduce the administrative burden caused for both the RA and beneficiaries, e.g. use of flat rate that include the regular travel costs. Reporting and monitoring have got lighter and error rates have decreased.

Thus, the problems are not necessarily linked to implementation but to the preparation of SCOs which is rather demanding. Therefore, we would gladly receive guidance and directly applicable models of SCOs from the Commission. Furthermore, best practices of the MS that have used the SCOs are equally highly valuable.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Yes it would but - at the same time - we are aware of the constraints imposed by the Financial Regulation.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

We feel positively on the suggestion of using the single audit approach.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

We have generally good cooperation and working practices between the authorities. No specific problems to be mentioned.

GERMANY

GER General Disclaimer:

1. We understand the purpose of this questionnaire to be a non-exclusive first overview. Therefore, GER understands that during the article-to-article negotiations additional reservations or scrutiny reservations may be declared, regardless of the evaluation in this answer.

2. The recitals have not been commented upon, thus they are subject to a general scrutiny reservation.

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.3: positive /negative?

No concerns.

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

It should be clarified what is understood by the external dimension of the CEAS.

- Art.4: positive /negative?

No concerns.

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

It should be further specified which actions in relation to and in third countries may be supported by the AMF. Complementarity with external instruments such as the NDICI should be ensured and duplication avoided.

- Art.6: negative

Clarifications necessary.

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

Member States need to be involved in the decision, what entities are eligible. This concerns especially paragraph 1 a) No. 3 (“third country listed in the work programme”).

Concerning paragraph 4: The term “independent entity” needs to be clarified.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.7: negative

Clarification needed.

Questions and comments?

Unclear, what is meant by “complement national, regional and local intervention”. Does this mean national and regional means are to be used prior to AMF means? Or can AMF means be used to complement national and regional means?

Unclear, what Member States have to do in order to “ensure that the support provided under the AMF regulation and by the Member States is consistent with the relevant activities of the Union”.

- Art.8: negative
negative

Regarding the allocation of funds high priority should be given to National Programmes while respecting the needs of the thematic facility, in particular lump sums according to Art. 16 and 17.

Questions and comments?

Para 3: COM should explain why it thinks 0.42% of the overall financial envelope are needed for TA measures. What is the figure for TA implementation in the current MFF?

- Art.9: negative

The main focus of the thematic facility should be financing of the lump sums according to Art. 16 and 17. This needs to be clarified in Art. 9. Financing decisions on the distribution of funds within the thematic facility shall be taken in agreement with the Member States.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.11: negative

To allow for a more flexible adaptation to possibly changing needs, it is welcomed that a share of AMIF funding should be reserved for a new allocation based on updated data at the mid-term of the financing period.

Concerning paragraph 2: However, it is unclear under what conditions funds shall be allocated to the thematic facility. Generally, the funds under paragraph 1b) should be allocated to the National Programmes.

Questions and comments?

In terms of para 1, could Com elaborate on the procedure for the allocation of funds to the national programmes? How should the allocation be made, which kind of legal acts?

- Art.12: negative
negative

It is not clear under which circumstances higher co-financing rates may be applied. This should be defined more precisely.

Concerning para 2 and 3: scrutiny reservation in terms of the increased co-financing rates of 90 %. An appropriate share of national co financing is necessary in order to ensure MS ownership.

Questions and comments?

Paragraph 7 needs more clarification. What is the purpose of this paragraph?

- Art.13: negative

It is not clear what conditions a Member State has to meet in order to ensure that the priorities in its programme are consistent with the Union priorities. Furthermore, Germany has concerns involving the agencies in the programming. This could lead to increased complexity in the process of programming.

Questions and comments?

What kind of influence shall agencies have regarding the National Programme of a Member State?

How shall a Member State consult the COM when planning to implement a project in a third country?

Paragraphs 4, 5, 6 and 9 unclear.

- Art.14: negative
negative

In principle, an increased flexibility is to be welcomed to ensure an efficient use of the funds. However, it is unclear under what conditions funds shall be allocated to the thematic facility (see section 11) / to other Member States' National Programmes.

Clarification needed on "10% of the initial allocation of a programme"- what is taken into account when referring to this sum?

Questions and comments?

In terms of para 1 and para 3, could Com elaborate on the procedure for the allocation? How should the allocation be made, which kind of legal acts?

- Art.16: positive /negative?

In Principle no concerns (see question/comment stated below).

Questions and comments?

Art. 16 should also refer to humanitarian and national resettlement schemes.

Funds should also contribute to mitigate secondary movements. To better promote MS responsibilities in this regard, the payment of the lump-sum should be subject to the condition that the person actually resides in the Member State in question for a longer period of time. Payment modalities have to be adapted accordingly - e.g. a time shifted payment or a payment in several installments - while keeping the additional administrative burden to a minimum.

How will the accounting process work and in which form does the necessary information need to be kept?

- Art.17: positive /negative?
No concerns at the moment, but no conclusive evaluation possible at this time, as this Article refers to the Dublin-Regulation. Remarks (see Art. 16)
- Art.18: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
Clarification needed what is meant by “public authorities responsible for accomplishing the tasks and services which constitute a public service for the Union”.
Why is it necessary to justify operating support in each annual performance report?
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.20: negative
An additional paragraph should be included on how Member States should be involved in the programming process of the annual working programmes.
Questions and comments?
Paragraph one should be integrated into Art. 2, since it contains definitions.
Scrutiny reservation in terms of para 3. What exactly is meant by “financial instruments” in para 3? What is the scope of this regulation? Under what conditions should this be applied? What is the relationship between paragraph 3 and Article 22 (blending)?
 - Art.22: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
Please clarify under which circumstances blending operations can be used.
 - Art.24: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
Clarification needed concerning the modalities of audits.
 - Art.25: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
Clarification needed concerning the modalities of Information, communication and publicity.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.27: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
It should be clarified how exactly the use of several funds for one action is possible. How should the differentiation of the funds be ensured? Could COM give some examples?
Clarification needed with regard to the use of seals of excellence certification.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: negative
See comments on Annex VIII
Member States should to be involved in the process of adopting delegated acts (e.g. consulting committee of the AMF).
 - Art.29: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?
Please define “in a timely manner”.
 - Art.30: negative
The aim should be to reduce the administrative burden whilst monitoring the implementation of funds. Accordingly, only essential information should be required for the annual performance report. The information requirements in paragraph 2 appear to be too far-reaching.
Questions and comments?
In Terms of letter d) we kindly ask for further clarification, what exactly is meant?
 - Art.31: negative
The last sentence of paragraph 1 should be deleted, because that would lead to enormous amount of administrative burden during the implementation period.
Questions and comments?
Since Annex IV doesn’t contain any table what is meant by “monitoring and reporting shall be based on the types of intervention set out in tables (...)”?
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.34: positive /negative?
No concerns.
Questions and comments?

Under which circumstances shall it be possible to use the financial envelope to cover expenses necessary to ensure transition between the AMF and the AMIF?

- ANNEX I: negative

The distribution of funds between the Member States has to reflect the actual migration **situation** in the Member States, which is - of course - a result of the influx of previous years. Therefore, the allocation of funds to Member States should take account of the actual needs such as expressed by the number of asylum seekers that were received by a given Member State from 2015, the peak year of the migration crisis, onwards.

Please see remarks to questions 2-4.

Questions and comments?

In terms of para 5 it needs to be clarified, which Eurostat-data exactly are to be used to calculate the distribution key. A sample calculation would be helpful.

- ANNEX II: positive/ negative?

No concerns.

Questions and comments?

The implementation measures should be further specified, in particular clarifying which specific measures partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing migration entails.

- ANNEX V: negative

The data that would be necessary in order to adequately use the mentioned indicators cannot be easily collected by the Responsible Authorities. The use of different indicators thus seems necessary.

- ANNEX VIII: negative

Questions and comments?

The data that would be necessary in order to adequately use the mentioned indicators cannot be easily collected by the Responsible Authorities. The use of different indicators thus seems necessary. E.g. with regard to the first indicator to Objective 3 (“Number of places in detention centres...”), it has to be questioned, if this indicator can effectively measure if the fund fulfills its aim to “contribute to countering irregular migration and ensuring effectiveness of return and readmission in third countries”.

It also needs to be clarified if all the given indicators need to be used or if Member States can decide which indicators to use.

Detailed questions on the proposal:

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

Regarding the allocation of funds high priority should be given to National Programmes while respecting the needs of the thematic facility, in particular lump sums according to Art. 16 and 17.

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? [**ANNEX I**] If no, please elaborate:

This issue is of high importance: Due to the unforeseen high number of migrants in the years 2015-2016, and due to the fact that many of them are still in the receiving Member States, the years 2015-2016 should be taken into account.

When calculating the distribution key, the years from 2015, the peak year of the migration crisis, onwards should be taken into account in order to accurately reflect the actual migration situation in the Member States.

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

The allocation process and the distribution key remains unclear; it needs to be clarified which Eurostat-data is going to be used. A sample calculation would be helpful.

The pre-financing must, however, be higher, at least 7% per year.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? ([**ANNEX I**], **1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

Generally, in order to correctly reflect the migration related expenses in each Member State, the criteria for calculating the distribution key need to take into account how many migrants are actually living in the respective Member States.

Accordingly, with regard to the criteria in the area of asylum, especially ANNEX I, No. 2 letter b needs to be revised (60% in proportion to the number of third-country nationals or stateless persons who have applied for international protection). The application for international protection can only be a relevant criterion in case the applicant is still living in the respective Member State. The relevant criterion needs to be the place of actual residence.

Concerning criteria in the area of legal migration and integration, the actual expenses in the Member States need to be reflected. For this purpose, e.g. the number of language courses should be taken into account.

With regard to the criteria in the area of countering irregular migration including returns, it is of high importance that persons, whose deportation has been suspended (“Geduldete”), are to be included in the calculation of the distribution key as these persons also receive assistance in the Member States.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

The proposed specific objectives and implementation measures are seen as sufficient, so that no changes are necessary.

The objectives and implementation measures should however be further specified, in particular, it should be clarified, what is understood by the external dimension of the CEAS, and which specific measures “partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing migration” will entail.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

Each financial instrument should be geared towards distinct purposes. Between AMF and EU structural funds, the specific objective and thus the type of measure should be clearly differentiated. Overlaps need to be avoided, so that there is no possibility for double financing. Due to the higher financial volume of the ESF+, it is welcomed that this fund will contribute to integration related tasks in general which should, however, not affect the possibility of the AMF to fund integration measures. Yet, to ensure consistency of the measures, a differentiation according to thematic priorities instead of timing (short-term or long-term) seems more adequate. While structural funds could e.g. support the integration and opportunities for participation in the labor market, communal childcare facilities or investments in urban education, AMF could e.g. finance measures aiming at the integration into the host society or non-occupational language courses.

AMIF and structural funds should complement each other. As a consequence, the EU funding structure for addressing the internal dimension of migration would become more effective. Moreover, it would be more targeted towards those bearing the burdens of migration, in particular cities, regions and Member States that have taken on the genuinely European challenge of migration over the past years without commensurate EU funding.

To adequately reflect the scope of the funds, the former title “Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF)” should be kept.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

It should be made clear which target group can profit from the proposed measures.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

Clarification needed on “10% of the initial allocation of a programme”- what is taken into account when referring to this sum?

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

In general, the thematic facility might help in order to achieve more flexibility. The allocation of funds within the thematic facility needs to be clarified and it should be further specified which issues the thematic facility will address.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

10% seems appropriate.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? (**Art.5,6**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes, it is an important topic. More clarification on this topic is needed, especially with regard to the consistency of the AMF and other funds. It should be specified which measures fall under the scope of the external dimension of the AMF and how this complements other instruments focusing on the external dimension of European migration policy, in particular the NDICI, while avoiding duplication. It is important to ensure complementarity and coherence with development objectives and objectives relating to international cooperation on migration governance, in particular the Global Compact for Migration.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

No, more frequent reporting leads to a higher administrative burden; especially the annual performance reports are seen as a potential problem.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

The data that would be necessary in order to adequately use the mentioned indicators cannot be easily collected by the Responsible Authorities. The use of different indicators thus seems necessary.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

SCO are very much welcomed, as they potentially could lead to less administrative burden. In order to do so, it is however necessary that the COM publishes relevant guidelines on how to implement and use SCO.

During the AMIF, the German Responsible Authority used the hourly rate as laid down in article 18 paragraph 7 in regulation 514/2014 for accounting staff costs. While implementing this SCO, unforeseen problems on technical level occurred. That is why there is a strong necessity for guidelines on the use of SCO.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

This is not a relevant topic for GER. Generally, harmonization of the accounting year and the calendar year would be welcomed.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

The single audit approach seems to be a possibility to streamline the auditing process, and is therefore welcomed.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

Yes, this topic is relevant for Germany. The Audit Authority's tasks have to be clearly defined in order to avoid coordination problems when implementing the funds. During the AMIF period the uncertainty about the specific tasks of the Audit Authority has led to an increased administrative burden on the part of all entities involved.

LATVIA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.2: positive/negative

Comment

Referring to preamble (16) stating that integration actions may include immediate relatives of third-country nationals, where the term ‘immediate relative’ should be understood as meaning spouses, partners and any person having direct family links in descending or ascending line with the third-country national targeted by the integration action. Article 2 (d) should be supplemented with a clear definition of partner status.

- Art.6: positive/negative

Remark

In the official Latvian translation version the Article suggests, that the only eligible legal entities are those that perform entrepreneurship. Taking into account that public administrations are also eligible legal entities the translation should be revised carefully, excluding possibilities of misinterpretation.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.8: positive/negative

Comment

Taking into account the new proposal for the Regulation laying down Common provisions for seven EU Funds (including the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management Fund – further the Interior Funds) and the Title IV of the regulation proposal setting the monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements, the administrative burden for the Interior Funds will be significantly increased. The responsible authorities will have to deal not only with application of completely new rules in every aspect of programme implementation, but will also have to restructure several aspects of programme management. The proposals for each specific Interior Fund currently envisage decreased percentage of financial resources that shall be allocated for technical assistance. With regard to the above mentioned, we would like to request the Commission to reconsider percentage of the financial envelope allocated for technical assistance for each Interior Fund.

- Art.9: positive/negative

Remark

More elaborate explanations from the practical implementation point of view would be appreciated.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.13: positive /negative

Comment

Latvia is not convinced that the process of developing the MS National programs currently envisaged in the draft regulation is the best possible. According to our assessment involvement role of EU Agencies in designing, monitoring and evaluation of MS National programmes is excessive and exaggerated. Although we understand the objective of the EU Commission to coordinate different actions and avoid overlapping, the current suggestion provides the EU Agencies with too much power and the involvement in MS National programmes is overstated. Taking into account the objective of the Asylum agency to promote and support MS in KEPS implementation, the usage of mandatory clause 'shall' in this respect is not understandable.

- Art.14: negative/negative

Comment

With regard to previous programming experiences in EU Solidarity Funds, as well as the current programming period Funds and the new approach that has been incorporated in the Regulation proposal to consult several EU Agencies in the process of programming, it can be said with certainty, that the implementation of National programmes will not start on the envisaged time. Therefore, it is of a very high risk to foresee specific years within a regulation, especially in the Article regulating the eligibility to receive additional allocation for the programme. We suggest to revise this Article and instead of naming concrete years, incorporating the principle n+.

- Art.16: positive/negative

Comment

Latvia supports additional allocation of financial resources in cases of resettlement. At the same time, we would like to point out that participation in any resettlement measures can only be voluntary and this aspect is essential in the development of National programmes.

- Art.17: positive/negative

Comment

Taking into account the discussions within the process of elaboration of Dublin Regulation are still ongoing, Latvia does not support references to a legal act that has not been agreed upon. Discussions on the solidarity measures included in the Regulation should be closely linked to KEPS discussions. Without prejudice to the provision of funding for the measures included in Article 17 of the draft Regulation, we believe that they should be formulated in accordance with the actual situation rather than the current draft amendments of the Dublin Regulation.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):

- Art.31: positive

Comment

Article 28 (4) states that data shall be collected efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner, and that proportionate reporting requirements shall be imposed on recipients and where relevant Member States. This Article is in contradiction with the requirement to perform monitoring and reporting according to Title IV of the Common Provisions Regulation, where in addition to the Annual performance reporting – required to the Article 30 of this specific Regulation, additional reporting on qualitative and quantitative results 6 times per year broken down by specific objectives is required. This additional requirement would not only imply huge administrative burden to the Member States, but can also not be supported from the point of view of effective usage of human, time and financial resources. Latvia suggests to require this kind of reporting not more than 2 times per year.

ANNEXES:

- ANNEX III: positive/negative

Comment

Latvia suggests to amend the Scope of support with actions on implementation of IT solutions. Taking into account the current situation and trends where data accumulation and exchange of electronic data are of increasing importance and the fact that ICT solutions provide significant support for the effective provision of basic procedures, also taking into account the interoperability aspect of current and future IT systems, we propose to provide funding for the implementation of these issues also within the AMF.

- ANNEX V: positive

Comment

We believe that not all the indicators set out in Annex V of the draft regulation will allow an adequate assessment of the implementation progress and results, therefore, an in-depth analysis and discussion is needed.

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

Comment

Taking into account that from the National perspective, it is the most effective and appropriate way to tackle EU related problems, we suggest revising the proposed shares and foreseeing 70% through shared management, 30% through direct management.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

Comment

With reference to our comment on the Annex III, we would need to have more detailed discussions on the current definitions of implementation measures and their applicability to our proposed amendment to the scope of support.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

Comment

At the moment can't comment on this, we are seeking for more detailed information of the precise and measurable differences, as well as auditable documentation to prove the applicability of the specific target group in actions that can be classified under short-term or long-term measures.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

Comment

Please see our comment on the Article 2.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

Comment

Please see our comment on the Article 14.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

Comment

At the moment we are not able to respond to this question, we would like to come back on this question after having read the explanatory fiche on the Thematic facility elaborated by the EU Commission.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

Comment

At the moment we are not able to respond to this question, we would like to come back on this question after more detailed discussions on the current proposal between the MS.

General comment:

At this stage we are not able to respond to these questions. We would like to come back to these after the 14th September Ad-hoc meeting discussions.

LITHUANIA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: Positive
we propose to insert word “Integration” in to the title of the Fund – “Asylum, migration and integration Fund” because this proposal will support reception and early integration measures to third-country nationals legally staying in the EU that are generally implemented in the early stage of integration in the period after arrival on EU territory.
- Art.2: Negative
There is no definition of “early stage integration”.
There is a need to define “early stage integration” which will be supported by the AMF.
- Art.3: Positive
- Art.4: Positive
- Art.5: Positive
There is a need for more detailed guidance of the COM regarding the participation of third-countries.
Technical remark:
The Fund shall be open to third countries in accordance with the conditions laid down in a specific agreement covering the participation of the third country to the ~~Asylum and Migration~~ Fund, provided that the agreement
- Art.6: Positive

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.7: Positive
- Art.8: Positive
Is the allocations for the technical assistance included in the sum of financial allocation or is counted on the top?
- Art.9: Positive

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.10: Positive
- Art.11: Positive
- Art.12: Positive
- Art.13: Positive
Regarding the Art. 13(8), what forms of consultations should be organized?
- Art.14: Positive

- Art.15: Positive

There is a need for more detailed guidance of the COM regarding the implementation of specific actions taking into account lessons learned from 2014-2020 period.
- Art.16: Positive

At this time it is difficult to comment while the Union Resettlement [and Humanitarian Admission] Framework is not approved yet.
- Art.17: Positive

At this time it is difficult to comment while the Dublin Regulation is not approved yet, e.g. 17(7) what means “effectively transferred, “effectively returned or registered“.
- Art.18: Positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: Positive
 - Art.20: Positive
 - Art.21: Positive
 - Art.22: Positive

There is a need for more detailed guidance of the COM regarding the blending operations because it is new for AMF 2021-2027.
 - Art.23: Positive
 - Art.24: Positive
 - Art.25: Positive
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: Positive

It is suggested to remove “~~provided that it is earmarked as such in the programme~~” in the Art. 26 (3) as emergency assistance needs more flexibility.
 - Art.27: Positive

There is a need to define “Actions awarded a seal of Excellence certification” in the Art. 27 (2).

More COM guidance needed for implementation of cumulative, complementary and combined funding.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: Negative

Negative aspects of the Art. 28 (5): Member States should know all the indicators in advance and no indicators should be established during the implementation of the programme.

Questions and comments? Member States should know all the indicators in advance and no indicators should be established during the implementation of the programme.

- Art.29: Positive

Though the Art. 29 gives more flexibility, Member States should know the dates of submission of evaluation reports in advance (approximately 1-1,5 year before) because of the public procurement procedures.
- Art.30: Positive
- Art.31: Positive
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: Positive
 - Art.33: Positive
 - Art.34: Positive
 - Art.35: Positive
- ANNEX I: Positive
- ANNEX II: Negative

The Art. 2 (b) of the Annex II: there is no definition of “early integration”.

Questions and comments? There is a need to define “early integration” which will be supported by the AMF.
- ANNEX III: Negative

The Art. 3(g) of the Annex III: there is no definition of “early integration”.

Questions and comments? There is a need to define “early integration” which will be supported by the AMF.

Some aspects of the employment are included in the Art. 3 (b) / 4 (d) of the Annex III. Is it considered to be a complementarity with the ESF+ programme?

Art.4 (h) : it is not clear if it includes the organization and execution of forced return and organizations of escorts (of officers).
- ANNEX IV: Positive
- ANNEX V: Negative

Specific objective 2 (2): Persons usually receive several integration services / participate in several activities during the project. Therefore there is no possibility to evaluate the “general” opinion of the target group person on several activities Funded by the Fund, because some of the measures can be found as beneficial and some not beneficial. This evaluation would be an administrative burden for the final beneficiary.

Questions and comments? Specific objective 2 (2): It is suggested to remove „reporting that the measures were beneficial for their early integration as compared to the total number of persons who participated in the integration measures supported by the Fund“.

Specific objective 3 (1): Is the indicator “Number of returns following an order to leave compared to the number of third-country nationals ordered to leave“ related to the general number of returns in a Member State or related to the returns funded by the Fund?

- ANNEX VI: Positive
Questions and comments? Table 1 of the Annex VI: Will it be possible to mix several types of intervention in one action / project?
- ANNEX VII: Positive
- ANNEX VIII: Negative

Specific objective 1 (1.c): indicator establishes that vulnerable persons should benefit from specific assistance, but there is no definition of the “specific assistance“ in the Annex or Regulation, therefore it is an additional burden to decide whether the assistance to a vulnerable person / victim of trafficking in human beings / unaccompanied minor is specific or not.

Specific objective 2 (4): Persons usually receive several integration services / participate in several activities during the project. Therefore there is no possibility to evaluate the “general” opinion of the target group person on several activities Funded by the Fund, because some of the measures can be found as beneficial and some not beneficial. This evaluation would be an administrative burden for the final beneficiary.

Questions and comments? Specific objective 1 (1.c): it is suggested to remove “~~benefiting from specific assistance~~“ and to establish indicator „Number of vulnerable persons, victims of trafficking in human beings, and unaccompanied minors“.

Specific objective 2 (3.b): indicator related to the employment is included. Is it considered to be a complementarity with the ESF+ programme?

Specific objective 2 (4): It is suggested to remove „~~reporting that the measures were beneficial for their early integration as compared to the total number of persons who participated in the integration measures supported by the Fund~~“.

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

Yes

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? **[ANNEX I]** If no, please elaborate:

Yes

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

Yes

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**[ANNEX I], 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

No.

Could the allowances be paid to TCNs under the action 3(g) (Annex III) “early integration measures such as tailored support in accordance with the needs of third-country nationals and integration programmes focusing on education, language and other training such as civic orientation courses and professional guidance;”?

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

There is no definition of “short-term / early integration” in the AMF Regulation, therefore there is uncertainty related to the synergies / compatibility of the AMF and ESF+. Some aspects of the integration to the labour market is included in the AMF Regulation, so there could be some duplications of the actions related to the labour market funded by both funds.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

Definitions would give more clarity to the Member States, because at moment it is not clear which target groups can participate in particular implementation measures.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

The percentage could hinder MS in getting additional funds, therefore it is suggested not to establish certain percentage in the basic act.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

In favor of the 10%.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? (**Art.5,6**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

Specific objective 1 (1.c): indicator establishes that vulnerable persons should benefit from specific assistance, but there is no definition of the “specific assistance” in the Annex or Regulation, therefore it is an additional burden to decide whether the assistance to a vulnerable person / victim of trafficking in human beings / unaccompanied minor is specific or not. It is suggested to remove “~~benefiting from specific assistance~~” and to establish indicator „Number of vulnerable persons, victims of trafficking in human beings, and unaccompanied minors“.

Specific objective 2 (4): Persons usually receive several integration services / participate in several activities during the project. Therefore there is no possibility to evaluate the “general” opinion of the target group person on several activities Funded by the Fund, because some of the measures can be found as beneficial and some not beneficial. This evaluation would be an administrative burden for the final beneficiary. It is suggested to remove „~~reporting that the measures were beneficial for their early integration as compared to the total number of persons who participated in the integration measures supported by the Fund~~“.

There is also some uncertainty related to indicator of the Specific objective 2 (3.b): indicator is related to the employment, which is part of the ESF+ programme. Is it considered to be a complementarity with the ESF+ programme? Also we would like to note that in the Fiche No. 23 (9 July 2018) there is no information that the AMF will contribute to the integration into labour market.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

Opinion on using SCOs is positive, because they reduce administrative burden for the final beneficiary and the authority (Delegated/Responsible) which checks the project expenses. It would be very useful to have COM prepared guidelines on the use of SCOs (with practical examples) .

Although dissatisfaction of the final beneficiaries can occur, because SCOs is based on the average market prices which were identified at the moment on the establishing fixed amounts.

Also during current financial period, we had some problems of using SCOs: not enough statistical data from beneficiaries; it is not easy to get historical documents from beneficiaries; it takes a lot of time to prepare SCOs methodologies, the problem is that it should be done before the start of the project.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Harmonization of the financial year and regular calendar year would lead to easier way of managing Funds. But on the other hand, as in the Art. 92 of the CPR it is foreseen that “for each accounting year for which payment applications have been submitted, the Member State shall submit to the Commission by 15 February, the following documents ('the assurance package') which shall cover the preceding accounting year as defined in Article 2(28)“, the harmonization of the regular calendar and the accounting year would make more difficulties to submit documents for COM for accounting year until 15 February.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

In the current AMIF period the cooperation with audit authority was appropriate and no communicating problems occurred.

LUXEMBOURG

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.17: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
For which cases article 17 precisely intervenes? Which member state is entitled to the additional allocation? What are exactly the conditions for receiving the additional allocation(s)?
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.30: positive /negative?
Questions and comments?
The date of submission for the performance reports has been brought forward by 6 weeks compared to the present situation (implementation reports 31/3/n+1)
- ANNEX V: positive/ negative?
Questions and comments?
SO1 (3.): this indicator poses numerous problems for calculating, controlling and interpretation. It should be deleted or replaced by another, more relevant indicator

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

As we got explained, this is the starting picture and the money could be redistributed if there is a need.
2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? [**ANNEX I**] If no, please elaborate:

What years will be considered for the calculation? If 2018-2020 will be considered, the crisis years will be excluded
3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a)**, [**ANNEX I**]) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

no comment

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? ([ANNEX I], 1. (b)) If no, please elaborate:

Depending on the definition of integration on the AMF; if AMF will only cover short-term integration, the 30% for integration will be difficult to reach.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

No changes

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

I think that it is a good idea but first there need to be a definition of the splitting, otherwise it won't be able to check for the AA. Splitting-up short- and long term integration will be very difficult from the point of view of the scope and content of the actions/projects to set up, but also from an organizational point of view, as AMIF and ESF are managed by 2 different bodies

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

No

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

No

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes it can give a flexibility-point to the fund.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

Yes, a higher percentage would be great

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? (**Art.5,6**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

see above: Art 31. No, we are not at all in favor of this, because it is a massive increase in administrative burden and for small countries it will have a big impact.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

As the AMIF- ISF committee asked already in a Workshop, we would prefer to work on our one in a committee on these result indicators

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

It would be good to have the SCOs but we are not ready to have them at the beginning. That will say that we will have as administrative burden to implement them. At the end of the process, it will be a smaller administrative burden but at the beginning, it will be hard work. Simplified cost options will be beneficent on the long-term, but their set-up will be very resource-consuming, as we don't have any experience with SCO. The upper limit of 200.000 € (article 48) means that nearly all our projects will have to apply SCO. Member states should decide themselves for what project SCO's should/can be applied or there should be a possibility in workshops to implement them together before the mid term review.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

The difference between the EU budget exercise and the calendar year (which corresponds to our national budget year) as applied in AMIF 2014-2020 increased the administrative burden considerably. We would appreciate a harmonization it but I think for the AA and the clearance of the accounts it won't be possible considering the deadlines for submitting the accounts and the annual reports

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

That's a great approach

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

No, we don't have problems in the communication between AR and AA.

MALTA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: positive

No comments at this stage

- Art.2: positive

With regards to points (f) and (h) of this article, references should take into account any new proposal (recast) of the Return Directive that may be adopted in due course.

- Art.3: negative

Malta is not convinced of the approach proposed by the Commission to have support for long-term integration measures shifted from the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) to the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) under Cohesion Policy. We believe that there should be one dedicated funding instrument to support integration, considering the specific needs and challenges of the sector, and that this instrument should continue to be the AMF.

Do you have questions and comments regarding this article?

From an implementation point of view, with regards to Article 3(2)(b) on legal migration, a clarification is requested to see if any apportionment for integration activities involving non-TCNs will be applied whilst implementing projects under this priority.

- Art.4: positive

No comments at this stage

- Art.5: positive

No comments at this stage

- Art.6: positive

Given the scope of the fund, further clarifications are needed to understand the implications of the explicit exclusion of natural persons under this article.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.7: positive

No comments at this stage

- Art.8: negative

Although the EU financial envelope for the AMF has increased when compared to the current programming period, the share allocated to national programmes has decreased. In this context, we believe that discussions should give due consideration to increase the share of resources for national programmes and to take into account insular Member States facing disproportionate migration challenges.

- Art.9: Further information is required to understand how the thematic facility will be implemented in practice. In addition, further clarification is needed to understand if relocation will also be supported through the thematic facility.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.10: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.11: negative
In accordance with the position taken under Article 14 (2) on the scope of the mid-term review, we believe that paragraph 2 should be deleted. We believe that any funds allocated for the mid-term review should be allocated to national programmes and not the thematic facility.
 - Art.12: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.13: negative
If negative, why?
Further information is required to understand the role of the European Union Agency for Asylum and the European Coast Guard Agency at the programming stage and in the monitoring and evaluation phases of programme implementation.
 - Art.14: negative
We consider the conditionality proposed under sub paragraph 2 of this article as too restrictive and that it will constitute excessive burden on Member States which may result in the unnecessary loss of funds. In this context, Malta believes that sub paragraph 2 on the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be deleted as the scope of the mid-term review should not be to add undue burden on national authorities but to re-adjust national programmes in order to address any possible shift in needs.

With regards to sub paragraph 3, given that the nature of the sector is very dynamic and that the needs and responses can change very quickly, we are not convinced about the application of the performance framework to this Fund because it will not be practicable and may result in the unnecessary loss of funds.
 - Art.15: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.16: positive
We consider that discussions on this article should take into account the ongoing discussions in relation to the Union Resettlement Framework as some elements might need to be adapted to reflect the outcome of these discussions once these are concluded. In addition, we believe that support for relocation should also be made available to Member States.

- Art.17: positive
No comments at this stage
- Art.18: negative
The proposal for operating support under AMF is positive however, given that the sector is very volatile and the needs may change drastically within a short period of time, the introduction of a maximum threshold is considered as too restrictive. In the spirit of flexibility, we believe that there is scope to leave the decision on the amount to be used for operating support at the discretion of the Member State.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.20: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.21: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.22: Further information is required on practical examples of possible blending operations under the fund.
 - Art.23: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.24: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.25: positive
No comments at this stage
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: positive
We believe that discussions should take into account the ongoing discussions in relation to the Common European Asylum System and the Dublin Regulation as some elements might need to be adapted to reflect the outcome of these discussions once these are concluded.
 - Art.27: Further information on the application of this article is required. In addition a clarification is needed to understand the link between actions supported under the AMF and the award of a seal of excellence certification.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: positive
No comments at this stage

- Art.29: negative
A clarification is required to understand the scope of this article in the fund specific regulation taking into account the applicability of Article 40 of the new CPR to the new AMF.
- Art.30: negative
A clarification is needed to understand the rationale behind the requirement to prepare an annual performance report for the AMF [and other Home affairs funds] when this requirement was removed for the Cohesion funds. In the spirit of simplification, in order to minimize administrative burden, we consider that a streamlined approach should be applied across all funds falling under the new CPR.
- Art.31: negative
Malta is concerned with the proposal to increase the frequency of reporting. We believe that the new reporting system proposed will lead to excessive reporting requirements which will create additional administrative burden on authorities implementing the funds particularly on smaller administrations. In addition, we cannot see the added value of more frequent reporting. In the spirit of simplification, we believe that a more proportionate approach should be considered to avoid the risk of stifling the very objectives of the fund.
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.33: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.34: positive
No comments at this stage
 - Art.35: positive
No comments at this stage
- ANNEX I: In considering the criteria for the allocation of funding, Malta believes that attention should be given to insular societies that face disproportionate migration pressures, as well as to those Member States which have a very high population density. In addition, in order to ensure a critical mass, the fixed amount of resources per Member State should be increased.

With reference to sub paragraph 5, Malta supports the Commission proposal to use the preceding three calendar years for the purpose of the calculation as they would provide a more updated picture of the actual needs for each Member State.

- ANNEX II: negative
In line with the concerns raised under Article 3 (2) (b) above, Malta is not convinced about the split of integration measures between the AMF and ESF+ under Cohesion Policy. We believe that there should be one dedicated funding instrument to support integration considering the specific needs and challenges of the sector, and that this instrument should continue to be the AMF.
- ANNEX III: positive
A clarification is requested to understand if the list of support in Annex III is a non-exhaustive list. We believe that flexibility is necessary to address the actual needs and challenges on the ground.
- ANNEX IV: positive
No comments at this stage
- ANNEX V: positive
No comments at this stage
- ANNEX VI: positive
No comments at this stage
- ANNEX VII: positive
No comments at this stage
- ANNEX VIII: positive
No comments at this stage

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)?
(Art. 8-11) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

No. Under the new proposal, even though the challenges in relation to migration have increased, the share of resources for national programmes have been decreased. The primary responsibility to address migration challenges lies within Member States therefore it is necessary that adequate resources are available for Member States to be able to address their needs and challenges on the ground. In this context, we believe that the share of resources for national programmes should be increased taking also into account the challenges faced by those Member States experiencing disproportionate migration pressures.
2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States?
[ANNEX I] If no, please elaborate:

No, Malta does not agree to include the crisis years of 2015-2016 as criteria for the distribution key. Malta would prefer to retain the Commission proposal of using the preceding three calendar years as they would provide a more updated picture of the actual needs for each member state.

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

We believe that further flexibility is required in the allocation process to reflect better the challenges faced by Member states particularly those that face disproportionate migration challenges. In this regard, Malta believes that more attention should be given to insular societies facing disproportionate migration pressures, as well as to Member States which have a very high population density. In addition, in order to ensure a critical mass, the fixed amount of resources per Member State should be increased.

Furthermore, we are not convinced about the Commission's proposal for lower pre-financing rates as these will put further unnecessary pressures on the implementation of the programmes.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**[ANNEX I], 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

Whilst the distribution key will require further assessment, we believe that the reference period of the distribution key is also an important component to be considered. As stated above, Malta would prefer to retain the Commission proposal of using the preceding three calendar years as they would provide a more updated picture of the actual needs for each member state. In addition, particular attention should be given to Member States facing high disproportionate migration challenges and to Member States which have a very high population density.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

At this stage, the specific objectives and implementation measures seem sufficient however, apportionment of costs on integration activities which involve directly non-TCN's should be eliminated as it defeats the scope of integration in general. Integration measures need to be carried out for both TCN's and non TCN's in the receiving country.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

Malta is not convinced of the Commission's approach to split integration measures between AMF and ESF+ under Cohesion Policy. We believe that there should be one dedicated funding instrument to support integration considering the specific needs and challenges of the sector and that this instrument should continue to be the AMF.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? **(Art.4(3))** If yes, which?

The mentioning of specific target groups is a proposal that we are looking at constructively, however, we also believe that this topic requires further discussion to understand better the target groups envisaged under the Commission's proposal and therefore to ensure that there will be sufficient flexibility to reflect the particular situation in Member States.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? **(Art.14 in particular number (2))**

Malta believes that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be deleted. Given the nature of the projects supported under the programmes, such conditionality may lead to unnecessary loss of funds for Member States. The Mid-Term review should not add undue burden on national authorities but should serve the purpose of addressing any possible shifts in needs that may occur during programme implementation.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? **(Art.9)** If no, please elaborate:

Ensuring flexibility is necessary particularly to address new and/or emerging needs. The proposed thematic facility seems to be a step in the right direction in this regard, however further information is needed to understand how this will be implemented in practice.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? **(Art.18)**

The proposal for operating support under the AMF is positive, however, given that the sector is very volatile and the needs may change drastically within a short period of time, the introduction of a maximum threshold is considered as too restrictive. In the spirit of flexibility, we believe that there is scope to leave the decision on the amount to be used for operating support at the discretion of the Member State.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? **(Art.5,6)** If no, please elaborate:

The external dimension is an important component to be considered in the discussions, and the complementarity with external instruments will play an important role in asylum and migration matters.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? **(Art.28-31)** If no, please elaborate:

No, we believe that the new reporting system proposed will lead to excessive reporting requirements which will create additional administrative burden on authorities implementing the funds particularly on smaller administrations. In addition, we cannot see the added value of more frequent reporting. In the spirit of simplification, we believe that a more proportionate approach should be considered to avoid the risk of stifling the very objectives of the fund.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

Yes, we consider them as sufficient. However, it is necessary that indicators for migration funding programmes truly reflect the situation on the ground and that they are proportionate considering the very specific nature of the migration sector.

14. **CPR**: What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

We believe that the use of SCOs should be voluntary and at the discretion of the Member States. While we look positively at the use of SCOs, we believe that further guidance together with practical examples are needed to understand better their application within the migration sector.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR)**: Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Yes, we believe that this harmonization is positive.

16. **(Art. 74, 75 of the CPR)**: What do you think about the single audit approach?

The application of the single audit approach is a step in the right direction however further clarity is needed to understand how this will work in practice.

17. **(Art. 71 of the CPR)**: Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

We did not register any problems in communicating with audit bodies. However, having more clearly defined tasks and responsibilities would be helpful for both implementing and auditing entities.

POLAND

Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.2: positive /negative?

We suggest to include a definition of short-term or early-stage integration in the article.

We suggest to add the information on the forms of calls for proposals that are acceptable under the Fund (e.g. an open call, a restricted call, a direct award) in order to avoid questions in the future.

Recital (d) - definition of a family member is imprecise. Recital 16 of the preamble already includes the definition. We suggest moving the definition from the preamble to 2 (d).

Recital (j) - definition of vulnerable person is very imprecise. The policy area is known, hence the definition may include a reference to a specific regulation/legal act.

- Art.3: positive /negative?

Par. 2b. The provision should be compliant with the Preamble (13) and Annex II pt. 2b and should refer to early-stage integration.

Annex II, item 3 (b) mentions reducing incentives for irregular migration. Does it cover fighting irregular employment? In preamble, recital 26 provides for support of Directive 2009/52/EC which prohibits the illegal employment of migrants. This constitutes a major change (in comparison to AMIF), which actually reflects the responsibilities of the Polish Border Guard. In consequence also the National Labour Inspectorate may become a beneficiary. We suggest more explicit inclusion of this area in the implementation measures.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.8: Negative as for par. 2

Par. 2: We recommend a discussion on the allocation to the programmes implemented under shared management and to the thematic facility. The Member States should have more autonomy as they effectively identify their needs. We recognize the need of reducing the financial resources that are to be allocated to the thematic facility (e.g. to 30% i.e. EUR 3 124 500 000).

Questions and comments?

The part of the financial envelope which can be allocated for technical assistance at the initiative of the Member States should be indicated in the regulation.

- Art.9: positive /negative?

Questions and comments?

Par. 7. Does the meaning is that the Commission may unilaterally amend MS's programmes?

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.12: positive /negative?
 Questions and comments?
 Par. 7: What is the reason for differentiation between private and public contributions in case of the co-financing level?
 - Art.13: Negative as for par. 8
 We consider the obligation to consult the decisions on implementing projects with or in a third country as limiting the autonomy of the Member States. In addition, this provision will extend the implementation process.
 Consulting with the Commission the start of the project before MS decides to implement the project with or in a third country with the support of the Fund, will result in administrative burden and longer deadlines for project implementation. Moreover, the regionalization of migration problems is different in the Member States. Migration processes are not permanent. The liquidation of a migration route creates a new one. Therefore, each Member State should have the autonomy in the development of projects related to cooperation with third countries and in the possibility of quick response to migration changes.
 - Art.14: positive /negative?
 Questions and comments?
 We suggest to change the phrase “If at least 10% (...) has not been (...)” to “If less than 10% (...) has been covered (...)”.
 - Art.15: positive /negative?
 Questions and comments?
 Does par. 2 refer only to specific actions?
 - Art.16: positive /negative?
 Questions and comments?
 As regards the AMF resources for resettlement actions, Poland support all the activities which are based on the voluntary participation in mentioned programmes.
 Does par. 2 mean that the amount may be allocated only if the person was ALREADY effectively allocated (i.e. before the amendment)?
 - Art.17: positive /negative?
 Questions and comments?
 Does par. 3 mean that when a member state receives any amount under paragraphs 1 and 2 then it is eligible for additional contribution for ANY person granted international protection (also those not related to pars 1 and 2)?
 The same question to par. 4.

Does par. 7 mean that the amount may be allocated only if the person was ALREADY effectively transferred (i.e. before the amendment of the programme)?

Due to the fact that the Dublin Regulation proposal is currently being negotiated, Poland would like to express scrutiny reservation. Moreover, Poland still maintains its strong objection towards obligatory and automatic redistribution mechanism. The creation of a sustainable crisis mechanism which will be based on the migrant's redistribution mechanism cannot be seen as a proper solution. Poland holds the view that this approach will not lead to alleviate the migration pressure but will attract further waves of migrants into the EU creating a strong pull factor.

- Art.18: positive /negative?

Questions and comments?

How compliance with the Union *acquis* on asylum and return is defined? The criteria included in preamble (32) are not clear as for the meaning of “a clear risk of a serious breach by the Member States of the Union’s values”.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):

- Art.26: positive /negative?

Questions and comments?

Coordination and synergy should be maintained between the emergency assistance under the AMF, actions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (established by the DECISION 1313/2013 of 17 December 2013 on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism) and the Emergency Support Instrument (established by the COUNCIL REGULATION 2016/369 of 15 March 2016 on the provision of emergency support within the Union) or their successors-to-be, in order to secure a possibility for the EU to support the Member States in provision of humanitarian assistance inside the EU in case the Member States experience heavy migratory pressure.

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):

- Art.31: positive /negative?

Questions and comments?

The second paragraph refers to “These indicators” while the first paragraph does not mention any indicators.

- ANNEX I: positive/ negative?

Questions and comments?

Do the fixed percentages regarding the allocation also need to be applied by the Member States in the distribution of money to the specific objectives? If yes, Poland suggest some flexibility within the 30/30/40 rates depending on each Member State’s needs.

Do we understand correctly, that par 3 (c) first dash excludes third country national entering the MS territory with a country visa (reason for travel – work)? But if the person receives a second visa of this kind they are included in the calculation. In PL migration flows are often circular. These migrants should be subject to integration measures as well, therefore be included in the calculation of the allocation.

- ANNEX III: positive/ negative?

Questions and comments?

Pt. 1 and 4. In our view, the scope of support should include not only setting up of administrative structures, systems and tools but also development of the existing ones.

Pt. 2. We suggest to extend the scope of support and include also IT systems development, pre-integration measures, legal, social and health assistance.

Pt. 3b. On one hand the criteria defined in Annex 1 exclude (3(c) dash 1) exclude “Third country nationals being issued a work-related first residence permits valid for less than 12 months“ from calculation of the allocation. On the other scope of support provides for support of “development of mobility schemes to the Union, such as circular or temporary migration schemes”.

Pt. 3g. We would like to know which actions are eligible to be financed under the AMF, ESF+ and ERDF.

- ANNEX V: positive/ negative?

Questions and comments?

Pt. 2.2. The indicator should be compliant with the Preamble (13) and Annex II pt. 2b and should refer to early-stage integration.

- ANNEX VII: positive/ negative?

Questions and comments?

In our view, maintenance and development costs should be covered by operating support.

- ANNEX VIII: positive/ negative?

Questions and comments?

Indicator 4 for specific objective 1 is actual two indicators.

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management □ new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

No. We recommend a discussion on the allocation to the programmes implemented under shared management and to the thematic facility. The Member States should have more autonomy as they effectively identify their needs. We recognize the need of reducing the financial resources that are to be allocated to the thematic facility (e.g. to 30% i.e. EUR 3 124 500 000).

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? **[ANNEX I]** If no, please elaborate:

No, the crisis years of 2015-2016 should not be considered as criteria for the distribution key because those years do not reflect the current migratory situation in the Member States.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? **(Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g))**

We are of the opinion that a clear distinction between early-stage and long-term integration of third-country nationals is crucial regarding continuity of the integration process. The scope of support should not be subject to interpretation in the future. For that reason, actions addressing integration that are eligible to be financed under the AMF, the ESF+ and the ERDF need to be indicated in the regulation.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? **(Art.4(3))** If yes, which?

In our judgement, it is recommended but not crucial as they can be identify basing on art. 78 and 79 of the TFEU.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? **(Art.28-31)** If no, please elaborate:

No. We strongly recommend that all data necessary for monitoring progress in implementation should be transmitted every three months (instead of two).

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

In case of the AMF, the ISF and the BMVI the SCOs should be applied on voluntary basis as costs of establishing SCO rules at the MS level may not justify its application.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

Yes, the current situation (AMIF) and the proposal (AMF) puts unnecessary burden. The new Financial Regulation, binding for AMF, specifies a financial year as a period which runs from 1 January to 31 December (art. 9).

PORTUGAL

PROPOSAL:

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):

- Art.1: positive
- Art.2: positive
- Art.3: positive

Although the overall analysis of this article deserves a general support from Portugal, particular focus and further clarity may be needed in two concrete dimensions:

- a. The external dimension of the CEAS – ie, (a), n. 2 – being relevant to guarantee that there will not be a duplication of financial resources and obligations once considering the Funds specifically aiming at the EU's external policy.
- b. The integration of Third Country Nationals – being relevant to guarantee that there will not be a duplication of financial resources and obligations once considering the Social European Fund +.

- Art.4: positive
- Art.5: positive

It would be important to include, in the proposed art., in particular in its first bullet, a clearer definition of what is to be considered as “*fair balance*”.

- Art.6: positive

Portugal departs from a positive view on this article.

Nonetheless, there are concrete doubts on the manner upon which a legal entity established in a third country may be eligible to the Fund. Perhaps the experiences of the instruments dedicated to the external policy of the EU may be relevant in this regard, but in this case Portugal considers important for the European Commission to provide further written clarification on this matter.

To bear in mind concrete examples, an NGO, of which no particular or credible information may be available, and which may fall out of the scope of auditing and control of the Management Authorities of the Fund, is to be considered eligible?

In case of misuse of the Fund, which instruments do the Management Authorities, or even the European Commission and Court of Auditors, have in their hands to possibly force the return of the money that has been granted?

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):

- Art.7: No particular comments at this stage.

○ Art.8: Reservation.

Portugal considers that two particular questions need to be further discussed and analysed regarding the proposed article:

- a. the overall amount to be attributed to the area of asylum, migration and integration – although recognising the increase, once compared with the amount of money allocated through the current AMIF, Portugal considers that this subject needs further guidance from the European Council;
- b. the overall amount, resulting from the application of the 40% of the fund to be attributed to the thematic facility, should not be considered closed before the necessary technical discussion on the actions, priorities and methodology to be used for this purpose.

Furthermore, Portugal considers that further justification should be provided, by the European Commission, on the 10% which will remain to be attributed until the mid term review. Guarantees should be given to the member states on the effective availability of this money, as well as on their distribution to the Member States according this initial partition (the 10% to be handed to Member State A must not be reaffected to Member State B).

○ Art.9: Need for further information and consideration.

Portugal deems of particular importance to further analyze the information to be prepared and shared by the European Commission. Portugal does not necessarily have a positive view on the proposal of 40% of the overall budget to be attributed to the thematic facility, as there has always been a more favorable view over the need to increase shared management.

On the other hand, Portugal considers that there is a clear need to improve the transparency and predictability over the management done by the European Commission to the budget at its responsibility in this context.

In line with this view, Portugal considers that there is a need to avoid additional administrative burden, to be borne by the Management Authorities, as well as by the beneficiaries, each time there is a Top Up of the financing available through the National Programs.

The need for predictability should also be taken into account once considering situations of public procurement procedures, where the service demanders would much gain from knowing, from off the beginning, the total amount of money that they would have available, not depending on extra-financing, resulting from the a.m. Top Ups, along the implementation period.

Lastly, Portugal requires further information on are to be Specific Actions implemented only with / through one Member State.

• Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):

- Art.10: No particular comments at this stage.
- Art.11: Please see comments on Art. 8.

- Art.12: Positive.

Portugal welcomes the general cofinancing rate of 75%.

Portugal welcomes the inclusion of the contribution from the Union budget may be increased to 90 % of the total eligible expenditure for actions listed in Annex IV.

Portugal welcomes the inclusion of the Operating Support, with a cofinancing rate of up to 100%, in the AMF.
- Art.13: Reservation.

n. 3 - Portugal has particular concerns on the role to be played by European Agencies in this regards. It is essential to avoid the repetition of mistakes committed in the current programing period, namely Frontex changing its views and its technical requirements for the materials and transportation / patrol means to be acquired with the contribution of the Fund, a decision taking in the middle of the implementation period. This example shows the need for there to be further consideration on the extent and the relevance of the positions of the Agencies.

n. 4 – Portugal welcomes the reference to the priority to be attributed in the usage of the Fund for the implementation of vulnerability assessments and Schengen evaluation recommendations.
- Art.14: negative

Portugal is bound to stress its reservations over this proposal.

The identification of a minimum threshold of 10% of payment requests, to be presented until the mid term review of 2024, as a factor to define the extra allocation of the 10% defined in this regulation, does not deserve the support of Portugal, for two concrete reasons:

 - a. The 10% in question should always be attributed to the Member State at stake, regardless of its financial consumption at a particular moment in time. These 10% are to be considered as part of the overall amount to be managed by the Member State, and thus must not depend on subjective decisions of the European Commission;
 - b. The 10% of minimum threshold for payment requests at 2024 should, in principle, be positive, but it must also take into consideration the possibility for the start of the implementation of the Fund / of the National Programs to be delayed, for reasons that, in line with what occurred in the current programing period, cannot be attributed to the Member State's Management Authorities and/or Beneficiaries. If this would be the case in the current programing period – something far from impossible if one considers the timing for the general elections to the European Parliament – the completion of such a rule of minimum 10% of payment requests may be jeopardized, thus calling for different provisions in this regards.

- Art.15: positive
Further information need on Specific Actions to be implemented by a single Member State.
- Art.16: Negative
Portugal does not agree with the fixed provision of 10.000 euros for resettlement and relocation.

This amount is clearly limited to the financial allocation under the current programing period, not taking into account the impacts of inflation, the increased costs with housing or general expenses to be borne for the support of these resettled or relocated persons.

Portugal considers that the final provision should double the amount of money foreseen for this purpose to an overall of 20.000 euros per person.
- Art.17: Negative
Portugal does not agree with the fixed provision of 10.000 euros for resettlement and relocation.

This amount is clearly limited to the financial allocation under the current programing period, not taking into account the impacts of inflation, the increased costs with housing or general expenses to be borne for the support of these resettled or relocated persons.

Portugal considers that the final provision should double the amount of money foreseen for this purpose to an overall of 20.000 euros per person.
- Art.18: Positive & Negative
Portugal considers that the overall amount to be used under Operating Support should be up to 20%. This would allow for a more concrete contribution of the Fund to the results in the areas of migration, asylum and return.

This would allow simpler mechanisms for effective support to the public and competent authorities for the a.m. areas.

Portugal positively welcomes the inclusion of the Operating Support on the AMF Regulation.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: positive
 - Art.20: positive
 - Art.21: positive
 - Art.22: positive
 - Art.23: positive
 - Art.24: positive
 - Art.25: positive

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: positive
 - Art.27: No particular comments at this stage.
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: Negative

Portugal must present its reservations over the possibility for there to be an extra amount of workload for the beneficiaries, in particular in what concerns to the presentation of reports and statistical data.
 - Art.29: positive
 - Art.30: Negative

Portugal maintains its position according to which the financial consumption and financial year should be aligned with the calendar year. We have nothing the possibility of this alignment to oblige to a different reporting period.

Although Portugal welcomes the concretion of one single performance report, composed of the current – different and non-aligned – reporting obligations imposed to the Member States, Portugal stresses its opposition over the provisions obliging the beneficiaries towards reporting 6 times a year. This will imply a significantly higher amount of administrative burden, both for the beneficiaries as well as to the management authorities, with no foreseeable advantages for the usage of the Fund.
 - Art.31: No particular comments at this stage.
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: positive
 - Art.33: positive
 - Art.34: positive
 - Art.35: positive

Portugal stresses the importance of the proposed regulation to be applied, indeed, from off the 1st of January 2021 onwards.
- ANNEX I: negative

The criteria that has been found assumes a rather complex nature, which may be clearly disadvantageous for Member States such as Portugal.

A Member State that has correctly managed its migratory fluxes, and at the same time contributed to the Common European Asylum Policy, be receiving a high number of resettled and relocated persons, is certainly not favored by the criteria included in the proposal set out in Annex I of this Regulation.

In line with the same view, the proposed criteria, by focusing on absolute numbers of Third Country Nationals to be integrated in the Member States of the EU, does not allow for a clear priority to be attributed to the quality and positive results deriving from these integration efforts.

Furthermore, and without prejudice to the need for further discussion and analysis of the criteria proposed, Portugal has substantial reservations on the partition that has been proposed, according to which the financial allocation should be distributed accounting for an overall of 40% based on the efforts of countering irregular migration, including returns. The effort put, on the Common European Asylum System, by the significant amount of asylum requests and refugees, should determine a partition, one that would probably favor asylum and integration, in a fairer manner once compared to return.

Simultaneously, Portugal considers important that the data to be taken into account for the application of the proposed distribution key should bear account also of the most critical years, in terms of asylum requests and mixed migratory flows, aiming at the European territory, notably the years of 2016 and 2017.

Portugal stresses, once again, the importance of the European Commission to share with the Member States the preliminary, and provisional, provisions of the financial allocations resulting from the application of the current formula.

A last remark to underline that all statistical data, irregardless of its origin, should be subject to prior consultation and confirmation with the concerned Member State.

- ANNEX II: Positive
Particular attention, and possible need for further detailed written clarification from the European Commission, should be given to (b), n. 2 – *early integration measures*. Important to avoid misinterpretations and double financing with the ESF+.
In any case, Portugal must stress its view of the importance of AMF for the support of measures, as early as the arriving stage, constituting of an appropriate early response. In our view, structural measures should be addressed by ESF+.
- ANNEX III: Positive
Portugal suggests the inclusion of transportation means, in particular in what concerns to the actions to be carried out in line with n. 4 of the current annex.
- ANNEX IV: Portugal considers that should be given further detailed written clarification from the European Commission concerns to definition and framework for the special reception and/or procedural needs.
- ANNEX V: Reservations over the gathering of some of the indicators.
- ANNEX VI: No particular comments at this stage.

- ANNEX VIII: Reservations over the gathering of some of the indicators.

Detailed questions on the proposal:
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1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:

NO. As previously mentioned, Portugal is of the view that there should be a reinforcement of shared management. In this case, the proposal put forward by the European Commission provides for a significant, and not justified, increase of the percentage of the Fund to be used under direct management, something that does not deserve our support. Not only the Commission does not seem to be able to present clear cut justifications for this proposed increase, as it is incapable of demonstrating the added value of this decision. Portugal considers that such high amount of the budget to be centralized in the European Commissions' hands does not contribute for the need to safeguard transparency, predictability and better financial management of the Fund, in line with its primary objectives. One should, allthemore, bear in mind that the Commission is, in practice, and if this proposal is to be adopting, reserving a total sum of 50% of the Fund, to be solely managed by its services, as it cannot be forgotten the 10% of financial allocations, on top of the thematic facility, which are to be managed by the Commission and possibly attributed, given very strict conditions, to the Member States, in the context of the Mid Term Reviews.
2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? [**ANNEX I**] If no, please elaborate:

YES.
3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

NO. As Portugal has stated in various occasions, although we can welcome the new possibility for the submission of up to 4 intermediate payment requests per year, if the levels of prefinancing, currently stated in the proposals, are to be maintain, they will constitute a clear impediment to the proper financial consumption of the Fund. One has to bear in mind that, in the context of the current programing period, the annual prefinancing level is up to 5% of the overall budget. The proposal for the new programing period foresees a decrease from 5% to 0.5%, which will have an enormous impact in the selection of proposals by the management authorities, notwithstanding the impact in the real implementation capacity of the beneficiaries. If the current proposal is to move forward, it seems rather clear that most of the Member State will start the implementation period with a very low / limited of calls to be opened, as they will not be able to pay for the prefinancing of the projects, and will inevitably concentrate the concretion of the projects to a timing when they will start benefiting from the payment requests of the projects, something that will clearly lower the level and speed of the implementation of the Fund.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**ANNEX I, 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

NO. Without prejudice to the need for further discussion and analysis of the criteria proposed, Portugal has substantial reservations on the partition that has been proposed, according to which the financial allocation should be distributed accounting for an overall of 40% based on the efforts of countering irregular migration, including returns. The effort put, on the Common European Asylum System, by the significant amount of asylum requests and refugees, should determine another partition, one that would probably favor asylum and integration, in a fairer manner once compared to return. As a last resource, Portugal could possibly support a balance approach, according to which the partition would be of 33% per each of the three major objectives / policy areas.

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

No particular suggestions for changes at this stage.

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

For Portugal, the most important is to guarantee that the paths are clear, both for AMF and ESF+. It is of utmost importance to avoid the duplication of financial resources / funding, as it will constitute a major problem in terms of audits and controls. The clearer the borders / barriers are between the two funds, the better for their implementation.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

For the reasons previously mentioned in response to question n. 7, Portugal can agree with this proposal.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2)**)

YES. To start with, Portugal considers that further justification should be provided, by the European Commission, on the 10% which will remain to be attributed until the mid term review. Guarantees should be given to the member states on the effective availability of this money, as well as on their distribution to the Member States according this initial partition (the 10% to be handed to Member State A must not be reaffected to Member State B).

Furthermore, the identification of a minimum threshold of 10% of payment requests, to be presented until the mid term review of 2024, as a factor to define the extra allocation of the 10% identified in this Regulation, does not deserve the support of Portugal, for two concrete reasons:

- a. The 10% in question should always be attributed to the Member State at stake, irregardless of its financial consumption at a particular moment in time. These 10% are to be considered as part of the overall amount to be managed by the Member State, and thus must not depend on subjective decisions of the European Commission;
- b. The 10% of minimum threshold for payment requests at 2024 should, in principle, be positive, but it must also take into consideration the possibility for the start of the implementation of the Fund / of the National Programs to be delayed, for reasons that, in line with what occurred in the current programming period, cannot be attributed to the Member State's Management Authorities and/or Beneficiaries. It this would be the case in the current programming period – something far from impossible if one considers the timing for the general elections to the European Parliament – the completion of such a rule of minimum 10% of payment requests may be jeopardized, thus calling for different provisions in this regards.

Portugal thus suggests the deletion of this threshold.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? **(Art.9)**
If no, please elaborate:

NO. For the reasons already explained in the responses provided to this questionnaire, Portugal considers that tis possibility will only bring extra administrative burden, lack of transparency and predictability.

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? **(Art.18)**

NO. Portugal considers that the overall amount to be used under Operating Support should be up to, at least, **20%**. This would allow for a more concrete contribution of the Fund to the results in the areas of migration, asylum and return.

This would allow simpler mechanisms for effective support to the public and competent authorities for the a.m. areas.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? **(Art.5,6)** If no, please elaborate:

To respond to this question the Member States need, in our view, further information on the complementary and methodology for the usage of the funds available in this regard. Portugal reserves its position on this to a later stage.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? **(Art.28-31)** If no, please elaborate:

NO. Portugal stresses its opposition over the provisions obliging the beneficiaries towards reporting 6 times a year. This will imply a significantly higher amount of administrative burden, both for the beneficiaries as well as to the management authorities, with no foreseeable advantages for the usage of the Fund.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? **(ANNEX VIII)**

These assume a rather complex nature.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

In Portugal's view, the usage of SCOs can only be effective if the European Commission will, in advance, provide the Member States with clear and concrete guidance, based on the statistical data at its disposal, in order to allow for the usage of the SCO.

To oblige the Member States to create the methodology, to test it, to validate it with the audit authorities, and to implement it in the current programming period will, not only jeopardize its concretion, but also the effectiveness of the management of the overall rest of the Fund.

15. **(Art. 2(28) of the CPR):** Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

YES. It would allow for better implementation conditions for the beneficiaries and stronger consumption rates, due to the fact that national budgets are still of a yearly basis, from 1st of January to the 31st of December each year. It would also decrease the administrative burden for the management authorities and better comprehension of the obligations, and timings, to be put on the beneficiaries.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

No particular comments against the proposed option.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

Portugal's Responsible and Delegated Authorities have no particular problems in terms of communication and cooperation with its audit authority. In fact, it is a quite positive and cooperative relation, one that has proven to be essential in many different occasions.

As a last remark, Portugal is of the view that the CPR should necessarily be subject to concrete discussion and approval under the Ad Hoc Working Group on JHA matters. The truth is that the CPR will have a major impact and deep implications in the implementation of the AMF, being, thus, more than justified the need for it to be discussed with those representatives that are in a better position to judge on its sectorial and concrete implications to the areas of asylum, migration, integration and return.

Portugal urges, thus, the European Commission and the Austrian Presidency to bear in mind this proposal, and to convey joint technical meetings for this purpose.

SLOVAKIA

- Chapter I – General Provisions (Art.1-6):
 - Art.1: Without comments
 - Art.2: Definition of early integration and definition of short-term integration should be in Article 2 including eligible measures and time frame.
We suggest to add a new article with definition of a target group.
 - Art.3: Without comments
 - Art.4: Without comments
 - Art.5: Without comments
 - Art.6: Without comments
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 1 (Art.7-9):
 - Art.7: Without comments
 - Art.8: Without comments
 - Art.9: Without comments
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 2 (Art.10-18):
 - Art.10: Without comments
 - Art.11: Without comments
 - Art.12: Without comments
 - Art.13: Without comments
 - Art.14: Without comments
 - Art.15: Without comments
 - Art.16: Without comments
 - Art.17: Without comments
 - Art.18: Without comments
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 3 (Art.19-25):
 - Art.19: Without comments
 - Art.20: Without comments
 - Art.21: Without comments
 - Art.22: Without comments
 - Art.23: Without comments
 - Art.24: Without comments
 - Art.25: Without comments
- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 4 (Art.26-27):
 - Art.26: Without comments
 - Art.27: Without comments

- Chapter II – Financial and Implementation Framework Section 5 (Art. 28-31):
 - Art.28: Without comments
 - Art.29: Without comments
 - Art.30: We suggest to prolong the deadline for the submission of the annual performance report till 31 March. The reason is to have enough time for elaboration of the report after 15 February, when the RA is supposed to submit accounts. Also, if – during the negotiations - accounting year will not remain the period from 1 July to 30 June of the following year (as it is proposed in the current proposal of CPR), we suggest to adapt the accounts and reporting to accounting year in order to always have 8-9 months from closure of accounting year till submission of accounts and reports.
 - Art.31: Without comments
- Chapter III – Transitional and Final Provisions (Art.32-35):
 - Art.32: Without comments
 - Art.33: Without comments
 - Art.34: Without comments
 - Art.35: Without comments
- ANNEX I: point 2,3 and 4 of Annex I: we suggest to take into account the number of inhabitants of member states in the distribution key.
- ANNEX II: Without comments
- ANNEX III: Without comments
- ANNEX IV: Without comments
- ANNEX V: Without comments
- ANNEX VI: Without comments
- ANNEX VII: Without comments
- ANNEX VIII: Without comments

<u>Detailed questions on the proposal:</u>

1. Do you think the Principle of Subsidiarity is adequately recognized in the Proposal? Does it seem that the Member States still have enough autonomy (current fund: 76% through shared management, 24% through direct/ indirect management → new proposal: 60% through shared management, 40% through direct, indirect and shared management)? (**Art. 8-11**) If your answer is no, please elaborate:
Yes

2. Do you think the crisis years of 2015-2016 should be considered as criteria for the distribution key? Are you in favor that for initial allocation the reference figures shall be the latest annual statistical data produced by the Commission (Eurostat) covering the preceding three calendar years on the basis of data provided by Member States? **[ANNEX I]** If no, please elaborate:

We prefer to use the data from 2017 - 2019

3. Do you think the stated allocation process and the pre-financing at the beginning of the financial period and the years after that (**Art. 11 (a), [ANNEX I]**) will be adequate for a successful implementation of the fund? If no, please elaborate:

We do not agree with the cancellation of the initial pre-financing payment since leaving only an annual advance payment from the EC at a reduced rate of 0.5% of the total amount of aid combined with reimbursement of interim payments only up to 90% increases the risk of illiquidity of the MS and at the same time does not help to meet commitment of the year 2021.

4. Are you in favor that the global budget should be distributed among MS based on the following criteria: 30% for asylum, 30% for legal migration and integration and 40% for countering irregular migration including returns? (**[ANNEX I], 1. (b)**) If no, please elaborate:

Yes

5. Do you think the specific objectives and implementation measures are sufficient? Would you like to have any changes? (**Art.3, ANNEX II**) If yes, which?

Yes, they are sufficient, we would not like to have any changes

6. What is your opinion on splitting up the managing of integration measures between the AMF (short-term or early integration measures linked to the reception) and the ESF+ (long-term socio-economic integration of third-country nationals)? (**Art.3(2)(b), ANNEX II (2)(b), ANNEX III (3)(g)**)

According to the explanatory memorandum to the draft regulation, the Fund will support the "action of national governments, local and regional authorities and civil society groups involved in supporting the short-term integration of third-country nationals ... This proposal will support measures for the admission and early integration of third- of countries legally resident in the EU, which are generally implemented in an early phase of integration in the post-EU accession period. "

According to par. 13 Preamble of the Proposal for a Regulation "Measures funded by this Fund should support measures tailored to the needs of third-country nationals normally pursued in the initial phase of integration ... while interventions concerning third-country nationals with a longer-term impact should be financed by the European Social Fund plus (ESF +) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). " However, the draft regulation itself does not reflect this approach by not defining the early integration phase or short-term integration, including the types of eligible measures and their timing.

7. Would you like to have the target groups named specifically in the AMF proposal with clear definitions? (**Art.4(3)**) If yes, which?

Yes, we suggest to have the target group defined and described specifically in a new article.

8. Concerning the Mid-Term Review: Do you think that the percentage which needs to be reached to be eligible for top-ups (10%) should be decreased or even deleted? Do you think it would hinder certain MS in getting additional funds? (**Art.14 in particular number (2))**)

Yes, we support the fact that the percentage for top-ups should be decreased, even deleted.

9. Do you think that the thematic facility will be beneficial in terms of flexibility? (**Art.9**)
If no, please elaborate:

Yes, we think so

10. Are you in favor of the 10% which are proposed for the operating support or would you like to have a higher percentage? (**Art.18**)

We don't object 10%.

11. Is the funding of the external dimension and the increased complementarity with the external instruments an important topic for you? (**Art.5,6**) If no, please elaborate:

We do not expect projects' implementation in third countries.

12. Are you in favor of the new reporting system (more frequent reporting)? (**Art.28-31**) If no, please elaborate:

We are in favour of keeping current reporting system – that means accounts submitted once a year and then report submitted once a year.

13. Do you think the output and result indicators are sufficient? Which changes would you like to see? (**ANNEX VIII**)

No, indicator 3B is inconsistent with the proposal –we suggest to delete it.

14. **CPR:** What is your opinion on using Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) – will they reduce the administrative burden? Did you have problems in terms of the implementation of SCOs in your countries during the current financial period? Do you think it would be beneficial for the implementation, if the COM would publish guidelines on the use of SCOs?

The Slovak republic has not used the Simplified Cost Options yet, introduction of SCOs may represent an administrative burden . In case of using SCOs, EC should publish a guideline.

15. (**Art. 2(28) of the CPR**): Do you think that the harmonization of the regular calendar year (01.01.n-31.12.n) and the accounting year of the COM would lead to less administrative burden?

No, we prefer current system. It is important for the Slovak republic to submit accounts 6-7 months after closing, because that is the period necessary for the audit.

Also, if – during the negotiations - accounting year will not remain the period from 1 July to 30 June of the following year (as it is proposed in the current proposal of CPR), we suggest to adapt the accounts and reporting to accounting year in order to always have 8-9 months from closure of accounting year till submission of accounts and reports.

16. **(Art.74, 75 of the CPR):** What do you think about the single audit approach?

We welcome single audit approach.

17. **(Art.71 of the CPR):** Did you have problems in communicating with your audit authorities and do you think there should be a clearer definition of tasks and responsibilities for the audit authorities?

No, we do not have problems with our audit authority, their responsibilities are sufficiently defined.
